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ՀԱՅԱԳԻՏԱԿԱՆ ՀԵՏԱԶՈՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ԻՆՍՏԻՏՈՒՏ

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INSTITUTE FOR ARMENIAN STUDIES

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ԱՄՍԱԳԻՐ
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RUSSIAN AND SOVIET IMPERIAL LEGACY IN POSTCOLONIAL EURASIA: AN OVERVIEW OF THE REVIVED DEBATE

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Yerevan State University

Abstract

The year 2022, with Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, has been a milestone that brought the events, in a way, widely expected and predicted, resulting in the obvious long-term trends, and yet, stunning by their dramatic acceleration. That year has also affected both academic and public discourses related to a number of issues, including, most of all, the changing perception of the huge historical, cultural, and geopolitical region - the space of Russian and then Soviet imperial domination, both current and former, both real and imagined, both directly or indirectly subject to Russian economic involvement and political dependency. After 2022, this vast, territorially pulsating region, sometimes called Northern Eurasia, acquired both new existential vulnerability and conceptual fragility.

This review paper will suggest some observations concerning the intense discussions about the cultural-historical meaning, both retrospectively and prospectively, of this Russia-affected regional space - the discussions that broke out after the start of the Ukraine war. I draw upon both published generalized opinions and regular scholarly publications related to the outlined themes. My goal here is to identify major trends in these discussions and share some comments.

A storm of debates has been trying to interpret the aggressive internal and external mobilization of Putin's regime in several explanatory logics. It could be, first, the logic of post-Soviet developments (the evolution of the elites, the features of available resources, the misbalances of state-society relationships, etc.); or the logic of the *longue-durée* patterns of the Russian social and cultural history (dominant political culture, deeply-imbedded cultural mythologies, etc.); or, finally, placing the problem within a wider logic of contestation ("clashes") between the evolving global centers of power. In all these cases, one factor should be stated as crucial and definitive: the huge continental space of Northern Eurasia, a unique geographical-spatial system that largely defined the logic of integration and disintegration, solidarities and rivalries, violence and resistance, cultural imagination, entangled identity formation, and the very nature of the state rule.

The empire that twice emerged on this geographical space – as the Romanov Empire first and then the Soviet Union (with additional claims of influence beyond the official borders, in both cases) – is now under the most passionate scrutiny because of the dominant postcolonial and decolonial agenda and the assumption that Putin's aggression in Ukraine indicates imperial revenge. Hence the growing interest in the nature of this imperial system throughout its history.

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Keywords - Romanov Empire, Pax Rossica, Russian imperial duality, Soviet Union, “Island Russia”, Armenia, Georgia, South Caucasus, Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), Central Asia, Northern Eurasia, Rose Revolution, “near-abroad”, “fraternal rivalry”, “paleoconservatism”, “subaltern peripheries”, “Russkii mir”.

Romanov and Soviet empires: typical, special, ambivalent

We will start with the perception of the Romanov Empire and will later move to its Soviet incarnation. The Romanov Empire was usually placed in the row of the modern continental empires along with the Habsburg, Ottoman, and sometimes Hohenzollern, all of them dismantled after the Great War (World War I), and these polities are sometimes opposed to the classic maritime empires, such as British or French.¹ This opposition involves debates about the differences between these two types. We know that the now dominant postcolonial research agenda has been overwhelmingly shaped by the material from the maritime empires, where the “metropolis” and “colony” were clearly separated in terms of resources, administration, and cultural subjectivity, and this initial distance defined the strategies of institutional and human communication. The now classical tropes of orientalism, hybridity, or mimicry, developed in postcolonial theory, began to be applied to the Russian imperial history relatively recently.

A number of recent research of the Russian imperial expansion have shown, for example, the similar mechanism of “orientalization” as Edward Said described in his classic study.² Scholars refer to the Russian academic oriental studies, such as Caucasian studies and the studies of Russian Turkestan, as developing, in collaboration with colonial administration and in parallel with travelogues and visual arts, a typically orientalist pattern of the annexed cultures.³

At the same time, in a new turn, the scholars show that the Russian orientalists and intellectuals in many cases initiated a sympathetic collaboration with the local elites whose subjectivities were preserved within the emerging, apparently “hybrid,” communicative models.⁴ Other studies suggested that the Romanov Empire “colonized” the ethnically Russian provinces in the same way as it did with its non-Russian peripheries, and even that some of these “central” provinces have been

¹ See Miller: Alexey Miller, *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism. Essay on the Methodology of Historical Research*. (Moscow): NLO, 2006), 32-42. The third type that might be designated as (post)modern empire, the “global empire” of the United States, is a separate issue.

² Said E., *Orientalism*, (Pantheon Books, 1978).

³ Melentyev D. *Ethnography and Eroticism in Russian Turkestan, State, Religion, Church in Russia and Abroad*. 2020. No. 38(2). pp. 308–344. On the role of Caucasian studies as “scientific appropriation” along with the imperial expansion, see: Mirja Lekke, “Russian-Georgian Literary Ties and the Science of Them in the Social Context”, in: Mirja Lecke, Elena Chkhaidze, eds. *Russia and Georgia after the Empire*, *Moscow: NLO*, 2018, 22.

⁴ See Vera Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient, The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods*, (Oxford University Press, 2011), where the author claims that Russian academic orientalists have developed the postcolonial scholarly agenda many decades before it was created by its later classics; see also Sergei Abashin, “Another history of “Russian Turkestan”?– *Am Imperio*, 3 (2018), 410-415.

economically inferior to some peripheries.⁵ The incorporation of the local political and learned elites, as well as the “internal colonization” of central provinces, however, would not downplay the conclusion that the Romanov Empire was a typical empire in the sense that the norms created in the center were imposed and applied in the peripheries.⁶

We can also say that the Romanov Empire, similar to all other modern empires, embodied an ambivalence of being simultaneously a conservative, repressive system, and yet, on the other hand, of creating a *modernizing* political and cultural environment that promoted economic growth, elements of rational bureaucratic management, acting as a public *Kulturträger* that reached its diverse population, and finally, if unwillingly, shaping the ethnic and national communities within its space. It seems that the current scholarship does not contrapose any more the empires to nation-states as standard agents of Modernity.⁷

However, there is another, and particularly important, ambivalence in the Romanov Empire that was inherited in the Soviet period and is clearly relevant to the ideologies of the post-Soviet imperial *revanche*. I mean Russia’s dual nature of being both colonizer (of Eurasian spaces) and quasi-colonized (by Europe); of both belonging to Europe (since the early 1700s) and constantly generating anti-Western resentment expressed in cultural agendas such as Slavophilism, “native soil” embeddedness (*pochvennichestvo*), and various forms of Eurasianism. Interesting that all these forms of anti-western reaction were partly inspired by, and synthesized from, some alternative and marginal western-European ideological currents (such as the German *Sonderweg* discourse or the mystical anti-Atlantic traditionalism) and mostly formulated within a Eurocentric hegemonic discourse – another prove of the said ambivalence. To conceptualize this paradox of Russian imperial duality, a few scholars proposed, drawing upon the postcolonial analytical vocabulary, the term “subaltern empire.”⁸ Hence Russia’s obvious and sometimes radical oscillations, throughout its historical course, between the periods of “catching up” (with European modernity) and conservative backlashes.⁹ The radical break of the Russian Revolution of 1917 was a catastrophic expression of this duality.

⁵ For the thesis of “internal colonization,” see Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); and the volume that elaborates this thesis on a number of cultural examples: A. Etkind, D. Uffelman, I. Kukulin. (eds.). *There, Inside. Practices of Internal Colonization and Cultural History of Russia*. (Moscow: NLO press, 2012).

⁶ See, inter alia, *Russian Empire: Nationalized and Nationalizing*, 2020. №. 3. c. 9–113.

⁷ Miller, *Op. Cit.*, 44. Miller adds that it is also unfair to identify the imperial rule with constant backlash repressions against the colonies’ resistance – for the imperial state this would be simply impossible in pragmatic terms.

⁸ See Madina Tlostanova, *A Janus-Faced Empire. Notes on the Russian Empire in Modernity, Written from the Border*, (Moscow, 2003); Idem, ‘The Janus-Faced Empire Distorting Orientalist Discourses: Gender, Race and Religion in the Russian/(post)Soviet Constructions of the “Orient,”’ *Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise* 2(2): 1–11; and most substantially, Viatcheslav Morozov, *Russia’s Postcolonial Identity. A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁹ See an earlier definition of the Russian Empire as being an “intermediary” system that implied historical cycles based upon oscillations between the periods of reforms and counter-reforms, Alexander Akhiezer, *Russia: Critique of Historical Experience (Sociocultural Dynamics of Russia)*, (Novosibirsk: Siberian Chronograph, 1998); this resonates with Yuri Lotman’s reflections about the “dual models” in Russia’s cultural dynamic first formulated in: Yuri Lotman, Boris Uspensky, “The Role of Dual Models in the

Let us now turn to the Soviet incarnation of the *Pax Rossica*. Debates about the nature of Soviet legacy are predictably more passionate now, as this legacy has been strongly felt after the breakdown of the Soviet Union and continues to be an important factor these days. The Bolshevik revolutionary drive was apparently anti-imperialist; however, imperialism was rejected not for the sake of the nation-states (as it happened in the realms of other dismantled empires of the twentieth century) but in anticipation of a new polity and a Utopian new community to emerge (“*новая социальная общность людей*”, according to the Soviet ideological parlance). The initial politics of redesigning the space of the former Romanov Empire (minus some lost western territories such as Poland and Baltic states, until the latter were re-occupied in 1940) led to welcoming national and ethnic identitarian claims in the 1920s-early 1930s (the so-called politics of *коренизация*, promoting, re-integrating, and actually sometimes inventing/constructing local ethnic cultures, intellectuals, and bureaucrats). This apparent anti-imperialism might lead to viewing the Soviet Union as a special political phenomenon.¹⁰

Gradually, however, the Union evolved into a typical empire, although not conservatively modernizing, like Romanov’s, but radically modernity-driven – with an ideological, constructivist, and totalitarian edition of modernity. The political center (the ruling communist party) provided undisputed general norms, and “the peoples” were supposed to follow *substantial* socialist core with a permission to maintain *formal* national-cultural variations doomed to imminent extinction (*национальные по форме, социалистические по содержанию*). The official policy of the “friendship of the people” quickly became a discourse of domination.¹¹ There was no question that the ruling imperial institutions were overwhelmingly run by ethnic Russians; the Russian language was an imperial *lingua franca* in the same way as in Romanov Empire;¹² the celebration of national minority cultures usually came down to “orientalist” admiration and folklorization.¹³

The ambivalence of the initial design and “affirmative” ethnonational policies, however, manifested itself after World War II in the late, post-Stalinist Soviet Union. The proto-nation-states, created within the imperial system (in the same way as proto-nations were constructed by other colonial powers), gradually acquired larger rights and significance; the ethnonational elites strengthened (partly thanks to successful

Dynamics of Russian Culture (until the End of the 18th Century),” *Scientific Notes of Tartu State University*, Issue. 414, Tartu, 1977, 3–36.

¹⁰ Most famously, see Terry Martyn, *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, (Cornell University Press, 2001).

¹¹ On the early Soviet ethno-emancipatory and constructivist zeal, related to thriving ethnography and promotion of local resources, and the simultaneous strengthening of the totalitarian control from the center, see Francine Kirsch, *Empire of Nations. Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, (Cornell University Press, 2005).

¹² The communist (socialist Yuri Lotman, Boris Uspensky, “The Role of Dual Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture (until the End of the 18th Century),” *Scientific Notes of Tartu State University*, Issue.) national intermediaries have mostly been Russians, according to Charles Shaw and Konstantin Iordachi, “Intermediaries as Change Agents: Translating, Interpreting, and Expanding Socialism,” *Russian Review*, 82 (2023), 387–400.

¹³ Vadim Mikhaylin, “Locus amosus: “a special path” of colonial and postcolonial discourse in domestic cinema,” *New Literary Review*, 166 (6/2020).

incorporation into the imperial centers); cultural entrepreneurs managed to create modern national cultures while the overarching, dominant (communist) discourse gradually lost vigor, substance, and credibility. With today's growing decolonial sensitivity in late Soviet studies, some free spaces have been identified in spheres where political control and censorship were relatively weak, and sometimes more often in imperial peripheries: many studies show how, for example, the literary translation industry produced a half-hidden decolonizing effect; how the literary process on minority-languages allowed more freedom; and how national republics became centers of artistic innovation.¹⁴ Overall, "the Soviet Union became an incubator of the new nations," where the imperial state itself endowed the subalterns with the language of agency and resistance.¹⁵ Recent studies have specifically focused on the formation of such national agency within "Soviet-Georgian" or "Soviet-Armenian" cultures.¹⁶ The shaping of these semi-hidden national agencies finally led to the empire's explosion in 1989-1991.

At the same time, the late Soviet Russian empire, in its dominant discourse, inherited the aforementioned duality of combining colonial hegemony with defensive, isolationist anti-Western resentment in a weird combination with global messianic rhetoric. Predictably, urban dissenters who explored the "free spaces" both in the center and in the peripheries often looked to Western alternative patterns over the loosening Iron Curtain. On the other hand, within the "internally colonized" space of Russia proper, the rise of Russian ethnic nationalism (in literature, visual arts but also within the bureaucratic apparatus) developed in parallel with the rise of national feelings in the peripheries and contained a conservative, nativist protest against both Soviet and Western modernities (seen, in fact, as the two forms of colonization).

¹⁴ On translation activities and literary studies as producing real elements of dissent behind the ritualized "peoples' friendship" discursive core, see Mirja Lekke using Georgian examples (Mirja Lekke, Elena Chkhaidze, *Op. cit.*, p. 26). See also excellent studies on Chabua Amirejibi's epic and Grant Matevosyan's prose as containing semi-hidden protests against Soviet modernity (Bela Tshipuria, "Hybridity and the Double Sociocode in Chabua Amirejibi's Novel 'Data Tutashkhia'," in Mirja Lekke, Elena Chkhaidze, *Op. cit.*, 94-104; Hrach Bayadyan, "Becoming Post-Soviet," 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts, #59, 4-12, http://bettinafuncke.com/100Notes/059_Bayadyan.pdf. Evgenii Dobrenko discussed the "non-imperial and anti-imperial spaces in Soviet literature" in 2023 (the conference "XXIX Bathhouse Readings," New Literary Review). On creating counter-narratives in the literature of the Russian North, see Klavdiya Smola, "Little America: (Post)Socialist Realism of the Indigenous North." – New Literary Review 166 (2020). On the phenomenon of late Soviet Armenian modernism in fine arts, architecture, and cinema, see: Vardan Azatyan. "National modernism," in Georg Schollhammer, Ruben Arevshatyan, eds., *Sweet Sixties: Specters and spirits of a parallel avant-garde*. (Sternberg Press, 2013), 107-120; Ruben Arevshatyan, "Blank zones in collective memory, or the transformation of Yerevan's urban space in the 1960s," *Ibidem*, 299-319; Vigen Galstyan. "Desperately searching for aesthetics: Armenian cinema of the 1960s and late modernity," *Ibidem*, 354-364.

¹⁵ Ronald Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, (Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 292ff; also, *Idem*, "Dialectics of Empire: Russia and the Soviet Union," in: Ilya Gerasimov et al., eds., *New Imperial History of the Post-Soviet Space*, (Kazan, 2004), c.173.

¹⁶ On the Georgian case, see Claire P. Keizer, *Georgian and Soviet. Entitled Nationhood and the Specter of Stalin in the Caucasus*, (Cornell University Press, 2022); on the Armenian case, see Yulia Antonyan, ed., *Armenian Culture: Concepts, Perceptions and Manifestations*, (Yerevan, Yerevan State University, 2023) (in Armenian).

Russia after the Soviet Union: decolonization versus the hanging shadow of empire

In 1991, the Soviet empire collapsed, and its entire territory transformed into the space of ethnic and national projects, claims, and conflicts. However, the idea of empire and the imperial spatial-communicative structure survived, first within the Russian Federation (with stronger claims of ethnic constituencies), and second, as a *shadow* of the former imperial rule over the so-called “near-abroad” (*ближнее зарубежье*), a euphemism for the zone of special claims, the newly independent states.

Post-Soviet Russia’s complex political and economic history was accompanied by a polyphonic ideological evolution towards a new master narrative of the country’s regional and global identity. As the Marxist discourse disappeared overnight - including its scholastic internationalism, fully disproved by the ethno-nationalist breakdown - in the course of the three decades, 1990s-2010s, controversial ideological debates exploded.

One initial trend was Russia’s post-Iron-Curtain global integration related to liberal economy and cultural openness - the trend shaped as a teleological, Westcentric concept of “transition.” However, the anti-global and anti-western reactions came up immediately. The old ideological patterns were revived, with discursive “parties” that reminded the old Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists, each expressing a particular vision of geopolitical and geocultural identity. The “westernizing vector” was poorly elaborated ideologically; the ethnonationalist and imperial parties, initially clashed with each other, have gradually inundated the public space and penetrated the increasingly authoritarian official rhetoric. The mainstream ethnonationalist and imperial (Eurasianist) camps would reject the westernized nation-state perspective; they would also reject more eccentric attempts to imagine an “Island Russia” based on a seventeenth-century (pre-imperial) “heartland ethno-civilizational platform” equally distanced from the Western European and “Eurasian” identities.¹⁷ Ethnonationalist versus imperial (Eurasianist) controversy seemed to define the debates in the early post-Soviet years, but later Putin’s hardening regime borrowed ideas from both to finally create a pragmatic synthetic ideological amalgam to support the authoritarian agenda.¹⁸

The ethnonationalist-imperial combination eventually produced a number of fundamental elements of a new hegemonic discourse. This ideological toolkit included: the key concept of the Russian world/*Russkii mir*; the strongly promoted idea of historical continuity of the current polity with the Romanov and Soviet empires based upon the strong continuous statehood (with an interruption of the 1917 Revolution seen as unfortunate and tragic and the 1990s liberal reforms as a collective trauma of late Soviet generation) – the statehood that constitutes the indisputable core of an distinctive, indigenous “Russian civilization”; the conservative ideology of “traditional values” with its strong anti-liberal and authoritarian biases coupled with a pseudo-

¹⁷ On the last point, see an early piece of geopolitical imagination by Vadim Tsymbursky, “Island Russia” (prospects of Russian geopolitics), - *Polis*, №5, 1993, c. 6-23.

¹⁸ Igor Torbakov, *After Empire: National Imagination and Symbolic Politics in Russia and Eurasia in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, Chapter 5 (p. 95ff).

missionary idea of promoting and protecting this value agenda on a global scale.¹⁹ This master-narrative also includes a militant patriotic flavor orchestrating the millennial Russian historical narrative epitomized in the celebration of the World War II victory in its nationalized version. It also includes the references to the Russian Orthodox tradition that are used in most of the elements listed above – from the “Russian world” concept (correlated with the ecclesiastic “canonical territory”), to the perennial statehood and to the “traditional values” rhetoric.²⁰ This entire ideological master-narrative was finally shaped as a series of official state documents.²¹

This entire ideological construction served pragmatically to consolidate the increasingly authoritarian power of Putin’s ruling group and to justify the more self-asserting foreign policies; however, it would be simplistic to reduce this set of ideas to a false, cynical, and eclectic camouflage of the *Realpolitik*.

In depth, the official Putinite identity politics reflected the *longue-durée* ambivalence of the “subaltern empire” and was determined by Russia’s “simultaneous belonging to and exclusion from Europe.”²² On the one hand, the nationalism-driven, quasi-postcolonial energy of isolationist resentment; an anti-universalist claim of closure, uniqueness, and authenticity; a bitter experience of a humiliating defeat (as the collapse of the Soviet Union was perceived).²³ On the other hand, the compensatory celebration of the past and present might and the paroxysms of inherited imperial claims were presented as a special mission in the entire Northern Eurasia, including the space both within and outside the Russian Federation.

¹⁹ See Torbakov, Op. cit; On the historical narrative of “total continuity,” see also Olga Malinova, “Constructing the Useable Past: The Evolution of the Official Historical Narrative in Post-Soviet Russia.” Niklas Bernsand and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, eds. *Cultural and Political Imaginaries in Putin’s Russia*. (Brill, 2019), 85-104. On constructing the collective trauma of liberal reforms, as a foundation of a conservative turn, see: Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, *The Red Mirror: Putin’s Leadership and Russia’s Insecure Identity*, (Oxford University Press, 2020), Chapter 5 (p. 105ff). V. Morozov calls the Putinite ideology “paleoconservatism” emphasizing its consonance with western conservative currents (V. Morozov, Op. cit., Chapter 4, p.103ff).

²⁰ On the uses of war victory as the core memorial tool, see: Mikhail Gabovich, ed. *Monument and holiday. Ethnography of Victory Day*. (Moscow, Nestor-history, 2020). The millennial myth of the strong state is widely promoted in public sphere, such as in the large-scale exhibition “Russia-My History” opened in twenty-four Russian cities: see Ekaterina Klimenko, “Building the Nation, Legitimizing the State: Russia—My History and Memory of the Russian Revolutions in Contemporary Russia,” *Nationalities Papers* 49 (1), 2021, 72-88. On the place of the Russian Orthodox agenda, see Tobias Koellner, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Russia*, Routledge, 2021, Chapter 6 (p. 113ff); Kathy Rousselet, “The Russian Orthodox Church and the Russkii mir,” in: Thomas Bremer, Alfons Brüning, Nadeszda Kizenko, eds. *Orthodoxy in Two Manifestations? The Conflict in Ukraine as an Expression of the Fault Line in World Orthodoxy*. (Erfurt, 2022), 121-144.

²¹ See the documents and publications presenting this entire set of ideas: a highly confrontational and isolationist document “Strategy of national security of the Russian Federation” (2021; <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/47046>); the militantly anti-liberal document “The Foundations of the state policy in conservation and reinforcement of the traditional Russian spiritual and moral values” (2022; <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>); the isolationist and authoritarian revisions of the 2014 “The Foundations of the State cultural politics” (2023; <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48855/page/1>); “The Concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation (2023; <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/70811>). Check also the mandatory course “The Foundations of the Russian statehood” introduced in all Russian higher education institutions since September 2023.

²² Morozov, Op. cit., 41.

²³ Nikolai Plotnikov, “Preface,” in N. Plotnikov, ed., *Facing Disaster*, (Berlin: LIT Verlag), 5-9.

Decolonization across Northern Eurasia: the empire's legacy and national agency

Decolonization of Northern Eurasia has been occasionally discussed in the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it has become the overwhelming topic since the 2022 geopolitical crisis. The new imperial ambitions of Putin's Russia and various forms of either dependency or threat felt in former Soviet lands instigated the explosive academic interest to the *longue-durée* imperial patterns in this entire area. "Decolonization" meant not only new processes guaranteeing further and real independence from Russia but also, in academic historiography or anthropology, the intellectual emancipation from centralized, uniform perception of empire with neglected or underrated peripheries/colonies.

This trend in Eurasian studies looks like a belated entry into the classic twentieth-century historical narrative of the nation-state "triumph" as an implied, mainstream political form as famously proclaimed by Ernst Gellner.²⁴ The deep reasons of the nation-focused conceptual revisions in the North Eurasian context - as it often happens with the academic paradigm-changes - are related to current political concerns: the peripheral, local subjective agendas found and emphasized in the Russian and Soviet imperial past are supporting the claims of final decolonization and counteracting the Putinite imperial revanchism. The years 1990s-2020s have been a romantic period of nation-building in post-Soviet states, with a strong decolonial agenda, a more or less clear distancing from the Russian and Soviet domination. This nation-focused agenda has been distinct from the start in the Baltics, then radicalized with "colored revolution" in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and it was palpable everywhere else across the spaces of the old Russian imperial presence - including those within the Russian Federation itself and in Eastern Europe. The Russian war in Ukraine, especially after its full-scale stage since 2022, led to a boom of decolonial nation-focused feelings and revisions in cultural practices and human studies, including the Russian and Slavic studies as such.

The Russian studies, as some scholars stated, continued to be overall "Westo-centric, Moscow-centric, and Putino-centric" and were practically aloof from the decolonial approaches.²⁵ As an example, the dominant place of the Russian language and Russian literature as central and hegemonic have been put under question: it would be more accurate to speak of the multi-language "Russophone" literature (and culture in general) as a transnational phenomenon, similar to (post)colonial Anglophone or Francophone ones.²⁶ In the same vein, the Russo-centric and capitals-centric research needs to be "refocused" to discovering a "pluralism of intellectual centers" (such as Odessa, Warsaw, Vilnius, etc. in the Romanov times²⁷); such a refocusing could be imagined for the Soviet period as well (see examples I referred to above); the historical

²⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Cornell University Press, 1983).

²⁵ Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Studies' Moment of Self-Reflection*, *Russian Analytical Digest*, 293, 2-3. <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000600973>; also see Kevin Platt in: "Humanities after February 24: UFO questionnaire", *New Literary Review*, #6 (2022), c. 56-57.

²⁶ Yuliia Illchuk, *From Russian literature to Russian-language literature of the empire*, *Ab Imperio*, #2 (2022), 85-88.

²⁷ Nikolai Plotnikov's comment in "Humanities after February 24. UFO questionnaire," *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

storytelling should be decentralized and the historical narratives of ethnic minorities reclaimed (in the past and in today's Russian federation), etc.

The imperialistic deconstruction of the Russian culture has been common in the western general public and academia since the 1990s, first in the context of Eastern Europe,²⁸ then spread over the studies of post-Soviet Eurasia, and became mainstream. However, some scholars warn about the simplified nationalistic resentment that is emotionally opposed to the Russian expansionist resentment. They advise that imperialist deconstruction of the Russian culture should not be the end in itself or a form of a new etiquette or of a derogatory campaign.²⁹

The analysts warn about the pitfalls of the postcolonial and post-dependency reactions, both in the public sphere and in academia. The postcolonial emancipation contains a danger of "programmatic and methodological nationalism."³⁰ This may lead to a post-dependency syndrome that may include a few elements. First, it is a simplified, polarized opposition of (former) colonizers and the (former) colonized and thus ignoring (post)imperial complexities. Secondly, another feature of this post-dependency syndrome is excessive self-victimization, a sort of romantization of victimhood of (formerly) colonized and/or dependent - a position that can become official and thus hegemonic in collective memory and tends to view a newly independent nation morally and historically unaccountable.³¹ Thirdly, the emancipatory nationalist program usually includes the exaltation or even a construction of the glorious past, to compensate with it the sense of "orphanhood" of yesterday's colonial victims.³²

Russia, especially after the open war in Ukraine, became the direct object of anti-imperial anxiety and criticism, although, ironically, as we have seen, all the patterns of the post-dependency syndrome could be found within Russia itself. In any case, after 2022, the anti-Russian sentiments, infused with post-dependency reactions, intensified in the region (in the most radical form, predictably, in Ukraine). This trend was criticized as simplistic and non-productive: the critics, such as the editors of the *Ab Imperio* journal, warned that associating the anti-Putinist agenda with the "canceling of Russian culture" (in education or memory landscape) was a "typical nationalist policy of suppressing minorities" led by "hegemonic nationalists" and is in fact "symmetrical to the hegemonic Russian nationalism in [Putinite] Russia;" therefore, accusing

²⁸ The approach was classically presented in the work of Polish-American Slavist Ewa Thompson in her book, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism*, (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood 2000).

²⁹ See Mark Lipovetsky's and Evgenii Dobrenko's contributions to the discussion in: "Humanities after February 24," *Op. cit.*, 57, 61-62.

³⁰ Dirk Uffelman, *Postcolonial Theory as Postcolonial Nationalism*, *New Literary Review*, № 161 (1), 2020.

³¹ On the "romantization of victimhood," and the "heroization of defeats" as a defensive postcolonial mechanism, in Polish case, see Uffelman, *Op. cit.* On the danger of "hegemonic victimhood" that becomes an official standard of collective memory in a newly independent nation, see Ilia Kalinin, "Historical Politics", in: Andrei Zavatsky and Vera Dubina, eds. *Everything is in the past. Theory and practice of public history*, Moscow: Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2021, p. 357-358.

³² See excellent study of the Kyrgyz case of "producing history" and overcoming "orphanhood" - Sergey Ouchakine, "The Colonial Omelette and Its Consequences. On Public Histories of Postcolonial Socialism", *Ibidem*, c. 412-425.

Russian as an ethnic group in past and present (imperial) injustice had no analytical consistency and drew upon racial profiling.³³

Instead of emotional rejection of imperial legacy as totally unsustainable, these scholars propose a sober revision of the former research and declare the need for a “new imperial history” of the region to be on the order; this “new imperial history” is supposed to address the entire variety of historical narratives within the empire, the plurality of imperial subjectivities, and the hierarchy of various forms of sovereignty. It would therefore lead to a revising of the mainstream and supposedly simplistic narrative of the empires’ imminent replacement by the modern nation-states – a paradigm built upon the European experience.³⁴

When the ghost of the old empire seems to be revived and claims territories it earlier possessed, as it happens with Russia’s revanchist policy since 2000s and especially since the full-scale war against Ukraine in 2022, it is really hard to continue a dispassionate, cold-blood “defence” of the empire as a historical type of polity. It is hard to measure what was “good” and what was “bad” in the imperial legacy; what were alleged positive developments in the colonial peripheries in terms of economic, cultural changes or in terms of overall stability and security under the imperial canopy. The current political agenda sees the awakening empire as a dangerous monster, or, at best, a political space of injustice and oppression - what was certainly also the historical truth - and therefore the current academic tastes dictate to explore the forms of injustice and oppression of the Russian and Soviet Leviathan and to reveal the hidden and open scripts of emancipation of the colonized peoples. This biased presentist agenda is absolutely predictable and explainable within the current state of emotions, and we have to acknowledge this sort of “economy of emotions” as an important factor in the knowledge production both within and outside academia. It is true, however, that this emotional disposition can lead, as some scholars warn, to a danger of an uncontested (that is, in a way, dogmatic) narrative of the particular, isolated national history, emphasizing the trauma of dependence and disregarding the real historical complexity of multilevel entanglement in the past centuries and now.³⁵

Complexity and variety of decolonial trajectories: comparing particular cases across Eurasia

There are plenty of examples of the recent studies of the post-Russian and post-Soviet imperial space reflecting the new postcolonial attitudes and sensibilities. Ukraine has definitely been at the center of controversies over the common past that started in the 1990s and grew exponentially throughout the 2000s-2010s as within the politics of history from both sides, reflecting the overall Russo-Ukrainian relations once aptly called the “fraternal rivalry.”³⁶ Ukraine is hardly perceived by the Russian elites as a

³³ From the Editor. “Russian Leviathan. Does History Matter?” *Ab Imperio*, #2 (2022), c. 33-34.

³⁴ Alexander Semenov, in NLO’s questionnaire, “Humanities after February 24,” *New Literary Review*, #6 (2022), p. 32. Aleksey Miller similarly criticized the “ethnonational narratives” of the imperial past, which were seen as outdated in the current academic historiography (Miller, *Op. cit.*, p.21).

³⁵ От Редакции, *Op. cit.*, p. 37-39.

³⁶ Anatol Lieven, *Ukraine and Russia: A Fraternal Rivalry*. (Washington: United State Institute of Peace, 1999).

legitimate Other, and the continuous postcolonial distancing from Russia and the common imperial past, with a growing pro-western trend, within the Ukrainian public discourse, has produced a cognitive dissonance and irritation in Russia - and even the idea of the unnatural deficiency of the Ukrainian statehood.³⁷ This last thesis has ultimately laid the foundation of the Russian invasions in 2014 and 2022. The perception of cultural unity, within the Russian elites, goes back to the nineteenth century, as a study of the perception of Malorossia ("Little Russia") in the classic Russian literature shows.³⁸ Even a specific Russian Ukrainophilia, within the imperial sway, tended to come down to an "orientalized" search of authentic, folkloric, and imagined "Slavicism" while the Russian cultural canon heavily dominated all public spheres in Ukraine.³⁹ On the other side, the Ukrainian and other postcolonial scholars, intellectuals and politicians are promoting their own narrative of the de-Russified Ukrainian history and culture - a "standard national ethnocentric master-narrative"-with the re-coding of tough issues of the "common past," such as the national significance of the medieval Kievan Rus'; the suppression of the Ukrainian Republic by the Bolsheviks in the 1917-1921; the controversial figures such as the seventeenth-century hetman Ivan Mazepa and the twentieth-century nationalist Stepan Bandera; and the history of the Holodomor of the 1932-1933, often interpreted (and legally recognized by a few states) as the Ukrainian genocide.⁴⁰

The cultural historians of Ukraine are also inclined to emphasize alternate subjects and narratives that opposed and resisted the "Russkii mir" hegemonic vision of imperial continuity. As for today's Ukraine, the country seems to be a nationally-emancipated, de-Russified, and Europe-oriented community. Of course, this image requires qualifications. The same authors of *Ab Imperio*, cautious of preserving a balanced view of the imperial legacy, remind that Ukraine and Russia stand most close to each other on the World Values Survey's cultural map of world values.⁴¹ However, no matter how natural the initial cultural proximity might be between the two deeply entangled post-Soviet populaces, a relatively recent decisive change in political culture, the clear pro-European orientation of the elites, and the very fact of an intense emotional distancing from Putinite Russia (especially in the war-torn Ukraine) need to be taken as powerful factors of de-colonial "othering."

The decolonization of other post-Soviet societies does not face such a dramatic riddle of "fraternal rivalry." Yet, there are a few major defining factors that set the parameters of the process. For example, the actual use of the Russian language in

³⁷ Georgy Kasyanov. *Ukraine and its Neighbors: Historical Politics, 1987-2018*. Moscow, NLO, 2019, 239-240.

³⁸ Olga Mayorova, "Ukraine in Russian Literature," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2022), 70-76.

³⁹ Taras Koznarsky, "Ukrainian-Russian Encounter in the Romantic Era," *Ab Imperio*, 2 (2022), 77-84. On exotization of Ukraine in the Russian cultural imagination, coupled with the lack of sovereignty, see A. Etkind, D. Uffelman, I. Kukulin, "Internal Colonization of Russia: Between Practice and Imagination," A. Etkind, D. Uffelman, I. Kukulin, *Op. cit.*, 26; see chapters by Mykola Riabchuk, Vitaliy Kisilev and Tatiana Vasilieva in the same volume.

⁴⁰ See the cited expression and the description in Kasianov, *Op. cit.*, p. 241-243 and ff.

⁴¹ From the Editor, *Op. Cit.*, 37. The authors refer to the Ronald Inglehart's WVS "cultural map" of 2022; the same closeness of values of the two countries' populations is on the most recent map of 2023: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/images/Map2023NEW.png>.

Moldova, the South Caucasus or Central Asia continues to be a crucial, background factor of the cultural (in)dependence, no less crucial than the extent to which the supply of the Russian raw resources measures these countries' economic (in)dependence. Apart from language, there are a number of other parameters: the structure of memorial symbolism (monuments, glorified figures and events, commemorative practices, etc.); the canons of artistic expression; the built-in patterns of the education system; the forms of political culture; etc. Beyond these structural, "objective" factors, the subjective agency is just as important: what is crucial is the total balance of the subjective decolonial agendas within a given society - the total capacity and thrust to be consciously tuned towards getting rid of dependency.

To take a comparison of Georgian and Armenian cases, we can see that subjective decolonial agency was stronger felt in the former, with a "Soviet occupation" discourse clearly expressed by the nationalist and pro-Western elites (after the trigger of April 9, 1989), while "Soviet" lexeme in this formula has gradually merged with "Russian" and radicalized in the context of the 2003 Rose Revolution and Russia's 2008 aggression against Georgia. The anti-Russian discourse intensified in the post-Soviet Georgian literature, and the Russian language was considerably pushed back by both Georgian and English.⁴² The overall agency of the decolonial reforms and European orientation in Georgia have been quite strong in the 2000s and 2010s. Again, we understand that reducing the Soviet period to mere "occupation" is far from the complex historical truth,⁴³ but the very fact of a decolonial agency is highly important by itself.

The Armenian case is different: the initial break with the common, imperial collective memory was strong in the early 1990s, right after the dissolution of the Union, but then the formation of the decolonial agency slowed down because of the Russian geopolitical protectionism and economic influence; the links between the political elites; and deep entanglements of the multi-level interests with the numerous Armenian diasporas in the Russian Federation. Although the cultural and educational infrastructure have been deeply nationalized, similar to Georgia, the Russian linguistic and cultural presence was not disputed as being a legacy of the colonial dependence.

In both countries, decolonization meant the disembodiment of the partly outdated but powerful industrial, bureaucratic, and cultural infrastructure that was only meaningful within a centralized, authoritarian imperial context.⁴⁴ This was a slow process, however, that could not quickly dissolve the thick web of human and professional relationships developed over a few generations of cross-national entanglement within the empire. However, this web was weakening while new globalized networks tended to (at least partially) replace the old imperial networks.

Another thing that unites the Georgian and Armenian cases and reminds similar trends in other places of the North Eurasian imperial space, was a post-dependency syndrome with its typical patterns that we mentioned above: the compensatory

⁴² Mirya Lekke, Elena Chkhaidze. "Russia - Georgia after the Empire", Idem., *Russia and Georgia after the Empire*, Op. cit., 7-18.

⁴³ See discussion in: Keizer, Op. cit, 205-208.

⁴⁴ For the Armenian case of the cultural practices of post-Soviet economic disintegration, see interesting research by Lori Khatchadourian, "Life extempore: Trials of Ruination in the Twilight Zone of Soviet Industry," *Cultural Anthropology* 37(2), 2022, p. 317-348.

glorification of the precolonial past and the emphasis upon the recent traumatic experience, related to the colonial status - the two pillars of the revived, sovereign national identity. As for the first of these patterns, the glorification of the ancient national roots has been an obvious, although ideologically hidden, trend ever since the late Soviet times and became the open mainstream of cultural policy after independence. Speaking of the second pattern: for Armenians, the trauma and the victimhood was strongly linked to the genocide in the Ottoman Empire, what reduced the significance of the Soviet-time traumas within the cultural memory.⁴⁵ The Armenian sense of victimhood was temporarily softened by the success of the first Karabakh war in 1992-1994 but then dramatically magnified after the defeats in 2020 and then 2023, followed by the total exodus of the Armenian population from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh); these last events also sharply aggravated the anti-Russian feelings as the Russian state failed to keep its protective functions in the last military conflict. In the Georgian case, the anti-Russian imperial trauma developed with the dissolution of the Empire and the tragic wars that led to the loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where Russia was unfriendly involved. At the same time, the ruling elites of both countries continued, with different trajectories, an inevitable maneuvering to cope with the former imperial power, while trying to diversify their external allegiances.

Conclusion: the dialectics of imperial legacy

The colonial legacy of the former *Pax Rossica* has become the central issue in the studies of the historical and cultural development across Northern Eurasia; the prominence of these studies, as we have tried to show, was triggered by the growing revanchist policies of Putin's regime and the assertive nationalist reactions from the former imperial peripheries. The long common history of the vast region acquired an unusually topical, affective significance, as the past became directly linked to current politics and served to justify it. The research on current post-colonial developments became inseparable from the perception of the past.

Both the past and the present of cultural encounters were engaged in the heated public and political debate between the opposite agendas. It is too obvious and yet necessary to mention that the principles of neutrality and objectivity of academic research have been under strong pressure, even though these principles' alleged infallibility were theoretically questioned or at least sophisticated decades ago; the very methodology of postcolonial studies, now appropriated by the scholars of Northern Eurasia, provided the strongest impulse to such questioning.

However, the changing, politically-driven research quests stimulated interest in those aspects of cultural developments that were more or less ignored before. These new aspects, or objects of study, fall into two trends.

The first trend can be called straightforwardly decolonial. The central thrust of inquiry here would be a special interest in "hidden transcripts" - to use James Scott's analytic vocabulary - that shaped the spaces of freedom and resistance within the

⁴⁵ See Gayane Shagoyan, "Cultural vs. Collective Trauma: Memorialization of Soviet Repressions in Post-Soviet Armenia Based on the Genocide Memory Model," *Siberian Historical Studies*, No. 2 (2001), 73-98.

structures of domination⁴⁶; it would also reveal the formation of (proto)-nation-states under the imperial administrative and ideological canopy, as well as the affective, emotional, subjectivity-driven cultural agenda of post-imperial decolonization.

The second trend looks at the potential of imperial resources. It reveals the complexity of relationships between the center the peripheries, the dialectics of dependency, showing how the colonial (Russian) center both repressed the (non-Russian and Russian) peripheries and, at the same time, provided them with political and cultural resources of agency; secured, within its regime of domination, the inter-ethnic and transnational communicative exchange; and created hybrid subjectivities not only in “subaltern peripheries” but also within itself (at the center) because of its own “subaltern” dependency (from Europe).

These two trends in approaching the imperial legacy in the light of current decolonial processes are, as I said above, inevitably emotionally charged, and there is a danger that they be reduced to emotionally engaged, simplified patterns - either rejecting *the imperial* for the sake of the national (and nationalist), autarchic, isolated historical narratives (in the former colonies); or glorifying imperial continuity (by the Russian neo-imperial regime). While avoiding confrontational reductionism, the two trends complement each other and focus on the same thing - a complex, dialectical entanglement within the region’s cultural memory and today’s continuing interdependence.

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⁴⁶ James Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (Yale University Press, 1992).

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REASSESSING ARMENIA'S STANCE ON THE ROME STATUTE: CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE AND POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR ARMENIA

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Abstract

The Republic of Armenia signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1999 but found it unconstitutional in 2004. After constitutional amendments in 2005 and 2015, the issue resurfaced. In March 2023, Armenia's Constitutional Court declared the Statute constitutional, allowing the continuation of the ratification process. This could enable the examination of issues related to Azerbaijan's aggression in the ICC. The ICC's recent issuance of an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin has gained attention in Armenian media. In this article, I will first provide background information on the ICC. Next, I will examine the two decisions of the Constitutional Court. Finally, and most importantly, I will discuss the potential political and foreign policy implications of the ratification of the Statute.

Keywords - Republic of Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Individual criminal responsibility, Nagorno-Karabakh War, EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Introduction

The ICC, founded in 2002 based on the Rome Statute, prosecutes individuals responsible for genocide, war crimes, and other serious offenses. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (hereinafter referred to as ICC) was signed and adopted on July 17, 1998, at a United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rome. It entered into force on July 1, 2002. The Republic of Armenia signed the Statute on October 1, 1999, issuing a statement pertaining to Article 124. The statement declares that the Republic of Armenia does not acknowledge the Court's jurisdiction over crimes categorized under Article 8, committed by its citizens or within its territory for seven years post-ratification. Furthermore, according to Article 103 of the Statute, Armenia agreed to accept

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individuals convicted by the Court, provided they are Armenian citizens or have permanent residence in Armenia.¹ However, in 2004, the Constitutional Court deemed the Statute incompatible with Armenia's constitution. Subsequently, the Constitution was amended twice, in 2005 and in 2015.

On December 29, 2022, the Armenian government announced its decision to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the ICC and begin ratifying the Rome Statute, reflecting Armenia's robust commitment to international criminal justice. This resolution, after thorough discussions within Armenia, highlighted the significance of the ICC, with informal talks about its potential legal protection against international crimes already occurring during the second Nagorno-Karabakh War.² Therefore, the Constitutional Court was again assigned to assess the constitutionality of the Statute.

In reassessing the Rome Statute's constitutionality, the Constitutional Court examined two major issues: the principle of complementarity and Article 105 of the Rome Statute. Referring to its previous stance, the Court evaluated the shared values in the Constitution and the Statute by comparing their preambles. It underscored the Armenian people's commitment to universal values and battling serious crimes and impunity, as depicted in the Rome Statute's preamble. The Court concluded that Armenia's ineffectiveness in investigating and prosecuting cases that uphold global peace and well-being was unconstitutional. It further ascertained that the ICC's exercise of complementary jurisdiction to reinforce Armenia's constitutional adherence did not unconstitutionally violate Armenia's sovereign criminal jurisdiction.

Amid ongoing tensions with Azerbaijan, Armenia's ratification could permit to examine matters related to Azerbaijan's aggression in the ICC. Noteworthy is the ICC's recent issue of an arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin, which has garnered attention in Armenian media and social networks. Among Armenia's neighbors, only Georgia has ratified the Rome Statute, while Iran, Azerbaijan, and Turkey have not. On September 28, 2023, Armenia's National Assembly committee unanimously approved the government's proposal to ratify the Rome Statute. This item is slated for inclusion in the agenda of the forthcoming parliamentary sessions.

Background Information: The ICC

The ICC, established by the Rome Statute in 1998, began its operations in 2002 as an intergovernmental organization and a tribunal that sits in The Hague, Netherlands. The ICC is the first and only permanent international court with jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the most serious offenses of concern to the global community, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Unlike ad hoc tribunals created for specific conflicts, the ICC serves as a permanent institution to enforce international criminal law and enhance the protection of human rights worldwide. The ICC operates

¹ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia, "Decision on the compliance of the obligations outlined in the Agreement on the Statute of the International Criminal Court," 2004, https://www.concourt.am/decision/decisions/6421e55c142ad_SDV-1680.pdf. (accessed September 30, 2023)

² Armenian Government Starts Process of Ratifying Rome Statute over Azeri War Crimes, Risk of New Aggression, Armenpress, December 29, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1100784.html> (accessed 29 September 2023)

independently, not under the United Nations' auspices, and currently, 123 countries are parties to the Rome Statute. The table below provides a concise summary of pertinent information about the ICC.

Table 1. General information about the International Criminal Court³

Raison d'être	Prevention of and retribution for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community (crimes under Art. 5 of the Rome Statute)
Legal base	Rome Statute, signed on 19 June 1998 in Rome, Italy and is in force from 1 July 2002.
Principles	Nullum crimen sine lege, nulla poena sine lege and ratione materiae.
Venue	The Hague, Netherlands
Individual criminal responsibility	The Rome Statute is applied impartially to all individuals, regardless of their official position. Specifically, holding a high-ranking position such as a Head of State or Government, being a member of a Government or parliament, an elected representative, or a government official does not exempt anyone from criminal accountability under this Statute. Such positions also do not serve as a basis for reducing sentences. Any immunities or special procedural rules linked to a person's official status, whether under national or international law, will not prevent the Court from exercising its jurisdiction over them (Article 27 of the Rome Statute). Nonetheless, the Court will not have authority over individuals who were under 18 years of age at the time the alleged crime was committed (Article 26 of the Rome Statute).
Official languages of the Court	Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.
Working languages of the Court	English and French
Place of trial	Unless otherwise decided, the place of the trial shall be the seat of the Court.
Crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court	1. Crime of Genocide; 2. Crimes against humanity; 3. War crimes and 4. Crime of aggression.
Subjects eligible to bring cases before the Court	1. The UN Security Council, 2. The prosecutor of the Court (motu proprio), 3. Any state party to the Statute
Applicable punishments	Imprisonment; life imprisonment; fine; A forfeiture of proceeds, property and assets derived directly or

³ International Criminal Court, "Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court," <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf> (accessed July 11, 2023)

	indirectly from that crime, without prejudice to the rights of bona fide third parties.
Bodies of the Court	The ICC is governed by the Assembly of States Parties, which consists of the states that are party to the Rome Statute. It elects officials of the Court, approves its budget, and adopts amendments to the Rome Statute. The Court itself is composed of the following four organs: the Presidency, the Judicial Divisions (an Appeals Division, a Trial Division and a Pre-Trial Division), the Office of the Prosecutor, and the Registry.
States that voted against the Statute	General Assembly convened a conference in Rome in June 1998, with the aim of finalizing the treaty to serve as the Court's statute. On 17 July 1998, the Rome Statute of the ICJ was adopted by a vote of 120 to seven, with 21 countries abstaining. The seven countries that voted against the treaty were China, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Qatar, the United States, and Yemen.
Responsibilities of states party to Rome Statute	1. Recognize the ICC as a complementary to national criminal jurisdictions, 2. Recognize the jurisdiction of the Court over the crimes listed under Art. 5 of the Rome Statute 3. To act in accordance with the international law, especially with respect to the State or diplomatic immunity of a person or property of a third State which remains immune until and unless he Court obtains the cooperation of that third State for the waiver of the immunity.
Criticism	ICC is often criticized for having a so-called "Africa-bias". The bulk of the cases hitherto brought before the Court are related to African states.

Despite facing challenges, including non-cooperation from certain states and accusations of bias, the ICC's existence symbolizes the international community's collective endeavor to confront impunity and foster a world rooted in justice and the rule of law. Its commitment to rendering justice to victims and holding perpetrators accountable remains unwavering, reflecting the global aspiration for lasting peace and respect for human dignity. In the realm of bias, the ICC grapples with serious reproach for its perceived disproportionate scrutiny on African nations, an aspect that has evoked accusations of neocolonialism and kindled contemplation of withdrawal by some states from the Rome Statute. This discerned concentration on Africa⁴, paired with an apparent vulnerability to global political currents—especially visible through the United Nations Security Council's authority to refer cases—further escalates apprehensions concerning the ICC's even-handedness and the uniform enforcement of

⁴ For further information check Murungu, Chacha, and Japhet Biegon. *Prosecuting International Crimes in Africa*. (Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, 2011).

international law. Its conspicuous inability to bring to book leaders from powerful non-member nations further exacerbates these concerns, casting shadows of doubt over the court's equitable application of justice. In the face of these formidable challenges, the Court's unwavering commitment to championing global backing, bolstering state cooperation frameworks, augmenting operational efficiency, and resolutely confronting and dispelling bias perceptions remains paramount. Through these concerted efforts, the ICC can robustly reinforce its indispensable role as a beacon of international justice, unwaveringly advancing global peace, stability, and the entrenched rule of law.

The Decision of the Constitutional Court of Armenia on the Constitutionality of Rome Statute (2004)

In the deliberative ambiance of Armenia's Constitutional Court's 2004 decision on the constitutionality of the Rome Statute, critical issues surfaced, carrying substantial implications for Armenia's constitutional landscape. The Court's detailed examination underlines pivotal conflicts between the Statute and the Armenian Constitution, particularly focusing on the encroachment upon the President's right to pardon and the constitutional right to amnesty.

The Court's decision poignantly highlights the substantial limitations imposed on the President's power to grant pardons by the Rome Statute. The Statute's insistence on strict adherence to the ICC verdicts eliminates the possibility for presidential pardon in alignment with Armenia's domestic legal framework. The Court eloquently elaborates on the implication of this restriction, asserting a palpable conflict with Article 55, Clause 17, of the Armenian Constitution, which confers upon the President the prerogative to grant pardons. This Statute-mandated constraint diminutively shrinks the constitutional power of the Armenian President, marking a contentious issue in the quest for constitutional compatibility with international commitments.

Expanding the discussion, the decision also underscores the Statute's potential impact on the constitutional right to amnesty. The obligations within the Statute's Article 105 irrevocably bind Armenia to the enforcement of sentences as adjudged by the ICC, nullifying any domestic prospects for sentence amendments, reductions, or amnesties. This international obligation stands in stark contrast to Article 81, Clause 1 of the Armenian Constitution, which solidifies the right to amnesty. The Court's analysis accentuates this disparity, marking another domain of pronounced conflict between the Statute and the Armenian Constitution.

The Court's decision, through its profound and comprehensive analysis, thereby signals the substantial encroachments on both the right to pardon and the right to amnesty as articulated within the Armenian Constitution. By echoing these concerns, the Court affirms the significant incompatibilities between the Statute and Armenia's constitutional framework, reinforcing the urgency for a scrupulous review and possible amendment of international commitments to ensure their alignment with domestic constitutional provisions. The Court's evaluation stands as a robust argument for safeguarding Armenian constitutional authority and rights against external infringement, underscoring the imperative of internal legal sovereignty and the protection of constitutional rights and freedoms.

Concourt Decision Divergence: Are Legal Judgments Eclipsed by Political Agendas?

In the annals of Armenian legal and political history, March 16, 2018, stands out as a significant date. On this day, the Constitutional Court of Armenia rendered a landmark judgment regarding the Comprehensive Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed on November 24, 2017. This agreement, a collaborative pact between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community along with their member states on one side, and the Republic of Armenia on the other, marked a pivotal advance in Armenia's international relations. The Court's scrutiny focused on ensuring the accord's alignment with the nation's Constitution. After extensive deliberation, the Court conclusively found that the CEPA accord is in congruence with the Constitution of Armenia.⁵ Nevertheless, in Article 6.2 of the CEPA the following is stated: "The Parties consider that the establishment and effective functioning of the International Criminal Court constitutes an important development for international peace and justice. The Parties shall aim to enhance cooperation in promoting peace and international justice by ratifying and implementing the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and its related instruments, taking into account their legal and constitutional frameworks."⁶

It is crucial to note that the above decision of the Armenian Constitutional Court was rendered in 2004, prior to the Constitutional amendments of 2005 and 2015. Despite these changes, the core of the issue remains unaltered, as the right to pardon and amnesty persists in the Republic of Armenia. Nonetheless, under Article 6 of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, signed between the Republic of Armenia and the EU in 2017, the Republic of Armenia is committed to signing the Rome Statute of the ICC. Evidently, the two aforementioned decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia starkly contradict each other.

The Decision of the Constitutional Court of Armenia on the Constitutionality of Rome Statute (2023)

The 2023 Decision of the Constitutional Court of Armenia initially outlines the position of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.⁷ In a comprehensive discourse on the imperative of upholding *jus cogens* norms within the jurisdictional boundaries of the ICC, the Government of Armenia, in its elucidative statement of February 3,

⁵ Armenian Legal Information System, "The Decision of the Constitutional Court of the RA on the correspondence of the Comprehensive Enhanced Partnership Agreement to the Constitution of the RA" (in Armenian), <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docID=120651> (accessed September 1, 2023).

⁶ Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their member states, of the one part and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RA, https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/eu/CEPA_ENG_1.pdf (accessed September 1, 2023).

⁷ Decision of the Constitutional Court Concerning the Determination of the Question of Constitutionality of the Obligations Set Forth in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in Case of the Republic of Armenia, signed on July 17, 1998; re-examined (Yerevan, March 24, 2023), https://www.concourt.am/decision/decsions/6421e55c142ad_SDV-1680.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23CQLmNeFY4lk0eyIIEp6rLSYWjGL-Ci-iLX5OmZT5TIXW4DL-ZM3cAWQ.

2023, astutely draws attention to the overarching principles that guide the international legal framework. It emphasizes the clear necessity for strict adherence to these norms from which no derogation is permitted, prohibiting severe crimes such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The *jus cogens* norms emerge as the bedrock of international legal commitments, binding all nations to an unwavering pursuit of justice against the backdrop of the gravest crimes known to humanity.

In a delineation of the principles underpinning the ICC, the Armenian Government accentuates the foundational role of complementarity in fortifying the interplay between national and international jurisdictions. This principle, as articulated by the government, underlines the ICC's ancillary role, signifying its intervention solely in instances where a state is demonstrably unable or unwilling to undertake a robust investigation and prosecution of serious international crimes. In doing so, the government reaffirms the inviolable sovereignty of states, concurrently ensuring the absence of impunity for perpetrators of these cardinal transgressions.

Amidst the intricate mosaic of international and national legal interplay, the Armenian Government's elucidation stands as a testament to its unwavering commitment to the pillars of justice, human rights, and international legal obligations. It unequivocally declares no intent of contravention upon the signing of the Statute, thereby solidifying its stance as a conscientious actor on the global stage, ardently dedicated to the unwavering enforcement of *jus cogens* norms and the eradication of impunity for the most grievous international crimes. In this resolute commitment, the government elegantly intertwines national constitutional fidelity with the robust frameworks of international law, crafting a harmonious symphony of justice, accountability, and unwavering dedication to the upholding of human rights.

The pronouncements of the Constitutional Court illuminate Armenia's robust alignment with international instruments geared towards the prevention and punishment of crimes that have long cast a shadow on human history. The Republic of Armenia, as emphasized by the Court, has ratified a cadre of seminal international agreements and conventions that underline its resolute stance against grave injustices including genocide, war crimes, and torture. These international alignments encompass the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, the 1968 Geneva Convention regarding the non-applicability of the Statute of Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, and the 1987 European Convention on the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to enumerate a few.

In its deliberation, the Court posits a fundamental inquiry: To what extent is the principle of addition or complementarity underlying the exercise of the jurisdiction of the ICC, as defined by Article 5, Part 1 of the Statute, compatible with the principle of exclusivity entrenched in the Armenian Constitution? "Putting it short, the Court found no contradiction between the Rome Statute and the Constitution. Thus, it is notable that in a similar vein, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia has issued two divergent decisions in 2004 and 2023. This discrepancy was underscored by a judge in his special opinion. From this perspective, it is arguable that the Constitutional Court lacks the authority to reassess an international agreement, previously identified as constitutionally incongruent, in the absence of relevant constitutional amendments.

Nevertheless, not all countries did it à la Armenia, i.e., by making another political and politicized decision of the Concourt, thus opting for constitutional changes.

In the European domain, France provides a compelling example. Having ratified the Rome Statute in 2000, France took the necessary legal strides to bridge constitutional gaps with international expectations. Originally, the French Constitution held firm against the extradition of its nationals. Yet, to ensure alignment with the Rome Statute's mandates, France amended its Constitution. This legal revision allowed for the transfer of French citizens to the ICC, marking a momentous shift in French legal paradigms and international cooperation.

Similarly, across the Atlantic, Brazil's commitment to the Rome Statute in 2002 prompted constitutional evolution. The country, eager to contribute to global justice efforts, refined its constitutional language regarding the extradition of naturalized citizens for pre-naturalization crimes. This amendment bolstered Brazil's legal synchrony with the ICC, reinforcing the nation's commitment to international justice standards.

Further to the north, Ireland echoed these adjustments, underscoring the global resonance of the Rome Statute. Ratifying the Statute in 2002, Ireland reviewed its constitutional framework, ensuring seamless compliance with ICC cooperation requests. While Ireland's Constitution did not explicitly oppose extradition, necessary amendments solidified its capacity to support ICC endeavors, ensuring the surrender of individuals without constitutional conflicts.

Domestic Political Implications of Ratifying the Rome Statute

One of the pivotal provisions of the Rome Statute of the ICC lies in Article 15, which grants the Prosecutor the authority to initiate investigations *proprio motu*—meaning “on their own motion.” This authority empowers the ICC to investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for the most heinous international crimes, even in the absence of a referral from a state party or the United Nations Security Council. Such a provision has profound implications for countries like Armenia, where domestic political events have tested the boundaries of accountability.

The events of March 1, 2008, in Armenia serve as a stark reminder of the complexities surrounding political transitions and electoral disputes. The aftermath of the disputed presidential election witnessed protests, violence, and a forceful state response. In the context of the Rome Statute, this period of political turmoil becomes emblematic of the potential consequences of ratifying the Statute. Once the Armenian Parliament ratifies the Rome Statute and the country becomes an ICC member, a significant shift in the domestic political landscape can be anticipated. The Statute establishes the ICC as a powerful deterrent against impunity for grave international crimes, including crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. Importantly, the Prosecutor's *proprio motu* powers allow for investigations into such crimes even when domestic authorities may be unwilling or unable to act.

The existence of the ICC serves as a crucial check on political actors and institutions. The knowledge that the Court can exercise jurisdiction over individuals responsible for crimes falling within its purview should discourage political leaders and opposition groups from engaging in acts that could amount to international crimes.

This deterrent effect extends beyond the ruling party to encompass all political actors, reinforcing the need for accountability and the rule of law.

In light of the Rome Statute's provisions, Armenia's future political landscape is poised to witness greater caution and responsibility among political leaders and opposition figures. The potential for international scrutiny and accountability through the ICC acts as a powerful force discouraging the repetition of events like those of March 1, 2008. Ratifying the Rome Statute is not merely a legal step for Armenia; it is a commitment to a more accountable and just political future, where the specter of international justice looms large, promoting stability, peace, and the protection of human rights.

Foreign Policy Implications: Russia and Azerbaijan

On March 17, 2023, the Pre-Trial Chamber II of the ICC issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, and Maria Lvova-Belova, the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Russian President's Office. President Putin is accused of committing war crimes, specifically involving the unlawful deportation and transfer of children from occupied Ukrainian territories to the Russian Federation. These actions are in violation of articles 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute. These alleged crimes occurred in Ukraine starting from at least February 24, 2022. The arrest warrant is grounded in the belief that Mr. Putin is individually responsible for these crimes, whether by direct involvement, joint action with others, or through subordinates, and for failing to properly control those who carried out these acts. Ms. Lvova-Belova faces similar allegations of war crimes related to the unlawful deportation and transfer of children from Ukrainian occupied areas to the Russian Federation. Her arrest warrant is also based on the belief that she is individually responsible for these actions, either directly, jointly, or through others. These arrest warrants were issued in response to applications submitted by the Prosecution on February 22, 2023.⁸ In an act of retaliation following the issuance of an arrest warrant by the ICC for President Putin over allegations of overseeing the abduction of Ukrainian children, the Russian government has included the British prosecutor of the ICC on a list of individuals wanted for arrest. The arrest directive specifies that Russia's interior ministry is pursuing the detention of Karim Khan, who has held the position of ICC prosecutor since 2021.⁹

However, Armenia's intention to join the ICC has raised concerns in Moscow, with the Kremlin warning that such a move could worsen relations between the two nations. The ICC's jurisdiction would require Armenia to arrest President Vladimir Putin if he were to visit the country, due to an ICC warrant for his arrest on war crimes charges. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has advocated for joining the ICC as a matter of national security and accountability for alleged war crimes by Azerbaijan in

⁸ Situation in Ukraine: ICC Judges Issue Arrest Warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, International Criminal Court, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and> (accessed September 1, 2023)

⁹ Russia issues arrest order for British ICC prosecutor after Putin warrant, *The Guardian*, May 19, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2023/may/19/russia-arrest-order-international-criminal-court-prosecutor-karim-khan>.

the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Russia, not a party to the Rome Statute, views Armenia's decision as hostile. The move reflects Armenia's efforts to reduce dependence on Moscow and strengthen its independence.¹⁰

The concerns raised by Russia regarding the potential enforcement of the ICC arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin in Armenia can indeed be effectively addressed within the framework of the Rome Statute. Specifically, the Statute provides mechanisms for cooperation and diplomatic solutions to mitigate any apprehensions related to the enforcement of arrest warrants.

One notable provision is the possibility for a State Party to refer a situation to the ICC Prosecutor. Article 14 of the Rome Statute allows a State Party to refer to a situation where crimes within the Court's jurisdiction may have been committed. This entails a formal request to the Prosecutor to investigate the situation and determine whether specific individuals should be charged with these crimes. Importantly, the referring State can provide detailed information and supporting documentation to clarify the circumstances surrounding the situation.

In the context of Armenia's willingness to sign an agreement with Russia to address these concerns, it becomes evident that the issue is not solely legal but also political. Armenia's proactive approach in proposing a bilateral agreement under Article 98 of the Rome Statute demonstrates its commitment to finding a diplomatic resolution. A mention must be made that Armenia officially made such a proposal. In particular, Armenia's Representative on International Legal Affairs, Yeghishe Kirakosyan, clarified that in the event of Russian President Vladimir Putin visiting Armenia after the country's ratification of the Rome Statute, the issue of arrest is unlikely due to the immunity of heads of states. He mentioned that a proposed solution, based on Article 96 of the Rome Statute (I believe he should have referred to Article 98, as Article 96 pertains to the technical regulation of other forms of regulation outlined in Article 93 of the Rome Statute of the ICC), involves signing a bilateral agreement with Russia to address concerns and provide guarantees.¹¹ The US has signed "Article 98 agreements" with around 100 countries¹², under which those countries agree not to surrender US nationals to the ICC without US consent. This is a common practice, and the US, for example, often takes the opportunity to sign the so-called Article 98 agreements. However, Russia's lack of response and its public criticisms of Armenia raise questions about the political motivations behind the dispute.

It can be surmised that Russia may be inclined to attribute the challenges stemming from its peacekeeping mission in Karabakh and the deterioration of Russo-Armenian relations to Armenia's actions. This suggests that the matter is more rooted in political considerations than legal ones and highlights the need for diplomatic dialogue and

¹⁰ Gavin, Gabriel, Russia President Vladimir Putin warns Armenia's Nikol Pashinyan on Nagorno-Karabakh not to join International Criminal Court, Politico, September 28, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-president-vladimir-putin-warns-armenia-nikol-pashinyan-nagorno-karabakh-not-join-international-criminal-court/>.

¹¹ Senior government official explains what ratification of Rome Statute would mean in terms of Putin arrest warrant, Armenpress, September 28, 2023, <https://www.armenpress.am/eng/news/1120731/>.

¹² Georgetown Law Library, "International Criminal Court - Article 98 Agreements Research Guide, Countries that have Signed Article 98 Agreements with the U.S.," <https://guides.ll.georgetown.edu/c.php?g=363527&p=2456099> (accessed September 30, 2023)

cooperation to address the underlying issues effectively. Ultimately, the Rome Statute offers a framework through which such concerns can be resolved, emphasizing the importance of a legal and diplomatic approach to international disputes.

Nevertheless, the looming “elephant in the room” poses a pressing question: What if Russia refuses to sign an “Article 98 agreement,” and President Putin visits Armenia under any pretext, such as a Eurasian Economic Union summit? In such a scenario, Armenia would inevitably find itself “between the devil and the deep blue sea.” Arresting one of the world’s most influential leaders, with whom Armenia shares economic and military alliances, would be fraught with unpredictable repercussions and is likely to gravely undermine the nation’s security. Conversely, not proceeding with the arrest, in the absence of an “Article 98 agreement,” would markedly tarnish the country’s international reputation. This delicate balance leaves Armenia navigating a precarious path where both directions lead to potential turmoil and discord. The question then arises: is there any other legal ground to avoid making an arrest? Perhaps one could invoke the immunity traditionally afforded to a Head of State.

This potential loophole may provide some legal shelter, albeit a contentious one, in navigating such a fraught scenario. The decision by Belgium to prosecute the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, accusing him of violating peremptory norms of international law, holds significant theoretical importance for legal studies. Prior to the prosecution, Belgium had, in 1993, already adopted legislation enabling its national courts to adjudicate over individuals for an array of committed crimes irrespective of the crime’s location. This legislation was applicable even in instances when the committed crime had no connection to Belgium itself! Congo subsequently filed a case against Belgium before the International Court of Justice (hereinafter referred to as ICJ). The ICJ ruled that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is immune from criminal prosecution. Contrary to Belgium’s arguments, the Court noted its inability to deduce from state practice any exception to the rule granting incumbent Ministers of Foreign Affairs immunity from criminal jurisdiction, even when suspected of having committed war crimes or crimes against humanity. Despite this, the Court refrained from commenting on the legality of invoking so-called ‘universal jurisdiction’ for justifying the prosecution of alleged perpetrators for crimes lacking an effective link with the prosecuting state!¹³ In a nutshell, the Head of State, Head of Government and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have (almost) absolute immunity under customary international law. However, the ICJ stated that the Minister of Foreign Affairs (presumably and logically Head of State and/or Head of Government as well) can be prosecuted in one of the following cases:

1. Foreign Minister can be prosecuted in her home state;
2. Foreign Minister can be prosecuted if her home state agrees to waive the immunity;
3. Foreign Minister can be prosecuted by international criminal courts;
4. Foreign Minister can be prosecuted after the expiration of her terms for the crimes committed before/after the period in office for the private acts.¹⁴

¹³ International Court of Justice, “Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Belgium).” <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/121> (accessed September 30, 2023)

¹⁴ Hayrapetyan, Albert, *The Legal Aspect of Nagorno-Karabakh Issue*, (Yerevan: Tntesaget Publishing House of Armenian State University of Economics, 2022).

In sum, while the ICJ underscores the immunity of foreign ministers from prosecution in foreign territories, doors remain ajar for legal actions within their home state, through international criminal courts, or post-tenure for private acts. In discussing the breadth of international law concerning accountability, one's focus inevitably shifts to Article 27 of the Rome Statute of the ICC.¹⁵ This article unambiguously affirms the equal application of the Statute to all individuals, irrespective of their official capacity or position. The language of the Statute leaves no room for ambiguity; no role as a Head of State, Government member, parliamentarian, elected representative, or government official will serve as a shield from the responsibilities and liabilities outlined within the Rome Statute.

This precise stipulation places nations such as Armenia in a position with minimal legal maneuverability. Should a situation unfold where a figure like President Putin elects to visit Armenia without the safety net of an "Article 98 agreement", Armenia's legal corridors for evading the mandated arrest of a foreign sovereign are glaringly narrowed. The stringent provisions embedded within Article 27 of the Rome Statute act as a robust barricade, hindering Armenia's ability to tender any legally sustainable justification for abstaining from the execution of such an arrest.

Conversely, the ratification of the Rome Statute holds the potential to bolster Armenia's security guarantees. Distinct from the situation with Russia, Armenia's anticipated ratification of the Rome Statute carries substantial implications for its national security, especially within the context of its enduring regional conflicts with Azerbaijan. This strategic move not only underscores Armenia's commitment to the principles of international justice but also fortifies its ability to address potential security threats through a well-established legal framework. The Rome Statute, complemented by international legal documents and precedents set by the ICC, provides Armenia with robust tools to manage and mitigate emerging challenges within its jurisdiction.

Foremost among these mechanisms is the principle of territorial jurisdiction, a cornerstone embedded within Article 12(2)(a) of the Rome Statute. This particular jurisdictional delineation authorizes the ICC to scrutinize crimes falling under its mandate when transacted on the sovereign expanse of a State Party, such as Armenia. Article 12 unequivocally positions the ICC to act when crimes, delineated in Article 5, unfold within the territorial bounds of a State Party.

In a tangible scenario, consider an Azerbaijani sniper executing a war crime on Armenian soil or infiltrating Armenian borders to commit such malevolent acts. The Rome Statute's Article 12 paves the way for the ICC to assert its jurisdiction resolutely over the incident. This assertion is not merely theoretical but finds its robust affirmation in the ICC's landmark judgment of *Prosecutor v. Lubanga*, underscoring the functional potency of territorial jurisdiction.

Delving deeper into the architectural framework of the Rome Statute, Article 15 emerges as another significant conduit. This article endows the ICC Prosecutor with the exclusive authority to initiate investigations *proprio motu*, unhindered by the necessity of state referrals, grounded on credible information indicative of crimes

¹⁵ International Criminal Court, "Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court." <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf> (accessed July 11, 2023).

within the ICC's jurisdictional ambit. This autonomous investigative discretion enables the Prosecutor to commence inquiries independent of a formal referral from a state party, markedly enhancing the responsiveness and agility of the ICC in addressing potential crimes.

In line with international legal instruments like the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute, Armenia's decision to ratify the Rome Statute signifies a proactive step toward bolstering its security and accountability mechanisms, much like the ICC's approach in the *Prosecutor v. Katanga* case. It mirrors the ICC's principles of accountability, deterrence, and prevention of grave international crimes. Ultimately, the Rome Statute, fortified by the ICC's rich jurisprudence and international legal documents, offers Armenia a comprehensive and legally sound framework to address emerging security concerns while underscoring the importance of a judicious and diplomatic approach to international disputes. Last but not least, by ratifying the Rome Statute, Armenia will fulfill its commitments under the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). This, in turn, is expected to have a positive impact on EU-Armenia relations, solidifying Armenia's reputation as a reliable partner for the EU.

Conclusion

The fluctuating stance of the Armenian Constitutional Court regarding the Rome Statute's constitutionality between 2004 and 2023 underscores the global struggle in aligning domestic constitutions with international obligations. Nations worldwide, like France, Brazil, and Ireland, demonstrate the critical importance of evolving domestic legal frameworks to meet international standards. The Armenian scenario, marked by legal and constitutional discrepancies, emphasizes the essential balance between upholding national rights and fulfilling international commitments. This delicate balance remains pivotal as nations integrate into the global legal order, ensuring both national sovereignty and adherence to international justice standards.

The domestic political implications of ratifying the Rome Statute are significant for Armenia. The ICC's potential to investigate and prosecute international crimes *proprio motu* highlights the necessity for robust internal accountability mechanisms and the assurance of adherence to international legal standards by all political actors within Armenia. This commitment will aid in fortifying the country's democratic institutions and ensuring that past events, like those of March 1, 2008, are not repeated.

However, the external pressures and considerations, especially concerning Russia and Azerbaijan, cannot be ignored. The issuance of ICC arrest warrants for high-profile figures like President Vladimir Putin places Armenia in a diplomatically precarious position. The possibility of having to arrest an ally's head of state under an ICC warrant could strain Armenia's diplomatic relationships. The concerns raised by Russia regarding Armenia's intention to join the ICC emphasize the need for deft diplomatic maneuvering to navigate these intricate international relations while maintaining a steadfast commitment to international law and justice.

Armenia's proactive approach in seeking a diplomatic resolution through a possible Article 98 agreement underlines the importance of diplomatic dialogue and international cooperation in addressing these issues. It underscores the nation's

commitment to upholding international law while also being sensitive to its unique geopolitical context. The ICJ's recognition of certain immunities, while maintaining the possibility of prosecution through various avenues, highlights the delicate balance required in upholding diplomatic relations while ensuring accountability for international crimes.

Armenia's prospective ratification of the Rome Statute is a bold step towards enhancing its national security, especially in light of the ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan. The Rome Statute provides Armenia with a solid legal framework to address potential security threats and reinforces its commitment to abiding by international legal standards. The principle of territorial jurisdiction, along with the Prosecutor's proprio motu powers, bolsters Armenia's legal arsenal in addressing potential international crimes within its territory.

Moreover, ratifying the Rome Statute reaffirms Armenia's alignment with the principles of the European Union, as outlined in the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). This alignment reinforces Armenia's status as a credible and reliable partner for the EU, contributing to the strengthening of EU-Armenia relations and enhancing Armenia's diplomatic standing on the global stage.

In the face of these complexities, the ratification of the Rome Statute by Armenia is a testament to the nation's dedication to the principles of justice, accountability, and human rights. It is an assertion of its sovereignty and commitment to international legal order, despite the potential challenges and diplomatic intricacies it may bring. As Armenia navigates this intricate landscape, the steadfast adherence to these principles will pave the way for a more just, secure, and accountable future, both domestically and internationally.

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THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH (ARTSAKH) CONFLICT AND THE ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES (OTS)

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to analyze the primary objectives of discussions surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the attitudes of Turkic-speaking republics towards this issue in summits of Turkic-speaking states, as well as within the Turkic Council and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). The OTS serves as an institutional framework for organizing Turkic integration processes. As these integration processes deepen across the Turkic world, challenges to Armenia are expected to increase. This research demonstrates that in previous decades, Turkey and Azerbaijan attempted to cast the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in a pan-Turkic light and to create a united anti-Armenian front; however, the Turkic-speaking republics of Central Asia have largely maintained a neutral stance. Following the 44-Day War, Türkiye initiated a process of Turkic integration encompassing the political, economic, educational, cultural, security, and informational spheres. The strengthening of this integration is likely to pose significant challenges for the region, particularly for Armenia, in areas such as economics, politics, and security.

Keywords - Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) conflict, Turkey (Türkiye), Turkic-speaking republics, Turkic Council (Türk Konseyi), the Organizations of Turkic States (Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı), Turkic integration.

Introduction

After the collapse of the USSR, Turkey saw an opportunity to build relations with Turkic-speaking countries in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey emphasized historical, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural ties with these countries, while focusing primarily on economic and educational-cultural initiatives. The Turkish leadership organized summits of Turkic-speaking countries and passionately advocated for Turkic unity, a core principle of the Pan-Turkism ideology. Turkey established the closest ties with Azerbaijan, viewing it as the main partner for expanding its influence in the South Caucasus.

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In the early 1990s, Turkey began to show an active interest in the South Caucasus conflicts, with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict becoming a focal point in its politics for several reasons.

Firstly, Azerbaijan was a party to the conflict, and Turkey had already held political plans regarding Azerbaijan since the beginning of the 20th century.

Secondly, Azerbaijan's geographical position and natural resources were crucial for Turkey to extend its influence across both the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

Thirdly, the conflict presented an effective opportunity for Turkey to strengthen its relations with Azerbaijan, ultimately aiming for comprehensive influence, while also applying pressure on Armenia by using the conflict as a precondition to not establish diplomatic relations.

Essentially, Turkey positioned the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a central element of its policy towards Azerbaijan, framing it solely from Azerbaijan's perspective. Türkiye began to advocate for Azerbaijan's interests on both international and regional platforms. In this context, the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance raised the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during summits of Turkic-speaking countries, aiming to achieve a unified stance to defend Azerbaijan's interests.

Recently, researchers have increasingly focused on the OTS, its activities, and related initiatives. In his article, Turkish scholar Can Demir examines the issue of the balance of power in Eurasia and links the establishment of the OTS to it. He provides a brief history of the organization's establishment, identity and vision, and analyzes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the OTS using a SWOT analysis.¹ The author also addresses the issue of the so-called "Zangezur Corridor" within the context of the Middle Corridor, noting that "the Zengezur corridor, involving transportation routes both for Azerbaijan and for Armenia, provides an opportunity for both countries to increase mutual cooperation, strengthen the security environment and create common areas of economic prosperity".²

This approach lacks arguments, especially since the author does not specify what opportunities it creates for Armenia. To ensure security and establish lasting peace in the region, Turkey and Azerbaijan should respect Armenia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, refraining from demanding extraterritorial corridors by the threat of war.

Chinese researcher Zhang Yuyan examined the creation, motivations, and effects of the OTS. The author observes that Azerbaijan's victory in the war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, established favorable conditions for the formation of a "union."³

Armenian researcher Hayk Demoyan addressed the summits of Turkic-speaking countries and the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. He analyzes how the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is discussed at these summits and reveals the goals of Turkey and Azerbaijan.⁴

¹ Can, Demir, *The Organization of Turkic States: Implications for the Regional Balance of Power*, *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi TDT Özel Sayısı*, 2022, pp. 39-71.

² Ibid, p. 56.

³ Юйянь, Чжан, Организация тюркских государств (ОТГ): Происхождение, мотивы особенности и влияние, *Вестник Пермского университета, Политология*, т. 17, № 1, 2023, с. 80.

⁴ Демоян, Гайк, Тюркские саммиты. цели, задачи, приоритеты и позиция в Карабахском вопросе, с. 47, http://www.noravank.am/upload/pdf/62_ru.pdf (accessed March 25, 2023).

The OTS programs and activities have also been studied by Firat Yıldız⁵, Murodjan Mustofaev⁶ and others.

Although many researchers from various countries have studied the OTS, studies related to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in that context are scarce. In this research, we analyze the policy transformations, discussions, and positions concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during the institutionalization of the OTS. From this perspective, the research aims to address the following issues: 1) the goals of Turkey and Azerbaijan in discussing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at the summits of Turkic-speaking countries, as well as the positions of Central Asian Turkic-speaking republics; 2) the approaches and principles adopted by the Turkic Council regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; and 3) the challenges that the OTS and Turkic integration projects pose for the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh.

Therefore, while Turkey and Azerbaijan raised the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at the summits of Turkic-speaking countries and within the Turkic Council, they did not achieve significant success, and the Central Asian Turkic republics maintained a neutral stance towards Armenia. However, given the current conditions of institutionalized pan-Turkic structures, it is unlikely that these states will continue to remain neutral. From this perspective, the OTS poses a significant security challenge for the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Methodology and scope of research

This research employs a systemic approach as a general methodological framework. The research problem is explored through various stages of organizing a unified process or system, such as the formation of the OTS and the establishment of its institutional structure. The basis of this study is the documents signed during summits attended by the heads of Turkic-speaking republics, which outline the main issues and discussed approaches.

Using document analysis and content analysis methods, we examined these documents with a specific focus on how they address the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Through document analysis, we investigated the policies pursued by Turkey and Azerbaijan regarding the conflict, as well as the positions of the Central Asian Turkic republics. Additionally, using content analysis, we analyzed the documents related to the OTS to reveal the ideological and strategic transformations concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenia.

The scope of the research encompasses the processes from the first summit of Turkic-speaking countries to the present day, which marks the founding of the OTS. From the issues discussed within this framework, we focused solely on observations and actions related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

During this research, we employed the method of comparative analysis to illustrate the changes related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We compared the three stages of

⁵ Yıldız, Firat, *The Political Vision of the organization of Turkic States: An Analysis of the Turkic World Vision 2040*, Eurasian Research Journal, vol. 5, no. 2, 2023, pp. 61-79.

⁶ Mustofaev, Murodjan, *The Organization of Turkic States: A New Approach to Global and Regional Challenges, Perception*, vol. XXVII, no. 1, 2022, pp. 105-120.

institutionalization of the OTS, revealing that Türkiye and Azerbaijan have shifted their rhetoric and approaches over time, moving from the idea of Turkic unity to a vision of Turkic integration. In this context, the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh face various challenges.

The research scope includes the processes from the first summit of Turkic-speaking countries to the present, which marks the establishment of the OTS. Within this framework, we focused specifically on observations and actions pertaining to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Issue in the Agenda of the OTS

Türkiye began promoting the ideas of Turkic unity and neo-pan-Turkism after the collapse of the USSR. It established diplomatic relations with Turkic-speaking countries and initiated cooperation in political, economic, and educational-cultural fields. One of Türkiye's key projects during this period was organizing summits of Turkic-speaking countries. Through these summits, the Turkish government sought to create a common platform and develop a unified agenda with post-Soviet Turkic-speaking republics. This platform gradually evolved over the decades, ultimately resulting in today's Organization of Turkic States. Chronologically the OTS has gone through three stages of institutionalization.

The first stage involved organizing summits of Turkic-speaking countries, which ultimately led to the creation of the Turkic Council (Türk Konseyi). The second stage marked the active period of the Turkic Council, during which unified structures began to form, and systematic programs were implemented. The third stage was the establishment of the OTS, which initiated integration processes within the Turkic world. Throughout these stages, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict appeared in adopted documents, and issues related to Armenia also remained on the agenda.

During the institutionalization of the OTS, notable ideological shifts emerged concerning both the organization and its stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenia. While earlier summits saw Türkiye emphasizing unity and commonalities with Turkic-speaking republics, after the establishment of the OTS, the focus shifted to integration. This integration is outlined in several stages, with the ultimate aim of forming a military-political structure under the OTS's auspices.

The first stage of this integration involves establishing a direct land connection between Turkey and Azerbaijan, which would enhance the position Turkey in the Caspian Sea basin and effectively link it by land with the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia. This objective presents a dangerous challenge to Armenia's territorial integrity. The Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance seeks to achieve this connection through Armenia's Syunik region, labeling it the "Zangezur Corridor" and presenting it as part of the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor project.

The policy concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenia can be examined from two perspectives: that of Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and that of the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia. Following the collapse of the USSR, Turkey recognized Armenia's independence but did not establish diplomatic relations. In early April 1993, after a military operation lasting from March 27 to April 3, the Armenian army gained control of Karvachar (Kalbajar), a pivotal moment in the

Artsakh liberation war, which underscored the defeat of the Azerbaijani armed forces. In response, Turkey unilaterally closed its border with Armenia.

Later, Turkey set three preconditions for reopening the border and establishing diplomatic relations with Armenia: (1) Armenia must abandon territorial claims against Turkey and accept the 1921 Treaty of Kars; (2) Armenia must refrain from mentioning the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and officially renounce its policy of recognizing and condemning the genocide; (3) Armenia must resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.⁷

It should be mentioned that in the post-Soviet South Caucasus, a number of conflicts emerged, including the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) conflict. This conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh escalated into a full-scale war in the early 1990s, ending in victory for the Armenian side. A ceasefire agreement was signed on May 12, 1994, in Bishkek. During this war and in the following decades, Turkey provided Azerbaijan with diplomatic and military support on this issue. Turkish-Azerbaijani relations grew stronger, evolving into a military-political partnership symbolized by the slogan "one nation, two states." Turkey played a direct military role during the 44-Day War, with the Turkish military leading operations. Following this war, Turkey and Azerbaijan elevated their relationship to the highest level of alliance, formalized in the Shushi Declaration.⁸

In international, regional, and bilateral meetings, Turkey and Azerbaijan consistently raised the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, framing it solely from the Azerbaijani perspective. They also introduced the issue to Turkic platforms, including the summits of Turkic-speaking countries.

The Turkic-speaking republics of Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan—are members of the OTS, with Turkmenistan holding observer status. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, along with Armenia, are also members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Russia-led military-political alliance (Uzbekistan left the alliance in 2012). Additionally, Armenia and these countries share membership in the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). However, despite this participation in economic and military-political structures, bilateral strategic cooperation has not developed between Armenia and these countries.

In the early 1990s, the Turkic-speaking republics participated enthusiastically in the summits organized by Turkey and began cooperating with Turkey in political, economic, and cultural spheres. During these summits, Turkey and Azerbaijan, along with these republics, attempted to form an anti-Armenian front on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. However, these republics largely exercised restraint and maintained a neutral position.

⁷ Grigoryan, Aleksandr, Knar Khachatryan and Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, Armenia-Turkey border opening: what determines the attitude of Armenians? *Caucasus Survey*, 2018, p. 3, <https://artsakhlbib.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Aleksandr-Grigoryan-Knar-Khachatryan-Vahram-Ter-Matevosyan-Armenia-Turkey-border-opening-what-determines-the-attitude-of-Armenians.pdf>.

⁸ Şuşa Beyannamesi. "Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasında Şuşa Beyannamesi imzalandı! İşte beyannamenin tam metni." *Haber Global*, June 15, 2021, <https://haberglobal.com.tr/dunya/turkiye-ve-azerbaycan-arasinda-susa-beyannamesi-imzalandi-iste-beyannamenin-tam-metni-115805>.

The situation changed after the 44-Day War when Turkey introduced the Turkic world integration project, positioning Turkey-Azerbaijan relations at its core. In the context of recent geopolitical developments—especially following the onset of the war in Ukraine—there has been a noticeable weakening of Russian influence and an increase in Western engagement, including from Turkey, in the post-Soviet regions.

These changes have also affected the politics of Central Asian republics. Following the 44-Day War, a process of strengthening relations between Turkey and the Turkic-speaking republics has begun, which now includes military and strategic cooperation. Simultaneously, these countries have begun to support integration policies, and a subtle shift in their policies toward Armenia is evident. After the 44-Day War, the leaders of these countries largely defended Azerbaijani narratives in their statements. One of the earliest statements came on September 28, 2020, when Azerbaijan launched its attack on Artsakh: “By means of this statement, the Turkic countries reaffirmed their commitment to the norms and principles of international law and reiterated the importance of an early resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict on the basis of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan”.⁹

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict as a Topic at the Summits of Turkic-Speaking Countries

The first summit of Turkic-speaking countries took place in Ankara on October 30-31, 1992. This summit focused on broader issues and can be characterized as an exploratory meeting. For Turkey, it was crucial to gauge the attitudes of the newly independent Turkic republics, which were seeking new platforms for cooperation and viewed Turkey as a potential partner. Cooperation with Turkey held particular significance for Azerbaijan, especially after A. Elchibey became president and emphasized Pan-Turkism rhetoric. During this time, Turkey monitored the developments in Nagorno-Karabakh and began to support for Azerbaijan. While Ankara recognized the independence of the Republic of Armenia, it did not establish diplomatic relations with the country.

The first summit of Turkic-speaking countries was convened at Turkey's initiative to capitalize on the vacuum created in the post-Soviet region and to gain influence. In this context, Turkey began to take active steps in the fields of economic, trade, education, and culture. It was no coincidence that Turkey placed significant emphasis on economic cooperation, particularly regarding energy resources.¹⁰

Concurrently, the rise of neo-Pan-Turkic ideas became evident, as Türkiye emphasized the unity of the Turkic world, which it argued shared common problems and goals. In this context, Turkey and Azerbaijan attempted to frame the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. During the summit, the Turkish-Azerbaijani side sought to persuade the leaders of other Turkic-speaking countries to condemn Armenia and adopt a separate document addressing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; however, they were unsuccessful. It was noteworthy to observe the stance of the leaders of the Central

⁹ Mustofaev, p. 112.

¹⁰ Demoyan, c. 34-36.

Asian Turkic-speaking countries, who suggested that the resolution of the conflict should be left to both parties.

Türkiye is interested in the energy resources of Turkic countries for two main reasons: to meet its own internal needs and to serve as a transit country for transporting these resources to Europe. During this summit, the Turkish leadership expressed enthusiasm about the possibility of creating a Turkic world, with President Turgut Özal even dubbing the 21st century the “Turkic century.”

Concurrently, the rise of neo-Pan-Turkic ideas became evident, as Türkiye emphasized the unity of the Turkic world, which it argued shared common problems and goals. In this context, Turkey and Azerbaijan attempted to frame the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. During the summit, the Turkish-Azerbaijani side sought to persuade the leaders of other Turkic-speaking countries to condemn Armenia and adopt a separate document addressing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; however, they were unsuccessful. It was noteworthy to observe the stance of the leaders of the Central Asian Turkic-speaking countries, who suggested that the resolution of the conflict should be left to both parties.¹¹ The Ankara Declaration had a more declarative nature, and its text did not address any points related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.¹²

In other words, Türkiye and Azerbaijan's attempts to involve the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia in an anti-Armenian front were unsuccessful, as these countries maintained a neutral stance.

The second summit of Turkic-speaking countries occurred on October 18, 1994, in Istanbul. By this time, the Bishkek ceasefire had been signed, and Türkiye had unilaterally closed the Armenian-Turkish border, setting forth preconditions for normalizing relations with Armenia. The statement signed at the end of the summit states the following regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: “The heads of states emphasized the need for a peaceful settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, based on the relevant resolutions¹³ of the UN Security Council”¹⁴.

Starting from the second summit, all subsequent summit statements included references to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Essentially, the Turkish-Azerbaijani sides succeeded in having the conflict mentioned in these statements. However, general formulations indicate that the Turkic-speaking countries maintained their previous neutral stance.

¹¹ Ibid, c. 47.

¹² Ankara Bildirisi, https://web.archive.org/web/20180712222351/turkkon.org/Assets/dokuman/11_Ankara-Bildirisi1992_1.DevletBaskanlariZirvesi_20140418_104048.pdf (accessed April 26, 2023).

¹³ In 1993, amidst the active military operations, the UN Security Council adopted four resolutions concerning Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict: 822 (April 30, 1993), 853 (June 29, 1993), 874 (October 14, 1993), 884 (November 12, 1993). The primary and most important requirement of these resolutions was the immediate cessation of fire, all military and hostile acts. For more: The UN Security Council and the Conflict between Azerbaijan and Karabakh, <http://www.nkr.am/en/un-and-karabakh-conflict> (accessed April 30, 2023).

¹⁴ Istanbul Bildirisi, https://web.archive.org/web/20220307214014/https://www.turkkon.org/Assets/-dokuman/10_IstanbulBildirisi1994_2.DevletBaskanlariZirveBildirisi_20140418_103924.pdf (accessed May 1, 2023).

During the third and fourth summits of the Turkic-speaking countries,¹⁵ the importance of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict based on the resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council was mentioned again, and it was noted that "the non-resolution of this conflict will harm the strengthening of the peace process, confidence, and security in the region".¹⁶ Overall, the previous approach was reiterated. However, it is noteworthy that the resolution of the conflict was conditioned on establishing peace and security in the region. Türkiye and Azerbaijan considered this approach one of the key foundations of their future policies. On the surface, it appeared that the UN Security Council resolutions favored Azerbaijani interests, particularly the call for the "immediate withdrawal of Armenian troops from occupied territories". However, these resolutions also included demands directed at the Azerbaijani side, which official Baku consistently avoided implementing.

The fifth summit took place on June 9, 1998, in Astana. The Astana Declaration states that the UN Security Council resolutions and the three principles adopted at the Lisbon Summit should serve as the foundation for establishing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and for resolving the conflict.¹⁷ The Lisbon summit took place on December 3, 1996. The Minsk Group¹⁸ was informed of the three principles that should be part of the settlement of the conflict: 1) the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia (RA) and the Republic of Azerbaijan; 2) the legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh as defined in an agreement based on self-determination, granting Nagorno-Karabakh the highest degree of self-government within Azerbaijan; 3) guaranteed security for Nagorno-Karabakh and its entire population, including mutual obligations to ensure compliance by all sides with the provisions of the settlement.¹⁹ The RA voted against this statement and presented its arguments: 1) the RA has no doubts about the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh or the right to reunify with RA. RA recognizes the political identity of the Nagorno-Karabakh people, the integrity of its territory, and the right to ensure security with its own forces; 2) Nagorno-Karabakh gained its status and level of security by resisting the military attack initiated by Azerbaijan, showing a clear sense of political identity and determination to manage the destiny of its people by its own forces; 3) RA realizes that in order to establish a stable and lasting peace in the region, it is necessary to find a resolution acceptable to all

¹⁵ The third summit took place on August 28, 1995, in Bishkek and the fourth summit took place on October 21, 1996, in Tashkent.

¹⁶ Taşkent Bildirisi, https://web.archive.org/web/20220307214006/https://www.turkkon.org/Assets/-dokuman/08_TaskentBildirisi1996_4.DevletBaskanlariZirveBildirisi_20140418_103822.p (accessed May 1, 2023).

¹⁷ Türkçe Konuşan Ülkeler Devlet Başkanları V. Zirve Bildirisi, https://web.archive.org/web/2022030820-0439/http://turkkon.org/Assets/dokuman/07_AstanaBildirisi1998_5.DevletBaskanlariZirveBildirisi_20140418_103743.pdf (accessed May 1, 2023).

¹⁸ The OSCE Minsk Group was established in 1992, whose purpose has been to encourage a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Three main co-chairmen are Russian, France and the United States.

¹⁹ Лиссабонский документ 1996 года (1996), Лиссабон, с. 14, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/-2/4/39543.pdf> (accessed May 16, 2023).

sides to the conflict, which will not give priority to the vital interests of any side and will enable the resumption of negotiations without preconditions.²⁰

During this period, negotiations on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue were at an impasse. Azerbaijan emphasized the principle of territorial integrity as outlined in the Lisbon principles, asserting that Nagorno-Karabakh would be considered a part of Azerbaijan, despite the mention of high self-governance. Essentially, these principles these principles satisfied Azerbaijan during this period.

The sixth and seventh summits mentioned that the resolution of the conflict was based on the UN Security Council resolutions and the three principles adopted at the Lisbon Summit.²¹ The eighth summit, held on November 17, 2006, in Antalya, discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in relation to stability and cooperation in the South Caucasus. Additionally, the Antalya statement presented the resolution of the issue for the first time within the framework of Azerbaijan's independence, territorial integrity, and inviolability of its borders.²² These principles subsequently became the foundation of Azerbaijan's foreign policy, which was also supported by Turkey.

The ninth summit of Turkic-speaking countries took place on October 3, 2009, in Nakhichevan. This summit was significant as it resulted in the establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States through the Nakhichevan Agreement. The agreement outlined the fundamental principles, structures, and areas of activity for the Turkic Council.²³ The main structures of the Turkic Council are the Council of Heads of States, the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Senior Officials Committee, the Council of Elders of Turkic-Speaking States, and the Secretariat.²⁴ The summits of the Turkic-speaking countries led to the establishment of the Turkic Council as an institutional structure tasked with implementing specific programs and developing strategies aimed at unifying the Turkic world.

The tenth summit of Turkic-speaking countries was held on September 15-16, 2010, in Istanbul. The tenth summit of Turkic-speaking countries took place on September 15-16, 2010, in Istanbul. The statement signed at the conclusion of this summit reaffirmed the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the context of Azerbaijan's independence, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of its borders.²⁵

²⁰ Hayrapetyan, Albert, *The Legal Aspect of Nagorno-Karabakh Issue*, (Yerevan: Tntesaget Publishing House of Armenian State University of Economics, 2022). pp. 66-68.

²¹ The sixth summit was held on April 8, 2000, in Baku and the seventh summit took place on April 26-27, 2001, in Istanbul.

²² Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler Devlet Başkanları 8. Doruk Toplantısı Antalya Bildirisi, https://web.archive.org/web/2/https://turkicstates.org/Assets/dokuman/04_AntalyaBildirisi2006__8.Devlet_BaskanlariZirvesiortakbildirisi_20140418_103555.pdf (accessed 04.05.2023).

²³ Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler İşbirliği Konseyi'nin Kurulmasına Dair Nahçıvan Anlaşması, https://web.archive.org/web/20110831135958/http://turkkon.org/docs/02_a_NahcivanAnlasmasi_Turkce.pdf (accessed 04.05.2023).

²⁴ Nakhchivan Agreement on the Establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/nakhchivan-agreement-on-the-establishment-of-the-cooperation-council-of-turkic-speaking-states-1-en.pdf (accessed April 7, 2023).

²⁵ Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler Devlet Başkanları 10. Zirve Toplantısının Bildirisi, https://web.archive.org/web/20220307214014/https://www.turkkon.org/Assets/dokuman/10_IstanbulBildiri_si1994_2.DevletBaskanlariZirveBildirisi_20140418_103924.pdf (accessed May 1, 2023).

With Turkey's support, Azerbaijan brought the Nagorno-Karabakh issue to the forefront of discussions at the summits of Turkic-speaking countries, incorporating it into the adopted declarations. Initially, the solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue was presented based on the UN Security Council resolutions and the Lisbon principles. However, over time, this solution became linked to the principles of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and the inviolability of its borders. On the other hand, despite the efforts of Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia refrained from condemning Armenia, did not adopt an anti-Armenian position and remained neutral.

The Turkic Council's Position on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

The declarations signed at the conclusion of all Turkic Council summits address the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The first summit of the Turkic Council took place on October 21, 2011, in Almaty. The Almaty Declaration emphasizes the importance of a peaceful settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which is regarded as a significant obstacle to lasting stability and regional cooperation. The declaration reaffirms the commitment to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of the borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is considered crucial for achieving peace, stability, and prosperity in the Eurasian region.²⁶ This marked the beginning of discussions on the conflict in the context of security issues, as Azerbaijan portrayed it as a threat to its security.

In the declarations of the second, third, and fourth Turkic Council summits, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is mentioned again, linking its resolution to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of Azerbaijan's borders.²⁷ Peace, stability, and prosperity in the Eurasian region are also connected to the conflict.²⁸ The third summit highlights economic cooperation and emphasizes the importance of the Central/East-West Corridor, which includes the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, connecting Central Asia to Europe via Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.²⁹

²⁶ Declaration of the First Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, Almaty, October 21, 2011, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/first-summit-declaration-8-en.pdf (accessed 07.04.2023).

²⁷ The second summit of the Turkic Council was held on August 23, 2012, in Bishkek, the third was held on August 16, 2013, in Gabala, Azerbaijan and the fourth was held on June 5, 2014, in Bodrum. The second summit was held under the theme "Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation," and the fourth summit was held under the theme "Cooperation in Tourism."

²⁸ Declaration of the Second Summit of the Turkic Council, Bishkek, August 23, 2012, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/2nd-summit-declaration-9-en.pdf (accessed April 7, 2023). Declaration of the Third Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, p. 3, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/third-summit-declaration-10-en.pdf (accessed April 10, 2023). Declaration of the Fourth Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, p. 2, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/fourth-summit-declaration-11-en.pdf (accessed April 10, 2023).

²⁹ Declaration of the Third Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, p. 3, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/third-summit-declaration-10-en.pdf (accessed April 10, 2023).

The fifth, sixth, and seventh Turkic Council summits³⁰ reiterate the importance of an early settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized borders.³¹

An extraordinary meeting of the Turkic Council was held via video conference on April 10, 2020, themed "Solidarity and Cooperation in the Fight Against the COVID-19 Pandemic."³² Azerbaijan's President I. Aliyev initiated this meeting, which focused on issues related to COVID-19 and healthcare. To some extent, Azerbaijan addressed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during this meeting, particularly regarding the military aspect of its resolution. Securing neutrality of the Turkic-speaking republics of Central Asia would have been an important accomplishment for Azerbaijan, especially considering that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are allies of Armenia within the CSTO.

Following the extraordinary meeting, the 44-Day War took place from September 27 to November 9, 2020, during which Azerbaijan achieved victory with direct assistance from Turkey. After the war, a shift in the rhetoric of the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance became evident, linked to the change in the South Caucasus status quo. In this new context, Turkey openly seeks to establish stronger influence in the region, coinciding with a weakening of Russia's position. Notably, Turkey initiated processes of Turkic integration following the 44-Day War.

Turkey continues to support Azerbaijan's policies regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Republic of Armenia. Several observations can be made in this regard: 1) From November 9-10, 2020, until mid-September 2023, Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, has repeatedly violated the November 9 agreement,³³ aiming to secure a final resolution to the conflict according to its own terms, including the incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan, which implies ethnic cleansing; 2) Azerbaijan has continued to create tension and instability in the region with the goal of "integrating" Nagorno-Karabakh, a policy that Turkey supports; 3) Starting on December 12, 2022, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade on the Lachin Corridor, severing the connection between Artsakh and Armenia and cutting off electricity and gas supplies.³⁴ As a result, Azerbaijan created a humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh with the aim of

³⁰ The fifth summit of the Turkic Council was held on September 11, 2015, in Astana, the sixth summit was held on September 3, 2018, in Cholpon-Ata and the seventh on October 15, 2019, in Baku. The sixth summit was held under the theme "Cooperation in Youth and National Sports" and the seventh summit was under the theme "Supporting the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)."

³¹ Declaration of the Fifth Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, p. 4, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/5th-summit-declaration-12-en.pdf (accessed April 11, 2023). Declaration of the Sixth Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/sixth-summit-declaration-13-en.pdf (accessed April 11, 2023). Declaration of the Seventh Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, p. 5, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/seventh-summit-declaration-14-en.pdf (accessed April 11, 2023).

³² Baku Declaration of the Extraordinary Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/extraordinary-summit-baku-declaration-2020-17-en.pdf (accessed 12.04.2023).

³³ <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384> (accessed May 4, 2023).

³⁴ Shahverdyan, Lilit, Blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh enters second day, Eurasianet, December 13, 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/blockade-of-nagorno-karabakh-enters-second-day>.

dismantling Artsakh's autonomy and state institutions, primarily targeting the Defense Army. 4) On September 19-20, 2023, Azerbaijan launched military operations in Nagorno-Karabakh, resulting in the occupation of the entire territory, the forced dissolution of state institutions, and, effectively, ethnic cleansing³⁵; 5) Türkiye has introduced a new precondition for establishing relations with Armenia: the signing of a peace treaty with Azerbaijan.

After the war, discussions surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have shifted in a completely new direction. Azerbaijan, with Türkiye's support, has initiated the reconstruction of the so-called "liberated" territories, which are, in fact, occupied. Azerbaijan is also attempting to involve Turkic-speaking republics in this process, though largely symbolic.

An informal meeting of the Turkic Council was held via video conference on March 31, 2021, under the theme "Turkistan - A Spiritual Capital of the Turkic World." The Turkestan declaration states: "Commending the liberation of territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan from military occupation and welcoming the end of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict".³⁶ Notably, the statement refers to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict as resolved, implying that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict no longer exists—a claim that does not reflect reality.

During this meeting, former President of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev proposed a name change for the Turkic Council. The foreign ministers of the member states and the Secretariat were tasked with preparing the necessary documents for the next summit. Additionally, the Secretariat was instructed to draft the "Turkic World Vision 2040" and "Turkic Council Strategy 2020-2025" documents. It is important to note that member states were required to prepare their own drafts, which would be discussed and adopted as a unified text at the upcoming summit. The document also refers to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, expressing solidarity with the government and people of Azerbaijan in their efforts to rehabilitate, rebuild, and reintegrate conflict-affected territories. It further supports the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan based on mutual recognition, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders.³⁷

The 8th Summit of the Turkic Council took place on November 12, 2021, in Istanbul, under the theme "Green Technologies and Smart Cities in the Digital Age". During this summit, the "Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States" was renamed the "Organization of Turkic States". The "Turkic World Vision-2040" was adopted as a strategic document guiding future cooperation in various fields of common interest within the Turkic World. The declaration congratulates Azerbaijan once again on its victory in the 44-Day War, while also expressing support for the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan based on mutual

³⁵ Scheffer, David J., *Ethnic Cleansing Is Happening in Nagorno-Karabakh. How Can the World Respond?*, Council on Foreign Relations, October 4, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/article/ethnic-cleansing-happening-nagorno-karabakh-how-can-world-respond>.

³⁶ Turkistan Declaration of the Informal Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/unofficial-turkistan-summit-declaration-2021-18-en.pdf (accessed April 12, 2023).

³⁷ Ibid.

recognition, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders. Member and observer states express readiness to contribute to Azerbaijan's post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction, and reintegration efforts.³⁸ It is important to note that this approach represents the stance of the member states in general and does not necessarily reflect the positions of Turkey and Azerbaijan. It should be noted that Azerbaijan, with the support of Turkey, violated Armenia's territorial integrity in 2021-2022, and the Turkic-speaking republics allied with Armenia did not take any action which highlights the reliance of the CSTO on Moscow for its functionality. At the Istanbul summit, considerable emphasis was placed on enhancing economic relations among the Turkic-speaking states, both bilaterally and within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States. Additionally, significant attention was directed toward global economic projects, particularly the East-West International Trans-Caspian Middle Corridor. To facilitate transportation operations along this corridor, a directive was issued to finalize the "Agreement on International Combined Freight Transport among the Member States of the Organization of Turkic States." This agreement is considered a significant step toward enhancing transport capabilities across the Trans-Caspian International East-West Middle Corridor.

In this context, the summit "highlighted the Zangezur Corridor as an emerging opportunity to improve connectivity along the Trans-Caspian International East-West Middle Corridor and the relevant authorities of the Member states were urged to support the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for its soonest operationalization".³⁹

It should be noted that Turkey and Azerbaijan have mentioned the phrase "Zangezur Corridor" in their discussions, presenting it as a part of the aforementioned mega project. Their vision for the corridor involves granting it an extraterritorial status and placing it under Azerbaijani (in fact Turkish) control.

The Organization of Turkic States and Its Impact on the Security of the Republic of Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic

The first summit of the Organization of Turkic States (the 9th summit of the Turkic Council) was held on November 11, 2022, in Samarkand under the theme "New Era for Turkic Civilization: Towards Common Development and Prosperity," which is a significant and ambitious goal.⁴⁰ The OTS consists of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan, while Turkmenistan, Hungary, and the

³⁸ Declaration of the Eighth Summit of the Organization of the Turkic States, p. 2, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/eighth-summit-declaration-15-en.pdf (accessed April 11, 2023).

³⁹ Ibid, p. 6.

⁴⁰ The Samarkand Summit marked the end of the mandate of Baghdad Amreyev as the Secretary General of the Organization of Turkic States and in this position was appointed the Ambassador of the Kyrgyzstan to Turkey Kubanychbek Omuraliev. Amreyev was appointed by a special decision of Heads of States as the President of Turkic Investment Fund. Kadirova Elvira, Economic integration and transport connectivity under the spotlight of the summit of the Organization of Turkic States in Samarkand, News Central Asia, November, 14, 2022, <https://www.newscentralasia.net/2022/11/14/economic-integration-and-transport-connectivity-under-the-spotlight-of-the-summit-of-the-organization-of-turkic-states-in-samarkand/>.

unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus⁴¹ hold observer status. During this summit, several cooperation programs were presented to facilitate integration in various fields within the OTS framework, with the European Union cited as a model.⁴²

It is important to understand the goals and objectives of the Organization of Turkic States. Turkey assumes the role of coordinating all previously established structures and mechanisms, including economic, cultural, and educational initiatives.⁴³ The creation of this organization reflects Turkey's aim to establish a foundation for Turkic integration, driven by linguistic, cultural, historical, and ethnic commonalities. Over the past few decades, Turkey has invested considerable effort in fostering these connections.⁴⁴ The "Turkic World Vision-2040" document outlines the overall framework for cooperation in the economic, cultural, educational, security, and political spheres between Turkey and the Turkic republics over the next two decades.⁴⁵ Currently, Turkey places particular emphasis on the economic and educational-cultural aspects of integration, in line with its available resources.

In the economic sphere, steps are being taken to strengthen bilateral cooperation between Türkiye and the Turkic-speaking republics, with a focus on enhancing the economic strength of the Turkic world. Efforts are underway to establish a Turkic common capital, and to that end, the member states have decided to establish the Turkic Investment Fund during the recent extraordinary summit.⁴⁶ The Vision-2040 document emphasizes the strengthening of cooperation in the fields of transport and customs, energy, health, information and communication technologies, tourism, environment and agriculture and gives a great place to the People-to-People cooperation.⁴⁷

The document also highlights the significance of communication and transport routes, particularly the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor, for the development

⁴¹ Worthy of attention is the fact that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was given observer status in the OTS. TRNC is an unrecognized state (it was recognized only by Turkey), so its membership in OTS should be considered an important political step. Essentially, with this step, grounds are created for the recognition of the TRNC by the member-states of the organization. Turkey, in turn, is trying to create grounds for the international recognition of the TRNC with this step. According to the information circulating in the press, the Central Asian Turkic countries (mainly Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) were not in favor of granting observer status to the TRNC, but they gave in at Turkey's insistence. In fact, it can be concluded that the principle of equality of its members within the organization has a formal nature.

⁴² Yuyan, Zhang, c. 81.

⁴³ The OTS also functions as an umbrella organization for existing cooperation mechanisms such as the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic Speaking Countries (TURKPA), International Turkic Academy, Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation and Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry. For more: <https://www.turkicstates.org/en/organizasyon-semasi> (accessed May 2, 2023).

⁴⁴ Minasyan, Nelli, *Turkish Initiatives in the Direction of Turkic Integration: Prerequisites and Tendencies*, *Contemporary Eurasia: International Journal of Eurasian Geopolitics*, vol. XI, no. 2, 2022, p. 25.

⁴⁵ *Turkic World Vision-2040*, <https://turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/haberler/turkic-world-vision-2040-2396-97.pdf> (accessed April 28, 2023).

⁴⁶ Turkic world sets up investment fund to boost economic integration, *Daily Sabah*, March 16, 2023, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/economy/turkic-world-sets-up-investment-fund-to-boost-economic-integration>; Turkic Investment Fund to Have Authorized Capital of \$500 million, *The Astana Times*, March, 30, 2023, <https://astanatimes.com/2023/03/turkic-investment-fund-to-have-authorized-capital-of-500-million/>.

⁴⁷ Firat, pp. 75-76.

of the Turkic world. Turkish and Azerbaijani officials frequently mention this corridor in their speeches. By analyzing the “Vision-2040” document and Turkey's policy in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, it becomes evident that one of Turkey's key objectives is to achieve political integration with the Turkic-speaking republics within the framework of the OTS. Ultimately, Turkey aims to form a strategic union or alliance with the Turkic republics.⁴⁸

The Samarkand Declaration reaffirms support for the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia based on mutual recognition, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders. Furthermore, the declaration emphasizes the readiness to contribute to the post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction, and reintegration efforts in Azerbaijan.⁴⁹ It is worth noting that while the declaration does not explicitly mention the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it focuses on post-conflict reconstruction, reflecting the position of the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance.

Summarizing the results of the summit, we can conclude that the member states primarily focused on economic issues, influenced by current geopolitical developments, particularly the Russian-Ukrainian war. In these circumstances, the significance of energy resources and countries with reserves has increased. Turkey aims to capitalize on this situation and become an economic and energy hub between Europe and Asia, leveraging the resources and opportunities of Turkic nations.

President of Turkey, R. T. Erdoğan, and other leaders of Turkic states emphasized economic matters in their speeches.⁵⁰ Erdoğan specifically highlighted the development of trade, transport, and energy sectors within the framework of the OTS. In the energy sector, they are striving to enhance the importance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, aiming to establish it as a crucial route for oil supply to Europe. Following the summit, it was reported that Kazakhstan would begin transporting its oil through this pipeline starting from January 1, 2023. It can be assumed that such an agreement was reached during the summit.

The plans presented in the transport sector are ambitious. The Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor was extensively discussed during the summit. Turkey recognizes the geopolitical significance of Turkic countries and their energy resources but acknowledges the need for improved transport hubs, particularly towards the oceans. Therefore, the development of transport infrastructure becomes a primary objective. It was announced during the summit that a unified transport system would be established within the OTS framework. The initial stage involves: 1) increasing the capacity of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, 2) enhancing transport connections between Europe and Asia through the construction of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China⁵¹ and Termez-

⁴⁸ Minasyan, p. 31.

⁴⁹ Samarkand Declaration of the Ninth Summit of the Organization of Turkic States, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/ninth-summit-declarataion-16-en.pdf (accessed April 19, 2023).

⁵⁰ Musayeva, Farida, Organization of Turkic States Summit, Modern Diplomacy, November 13, 2022, <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2022/11/13/2022-organization-of-turkic-states-summit/>.

⁵¹ Lillis, Joanna, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan sign landmark railroad deal, Eurasianet, September 15, 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/china-kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-sign-landmark-railroad-deal>.

Mazar-e-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar⁵² railways, and 3) opening the “Zangezur Corridor”.⁵³ The first steps towards creating a unified transport system will include defining customs privileges and establishing free trade zones.

Analyzing Turkey's policy in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, along with Turkic integration processes, it becomes evident that Turkey places great importance on the so-called “Zangezur Corridor”. Turkey proposes economic projects to support this initiative, particularly as part of the East-West mega project. However, its true significance lies in its geopolitical implications. The establishment of such a corridor would connect the Turkic world by land, reshaping the geopolitical landscape in Eurasia. Currently, Turkey and Azerbaijan are working to address the issue of the “Zangezur Corridor.” Turkey has made the normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations contingent upon the establishment of the corridor, employing military threats to achieve this through Azerbaijan. While other Turkic-speaking states support this project, they have not yet expressed their backing openly. Furthermore, the “Zangezur Corridor” has become an existential goal for the OTS in terms of developing comprehensive transport infrastructure. As a result, we should anticipate increased and more intense pressure on Armenia, potentially escalating to military aggression. Iran's role in this matter is significant as it is the only country opposing the plan at the highest level. The problem directly affects two states, Armenia and Iran, as it violates Armenia's territorial integrity and eliminates the Armenian-Iranian border, which holds great economic, political, geopolitical, and even civilizational importance for both nations. Russia and China should also take this issue seriously, considering its implications for their respective interests.

In his article, Can Demir evaluated the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the OTS as an integration organization. The author mentions geographical location, availability of energy resources, and common culture as strengths of the organization. Additionally, he considers the influence and policies of Russia and China in Central Asia to be one of the weaknesses. The researcher views the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor and particularly the “Zangezur Corridor” as important opportunities for the OTS.⁵⁴

The Second Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Turkic States took place in Ankara on March 16, 2023, under the theme “Disaster-Emergency Management and Humanitarian Assistance”. This summit was initiated by I. Aliyev, president of Azerbaijan.⁵⁵ The reactions of the Turkish leadership were noteworthy, especially the statement by Foreign Minister M. Çavuşoğlu: “...Türkiye stands for strengthening unity and cooperation in the Turkic world...The support provided to Türkiye proved once

⁵² Termez-Kabul-Peshawar Railway Line Initiative Work to Start Soon, August 3, 2022, <https://bakhtarnews.af/en/termez-kabul-peshawar-railway-line-initiative-work-to-start-soon/>.

⁵³ Samarkand Declaration of the Ninth Summit of the Organization of Turkic States, p. 4, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/ninth-summit-declaration-16-en.pdf (accessed April 19, 2023).

⁵⁴ Can, pp. 46-66.

⁵⁵ Ankara Declaration on the Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Turkic States, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/2nd-extraordinary-summit-ankara-declaration-2023-20-en.pdf (accessed April 19, 2023).

again that our strength lies in unity”.⁵⁶ It should be noted that in recent years, Aliyev has been increasingly active on Turkic platforms. Organizing this summit, he aimed to introduce several issues of Azerbaijan and support Erdoğan, particularly in the context of rebuilding the disaster-stricken area after the earthquake and providing support for the upcoming elections. Analyzing the speeches of the Turkic state leaders, it can be concluded that economic cooperation, including transport and communication issues are the central ones. The final agreement on the establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund was also signed. Moreover, within the framework of the OTS, Turkey and Azerbaijan continued their policy regarding the so-called “Zangezur Corridor”.

Turkey leads efforts within the OTS to develop a unified foreign policy and establish civil defense mechanisms, as outlined in the “Vision-2040” document. The unification of foreign policy and coordination of security spheres are discussed. Although Ankara's statement did not explicitly mention the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Aliyev referred to it in his speech. He continues to threaten and put forward new unreasonable demands and preconditions not only regarding this issue but also matters related to the Republic of Armenia.⁵⁷

In summary, on this platform, Turkey and Azerbaijan frame the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as an issue of reconstructing the “liberated” territories. Their goal is to ultimately appropriate the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, which aligns with Azerbaijan's policy of cultural genocide. Additionally, Azerbaijan seeks capital investments from Turkic-speaking states in these territories. It is worth noting that the main investments come from Turkey, while other Turkic-speaking states mostly engage in smaller projects, such as building schools. For instance, Uzbekistan is constructing a school in Fizuli.⁵⁸ The inauguration of the school occurred during President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's official two-day visit to Azerbaijan, which took place on August 23-24, 2023.⁵⁹ During the summit, President Aliyev announced that Azerbaijan had signed contracts worth \$3 billion with Turkish companies for the restoration of the “liberated” territories in Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur, as part of a broader plan for a “Great Return.”

The OTS, as a Turkic integration structure, poses challenges for the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh, particularly in terms of security. The idea of Turkic unity, which reflects the concept of Pan-Turkism, serves as the foundation of this organization. The challenges Armenia faces should be examined both in the short and long term, covering economic, political, and cultural dimensions. In the short term,

⁵⁶ Cavusoglu: Power of Turkic-speaking states is in unity, Report News Agency, March 16, 2023, <https://report.az/en/region/cavusoglu-power-of-turkic-speaking-states-is-in-unity/>.

⁵⁷ Ghazanchyan, Siranush, Aliyev's speech a clear manifestation of territorial claims – Armenia MFA, Public Radio of Armenia, March 16, 2023, <https://en.armradio.am/2023/03/16/aliyevs-speech-a-clear-manifestation-of-territorial-claims-armenia-mfa/>.

⁵⁸ Shavkat Mirziyoyev to attend opening ceremony of a school built by Uzbekistan in Azerbaijan, March 24, 2023, <https://kun.uz/en/news/2023/03/24/shavkat-mirziyoyev-to-attend-opening-ceremony-of-a-school-built-by-uzbekistan-in-azerbaijan>.

⁵⁹ Turksyoy, Timucin, New School Established with Uzbek Assistance Inaugurated in Azerbaijan's Karabakh Region, Caspian News, August 24, 2023, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/new-school-established-with-uzbek-assistance-inaugurated-in-azerbajjans-karabakh-region-2023-8-24-0/>.

the primary challenge is the so-called “Zangezur Corridor,” which threatens Armenia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, ultimately undermining the state’s functionality.

Conclusion

Thus, the topic of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been introduced for discussion at the summits of Turkic-speaking countries, as well as in the Turkic Council and the OTS, primarily at the initiative of Turkey and Azerbaijan. At the summits of Turkic-speaking countries, the Turkish-Azerbaijani bloc aimed to garner condemnation of Armenia from the Turkic countries in Central Asia, but these countries have maintained their neutrality. Nonetheless, the documents adopted at the end of the summits mention the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, initially linking its resolution to the resolutions of the UN Security Council, but later presenting it based on the principle of preserving Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Turkey and Azerbaijan continue to pursue this policy today, attempting to remove this conflict from the international relations agenda.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was also discussed within the Turkic Council, an existing institutional structure that Turkey sought to unite the Turkic states around. Additionally, within the framework of the Turkic Council, projects and mechanisms were developed to strengthen cooperation among the Turkic states. Economic cooperation, particularly communication projects such as the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor, holds a prominent position in this regard.

Following the 44-Day War, integration processes were initiated under Turkey’s leadership, culminating in the establishment of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). In the post-war rhetoric of Turkey and Azerbaijan, the focus shifted from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to the restoration of the “liberated” territories, and they sought to involve other Turkic republics in this process. Due to geopolitical developments, the issue of communication has become more critical, and in this context, the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem introduced the concept of the so-called “Zangezur Corridor.” They present it as an economic project that would also benefit Armenia, within the framework of the East-West project. However, this is untrue for two reasons: 1) They desire extraterritorial territory, which violates Armenia's territorial integrity and restricts its capabilities; 2) The “corridor” holds geopolitical significance as it would connect Turkey and the Central Asian republics via the shortest land route. Consequently, the OTS poses challenges for Armenia, primarily in terms of security, followed by economic, political, and even cultural aspects.

It should be noted that while the Turkic republics of Central Asia previously maintained neutrality, this is unlikely to be the case in the context of integration.

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CHINA'S POLICY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

The paper examines the policy of the People's Republic of China in the South Caucasus. The main task of the research is to highlight the political, economic and cultural factors that strongly affect the formation of China's foreign policy in the region. Over the last decade, China's policy in the South Caucasus has become more active, which is primarily due to the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative and China's growing interests in the region.

The study of the South Caucasian vector of China's foreign policy is quite actual among the researchers both in Armenia and other countries of the region. However, it is necessary to explore official Beijing's regional policy comparatively. The need to explore the issue has grown significantly after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, as it transformed Beijing's political interests and changed its behavior in the region. Though China's interests in the South Caucasus are primarily measured in the context of the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, in fact, it can be the most important, but only one aspect of China's growing interests in the region. In the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, which started in 2022, this topic has gained more relevance.

In the paper, we have tried to observe the evolution of China's South Caucasian policy in dynamics, as well as to highlight the factors that influence the formation of Beijing's policy behavior. On the other hand, we have set a task to consider the possible scenarios of the development of relations between China and the countries of the South Caucasus region as well as the possible scenarios for the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative in the South Caucasus.

Keywords – People's Republic of China, the South Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belt and Road Initiative, China's soft power, territorial conflicts, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, regional economic cooperation.

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Introduction

For many years, China generally demonstrated comparatively restrained behavior in its foreign policy. This is mainly due to the fact, that the latter focused its main attention on its economic development. In the last two decades, China's economy has registered a rapid development, which prompts official Beijing to activate its foreign policy as well. First of all, it refers to energy and transportation initiatives that will facilitate China's product exports and also diversify energy sources critical to ensuring the continuity of the development of the economy. The South Caucasus region has gained enough importance for China in both above-mentioned directions, making the study of this issue very important and topical.

From the point of view of the Republic of Armenia, the main measure of the relevance and importance of the issue are primarily reflected in the following facts:

- ✓ official Yerevan seeks to develop cooperation with China on a bilateral level;
- ✓ China, as a newly emerging power center, is important from the point of view of forming a positive position regarding the issues facing Armenia's foreign policy;
- ✓ China has enough potential to influence the economic processes in the the South Caucasus;
- ✓ China is one of Armenia's main economic partners which creates an opportunity to ensure development in other areas of cooperation as well.

The research question

The main research question is the following: what factors form China's policy in the South Caucasus? To answer this question, the following issues were posed:

- to study the characteristics of the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter - China) in the South Caucasus;
- to present the main trends in the development of China's relations with the countries of the region;
- to investigate China's position and policy towards the territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus;
- to study China's soft power policy in the region;
- to explore China's relations with the regional countries within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Methodology

The method of historical argumentation was used to examine the problem in the dynamics of the development of events. Facts are the most important indicators of relations between the countries. The method of comparative analysis allowed us to examine China's relations with each country of the South Caucasus. This also helped us to make certain conclusions regarding China's deeper interests in the region and attitude to regional states. Scenario analysis was used to project possible future developments in China's South Caucasus policy. There are some external and internal factors that can influence China's relations with South Caucasian states.

The main features of China's Foreign policy in the South Caucasus

Since the second decade of the 21st century, the South Caucasus has acquired a rather important role in the foreign policy agenda of China. This is connected with China's growing interest in the region, which is based on several factors. First of all, it is China's Belt and Road initiative, where the South Caucasus countries have certain transit role. Additionally, historical ties connect China with the region, as the South Caucasus is situated along the ancient Silk Road, which linked China to Europe for centuries. Therefore, the local nations of the South Caucasus and China have known each other thousands of years and traded with each other.

The South Caucasus has not gained strategic importance in China's foreign policy agenda. Rather it fits into the latter's foreign policy priorities. To measure the importance of the region, it is necessary to observe it in the framework of China's economic initiatives. China, however, does not view the South Caucasus as a single entity and tries to develop its relations with the regional countries on individual basis. China's South Caucasus policy is part of its global strategy and goals. China has become one of the main actors in global politics. For China, that role is not a goal in itself: it is aimed at strengthening peace at the global level, forming cooperation between countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. These norms are enshrined in China's foreign policy strategy, which, together with several other principles, received the formulation of "Principles of Peaceful Coexistence".¹

In recent years, China's expanding cooperation with the South Caucasus has made Beijing a highly influential force in the region. The key component of these relations is the economic interests of all involved parties. China has signed a number of official documents with Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding their participation in the Belt and Road Initiative. While ten years ago China's presence in the Caucasus was minimal, it is now among the top three largest trading partners of the South Caucasus countries.

Another important aspect of China's foreign policy is the issue of Taiwan. China prioritizes restoring its territorial integrity, therefore regions with territorial conflicts also align indirectly with China's foreign policy interests. China is home to around 50 ethnic minorities, highlighting the importance it places on maintaining territorial integrity. Beijing tends to avoid expressing a political position on territorial disputes. However, it is obvious that conflicts hold a special place in China's policy in the South Caucasus.

Beijing cannot disregard Russia's interests concerning territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus, as Russia is one of China's most significant military, political, and economic partners. China has shown no desire to challenge Russia's security role in the former Soviet Union territory, with Central Asia—especially Kazakhstan—being a minor exception. When shaping its strategy in the South Caucasus, China acknowledges Russia's great influence and vital interests in the region. In addition, the

¹ Carry Forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to Build a Better World through Win-Win Cooperation, Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, MFA of PRC, January 7, 2014, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/201407/t20140701_678184.html

unrecognized republics of the the South Caucasus have certain dependence on Russia, therefore Beijing has adopted a cautious approach in this regard.

Although the South Caucasus is not a strategic priority for China's foreign policy, there is a potential for growth in the relations between the regional states and China. China's investments in the region, strengthening of cultural ties, as well as implementation of youth mobility programs can pave the way for further development of bilateral relations. We believe, that currently China has the best chances to compete with Russia in the South Caucasus.

China's soft power policy in the South Caucasus

Soft power is one of the most active tools in China's foreign policy. Beijing skillfully uses cultural, economic, and humanitarian instruments. One of the most widely used cultural instruments is the establishment of Confucius Institutes, which aim to promote Chinese language and culture. The first Confucius Institute in the South Caucasus was opened in Armenia in 2008. Over the past 15 years, more than 13,000 students have studied at this institute, reflecting the growing popularity of Chinese language studies in Armenia. Special attention shall be focused on Chinese soft power initiatives regarding education. The Chinese government allocated nearly 12 million USD to found the Armenian-Chinese Friendship School with a capacity of around 400 students participating in an intensive Chinese language study program. This institution is the largest Chinese language center in the countries of the former USSR.

The Confucius Institute at Tbilisi Free University was established in 2010. 26 Georgian universities and secondary schools offer Chinese language courses. Approximately 30 Georgian students receive scholarships from the PRC government each year to study at Chinese universities. In addition, 20 Chinese teachers and volunteers come to Georgia every year to teach the Chinese language and culture. On February 15, 2019, the governments of Georgia and China signed an agreement to promote the study of the Chinese language throughout Georgia. The agreement will allow secondary schools in Georgia to conduct Chinese lessons for students within the scope of the national curriculum.

Confucius Institute at Baku State University was established in 2010 and opened in 2011. In addition to language courses and cultural projects, it also conducts research on Azerbaijan's participation in the implementation of the BRI. According to an interstate agreement, the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan annually sends up to 50 students to China. Additionally, the Confucius Institute sends selected students from its language courses to a one-year educational program in China.²

Relations between China and Armenia

The People's Republic of China was among the very first countries that recognized the independence of the Republic of Armenia in December 1991. Official diplomatic relations between Armenia and PRC were established on April 6, 1992. In 2020, China

² China's bilateral relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, MFA of PRC, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/2675_665437/ (accessed 22 May 2023).

opened its largest by territory embassy in the region in Yerevan, underscoring the high level of political, economic and cultural relations between the two countries.³

The political dialogue between Armenia and China currently includes over 60 interstate documents.⁴ Armenia recognizes the territorial integrity of China and supports the “One China” policy.⁵ In July 1992, official Yerevan and Beijing issued a joint statement about keeping constructive neutrality on unresolved political issues, meaning that neither country would take actions contrary to each other's interests in the international arena. The countries have largely adhered to this approach. Official Yerevan shows constructive neutrality during discussions and votes on issues related to China's interests on international platforms. As for China's policy, it generally maintains the political approach of not contradicting Yerevan's interests.

Relations with China are of great importance in Armenia's foreign policy agenda. The three previous presidents of Armenia - Levon Ter-Petrosyan, Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan – each paid state visits to China during their presidencies. During the visit of President Robert Kocharian in September 2004, a joint statement was signed, which clarified the positions of the parties on matters of bilateral interest.⁶

Serzh Sargsyan, President of Armenia made a state visit to the People's Republic of China on March 2015. The meeting with China's leader Xi Jinping was held in the House of Representatives. At the end of the meeting, following the results of the talks, the Presidents of Armenia and China signed a joint declaration "On the further development and deepening of friendly cooperation between the Republic of Armenia and the People's Republic of China". More than a dozen documents have been signed between the two countries aimed at developing and strengthening bilateral cooperation in a number of areas.⁷ They refer to cooperation in economic, customs, technical, legal, scientific, educational and other fields. President Serzh Sargsyan also met with the Premier of the State Council (Prime Minister) of China Li Keqiang.⁸ Serzh Sargsyan and Li Keqiang noted the progress recorded in bilateral trade and in economic relations in recent years. According to Serzh Sargsyan, Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union opens up new and broader opportunities also in terms of expanding the Armenian-Chinese economic relations. Serzh Sargsyan once again welcomed the

³ Newly-built embassy in Yerevan: China's new step for developing relations with Armenia, Armenpress, September 23, 2020, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1028521.html>.

⁴ Schulz, Dante, China-Armenia Bilateral Relations, Caspian Policy Center, January 26, 2022, <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/security-and-politics-program-spp/china-armenia-bilateral-relations>.

⁵ Bilateral Relations, China, MFA of RA, February 07, 2023, <https://www.mfa.am/en/bilateral-relations/cn>.

⁶ Wu Bangguo Meets with Armenian President Robert Sedrakovich Kocharyan, MFA of PRC, September 28, 2004, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/gjhdq_665435/2675_665437/3130_664282/3132_-664286/200409/t20040928_555329.html.

⁷ High-level Armenian-Chinese talks held in Beijing, Official website of the President of the RA, March 25, 2015, <https://www.president.am/ru/press-release/item/2015/03/25/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-state-visit-to-China-day-1/>.

⁸ Many issues of bilateral significance became the subject of discussion. This circle covered the spheres of energy, transport, chemical industry, education, science, culture, agriculture, aviation, tourism, infrastructure development and a number of other areas. Armenia's President and China's Premier of the State Council noted the importance of the work of the Armenian-Chinese Joint Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation.

initiative of the Chinese side to restore the Great Silk Road and the purposeful work carried out towards its implementation: “Armenia welcomed the idea of creating the Silk Road Economic Belt put forward by the President of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping. Back in the days of the ancient Great Silk Road, Armenian goods were known on the Chinese market and Armenian merchant ships traveled to the eastern ports of Asia, in particular, to Hong Kong. I hope that the program for the construction of the southern railway, which runs along the Armenian section of the modern Silk Road, will become one of those projects that are designed to contribute to the implementation of the noted economic idea. At the same time, it will ensure the practical presence of the Chinese side in the South Caucasus region, as well as give impetus to bilateral relations between Armenia and China”.⁹

After the constitutional reforms in Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan was the first prime minister of Armenia to make a working visit to China on May 2019. During the meeting of the leaders Chinese President thanked Nikol Pashinyan for accepting the invitation to participate in the conference “Dialogue of Asian Civilizations”. Xi Jinping noted that his country attaches importance to the consistent development of relations with Armenia in various fields. The President of the People's Republic of China spoke about strong historical and cultural relations between Armenia and China. “We are united by the common goals of cooperation between civilizations. We are well aware of significant historical events in Armenia. We are convinced that the tragic events that happened to the Armenian people should be ruled out in the future”, Xi Jinping said.

Nikol Pashinyan noted that Armenia is interested in implementing joint programs within the framework of the One Belt, One Road initiative and added that the Armenian side was considering the possibility of participating in the implementation of joint programs in the areas of transport, railroads, and information infrastructures. Xi Jinping stressed that China was ready to take part in the construction of the North-South highway and the implementation of other infrastructure programs. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan thanked Xi Jinping for the invitation. “Relations with China are among the priorities of Armenia's foreign policy. Our two nations represent ancient civilizations, even the Armenian manuscripts of the fifth century tell about the ties between them. These ties were of a commercial, humanitarian and political nature. Constructive and productive relations with China are very important for us”, said Nikol Pashinyan.¹⁰ The main achievement of this visit can be considered the signing of the agreement on mutual visa liberalization.

Armenian-Chinese economic ties are rapidly developing. Trade between the two countries is growing every year. Today, China is Armenia's second largest trading partner after Russia with \$1 billion 241 million.¹¹ China is also one of the active

⁹ State visit of President Serzh Sargsyan to the People's Republic of China, Official website of the President of the RA, March 25, 2015, <https://www.president.am/ru/foreign-visits/item/2015/03/25/State-visit-of-President-Serzh-Sargsyan-to-China/>.

¹⁰ Nikol Pashinyan and Xi Jinping discussed a number of issues of further development of Armenian-Chinese relations, Armenia Prime Minister's official website, May 14, 2019, <https://www.primeminister.am/ru/press-release/item/2019/05/14/Nikol-Pashinyan-Chine-President/>.

¹¹ Bilateral Relations, China, MFA of RA, February 07, 2023, <https://www.mfa.am/en/bilateral-relations/cn>.

investors on the Armenian market, which currently includes the fields of education, IT, infrastructure, trade, and agriculture.¹²

It is evident that official Yerevan still has much work to do in developing its strategy for relations with China. In the foreign policy section of the National Security Strategy of Armenia adopted in 2007, only the following line is mentioned regarding China: Armenia will develop relations with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, including China.¹³ And in the strategy approved by the government in 2020, the following is mentioned: we will consistently deepen friendly relations with the People's Republic of China through the development and expansion of multi-sector and mutually beneficial broad-based cooperation.¹⁴

We are sure that the relations with China have a great potential for development, grounded in broad cultural and geopolitical foundations. Although in many issues Armenia has missed its opportunities, there is still much to be done in this direction. Currently, China's main partners in the South Caucasus are Georgia and Azerbaijan. It will be challenging for Armenia to regain its former importance in Beijing's political agenda, especially given recent successes of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, which have made it a more appealing partner for China.

China's relations with Georgia

Georgia's favorable geopolitical position offers good opportunities for developing economic relations with China. Each year, Georgia's economy becomes increasingly attractive to China, primarily due to Georgia's transit importance. Transport infrastructure in Georgia, including sea ports, can fill the logistical gaps in the Belt and Road Initiative. According to the assessment of the foreign political department of Georgia, the current pace of development in relations with China has been reported since 2012.¹⁵ Georgian Dream, Georgia's ruling party, is increasingly focused on strengthening relations with China. In May 2015, the government of Georgia published the development plan "Strong, democratic and united Georgia", emphasizing the special role of Georgia as a bridge in the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt.¹⁶ In November 2016, the government of Georgia published the program "Freedom, rapid development and prosperity (2016-2020)".¹⁷ According to the document, cooperation between Europe and Asia through the Silk Road is of great importance, and cooperation with Eastern countries in the spheres of economy, trade, transport and energy offers significant benefits to Georgia.

¹² Bergmann, Sofia, Armenia in the Belt and Road Initiative, EVN Report, December 16, 2019, <https://evnreport.com/economy/armenia-in-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>.

¹³ National Security Strategy of Armenia 2007, <https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/Statics/Doctrinarm.pdf>.

¹⁴ National Security Strategy of Armenia 2020, <https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/security%20and%20defense/AA-Razmavarutyun-Final.pdf>.

¹⁵ Bilateral visits, Embassy of Georgia to the People's Republic of China, May 24, 2018, http://www.china.mfa.gov.ge/default.aspx?sec_id=1185&lang=2.

¹⁶ For a strong, democratic and united Georgia: Government Program. Georgian Government, https://www.gov.ge/files/41_50258_481988_Strong,Democratic,UnitedGeorgia1.pdf.

¹⁷ Freedom, Rapid Development Prosperity, Government Platform 2016-2020, https://www.gov.ge/files/41_61087_816118_GoG_Platform_LKF_19_05_2017.pdf.

The Free Trade Agreement of 2018 was a great impetus for the intensification of relations between the two countries. Under this agreement, China purchased 75 percent of the shares in the Poti Free Industrial Zone. In the same year, trade between the two countries for the first time exceeded \$1 billion.¹⁸ The volume of trade between the two countries in 2021 amounted to 1 billion 625 million dollars.¹⁹ In 2022, it exceeded 2 billion dollars for the first time.²⁰ Currently, China is Georgia's third-largest trading partner after Turkey and Azerbaijan. The Georgian government hopes that the country's geographical position with several ports such as Batumi, Poti and Anaklia, will allow Tbilisi to function as the largest logistic center in the region. Chinese investments in Georgia are directly linked to Beijing's massive Belt and Road Initiative, a global transit network aimed at facilitating China's trade with the world.²¹ Before the war in Ukraine in 2022, most of China's trade with Europe was conducted through Russia. The importance of Georgia and the South Caucasus in China's transport initiatives has increased since 2022. We believe that the states of the region can use the current situation to increase their transit potential. Another opportunity for Georgia's transit role could be the new sea port, which is planned to build in Anaklia. It will have the capacity to receive large ferries, which the ports of Batumi and Poti do not have. However, construction, which began in 2018, was suspended two years later due to legal issues. Georgia's Prime Minister, Irakli Gharibashvili, announced plans to resume construction of the port by the end of 2023.²²

The development of economic relations with China also holds significant political importance for Georgia. It is an opportunity for Georgia to have additional balancing tools in terms of diversifying its dependence on the Russian and European markets. According to Tbilisi, the more players involved in the Georgian market, the more stable and secure the situation in Georgia will be.²³ In fact, Georgia is seeking to develop ties with China at the highest level. Georgia has a great potential to become China's main political and economic partner in the South Caucasus.

China's relations with Azerbaijan

China's relations with Azerbaijan are developing rather dynamically. Over the past five years, trade between the two countries has exceeded \$1 billion.²⁴ While in 2015 the

¹⁸ Embassy of Georgia to the People's Republic of China, Economic cooperation, MFA of PRC, http://www.china.mfa.gov.ge/default.aspx?sec_id=1183&lang=2.

¹⁹ China's trade with Georgia. Economic Complexity Ranking, <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/chn/partner/geo> (accessed March 31, 2022)

²⁰ Trade between Georgia and China in 2022, Trading Economics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/china/exports/georgia> (accessed September 28, 2023)

²¹ Bergmann, Armenia in the Belt and Road Initiative.

²² When will the construction of the port of Anaklia start in Georgia? Sputnik Georgia, May 18, 2023, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20230518/kogda-v-gruzii-nachnetsya-stroitelstvo-porta-anakliya-277810775.html>.

²³ Growing interests of China in Georgia, Caspian Bulletin, April 01, 2018, <http://casp-geo.ru/rastushhie-interesy-kitaya-v-gruzii/>.

²⁴ As Armenia and Azerbaijan clash, where will China stand? SCMP, October 03, 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3103849/armenia-and-azerbaijan-clash-where-will-china-stand>.

trade turnover amounted to 561 million dollars, in 2016 it reached \$975 million, in 2017 – \$1.298 billion, in 2018 – 1.310 billion, and in 2019 – \$2.184 billion.²⁵ However, the trade balance between the two countries is in favor of China. While Azerbaijan's exports to China reached a record high, totaling \$752 million, imports from China surged to over \$1.432 billion. Trade between China and Azerbaijan in 2022 amounted to approximately \$1.2 billion.²⁶ Azerbaijan's exports consist mainly of crude oil and petrochemicals, while China exports a wide range of products. Chinese companies have invested \$800 million in Azerbaijan, whereas Azerbaijan's investments in China's economy are less than \$2 million. About 120 companies with Chinese capital operate in Azerbaijan.²⁷

China also invests in energy infrastructures passing through Azerbaijan. In 2016, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), headed by China, approved its largest loan for the construction of a gas pipeline connecting Azerbaijan with Turkey and Southern Europe. The AIIB provided a loan of 600 million dollars to the project of the Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP), by which natural gas will be transported from Azerbaijan through the territory of Turkey, and then further to the markets of Southeastern Europe.²⁸ Azerbaijan's cooperation with Chinese companies gained a wider scope after an agreement on strategic cooperation in the transport and transit sector, which was signed with Azerbaijan Railways CJSC in April 2019 in Beijing as part of the Belt and Road Initiative.²⁹

The economic cooperation between China and Azerbaijan is not limited to trade. Azerbaijan has managed to implement several transport projects, that can bolster its participation in the Belt and Road Initiative. The most prominent of them is the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. China has also launched several projects of constructing technologically rich areas (smart cities) in Azerbaijan. They can give new impulses to Chinese-Azerbaijani relations. Azerbaijan tries to hamper Belt and Road Initiative by proposing a more railway-oriented route crossing its territory, connecting the rail networks of Azerbaijan, Iran, and Russia, with the potential for future integration with India.

Azerbaijan is a key country in the China-Central Asia-West Asia economic corridor (CCW corridor). This corridor is one of the Belt and the Road's six economic corridors, involving five Central Asian countries, Iran and the Persian Gulf region, Transcaucasia and Turkey, and the Arabian Peninsula. Traditionally, transportation between China and West Asia has primarily relied on maritime routes. In contrast, the CCW corridor provides a land-based alternative to these conventional sea routes. To date, railways leading to the ports of Aktau and Turkmenbashi have been opened,

²⁵ Silk Road Briefing, Azerbaijan-China's Developing Trade & Investment Ties, April 19, 2022, <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2022/04/19/azerbaijan-chinas-developing-trade-investment-ties/>.

²⁶ Trade between China and Azerbaijan, Trading economics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/-azerbaijan/imports/china> (accessed September 30, 2023).

²⁷ Shahin Cheferli, Azerbaijan-China relations. <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/azerbaijan-china-relations/> (accessed April 28, 2023)

²⁸ Is China's Economic Expansion in the South Caucasus a Myth? The Diplomat, November 28, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/is-chinas-economic-expansion-in-the-south-caucasus-a-myth/>.

²⁹ Azerbaijan-China: 30 years of cooperation that can become an example for the world, China Daily, April 02, 2022, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202204/02/WS62484315a310fd2b29e54ead.html>.

allowing cargo to be transported to the Baku International Sea Trade Port (NBIST port), and then onto Turkey and Europe.³⁰

China's policy towards the territorial disputes in the South Caucasus

China usually avoids making clear formulations regarding territorial conflicts. As a multinational state facing separatist challenges, China prioritizes preserving its territorial integrity. Therefore, Beijing's policy regarding territorial conflicts is quite cautious and guided by its political interests. Official Beijing has always stated that territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus must be resolved peacefully, through negotiations, in accordance with the norms of international law. Even at the height of the war in South Ossetia in August 2008, Chinese Foreign Ministry issued an official statement urging the parties to immediately negotiate.³¹ It is difficult to find a case in official Beijing statements where it directly blames one of the conflicting parties. Although separatism is not in China's interests, its response to Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been notably balanced and restrained.³²

China avoids establishing official relations with the unrecognized republics of the South Caucasus, limiting its interactions to the humanitarian sphere. However, China has some trade and economic relations with the unrecognized states of the South Caucasus. This is a characteristic feature of China's foreign policy - to establish economic relations with the maximum possible number of subjects, thereby obtaining certain levers of influence in these regions. Trade turnover between Nagorno-Karabakh and China, for instance, increased steadily in the years before the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. Unfortunately, the war in Artsakh terminated the economic ties. In September 2023, following Azerbaijan's another aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh, the republic *de facto* stopped to exist.³³

China has semi-official ties with Abkhazia, driven by its economic interests in the region.³⁴ Abkhazia has appointed an honorary consul in China, based in Beijing. China's ties with South Ossetia are minimal. South Ossetia is landlocked, bordering only with Georgia and Russia. After the Georgian-South Ossetian war in 2008, the Chinese government provided humanitarian aid to South Ossetia.³⁵

It is possible that China may seek to strengthen its position in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the future. Georgia pursues integration into NATO and the EU. Most of the

³⁰ Bai Lianlei, Azerbaijan in the Silk Road Economic Belt: A Chinese Perspective, China Institute for International Studies, August 30, 2016, https://www.ciis.org.cn/english/ESEARCHPROJECTS/-Articles/202007/t20200715_3623.html.

³¹ China demands ceasefire in South Ossetia, Vzglyad, August 10, 2008, <http://www.vz.ru/news/-2008/8/10/194982.html>.

³² China concerned about situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia - Chinese Foreign Ministry, Ria News, August 27, 2008, http://www.rian.ru/osetia_news/20080827/150721040.html.

³³ Under the Azerbaijani military threat, the president of the Republic of Artsakh signed a decree by which the republic ceases to exist from January 1, 2024. At this moment, almost the whole Armenian population of the region has left their homes (02.10.2023).

³⁴ On the meeting with the delegation from China. Press Release, Abkhazia MFA, November 12, 2019, http://mfaapsny.org/en/allnews/news/visits/o-vstreche-s-delegatsiey-iz-knr-/?sphrase_id=83104.

³⁵ Babayan, David, New Silk Roads in the Southern Caucasus: Chinese Geopolitics in a Strategic Region. October 06, 2014, <https://www.yalejournal.org/publications/new-silk-roads-in-the-southern-caucasus-chinese-geopolitics-in-a-strategic-region>.

members of these organizations have economic and cultural ties with Taiwan. If Georgia's western integration succeeds, it will inevitably face the problem of recognizing Taiwan's identity. Therefore, Beijing should aim to maximize its influence over Tbilisi to preempt this scenario.

As for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, official Beijing avoids political assessments whenever possible. The main focus of China is on an exclusively peaceful settlement, without any comments on the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan or the right of the Armenian people to self-determination. Beijing has the same position towards the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts. Consequently, China refrains from direct participation in the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani and the Russian-Georgian conflicts.

In the dialogue with Beijing on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Baku usually starts from the following point of view: Nagorno-Karabakh is part of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Therefore the main argument is the restoration of the lost territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. This approach is intended to elicit China's sympathy, given its own challenge in reclaiming Taiwan, which has been separated from its territory. However, this is a manipulation of this issue by Azerbaijan. Taiwan, with a Chinese-majority population, did not separate from China based on the principle of national self-determination but rather for political reasons with external support. The same situation was in Nagorno-Karabakh: more than 94% Armenian-populated region was annexed to Azerbaijan in 1921 by the decision of the Soviet Russia for political motives. Thus, it can be concluded, that Armenia and China have common interests in the issue of territorial conflicts. Both countries face challenges in reclaiming the territories, which artificially had been separated from their historical homeland. However, it is also important to note that Armenia's Prime Minister has recently recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity—a decision perceived by some as having been made under the threat of force, which is vulnerable from the perspective of international law. But this is another question of discussion, so we will not concentrate on it here.

China's policy was rather restrained during the war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. The day after the conflict began, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin stated: "China believes that maintaining peace and stability in the region is in the interests of all parties, including Armenia and Azerbaijan. We hope that the parties concerned will show restraint and take measures to avoid further escalation of the conflict".³⁶ Certainly, expectations for China's involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue were higher in Armenia. This belief stems from the understanding that the conflict extends beyond a simple Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute. In the war, Turkey was one of Armenia's main rivals. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has pan-Turkic aspirations to unite all Turkic-speaking nations from Southeast Europe to Central Asia, has openly expressed his support for Azerbaijan throughout the war.³⁷

Given Turkey's pan-Turkic aspirations, as well as the fact that China is home to tens of millions of ethnic Turks - the Uighurs, Erdogan's ambitions pose a direct threat

³⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China urged to avoid escalation of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, REGNUM, September 28, 2020, <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/3075224.html>.

³⁷ Erdogan vows struggle until end of Karabakh occupation, Anadolu Agency, October 02, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/erdogan-vows-struggle-until-end-of-karabakh-occupation/1993513>.

from China's security perspective as well. While these threats may not be immediate, Turkey is trying to gradually increase its influence in Central Asia, particularly in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. The latter two provide Turkey and Azerbaijan with land access to the Turkic-speaking population of China. Turkey seems to have assumed the role of leader of the Turkic world, and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly accused China of massacring the Uighurs.³⁸ On this background, decision-makers in Yerevan should try to convince China, that a strong Armenia could serve as a barrier to pan-Turkic plans. However, it should be also recognized that Turkey is one of China's most important partners in the BRI.³⁹

The agreement signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan on November 9, 2020 inspired some hope that the Azerbaijani side is on the path of normalizing relations with Armenia. This agreement envisages a complete unblocking of communication channels, which is also beneficial from the point of view of the Belt and Road Initiative. During the last three years, the strategy of pressure implemented by Azerbaijan towards the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh leaves few opportunities for regulating Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. If the parties can achieve a final settlement of the conflict, it could open new avenues for the Belt and Road Initiative. We believe, that as a result of the final settlement of relations between Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan, China can be one of the winners. Growing cooperation and stabilization in the region can give additional guarantees to international megaprojects initiated by China.⁴⁰

In fact, given the aggressive statements from Baku and Ankara against Armenia after the end of the war, as well as the violation of the ceasefire by Azerbaijan, the above-mentioned scenario lacks optimistic prospects. Azerbaijan continues to blackmail Armenia with the prospect of renewed war if the latter refuses to fulfill its demands. The main demand from Turkey and Azerbaijan to Armenia is to grant access to the "Zangezur Corridor," which would include Turkish control mechanisms—something that is contrary to the interests of official Yerevan.

Conclusion

- ❖ China's interests in the countries of the South Caucasus are continuously growing. However, the region is far from gaining strategic importance for it. China mainly develops its economic and humanitarian ties with the countries of the region. We believe that if these relationships continue to develop, there may be potential for increased cooperation in the political sphere as well.
- ❖ China's policy in the South Caucasus is restrained by Russia's traditional influence in the region. Official Beijing is quite cautious about interfering with Russia's interests in the South Caucasus. In fact, Russia and China have a tacit

³⁸ "Father Muslim" vs. Heavenly. Erdoğan stood up for the Uyghurs (in Russian), Liberty Radio Russia, February 14, 2019, <https://www.svoboda.org/a/29770229.html>.

³⁹ Zangezur corridor to provide new link between Turkey and Azerbaijan, Anadolu Agency, June 01, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/zangezur-corridor-to-provide-new-link-between-turkey-azerbaijan/2260088>.

⁴⁰ Khorrami Nima, How China gains from Armenia-Azerbaijan war, Eurasianet, December 02, 2020, <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-how-china-gains-from-armenia-azerbaijan-war>.

agreement to share influence in the South Caucasus and to avoid conflicting interests. However, we are sure, that in case Russia's influence in the South Caucasus weakens, China has a huge potential to fill the political and economic vacuum that would result. For many years, the South Caucasus was generally regarded as a low-priority region for China, as Beijing viewed it as a geopolitical battleground between the West and Russia. This has changed with the launching of the Belt and Road Initiative.

- ❖ As for territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus, China adheres to a firm, constructive, neutral approach to their resolution. We believe, that it is in the interests of official Beijing to bring peace to these conflict zones, since they are located along East-West transport routes, which are of strategic importance to China. The settlement of territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus can provide additional guarantees for the successful implementation and further uninterrupted operation of China's transport and energy projects in the region.
- ❖ China's soft power policy is quite effective in the region. While China mainly relies on strengthening ties in the linguistic, cultural and humanitarian spheres in Armenia, the economic tools of soft power are more active in the other two countries of the region.
- ❖ After the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, China's South Caucasus policy has transformed. On the one hand, Beijing is strengthening its relations with Azerbaijan, which emerged stronger from the conflict. On the other hand, China is showing a relatively restrained political behavior. We believe that this reflects China's typical foreign policy behavior, and the latter is still waiting for the proper time to increase its presence in the region.
- ❖ The Russian-Ukrainian war that began in 2022 may create new economic opportunities for the countries of the South Caucasus, as the "Russian route" is threatened, and China is looking for alternative communication routes to Europe.

The growing influence of Turkey in the region can be another threat, especially after the war of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. Currently Turkey seeks to actively participate in all regional infrastructure initiatives, including East-West transport communication projects. Therefore, the primary task for official Yerevan should be to increase cooperation with China, Russia, and other power centers in order to effectively curb Turkey's political and economic ambitions in the region.

When examining China's relations with the countries of the South Caucasus through a comparative lens, we can come to the following general conclusion: in terms of education and culture, Beijing is more active in Armenia, which is also supported by the civilizational factor. Economically, China's relations with Georgia have proved more successful due to the latter's transit significance. Meanwhile, given the current geopolitical situation, Azerbaijan has a significant opportunity to establish itself as a new transit route for China. In fact, countries in the region are still competing to redistribute their roles in China's foreign policy agenda. Each country in the region has its own competitive advantages.

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THE FORMATS AND THE AGENDA OF ORGANIZING PAN-ARMENIAN CONFERENCES IN 1980-2022

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Abstract

Since 1980, several conferences have been held with the participation of representatives of Armenia and the Diaspora, the main purpose of which was to discuss the problems of bilateral cooperation, define the priorities, and clarify future tasks. The question of the necessity of such assemblies was discussed both during the Soviet period and after the restoration of Armenia's political independence, but the search for the most effective format is still ongoing. Based on the political approaches of this or that government and the imperative to effectively solve the defined problems, these assemblies were held in different formats, from representative meetings to conferences and summits. In this article, the agendas and convening formats of the Armenia-Diaspora conferences are examined, considering them under the historical and political reality of the time.

Keywords – Armenia, Artsakh, Diaspora, pan-Armenian conferences.

Pan-Armenian conferences organized on a representative basis

The precedent of the Homeland-Diaspora conference in 1980. In Soviet Armenia in 1964, in order to develop relations with the diaspora and increase their effectiveness, the Committee for Cultural Relations with the Diaspora Armenians was established, which significantly developed relations with the Diaspora with its long-term activity.¹ In 1980 it was decided to hold an Armenia-Diaspora meeting, and the responsibility for organizing it was assigned to the committee. The main goal was to strengthen the Homeland-Diaspora relations and develop the most effective cooperation mechanisms. The meeting was convened as part of the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the creation of Soviet Armenia, on the eve of the official celebration of that event on November 29. Its purpose was undoubtedly to make Diaspora Armenians aware of the events organized on the occasion. The format of the meeting was the “Assembly of Representatives of Diaspora Armenian Communities,” meaning that the conference

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¹ Yeghiazaryan A. & aylq, Hayreniq-Sp'yowr'q haraberowt'yownnery' 1918 t'vakanic minch& mer o'rery', E., 2017, e'j 103-120 (Yeghiazaryan A. and others, Homeland-Diaspora relations from 1918 to the present days, E., 2017, pp. 103-120).

was attended mainly by the representatives of organizations of the Diaspora friendly to the Soviet regime, as well as prominent figures of Diaspora Armenians. The committee's official newspaper, "Voice of the Hayreniq" stated that on November 24-25, 1980, an assembly of representatives of Diaspora Armenian communities will be held in Yerevan with the slogan "Revived Homeland and Diaspora Armenians: Struggle for Peace and Progress." The head of the organizational committee of the assembly was the president of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia, academician V. Hambardzumyan. Invitations to participate were sent on behalf of the organizing committee itself. Leaders of social and cultural "progressive" organizations, prominent social and political figures, writers, artists, journalists, scientists, teachers at Armenian schools, representatives of business circles were invited. A commemorative medal and a badge were issued on the occasion of the assembly.² Finally, the assembly was also referred to as the "Conference of Diaspora Armenians."³ The conference was attended by more than 100 representatives from all Diaspora Armenian communities, as well as figures from various regions of the ASSR.⁴

Although prominent figures from various fields also participated, the fact that it was called the "Assembly of Diaspora Armenians" underscores that the main goal of the conference was to bring together representatives of Diaspora organizations. For that purpose, extensive and informative program of visits was elaborated in Soviet Armenia, as well as ensuring participation in the events marking the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Soviet order in Armenia.⁵

The representatives of the conference sent a congratulatory letter to the leadership of the USSR and the Armenian SSR.⁶ This was also the reason why the documents adopted by the conference (statement, etc.) were considered "historical" in the report. The participants of the conference also issued a message to Diaspora Armenians, urging them to unite around Soviet Armenia and keep the bridge strong between the homeland and the Diaspora.⁷

² «Sp'yowr'qahay hamaynqneri nerkayacowcichneri jhoghovi masin», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», Sp'yowr'qahayowt'yan het mshakowt'ayin kapi komitei shabat'at'ert', 19.11.1980, e'j 2 ("About the meeting of representatives of Diaspora-Armenian communities," "Voice of the Hayreniq," weekly newspaper of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Diaspora-Armenians, 19.11.1980, p. 2).

³ «Sp'yowr'qahayowt'yan nerkayacowcichneri jhoghovy'», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», 28.11.1980, e'j 3 ("The meeting of Diaspora Armenian Representatives," "Voice of the Hayreniq," 28.11.1980, p. 3).

⁴ Hayastani azgayin arxiv, f. 875, c. 8, g. 9, c. 40, t'. 1-2: Te's na& «Sovetakan Hayas-tan», 1980, № 12, e'j 7-34 (National Archives of Armenia, f. 875, l. 8, f. 9, l. 40, p. 1-2: See also "Soviet Armenia," 1980, No. 12, p. 7-34).

⁵ «Sp'yowr'qahay hamaynqneri nerkayacowcichneri jhoghovi masin», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», 19.11.1980, e'j 2 ("About the meeting of representatives of Diaspora Armenian communities," "Voice of the Hayreniq," 19.11.1980, p. 2).

⁶ «SSHМ geragowyn soveti naxagahowt'yan naxagah Leonid Brejhn&in», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», 10.12.1980, e'j 3, «Haykakan SSH geragowyn soveti naxagahowt'yany'», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», e'j 4 ("To Leonid Brezhnev, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR," "Voice of the Hayreniq," 10.12.1980, p. 3, "To the Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR," "Voice of the Hayreniq," p. 4).

⁷ «Owgherd' sp'yowr'qahayowt'yany'», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», 10.12.1980, e'j 5 ("Message to Diaspora Armenians," "Voice of the Hayreniq," 10.12.1980, p. 5).

Eventually, the committee also called the conference “Homeland-Diaspora Conference.”⁸

It is clear from what has been said that when organizing the conference, the emphasis was placed on inviting representatives of Diaspora Armenian organizations, which is why it was called the “Assembly of Diaspora Armenians.” However, as prominent Diaspora Armenian figures, officials, and intellectuals from Armenia were also involved, the conference later became more generally called the “Homeland-Diaspora Conference.”

Pan-Armenian Conference of Heads and Representatives of Diaspora Organizations (2011). The precedent of calling the representative meeting a Pan-Armenian conference was later repeated during the first meeting organized by the RA Ministry of Diaspora. It took place in Yerevan, September 19-21, 2011, as part of the 20th anniversary celebrations of RA independence. The focus was on inviting leaders and representatives from Diaspora organizations. 550 leaders and representatives from 151 organizations across 46 countries participated in the conference.⁹ The participants were introduced according to their organizations in the official messages.

During the opening session, the RA President, the Catholicos of All Armenians and others presented their views on Diaspora and Armenia-Diaspora cooperation. In their remarks, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia and representatives of national parties expressed some criticism regarding the situation in Armenia and its relationship with the Diaspora. They highlighted the dangers of ongoing emigration, as well as certain unacceptable manifestations toward the Diaspora that cause mistrust.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, the RA Minister of Diaspora, H. Hakobyan, presented the Armenia-Diaspora cooperation policy and its main principles.

The conference was held in four thematic sessions:

1. language and education issues,
2. youth issues,
3. things to do before the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide,
4. development frameworks of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation.

At the end of each thematic session, summaries were prepared and presented to the plenary session of the conference. Those summaries were of great importance for the development of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation and for joint programs and their effectiveness.

At the conference, the creation of a national body in the Armenia-Diaspora format and the principles for its formation were the subject of special discussion.¹⁰

⁸ Hayastani azgayin arxiv, f. 875, c. 9, g. 40, t'. 4-5 (National Archives of Armenia, f. 875, l. 9, l. 40, p. 4-5).

⁹ «Sp'yowr'qi kazmakerpowt'yownneri ghekavarneri & nerkayacow-cichneri hamahayakan hamajhoghov», hamajhoghovi nyowt'er, E., 2011: Te's na& «Hayakan Sp'yowr'q» taregirq, 2011, e'j 41. aystegh masnakicneri shrjanaky' nerkayacovwm e'r aveli y'ndgrkown' 50 petowt'yownic 600 masnakic (“Pan-Armenian Conference of Heads and Representatives of Diaspora Organizations,” materials of the conference, E., 2011. See also “Armenian Diaspora” yearbook, 2011, page 41: here the range of participants was presented more comprehensively: 600 participants from 50 countries).

¹⁰ Hamajhoghovi y'nt'acqi manrakrit verlowc'owt'yowny' katarvac' e' Tehrani «Lowys» amsagrowm: Te's «Sp'yowr'qi kazmakerpowt'yownneri ghekavarneri & nerkayacowcichneri hamahayakan hamajhoghov», «Lowys» mshakowt'ayin ew hasarakakan amsagir, hoktember, 2011, № 166, e'j 7-11 (A detailed analysis of the proceedings of the conference carried out in Tehran's “Luys” magazine. See “Pan-Armenian Conference

Due to the participation of a large number of organizations and individuals from Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora, the Pan-Armenian Conference of Diaspora Organization Leaders and Representatives was later considered the Fourth Armenia-Diaspora Conference, as the next assembly was called the Fifth Conference. The numbering started from the Armenia-Diaspora conference in 1999, in fact, ignoring the assembly in 1980.

The first Pan-Armenian assembly, organized by the RA Ministry of Diaspora, followed a format similar to the one used by the Committee for Cultural Relations with Diaspora Armenians in 1980. Therefore, it can be argued that, from the perspective of a state body specializing in Diaspora relations, this format was the most suitable platform for effective discussions and decision-making. It is no coincidence that the RA Ministry of Diaspora, aiming to increase participation in such assemblies, maintained the representative format when organizing the Pan-Armenian assembly in 2015, while also expanding the number of participants.

The 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference (2014). The conference was held in Yerevan on September 19-21, 2014. Since 2014, the RA Ministry of Diaspora has been organizing Armenia-Diaspora assemblies on the principle of conference, that is, the principle of universal participation. However, the 2014 Armenia-Diaspora conference was still perceived as a gathering of leaders and representatives of Diaspora organizations, with participants counted according to their affiliation with Diaspora organizations and structures. Thus, the conference included 741 participants from the Diaspora (leaders and representatives of organizations and structures) representing around 60 countries, a delegation of 20 participants from Artsakh, and over 300 participants from the Republic of Armenia.¹¹ It is interesting that the very principle of convening the conference became an object of criticism. For example, the editor of Azg daily newspaper considered that the organizations represented by the participants of the conference do not represent the entire Diaspora Armenians, therefore, when specifying the lists of invitees, focusing mainly on their representatives made the conference “imperfect and incomplete.”¹²

The conference was held on the eve of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide, and the need for proper preparation was emphasized. The slogan “I remember and demand...” was highlighted in the statement adopted by the conference.¹³

The conference agenda, discussed during the sessions, were as follows:

1. The process of international recognition, condemnation and elimination of the consequences of the Armenian Genocide,
2. The problems of the Syrian-Armenian community,
3. Current problems and perspectives of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation.

of Leaders and Representatives of Diaspora Organizations,” “Luys” Cultural and Social Magazine, October, 2011, No. 166, p. 7-11).

¹¹ «Meknarkel e' Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hamahaykakan 5-rd hamajhoghovy'», («The 5th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference has started»). <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/62617/19.04.2023/>

¹² Avetiqyan H., Er'ankyownow ankatar ankyowny', «Azg», 26.09.2014, e'j 1 (Avetikyan H., The imperfect corner of the triangle, “Azg,” 26.09.2014, p. 1).

¹³ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q» hamahaykakan 5-rd hamajhoghovi y'ndownac' haytararowt'yowny'», (The statement adopted by the 5th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference).

<https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/63122/19.04.2023/>

The fourth agenda was the Seventh Pan-Armenian Conference of Journalists, where media coverage of the Armenian Genocide recognition and claim process, issues of knowledge and preservation of the Armenian language, issues of propaganda, anti-propaganda, information security, development trends and perspectives of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation were discussed.¹⁴

RA Minister of Diaspora H. Hakobyan said that the proposals, remarks, theses and recommendations made in 117 speeches at the 4th Armenia-Diaspora conference were compiled and served as a foundation for the development and guidance for Armenia-Diaspora cooperation. The Ministry also developed a program-schedule of measures for the implementation of the presented recommendations, assigning some to other RA ministries based on their respective sectors. Certain recommendations and related tasks were designated as long-term and ongoing.¹⁵

Instead of the five priorities of the previous conference, the Minister of Diaspora introduced seven priorities for Armenia-Diaspora relations:

1. Strengthening of the Armenian state,
2. Independence and security of Artsakh,
3. Strengthening the Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora trinity,
4. Spread of the Armenian language among all Armenians,
5. The issue of the Armenian Genocide,
6. Unification of Armenians around the church,
7. The problem of Armenians in emergency situations.¹⁶

In their concluding statement, the conference participants affirmed these priorities as the focus for further activities.¹⁷

The 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference was the last assembly convened by the RA Ministry of Diaspora on a representative basis. After that, in 2017, the Pan-Armenian Conference was convened on the basis of universal participation.

Pan-Armenian assemblies convened on the principle of universal participation as cognitive and consultation platforms

Since 1998, the RA's approach to the Diaspora has changed significantly. At that time, the issue of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide was declared as one of the priorities of RA's foreign policy¹⁸, opening great prospects for Armenia-

¹⁴ «C'ragir Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hingerord hamajhoghovi», E., 2014, e'j 5-8 ("Program of the 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference," E., 2014, p. 5-8).

¹⁵ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 5-rd hamajhoghovi 2-rd liagowmar nistowm nerkayavecine qnnarkveliq chors t'ematik owghghowt'yownnery'», ("At the 2nd plenary session of the 5th Armenia-Diaspora conference, the four thematic areas to be discussed were presented"). <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/62902/>, /19.04.2023 /

¹⁶ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan E. hamajhoghovy'», «Ard'aganq» Kiprahay gaghowt'i, o'gostos-september, 2014, e'j 1 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 5th conference", "Ardzaganq" of the Armenian Cypriot colony, August-September, 2014, page 1).

¹⁷ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q» hamahaykakan 5-rd hamajhoghovi y'ndownac' haytararowt'yowny'», (The statement adopted by the 5th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference). <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/63122/>

¹⁸ Poghosyan E., Ankax petakanowt'yan hastatman gorc'y'nt'acy' Hayastanowm (1991-2001t't'), E., 2003, e'j 548-549 (E. Poghosyan, The process of establishment of independent statehood in Armenia (1991-2001), E., 2003, p. 548-549.).

Diaspora rapprochement. The problem is that for decades, it was exclusively Diaspora organizations that pursued the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. After the restoration of Armenia's political independence, there were hopes that the RA would adopt a principled position on the issue. However, in the first years of independence, for various reasons (war, complicated political situation, etc.), the RA did not pursue a policy of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Therefore, from the perspective of Armenia-Diaspora relations, the inclusion of this issue in the RA foreign policy agenda since 1998 was a significant achievement.

The new phase of Armenia-Diaspora relations, which began in 1998, was marked by the holding of three consecutive Pan-Armenian conferences. In the absence of a state institution for Diaspora issues, the organization of the conferences was mainly carried out by the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Given the importance placed on Armenia's relations with the Diaspora after the restoration of political independence, it was considered that the conferences should be held with the widest possible participation from the Diaspora. Secular and spiritual organizations, as well as representatives from various fields, took part. Additionally, with the participation of many delegations from Armenia and Artsakh, these conferences can truly be called Pan-Armenian in nature.

The precedent of the first Armenia-Diaspora conference (1999). According to the commemorative medal issued on the occasion of the first Armenia-Diaspora meeting, the event was also called "Armenia-Diaspora Conference."¹⁹ It was the first large-scale meeting held in Armenia-Diaspora format after the restoration of Armenia's political independence.

The purpose of the conference was to align Armenia-Diaspora relations with regional requirements for addressing national problems, to effectively implement the idea of national unity, develop a fundamental concept of Armenia-Diaspora relations, and create the necessary organizational structures. A government commission was established to organize the preparations for the conference.²⁰

One of the important organizational issues of the conference was the selection of participants. The conference was convened on the principle of ensuring universal participation, that is, the participation of all Diaspora communities and groups of organizations, and the Pan-Armenian organizations were represented by separate delegations.

The first Armenia-Diaspora conference was held on September 22-23, 1999, in Yerevan. The organizers managed to solve the problem of the participation of representatives of all Armenian groups and Diaspora Armenians. About 1,300

¹⁹ «1994-1999 t't. t'ogharkvac' metaghadranner», «Hayastani Hanrapetowt'yan howshamedalner», («1994-1999 issued coins», "Commemorative medals of the Republic of Armenia"). https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/Հայաստանի_Հանրապետության_հուշադրամներ#/media/Պատկեր:AM_5000_dram_Ag_1999_Diaspora_b.png.

²⁰ «HH naxagahi hramanagiry' 1999 t'vakanin Er&anowm ha-ma-haykakan xorhrdajhoghov hravirelow masin», «HH pashtonakan teghekagir», 1998. 12. 31/33 (66) ("Decree of the President of the Republic of Armenia on convening a pan-Armenian conference in Yerevan in 1999", "Official record of the Republic of Armenia", 1998. 12. 31/33 (66)). See also <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=2506>.

Diaspora Armenians from 50 countries participated in the conference held under the slogan “One Nation, One Homeland, One Language, One Church.”²¹

At the opening plenary session, discussions were focused on elevating Armenia-Diaspora relations to a new qualitative level, defining the roles of Armenia and the Diaspora in solving nationwide problems, the need to make joint decisions,²² and considering the Artsakh issue and the economic rise of Armenia as a borderline in Armenia-Diaspora relations.²³ It was also proposed to participate in the “Hayastan” Pan-Armenian Foundation on the principle of “national duty,” aiming to reform the foundation’s activities.²⁴

The conference adopted several decisions: formation of a unified information platform as an integration tool, implementation of Pan-Armenian initiatives, creation of a Pan-Armenian youth center, creation of an Armenian development agency, and annual trainings for Diaspora Armenian teachers in Armenia.

The conference was held in plenary sessions dedicated to issues of national culture and identity, Armenia-Diaspora relations, communication between Diaspora structures and the RA, propaganda, existing capabilities, opportunities and perspectives, information technologies, and Diaspora support for Armenia. Issues of Armenian identity preservation, dual citizenship, unified spelling, resolution of existing misunderstandings and disagreements and other issues were also discussed.²⁵

The conference adopted a number of decisions: formation of a unified information platform as an integration tool, implementation of Pan-Armenian initiatives, creation of a Pan-Armenian youth center, establishment of an Armenian development agency, annual trainings of Diaspora Armenian teachers in Armenia.²⁶

Eventually, the conference adopted a declaration and a statement regarding Artsakh. It emphasized the commitment of all Armenians to preserving and strengthening the Armenian state.²⁷ It also highlighted the importance of protecting Armenian identity within the Diaspora, underscoring the role and responsibility of the Republic of Armenia. In the statement regarding Artsakh, the participants of the conference expressed their willingness to contribute to the fair and comprehensive settlement of the Artsakh issue, based on the manifestation of the free will of the Artsakh Armenians.²⁸

²¹ «Och t'e orpes tonahandes, ayl kensakerp», «Azg», 23.09.1999, e'j 1 (“Not as a festival, but a way of life,” “Azg,” 23.09.1999, p. 1).

²² «Bacowm` Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q ar'ajin hamahaykakan xorhrdajhoghovi. mo'taworape's 1200 patwirakner masnakowm en nisterin», «Aliq» o'rat'ert', Tehran, 23.09.1999, e'j 1 (“Opening of the first Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian conference: approximately 1,200 delegates participate in the sessions,” “Aliq” daily newspaper, Tehran, 23.09.1999, p. 1).

²³ «Och t'e orpes tonahandes, ayl kensakerp», «Azg», 23.09.1999, e'j 1 (“Not as a festival, but a way of life,” “Azg”, 23.09.1999, p. 1).

²⁴ Ibid, p. 3:

²⁵ Baharyan V., Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hamajhoghov & hayastanyan o'ra-gir, E., 2001, e'j 3 (Baharyan V., Armenia-Diaspora Conference and Armenian Diary, E., 2001, p. 3).

²⁶ Yeghiazaryan A. & aylq, nshv. ashx., e'j 189 (Yeghiazaryan A. and others, cf. work, p. 189).

²⁷ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q xorhrdajhoghovi hr'chakagrery», «Aliq» o'rat'ert', Tehran, 26.09.1999, e'j 1 (“Declarations of the Armenia-Diaspora Conference,” “Aliq” daily newspaper, Tehran, 26.09.1999, p. 1).

²⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

In fact, the first Armenia-Diaspora conference, although primarily aimed at solving the problem of mutual recognition and trust-building, also laid the groundwork for the adoption of a consistent policy by the RA authorities to coordinate the Armenia-Diaspora relations.

The Second Armenia-Diaspora Conference (2002). The second Armenia-Diaspora conference took place on May 27-28, 2002, in Yerevan. The responsibility for organizing the conference was once again assigned to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁹

The number of participants of the conference reached three thousand, of which more than one thousand represented the Armenian communities and organizations across 48 countries.³⁰ A representative of the organizing committee noted that, unlike the first conference, this time the sessions should be held in a more practical manner.³¹

RA President R. Kocharyan presented a report on the implementation of the decisions of the previous conference. Regarding the formation of a unified information field as a tool for integration, the broadcasting of the public television was launched, extending from Australia to the USA. In terms of Pan-Armenian initiatives, achievements included the organization of the Pan-Armenian sports games, the Pan-Armenian festival "One Nation, One Culture," and various Pan-Armenian assemblies. While the opening of the Pan-Armenian Youth Center was postponed until 2003, periodic assemblies of Diaspora Armenian youth organizations were held in Armenia. Concerning the creation of the Armenian Development Agency, Diaspora Armenians were involved in the agency's board. Regarding the training of Diaspora Armenian teachers, over 500 educators received training both in the RA and within their communities during 2000–2001. At the end of his speech, the RA President proposed to develop a Pan-Armenian agenda on issues of national significance.³²

After the opening plenary session, the conference continued with four parallel thematic sessions:

1. political issues, Armenia-Diaspora relations,
2. information and media,
3. economy and socio-economic development,
4. education, science, and culture.³³

In the thematic sessions, four or five key speakers presented, followed by discussions and a summarization of the results. The discussion on establishing a

²⁹ «Hayastani Hanrapetowt'yan varchapeti oroshomy' Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q erkrord xorhrdajhoghov' Er&anowm anckacelow masin», ("The decision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia to hold the second Armenia-Diaspora conference in Yerevan"), <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?tid=16578>.

³⁰ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan B. xorhrdajhoghov», «Teghekatow», pashto'nat'ert' Gahire'i Haykakan Baregorc'akan y'ndhanowr miowt'ean, Kahire, 2002, yowlis, t'iw 24, e'j 1; «Azg», 28.5.2002, e'j 1 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 2nd conference," "Teghekatu," the official newspaper of the Cairo Armenian Benevolent Union, Cairo, 2002, July, number 24, p. 1; "Azg," 28.5.2002, p. 1).

³¹ «Erkrord angam i mi enq havaqvel», «Azg», 28.05.2002, e'j 1 ("We gathered together for the second time", "Azg," 28.05.2002, p. 1).

³² Yeghiazaryan A. & aylq, nshv. ashx., e'j 192-193 (Yeghiazaryan A. and others, cf. work, p. 192-193).

³³ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan B. xorhrdajhoghov», «Teghekatow», pashto'nat'ert' Gahire'i Haykakan Baregorc'akan y'ndhanowr miowt'ean, Kahire, 2002, yowlis, t'iw 24, e'j 1 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 2nd conference", "Teghekatu", the official newspaper of the Cairo Armenian Benevolent Union, Cairo, 2002, July, number 24, page 1.).

coordinating body for Armenia-Diaspora relations was very important, and the possibility of creating a corresponding ministry was discussed.³⁴ Pan-Armenian priorities, such as Hay Dat, the fair settlement of the Artsakh problem, and the establishment of the Armenian state, were also discussed.³⁵

The conference adopted several important programs to provide computers to schools in the RA and the NKR, to create an Armenian Genocide research center, to establish an online university of Armenian studies, to support gifted Armenian students, to find a regional high-quality medical center, and to establish a Diaspora museum.³⁶

The Declaration of the second Armenia-Diaspora conference, with the slogan "Armenia is the homeland of all Armenians," justified the need to unite the efforts of all Armenians to strengthen Armenia. It was considered necessary to abolish the ban on dual citizenship in the RA, enabling every Armenian to fully participate in the life of their homeland. The issue of recognizing the right to free self-determination for the people of Artsakh was highlighted as an important concern for all Armenians. Similarly, the process of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide remained at the center of attention of the Armenian community.³⁷

The second Armenia-Diaspora conference, although again consultative in nature, proved to be particularly effective in terms of adopting joint programs within the Armenia-Diaspora format.

Third Armenia-Diaspora Conference (2006). The third Armenian-Diaspora conference was held in Yerevan, on September 18-20, 2006.³⁸ The conference was held as part of the events marking the 15th anniversary of the Republic of Armenia's independence. It brought together representatives from Pan-Armenian organizations, individual communities, intellectuals, businessmen, and other notable figures,³⁹ with a total of around two thousand participants from 50 countries.⁴⁰

³⁴ «Erkrord angam i mi enq havaqvel», «Azg», 28.05.2002, e'j 3; «Avartvec &s mek azgahavaq», «Azg», 29.05.2002, e'j 3 ("We gathered together for the second time", "Azg," 28.05.2002, p. 3; "Another rally has ended," "Azg," 29.05.2002, p. 3).

³⁵ «Avartvec &s mek azgahavaq», «Azg», 29.05.2002, e'j 3 ("Another rally has ended," "Azg," 29.05.2002, p. 3).

³⁶ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan B. xorhrdajhoghov», «Teghekatow», pashto'nat'ert' Gahire'i Haykakan Baregorc'akan y'ndhanowr miowt'ean, kahire, 2002, yowlis, t'iw 24, e'j 3: «Avartvec &s mek azgahavaq», «Azg», 29.05.2002, e'j 3 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 2nd conference", "Teghekatu", the official newspaper of the Cairo Armenian Benevolent Union, Cairo, 2002, July, number 24, p. 3. "Another rally has ended," "Azg," 29.05.2002, p. 3.).

³⁷ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan B. xorhrdajhoghov», «Teghekatow», pashto'nat'ert' Gahire'i Haykakan Baregorc'akan y'ndhanowr miowt'ean, kahire, 2002, yowlis, t'iw 24, e'j 2 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 2nd conference", "Teghekatu", the official newspaper of the Cairo Armenian Benevolent Union, Cairo, 2002, July, number 24, p. 2).

³⁸ «HH kar'avarowt'yan oroshowmy' HH artaqin gorc'eri naxara-row-t'yany' gowmar hatkacnelow masin», ("Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia on allocating money to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia"), <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=27224>.

³⁹ «Tpaworowt'iwnner Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghove'n», «Masis» shabat'at'ert', Beyrowt', № 13, 2006, hoktember, e'j 13 ("Impressions from the 3rd Armenia-Diaspora Conference", "Masis" weekly newspaper, Beirut, № 13, 2006, October, p. 13).

⁴⁰ «Hayery' 21-rd darown...», «Jhamanak» qaghaqakan jhoghovrdakan o'rat'ert', K.Polis, 18.09.2006, e'j 1; «Menq shat lowrj npataknerov enq masnackowm xorhrdajhoghovin, irenq lowrj chen verabervowm mez»

According to the agenda, in the first part of the conference, Armenian political and spiritual leaders and representatives of Pan-Armenian organizations spoke at the plenary session. The second part of the agenda of the conference was dedicated to a crucial issue: the implementation of the development program for the rural regions of Armenia.

The third part of the conference agenda featured a separate discussion titled “New answers to the old questions. Armenians in the 21st century,” which was divided into four key directions:

1. nation, state, and identity in the 21st century,
2. Armenia-Diaspora relations and the possibilities for their deepening,
3. Emigration and repatriation in the context of Armenia-Diaspora relations,
4. The discussion of Diaspora in terms of perspectives.⁴¹

In his speech, RA President R. Kocharyan emphasized the strong cooperation observed in Armenia-Diaspora relations, which is especially expressed in the important programs implemented in Armenia by the “Hayastan” Pan-Armenian Fund, the “Lincy” Fund and other charitable organizations.⁴² He also mentioned that the rural communities of the RA are weakening and depopulating, and large investments are needed to solve the problem. In this regard, he called for the support of the Diaspora.⁴³ The Catholicos of All Armenians appealed to the participants of the conference to support this crucial initiative: “We bring our patriarchal message and exhortation to our native and Diaspora people to respond to this great and important initiative of the homeland to rebuild the villages.”⁴⁴

In the third part of the conference agenda, a special discussion focused on regulating Armenia-Diaspora relations. The main concern was that in the absence of coordination, the process of implementing the decisions of the previous conferences had become uncontrollable. This was evidenced by the fact that most of the decisions from the second Armenia-Diaspora conference had not been implemented. Proposals were made to create a ministry of Diaspora affairs, though an alternative suggestion was to form a Pan-Armenian council. In his speech, the RA President mentioned that it was not possible to implement such proposals at that time, but they should be kept in mind for the future. He added, “I would consider this conference to be the highest body

(“Armenians in the 21st century...”, political popular daily “Zhamanak”, K. Polis, 18.09.2006, p. 1; “We participate in the conference with very serious goals, they do not take us seriously.”), <https://hetq.am/hy/article/11473>.

⁴¹ «HH AG naxarar Vardan O'skanyani handipowmy' Groghneri miowt'yan andamneri, steghc'agorc'akan miowt'yownneri nerkayacowichneri ew mshakowyti gor'ichneri het» (“Meeting of RA Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan with members of Writers' Union, representatives of creative unions and cultural figures”) <https://www.mfa.am/hy/press-conference/2006/09/05/vo/1711>.

⁴² «Y'st R'obert Qocharyani` LGH harcowm mot e'inq paymanagir knqelown, bayc chhajoghvec», «Azg», 19.09.2006, e'j 1 (“According to Robert Kocharyan, we were close to signing an agreement on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, but we did not succeed,” “Azg,” 19.09.2006, p. 1).

⁴³ Hovyan V., Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhghov (Hovyan V., 3rd Armenia-Diaspora Conference) http://www.noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2399 / 19.04.2023 /

⁴⁴ «N.S.O.T.T. Garegin B C'ayragowyn Patriarq & Amenayn Hayoc Ka-t'o-ghi-kosi xosqy' «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q» errord xorhrdajhghovin (18-20 september, 2006 t'., Er&an), «E'jmiac'in», 2006, № 9, e'j 24 (“The speech of the H.S.O.T.T. Supreme Patriarch Karegin II and Catholicos of All Armenians at the third conference “Armenia-Diaspora” (September 18-20, 2006, Yerevan), “Echmiadzin,” 2006, No. 9, p. 24).

of the collective wishes of the Armenian people, during which we make decisions and each of us tries to implement these decisions in our activities.”⁴⁵

The discussion on the issue of Armenian identity preservation in the Diaspora was particularly professional and meaningful. In the first session of the conference, titled “Nation, State, and Identity in the 21st Century” and focusing on the topic “New Answers to the Old Questions: Armenians in the 21st Century,” chaired by the famous theorist of diaspora studies Kh. Tololyan, scientific and applied reports were presented. It was proposed that the responsibility for preservation of Armenians should be entrusted to the RA, which had already been engaged in this mission through initiatives like the Pan-Armenian festival “One Nation, One Culture” and other events. However, the proposal emphasized the need for planning more extensive and systematic events.⁴⁶

During the conference, the Artsakh issue was also discussed, emphasizing that a fair resolution would not be achievable without the support of the Diaspora.⁴⁷

Following that, a discussion was held on the topic “Diaspora in 2020,” where participants envisioned the Diaspora changing over the next 15 years.⁴⁸ An attempt was made to discuss developments that could lead to a stronger and more united Diaspora by 2020. In fact, the third Armenia-Diaspora conference deviated from the traditional format and presented participants with an agenda to discuss basic solutions to fundamental problems.

The 6th Armenia-Diaspora Conference (2017). After convening Armenia-Diaspora conferences on a representative basis in 2011 and 2014, the RA Ministry of Diaspora organized a Pan-Armenian conference with comprehensive participation in 2017. It took place on September 18-20, 2017, in Yerevan. 1612 Armenians from 69 countries, as well as from the RA and Artsakh participated. The conference was held under the motto “Mutual Trust, Unity, and Responsibility.” The following issues were on the agenda of the conference:

1. Development of Armenia’s economy (foreign investments, promotion of tourism, cooperation of business circles),
2. Features of the defense policy of Armenia in the conditions of modern challenges,
3. Armenia’s foreign policy, Artsakh issue, and issues of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide,

⁴⁵ «Avartvec Hayastan - Sp'yowr'q errord xorhrdajhoghov'» ("The third Armenia-Diaspora Conference has ended"). <http://www.azatutyun.am/a/1584134.html>.

⁴⁶ «Hay linenq y'ndownelov orosh arjheqner, t'e jhxtelov...», «Azg», 20.09.2006, e'j 1; «Ayso'r awartwec Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghov'», «Aliq» o'rat'ert', T'ehran, 20.09.2006, e'j 1; «Ezrap'akich hangrowan», «Jhamanak» qaghaqakan jhoghovrdakan o'rat'ert', K.Polis, 20.09.2006, e'j 1; Hovyan V., Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghov ("Should we be Armenian by accepting certain values or by denying..."), "Azg", 20.09.2006, page 1; "The 3rd Armenia-Diaspora conference ended today," "Aliq" daily, Tehran, 20.09.2006, page 1; "Final milestone", "Zhamanak" political popular daily, K. Polis, 20.09.2006, page 1. Hovyan V., 3rd Armenia-Diaspora Conference) http://www.noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2399.

⁴⁷ Hovyan V., Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghov, (Hovyan V., 3rd Armenia-Diaspora Conference) http://www.noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2399.

⁴⁸ «Ayso'r awartwec Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghov'», «Aliq» o'rat'ert', T'ehran, 20.09.2006, e'j 1 ("The 3rd Armenia-Diaspora conference ended today," "Aliq" daily, Tehran, 20.09.2006, p. 1)

4. Problems of Armenian identity preservation.⁴⁹

At least the political circle of the participants viewed the purpose of the conference mainly in the development of tactics to stop emigration and the creation of the Pan-Armenian council.⁵⁰ The need to stop emigration was also mentioned in the speech of Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia.⁵¹ He also emphasized the lack of responsibility both from Armenia toward the Diaspora and from the Diaspora toward Armenia.⁵² Before the conference, intellectuals had highlighted the insufficient level of trust the Diaspora had toward Armenia.⁵³

It should be emphasized that the conference took place in 2016, shortly after the April four-day war. Therefore, the strengthening of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as the increase in their defense capabilities, became central topics in the broad discussions and the core agenda. It is no coincidence that at the closing of the conference, the RA Minister of Diaspora emphasized: “We said a lot to the world and our ‘neighbors’ and ‘we gathered to show that we are together,’ ‘unity was established, we are together.’”⁵⁴

The participants of the conference emphasized the increasing volumes of assimilation in the Diaspora.⁵⁵

The importance of the Diaspora’s participation in strengthening the homeland’s defense capabilities was at the core of the discussions on Armenia’s defense policy.⁵⁶

In the statement adopted by the participants of the conference, it was mentioned that the participants were guided by “the imperative of consolidating the potential of all Armenians, continuous dialogue and multi-layered involvement in strengthening the trinity of Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora.” The following national priorities were emphasized: the unity of Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora, the strengthening of Armenia, protection of Armenians, Artsakh security, international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, etc. The participants expressed their readiness to pursue the implementation of these priorities and underscored that they accepted the statement as “a landmark for all Armenians, the state bodies of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of

⁴⁹ Azatyan E., Gorc'nakan aknkaliqner Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 6-rd hamajhoghovic, «Azg», 08.09.2017, e'j 4 (E. Azatyan, Practical expectations from the 6th Armenia-Diaspora conference, "Azg", 09.08.2017, p. 4).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ «Aram A. Hayastany' parpvowm e', isk Sp'yowr'qy' mashvowm» ("Aram A. Armenia is being captured, and the Diaspora is being worn out.")

<https://www.panorama.am/am/news/2017/09/18/%D4%B1%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%B4-%D4%B1-%D5%AD%D5%B8%D5%BD%D6%84/1836097>.

⁵² Avetiqyan H., Xoher' 6-rd hamajhoghovi avartin, «Azg», 22.09.2017, e'j 1 (H. Avetiqyan, Thoughts at the end of the 6th conference, "Azg", 22.09.2017, p. 1).

⁵³ Melqonyan A., Inch spasel Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hamajhoghovic, «Azg», 30.08.2017, e'j 8 (Melqonyan A., What to expect from the Armenia-Diaspora conference, "Azg", 30.08.2017, p. 8).

⁵⁴ «Miasnowt'yowny' kayacav. y'ndownvec Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 6-rd hamahaykakan hamajhoghovi haytararowt'yowny'» ("Unity took place. The statement of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference was adopted.) <https://www.tert.am/am/news/2017/09/20/Arm-diasp/2488574>.

⁵⁵ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 6-rd hamajhoghovi masnakicnem amp'op'el en ashxatanqi ardyownqnery'» ("The participants of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora conference summarized the results of the work") <https://armenpress.am/arm/news/905996>.

⁵⁶ «Amp'op'el en Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 6-rd hamahaykakan hamajhoghovi ashxatanqnery'» ("The works of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference have been summarized.") <https://www.mil.am/index.php/ru/news/4957>.

Artsakh, the Armenian Church, Pan-Armenian community structures and organizations to pursue the realization of Pan-Armenian goals.”⁵⁷

In fact, the agenda of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora conference covered almost all issues of Pan-Armenian importance. After the four-day war in 2016, such a massive Pan-Armenian event attempted to show the unity and determination of the RA and the Diaspora to support the just cause of the Artsakh Armenians.

Global Armenian Summit in 2022: a new approach to the Pan-Armenian meeting

Speaking on the issue of convening a new conference, Chief Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs Z. Sinanyan stated that the goal was to organize a more practical and effective conference than the previous ones.⁵⁸ In other words, he believed that the time has come to organize more practical and effective discussions in terms of decisions and their implementation.

The Global Armenian Summit was held on October 28-31, 2022, in Yerevan. It was organized by the Office of the Chief Commissioner of RA Diaspora Affairs. The summit aimed to serve as a platform for diaspora representatives and local partners to discuss challenges and issues of universal importance. The proposals, solutions, and outcomes voiced during the summit were intended to form the basis of the Pan-Armenian agenda.⁵⁹

About 600 participants from more than 50 countries took part in the summit. The participants represented various organizations, structures, and fields of activity, including science, business, the military, community structures, healthcare, education, technology, art, etc. About 130 specialists from approximately 15 countries were invited to lead and participate in the panel discussions.⁶⁰

Chief Commissioner of RA Diaspora Affairs Z. Sinanyan, welcoming the participants of the “Global Armenian Summit,” spoke about the importance of the summit, Diaspora and Armenia cooperation.⁶¹

The summit was held in the aftermath of the military operations launched by Azerbaijan against the Republic of Armenia on September 13-15, 2022, during which significant areas of Armenia were occupied. The difficult situation surrounding Artsakh was also a major concern. It is no coincidence that the summit featured a

⁵⁷ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hamahaykakan 6-rd hamajhoghovi haytararowt'yowny'» (“Announcement of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference”) <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/259632>.

⁵⁸ «Che'inq owzowm hamajhoghov ankcacnel' naxkini nman t'oz p'cheinq sp'yowr'qi jhoghovrdi achqin, heto twamp'ow dneinq' xorovac' owtelowc ow mi erkow hamerg lselowc heto». Sinanyan (“We didn't want to hold a conference, that would blow dust in the eyes of the people of the diaspora like before, and then go on our way after eating barbecue and listening to a couple of concerts.” Sinanyan,) <https://www.aravot.am/2021/03/17/1178071/>.

⁵⁹ Hamashxarhayin haykakan gagat'najhoghov (World Armenian Summit) <http://diaspora.gov.am/hy/events/103/globalarmeniansummit>.

⁶⁰ Hamashxarhayin haykakan gagat'najhoghovi manramasner (Details of the World Armenian Summit) <http://diaspora.gov.am/hy/news/881>, Ezrap'akich ditoghowt'yownner, ar'ancqayin ezrahangowmner & hajordogh qayler (Concluding remarks, key conclusions and next steps,) <http://diaspora.gov.am/hy/news/915>.

⁶¹ Hamashxarhayin haykakan gagat'najhoghov: O'r 1 - Oghjowyni xosqer (World Armenian Summit. Day 1 - Greetings), <http://diaspora.gov.am/hy/news/883>.

special session on Armenia's security issues, where participants engaged in a direct dialogue with Artsakh Republic's State Minister, R. Vardanyan, who provided an update on the current situation and potential developments in Artsakh.⁶²

The security of Armenia, the protection of Armenian interests in the world, repatriation, education, healthcare, agriculture, issues concerning the communities and the Diaspora youth became topics of discussion at the conference.⁶³

The summit consisted of eight consecutive thematic (panel) discussions and 17 concurrent sessions. Many Armenian and Diaspora Armenian experts participated as moderators and panelists in these discussions. The panel discussions focused on Armenia and various current issues related to the Armenian people.

The summit differed from previous ones in that the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the Cilicia See of the Great House, and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation did not participate. Additionally, there was no delegation from Artsakh. The focus was placed on completing professional-expert discussions and their outcomes.⁶⁴

Judging by the fact that the formats of participation, topics, and discussions at the summit were completely changed compared to previous ones, it can be inferred that, if the new approach proves effective, there is possibility for future Armenia-Diaspora assemblies to be held in a similar format.

Conclusion

Summarizing the results of the study, we can note that the first Armenia-Diaspora conference, initially organized as a representative meeting of Diaspora Armenian communities or individuals, later began to be called "Armenia-Diaspora conference," due to the wide range of participants. However, the idea of organizing Armenia-Diaspora meetings on a representative basis did not fade, and the meetings in 2011 and 2014 were also organized on the same principle. Moreover, they were later called "Armenia-Diaspora Fourth" and "Armenia-Diaspora Fifth" conferences. The practice of organizing conferences with wide participation of Diaspora Armenians continued during assemblies in 1999, 2002, 2006, and 2017, where hundreds of representatives from Diaspora Armenian communities, organizations, and various individual figures from both the Diaspora and Armenia took part. In this regard, the example of the Global Armenian Summit in 2022 is interesting, which, in fact, was significantly different from the previous ones.

⁶² Owghigh. Hamashxarhayin haykakan gogat'najhoghov, o'r 2-rd (Live. World Armenian Summit, day 2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7HznFxRBT4>.

⁶³ «Hamashxarhayin haykakan gogat'anajhoghovi c'ragir», E., 2022 ("Program of the World Armenian Summit," E., 2022).

⁶⁴ Qani or gogat'najhoghovi qnnarkowmneri ardyownqnery' der'&s minch& verj i mi chen bavel & dranc himan vra hamapatasxan c'ragrer chen mshakvel ow irakanacvel, djhvar e' xosel dra y'ndhanowr ardyownavetowt'yan masin (Since the results of the summit discussions have not been brought together to the end and corresponding programs have not been developed and implemented based on them, it is difficult to talk about its overall effectiveness).

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THE EFFECT OF GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION ON THE FORMATION OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS SECURITY COMPLEX: THE STRATEGIC MODELING OF ARMENIA'S SECURITY POLICY

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Abstract

This scientific article explores the intricate dynamics between global geopolitical competition and the formation of the South Caucasus security complex, with a specific focus on Armenia's security policy. After the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war and the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the geopolitical significance of the South Caucasus is beginning to change. In the conditions of the deepening of the Ukrainian crisis, the global importance of the South Caucasus is highlighted as an important economic corridor of strategic communication in the "north-south" and "east-west" directions. The region is entering a complex period of strategic competition with increasing security dependence and vulnerability from global geopolitical processes. It also creates new security threats for the restoration of the balance of power in the South Caucasus and the reconstruction of the security complex.

The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Central and South Asia create new security threats for maintaining the security balance of the South Caucasus. The trends of increasing influence of hybrid threats in the Middle Eastern region are beginning to spread in the South Caucasus as well. Based on all this, the strategic modeling of Armenia's security policy is presented in the article. It can have a guiding role in the process of developing the priorities of Armenia's foreign policy.

Through strategic modeling, the article elucidates possible future scenarios for Armenia's security policy, considering varying degrees of global geopolitical competition and regional instability. This modeling enables us to better anticipate the potential trajectories of Armenia's security choices and their consequences for regional stability and security dynamics. Moreover, it highlights the interconnectedness of South Caucasus security with broader global geopolitics, emphasizing the need for a nuanced and multidimensional approach to understanding the security complex in this region.

Keywords - South Caucasus, security complex, security policy, international security system, 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, Russian-Ukrainian war, strategic modeling.

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Introduction

The South Caucasus region has historically been a geopolitical crossroads, subject to the influences of major powers and regional actors, making it a critical area for analyzing the interplay of international politics and regional security dynamics. The research methodology involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses, integrating historical context, policy documents, and strategic simulations to develop a comprehensive understanding of Armenia's security policy formation. This article identifies and assesses the key determinants of Armenia's security policy, including its strategic partnerships, military capabilities, and diplomatic initiatives. This article contributes to the literature on international relations and security studies by shedding light on the intricate relationship between global geopolitical competition and the formation of security policies in the South Caucasus, with Armenia as a central case study. By employing strategic modeling techniques, it provides valuable insights into the potential pathways of Armenia's security policy, offering policymakers and scholars a foundation for informed analysis and decision-making in this complex and volatile region.

Transformations of international security architecture

The international security system has undergone significant transformations over the years, reflecting changes in the global geopolitical landscape, advances in technology, and evolving security threats. The transition from a unipolar world order to a multipolar one makes it necessary to reinterpret the framework of relationships between "centers of power" that influence global political processes. While at the beginning of the 2000s the "management" of global political processes was mostly carried out through the hegemony of the USA, now it will be impossible to ensure global stability without a number of Eurasian states. The end of the complete "hegemony" of the USA does not mean that the USA ceases to be considered one of the most influential states in global political processes. Moreover, as long as the USA continues to surpass all "centers of power" in the world with its economic and military capabilities, it will remain the leading state in the multipolar world order.

Two possible scenarios are discussed in international relations due to the change of the unipolar world order.

- Prominent actors in international relations are beginning to challenge US hegemony, attempting to establish bipolarity or multipolarity.
- The USA is trying to maintain its dominant position in the international security system, but already acting as the primary power in the multipolar system (*primus inter pares*).¹

Multipolarity is presented as an unbalanced system, where the role of classical mechanisms of deterrence is minimized. In the conditions of the formation of the new world order, the standards of the state's power are also changing to some extent. Not only has the degree of modernization of the armed forces and the state's economic

¹ Williams P., *Security Studies: An introduction*, 2nd edition, (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 155.

potential become important, but also the degree of vulnerability of the state to external security uncertainties, the degree of modernity of the state's communication infrastructures, the presence of a reliable network of allies and coalitions, and the possibilities to neutralize hybrid threats.

In contrast to the bipolar and unipolar world order, the effectiveness of global security mechanisms and the deterrent role of international security organizations are significantly decreasing in the current world order. Nation-states are once again becoming dominant, with the ability to unite their societies and defend themselves against external aggression. As the world order changes, the degree of effectiveness of security systems built on liberal principles is now diminishing, because international law, state democratization, and protection of human rights cease to be of primary importance in the context of ensuring international security. In the changing world order, the structure of the international security system becomes more anarchic, and the accumulation of military forces and deterrence becomes more important.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war, the defining element of the formation of the international and global security system continue to be the competition for the division of influence zones in different regions. That competition will shape two opposing camps in the coming years, led by the USA and China. In particular, in its National Security Strategy document adopted in 2022, the US presents the model of "integrated deterrence" strategic cooperation for coalition security.² It includes the formation of new collective security mechanisms through cooperation with AUKUS, the Republic of Korea, and Japan. Meanwhile, China will try to enter into competition with the USA with the partial support of Russia and cooperation with the states showing "strategic independence" within the multipolar world order. Given the recent shifts in global strategic rivalry, one can note that the basis of global strategic competition in the coming years will be the struggle for scientific and technological superiority or the "technological arms race".³

The decline of US liberal hegemony and the tendencies to establish a multipolar world order have a serious impact on changing regional security complexes, including the South Caucasus. In the years to come, the most important element in shaping the international security system will continue to be the USA-China strategic competition over values and ideology, economic, technological and military supremacy. The USA-Russia rivalry will remain a competition between a global power and a regional power.⁴ Russia's geopolitical achievements will continue to be based on short-term goals. Beyond the USA-China-Russia "triangle" and European "centers of power", countries with regional influence—such as India, Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, Japan, and Brazil—will play a significant role in shaping the multipolar world order.

² Biden-Harris Administration's National Security Strategy, The White House, Washington, 2022, p. 22.

³ The Power Atlas, Seven battlegrounds of a networked world, European Council on Foreign Relations, Berlin, 2021, pp. 107-125.

⁴ Pezard S., U.S. Strategic Competition with Russia, A RAND Research Primer, 2022, p. 16.

Strategic modeling of Armenia's security policy in the context of changes in the international security system

Current Situation

- Intensification of geopolitical competition between “centers of power”.
- Escalation of military conflicts.
- Establishment of a multipolar world order under the leadership of the USA.
- Decrease in the role of international law and organizations providing international security.
- Activation of regionalism tendencies.

Current strategy of Armenia

- Implementation of geopolitical maneuvers.
- Reducing the likelihood of becoming a new platform for global geopolitical competition.
- Implementation of additional geopolitical mechanisms to ensure the security of Armenia.

Armenia's Strategic Gap

- Lack of opportunities to implement geopolitical maneuvers.
- Lack of opportunities to involve new “centers of power” in ensuring regional security.
- Lack of evasion of geopolitically imposed decisions.
- Settlement of misunderstandings related to the existing mechanisms of allied and collective security.

Strategic Alternatives

- Strengthening cooperation with Russia and Iran in the area of mutual vital interests in the region.
- Engaging in active maneuvers with the involvement of non-regional “centers of power” without changing Armenia's foreign policy direction.
- Maintaining cooperation with the West.

Recommended Strategy

- Implementation of a foreign and security policy adapted to the deepening geopolitical competition between the West and Russia.
- Strengthening the geopolitical positions of Russia in the region by combining mutual national interests.
- Deepening security cooperation with the West and other non-regional “centers of power” without violating the vital interests of Russia and Iran.

Recommended Action

- Maintain and strengthen Armenian-Russian strategic alliance to reduce the dangers of interfering in Armenia's internal affairs.
- Balance the deterrence factors caused by Russia's geopolitical presence in the South Caucasus.
- Encourage Western initiatives aimed at modernizing the political institutions of all the states of the South Caucasus.

- Expand the geopolitical, commercial and economic involvement of Iran, India and China in the South Caucasus.

The problems of forming the security complex of the South Caucasus

After the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, the South Caucasus has entered a complex cycle of global and regional strategic competition. Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Central and South Asia generate new security threats for maintaining the balance of power and rebuilding the security complex in the South Caucasus. The trend of increasing impact of hybrid threats typical of the Middle Eastern region is extending into the South Caucasus. In the long term, these processes pose serious security risks for the strategic autonomy of the South Caucasian states.

“Centers of power” have always viewed cooperation with the South Caucasian states not merely as bilateral relations but as a means to enhance their influence in the region. Consequently, the Armenian-Russian allied relations create opportunities for the preservation of Russia’s influence in the South Caucasus. Also, the West aims to reduce Russian influence in the region by deepening Armenia-USA and Armenia-EU relations. In the conditions of worsening relations between the West and Iran, it is in the interests of the West that the South Caucasian states do not contribute to the deepening economic and military-political cooperation between Russia and Iran. Therefore, Western countries often put pressure on Azerbaijan to prevent the latter’s support for the development of the Russia-Azerbaijan-Iran “North-South” economic corridor.

The war in Ukraine has restricted trans-Russian east-west transit routes in Eurasia, prompting Russia to focus more on developing north-south corridors.⁵ From a strategic point of view, strengthening of its positions in the South Caucasian and Central Asian states has become increasingly important for Russia. Before the war in Ukraine, east-west communication routes through the South Caucasus and Central Asia competed with Russian routes, however, now Russia seeks greater involvement in managing these routes. By supporting the unblocking of communications in the South Caucasus, Russia aims to bypass Western sanctions and establish new railway connections with Iran, Turkey, and India.

In the conditions of changing world order, the role of India in the South Caucasus is also significantly increasing. India has serious ambitions to become a separate pole of international relations. The deepening of Armenian-Indian military-political cooperation does not imply a worsening of India-Azerbaijan relations. For India, Azerbaijan is one of the key states in the “North-South” transport corridor, which ensures the transit of Indian goods from Iran to Russia. Despite the crisis in India-Azerbaijan political relations, bilateral economic relations are developing at a great pace. This is mainly due to changes in communication geopolitics resulting from the Russian-Ukrainian war. Particularly, in 2022, the volume of bilateral trade through the “North-South” corridor has increased.

⁵ Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, Decree of the President 229, March 31, 2023, Information resources of the President of Russia.

Due to the war in Ukraine, the international communication network in the east-west direction is facing serious disruptions. The role of Azerbaijan as energy exporter and a key transit state in the “Middle Corridor”, which is part of China's “Belt and Road” project, is significantly increasing. Azerbaijan’s role for Russia and Iran is also rising, especially after Azerbaijan and the EU agreed to double gas supply volumes and initiate electricity exports. Since Azerbaijan cannot meet the demand of European countries with its own resources, Russia and Iran will try to supply gas through Azerbaijan by entering into an indirect deal with the EU. The opportunities for Azerbaijan to become a transport hub between East and West, North and South are increasing. In this case, Azerbaijan does not intend to unblock the regional communication routes entirely under the control of Armenia. It will contribute to the economic development of Armenia and provide new control mechanisms. That is why Azerbaijan wants an extraterritorial corridor. If Armenia does not provide it, Azerbaijan will not restore communication links with Armenia. Adopting the strategy of becoming a communication hub, Azerbaijan will try to sign a peace treaty as soon as possible, as it needs long-term stability. On the other hand, Aliyev will not stop his anti-Armenian policy, as it helps sustain his regime. However, the preservation of the ruling regime in Azerbaijan is underpinned by an international consensus. Therefore, in the coming years, it is unlikely the change of the regime through external pressure or even application of international sanctions against Azerbaijan.

The Russia-Ukraine war has intensified security risks in the South Caucasus. If the South Caucasus becomes a new arena for military competition between the West and Russia, Armenia will have serious problems of preserving its sovereignty. Therefore, Armenia should avoid actions that deepen the competition between regional and non-regional “centers of power” in the South Caucasus.

The changing dynamics of the South Caucasus security complex creates a new need for Armenia to introduce additional security mechanisms, one of which is the establishment of the EU civilian mission in Armenia. The EU civilian mission offers new political opportunities for temporarily deterring Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia's sovereign territory, as in recent years, Azerbaijan has become economically dependent on the EU for its energy exports. Due to the situation in the South Caucasus, the EU is expanding its influence from Georgia to Armenia to weaken the role of Russia and maintain leverage over Azerbaijan. One of the main goals of the EU mission is to prevent attempts to create a new zone of destabilization in the South Caucasus region near Europe. However, the EU mission cannot fully serve the purpose of ensuring the stability of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, as its monitoring activities are limited to the Armenian side. Consequently, the EU mission’s impact will be less about stabilizing the border and more about increasing the political role of the EU in the South Caucasus. The EU civilian mission’s limited mandate and representation prevent comprehensive monitoring of border incidents. The main goal of the mission is political, given that regional security regulation remains in the hands of states with vital interests in the South Caucasus. If the EU’s mission changes from civilian to military, Armenia will risk significant security complications in its relationships with Russia and Iran.

Both Iran and Russia strongly oppose the involvement of non-regional actors in the South Caucasus. According to Iranian officials, security risks in the region are escalating due to Azerbaijan-Israel military-political ties and Armenia's cooperation with Euro-Atlantic structures. According to Ali Akbar Velayati, senior adviser on international affairs to the Supreme Leader of Iran, amid the Russian-Ukrainian war, the West tries to encourage pan-Turkism, which will encircle Iran from the north and Russia from the south. Velayati believes that the activation of the regional policy of the West contributes to the weakening of Russia's geopolitical position in the South Caucasus, and the West wants to strengthen the factors that create tension in the South Caucasus, which will have a negative impact on regional security.⁶

Strategic modeling of Armenia's security policy in the process of forming the South Caucasus security complex

Current situation

- Changing the inclusion of the South Caucasus region in the post-Soviet geostrategic complex.
- Uncertainties around the final formation of the security complex of the South Caucasus.
- Rising tendencies toward regionalism.
- Increasing the importance of unblocking transit communications in the region.
- Aspirations by South Caucasian states to diversify their foreign and security policy directions.

Current strategy of Armenia

- Diversification of foreign policy without full cooperation with other "centers of power".
- Implementation of extra-regional mechanisms for overcoming regional conflicts.
- Seeking to establish Armenian-Turkish diplomatic relations.
- Building security systems based on the principles of liberalism.

Armenia's strategic gap

- Lack of capabilities to neutralize threats beyond Armenia's control.
- Lack of a national security strategy, military strategy for the formation of a regional security complex.
- Lack of a regional strategy for common agendas regarding cooperation with regional states.

Strategic considerations

- The unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict, lack of prospects for a comprehensive settlement, change in the geopolitical balance of the settlement and the increasing role of Turkey.
- The existence of military conflicts in the wider neighborhood of the region.

⁶ Velayati Stresses Vigilance regarding NATO Plot, Future of Caucasus, Tasnim News Agency, July 12, 2023, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/07/12/2924987/velayati-stresses-vigilance-regarding-nato-plot-future-of-caucasus>

- Decrease in the regional effectiveness of the activities of international security structures and collective security organizations.
- Uncertainties related to the future of the presence of the Russian peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- The de facto interruption of the OSCE Minsk Group activities and attempts to adapt other Middle Eastern negotiation formats.
- Isolating Armenia from participating in international economic, transport, energy and communication projects.

Recommended strategy

- Taking into account the interests of Russia, Turkey, and Iran, as well as counterbalancing their neo-imperialist aspirations.
- Restoring the balance of power in the South Caucasus through an integrated deterrence strategy.
- Balancing the influence of regional and non-regional “centers of power”.
- Preventing the adaptation of Middle Eastern cooperation formats in the region.
- Maintaining the status quo and preventing Azerbaijan from capitalizing on the war successes.

Recommended Action

- Reinterpret the Armenian-Russian Mutual Assistance Agreement and the Declaration on Allied Cooperation.
- Initiate new formats of Armenian-Iranian security cooperation, without violating the principles of Armenian-Russian alliance relations.
- Use certain positive dynamics in Russian-Georgian relations for the activation of Iran-Armenia-Georgia-Russia cooperation.
- Initiate new formats of Armenia-India, Armenia-China military-political cooperation.
- Avoid interference in strengthening of Russian-Azerbaijan relations, as well as the development of Eurasian Economic Union-Azerbaijan economic relations, thereby contributing to the preservation of Russian influence in Azerbaijan.
- Separate the process of Armenian-Turkish reconciliation from the process of establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey.
- Support the restoration of the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group.
- In the process of establishing Armenian-Turkish diplomatic relations and unblocking regional communications, try to involve the EU and China, and emphasize its necessity for them with the "Middle Corridor" factor.
- Make new assessments regarding the economic and political risks and opportunities associated with region's becoming the main platform for bypassing Western sanctions on Russia.

Conclusion

Our analysis of Armenia's security policy within the South Caucasus security complex vividly illuminates the intricate nexus of global geopolitics and regional security complexities. We have demonstrated that Armenia's security decisions are deeply

interlinked with the broader global geopolitical landscape. Russia's role as a historical ally and security guarantor, Turkey's regional aspirations, and the USA and the EU engagement in the South Caucasus all exert profound influence on Armenia's strategic choices. Additionally, Armenia's evolving relationships with Iran and India further complicate its security calculus, underscoring the multifaceted nature of its security policy formation. The South Caucasus remains an arena of considerable uncertainty, with global geopolitical competition continuing to impact regional stability. The main conclusion of this article is that international relations are becoming increasingly anarchic, and Armenia should carefully navigate its security policy choices. In particular, the main idea is that Armenia should strive to avoid becoming an arena for competition between the West and Russia, while seeking to balance its security policy directions as much as possible. In summary, this scientific article makes a significant contribution to international relations and security studies by unraveling the intricate relationship between global geopolitics and the formation of security policies in the South Caucasus.

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THE NEW WORLD ORDER AND THE STRATEGIC SECURITY SITUATION IN THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST AND INDO- PACIFIC REGIONS

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Abstract

The paper examines the transformation of world order and accompanying geopolitical and strategic processes, particularly developments in the Greater Middle East and Indo-Pacific regions, their key actors, and political ambitions. In 2020, the Artsakh war and subsequent developments created a new geo-strategic and geo-economic reality for Armenia. These events highlight that the international system has entered a highly complex and even chaotic phase, encompassing a vast area from Europe's Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast of the Far East. In this context, the paper discusses two emerging geostrategic concepts in international discourse regarding the Greater Middle East and Indo-Pacific macro-regions.

The paper analyzes the processes, unfolding in those regions, including the US policies and strategies, as well as their implications, the factors of China and India as key actors, formed and emerging alliances, as well as cooperation formats. The transformation of the global order and the emergence of new geopolitical regions – the Greater Middle East, Central Asia and the Indo-Pacific – signal dramatic changes. The competition among great powers or power centers (the US, China, India, Iran, Turkey, Europe, and Russia) in these regions is becoming the core of modern world politics. Thus, it is evident that the Greater Middle East and Indo-Pacific macro-regions are converging, creating a new situation that differs significantly from both the post-Cold War order and the global order established after September 11, 2001.

Keywords - world order, Indo-Pacific, Greater Middle East, macro-regions, geostrategy, the US, China, India, Turkey, Iran, conflicts, power, interests.

Introduction

The war in Artsakh in 2020 and the following developments have formed a new geo-strategic and geo-economic reality for Armenia. Examining this conflict in the context of global and regional politics, and the new world order, established after the Cold War, we observe that the system of international relations has entered a highly complicated and even chaotic period, spanning a vast area from Europe's Atlantic coast

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to the Pacific coast of the Far East. Events unfolding in this region, especially in the South Caucasus, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific along with the strategic positioning of global power centers, reflect the final phase of the collapse of the post-Cold War world order and the emergence of the New World Order, proclaimed by President George Bush in 1991 and never materialized.

Greater Middle and Indo-Pacific Regions

The last two decades have brought to international discourse two geostrategic concepts: the *Greater Middle East* and the *Indo-Pacific Macro-regions*.

The Greater Middle East¹ consists of four subregions: a/ Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan); b/ the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia); c/ Western Asia (Turkey, Iran) and d/ the Middle East (the Arab countries, Israel, Palestinian entity).²

The implementation of this project became possible by connecting the South Caucasian and Central Asian sub-regions with the West Asian and Middle Eastern sub-regions. However, discussing the formation of a new geopolitical macro-region—the Greater Middle East—does not imply a merger of these four sub-regions into a union similar to the European Union, African Union, or NAFTA. It is practically impossible to implement. Implementing this concept is practically impossible, primarily because the Greater Middle East was a US-promoted idea, and the American influence on the macro-region seemed essential.

Nevertheless, during last 10 years the plummeting of the U.S. footprint in the Greater Middle East became obvious: “...*The post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were failures of both design and execution, resulting in costly overreach, part of a broader U.S. focus on the greater Middle East that defied strategic logic. The George W. Bush and Obama administrations dedicated a high percentage of their foreign policy focus to a region home to only about five percent of the world’s population, no great powers, and economies dependent on the wasting asset of fossil fuels.*”³

The emergence of a post-American order in the Middle East became evident in March 2023, when, with direct Chinese mediation, Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to restore diplomatic relations after a seven-year hiatus. China’s role in this process drew particular attention, especially from the United States, which had obviously not anticipated this development.

¹ That idea has been fermented in a number of institutes and scientific centers. However, the program was developed more regularly and in detail at the Harvey Truman Peace Institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, by a group of researchers from different countries (J. Landau, Ghali Odeh, R. Enoch, V. Mesamed, N. Hovhannissyan, etc.), Նիկոլայ Հովհաննիսյան, Մերձավորարևելյան-անդրկովկասյան աշխարհաքաղաքական տարածաշրջանի ձևավորումը (Nikolay Hovhannissyan, On Formation of the Middle Eastern-Transcaucasian Geopolitical Region, Մերձավոր և Միջին Արևելքի երկրներ և ժողովուրդներ Հ. 20, Երևան, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ, 2001, էջ 102-103:

² Հովհաննիսյան (Hovhannissyan), էջ 102-103

³ Haass, Richard, The Age of America First: Washington’s Flawed New Foreign Policy Consensus, Foreign Affairs, November/December 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-09-29/biden-trump-age-america-first>.

Washington's attempts to counter Iran in 2021-2022 were unsuccessful. The "nuclear talks" reached an impasse. The war in Yemen remained unresolved, and there was no diplomatic breakthrough in Syria. Meanwhile, the political situation in Lebanon and Iraq remained complex and tense. Biden's visit to the Middle East in July 2022 neither changed the situation, nor convinced Saudi Arabia that the US had a strategy/desire/will to counter Iranian influence decisively. Accordingly, Riyadh decided to take control of the process to prevent uncontrolled chaos, such as a regional war, into which the Gulf monarchies could unwittingly be drawn.

Widely speaking, the meaning of normalization with Iran is the attempt by Saudi Arabia (and other Gulf monarchies) to increase its autonomous role in determining the future post-American security architecture in the Middle East. Another factor became *China, which is actively investing in the Middle East. For China, the stability, predictability and sustainability of the region are crucial for the success of its major infrastructure projects. Recently, the PRC has become a major strategic partner of many Arabian monarchies, especially Saudi Arabia.*

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the neutralization of Iraq as a strong centralized state in the Middle East architecture and the inability of the US to build a new system there, marked an era that led to a gradual decrease of the US' presence and interests in the region, and the emergence of alternative external players. Realizing the need to "withdraw" from the Middle East, the American strategy gave its regional partners more room to maneuver and the opportunity to build a new balance. The US is seeking to capitalize on the situation, guiding the region's developments in a direction that best suits its strategic interests.

Indeed, the regional situation after the Iraq War and Arab Spring pushed Arab states to diversify their alliances and partnerships and reduce their reliance on the US. As a result, Asian countries such as China, Japan, India, Indonesia, and South Korea rushed to fill the vacuum. For example, The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, are India's third- and fourth-largest trading partners, respectively. Japan has become a trusted regional leader in technology, clean energy, and space exploration. South Korea is now a major supplier of technology and arms to the Gulf states and Egypt. The deepening of defense and trade ties, along with the Gulf states' growing clout, has accelerated Middle East's integration into the Asian economic sphere.

Turkey and Iran policies

Over the past two decades, Turkey has undergone a dramatic transformation in both its domestic and foreign affairs. President Erdogan's 20-years rule has reshaped the bureaucracy and transformed the military from a bastion of secularism into an engine of Islamism. He has fundamentally redefined Turkey's foreign policy, reorienting the country away from Europe and more toward the Middle East. For much of the past decade, Turkey has actively sought to expand its influence and reshape the Middle East according to its vision.

Assertiveness has become a hallmark of Turkey's foreign policy. Ankara has supported the Muslim Brotherhood across the region, backed the Arab uprisings, and expanded its military operations in Syria and Iraq. Ankara's main goal in the Greater

Middle East continues to be a geopolitical balancing policy aimed at supporting its economy and protecting its security interests.

To avoid a short-term balance of payments crisis or another currency devaluation, Erdogan's regime has sought financial support from Gulf states. More and more, Turkey is becoming a Middle Eastern state.

Turkey also showed ambitions to dominate areas of Syria controlled by Washington and its Kurdish allies. Ankara tries to prevent the establishment of independent Kurdish states in Syria and Iraq and to disrupt the development of an energy corridor in the eastern Mediterranean that would bypass Turkey. Both objectives are fundamental to Turkey's security interests and could outlast the Erdogan era.

As for Iran's regional positions, Iran is a nation with strong identity and geographic position which stimulate its desire to become a great regional power. Situated at strategic crossroad, Iran is a key transit point for the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Indian subcontinent, as well as for three seas: the Caspian, the Persian/Arabian and the Sea of Oman. Iran stands out as the most traditional Middle Eastern state and the strongest defender of "regionalism" - developing a strong regional system amongst local players, whilst deeming counterproductive military alliances with foreign powers.

The Iranian regime has sought to expand its influence across the region. To do this, Iran has countered conventional military forces with a network of associated militia groups and other non-state actors. Regional instability and weak states in Lebanon (from the 1980s), Iraq (from 2003) and Yemen (from 2014) have allowed Iran to develop alliances with Hezbollah in Lebanon, militia groups in Iraq and the Houthis movement in Yemen. Iran has also supported President Assad in Syria, as the two countries have been long-standing allies. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its Quds Force has been key to this process.

Tehran seeks to secure the regime through a "forward defense" strategy, meaning it battles its enemies in other states (eg, Lebanon, Iraq). As a Shia-majority state, Iran stands in contrast to the Sunni-dominated regimes across much of the Middle East—most notably Saudi Arabia, a key regional rival. Iran positions itself as a protector of Shia Muslims. Despite facing isolation and the sanctions, Iran has not missed opportunities to demonstrate its important role as a regional player, albeit without achieving significant results.

Indo-Pacific region

The modern concept of the Indo-Pacific dates back to 2007, when Japan's late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe observed in a speech in India that "the Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. A 'broader Asia' that broke away geographical boundaries is now beginning to take on a distinct form".⁴ During his first visit to India as prime minister, in August 2007, Abe delivered his seminal "Confluence of the Two Seas" speech to the Indian parliament. Abe drew his speech title from a book written by the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh in

⁴ Jackson, Van, America's Indo-Pacific Folly, Foreign Affairs, March 12, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2021-03-12/americas-indo-pacific-folly>

1655, which explored the commonalities between Islam and Hinduism as neighbouring religious and civilizational constructs. The Pacific and Indian Oceans also share many commonalities, Abe noted. The “dynamic coupling” of these seas of freedom and of prosperity would transform not only the Indo-Pacific region but also broader Asia.⁵

After the speech, the “Indo-Pacific” became a recurring referent in Japanese, Indian, and eventually Australian foreign policy circles. The Indian Ocean had always held importance for these countries; Australia and India front it, and since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Japanese strategists had quietly promoted the idea of partnering with India there to dilute China’s strength in East Asia. Reframing Asia as the Indo-Pacific served the interests of all three nations.

In advancing the notion of the Indo-Pacific as a critical region, Shinzo Abe created a strategic framework that anticipated the geopolitical and economic integration now unfolding across Asia and parts of Africa. As South Asian and Middle Eastern countries merge into West Asia, a new continental order could reshape the global balance of power.

The idea that the Indian Ocean would take center stage in the twenty-first-century strategy games of great powers was supported by the prominent American geostrategist Robert Kaplan. He identified real patterns crisscrossing the Pacific and Indian Oceans: energy corridors, shipping containers, migration, terrorism, and subdued Sino-Indian competition for influence among smaller states that long predated the current all-consuming rivalry between China and the United States.⁶

Today, the clearest manifestation of Abe’s and subsequently US Indo-Pacific strategy is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, better known as the Quad, which began as a humanitarian initiative when the US, Australia, India, and Japan coordinated relief efforts following the deadly tsunami that devastated Indonesia in 2004. Notably, that within the Indo-Pacific strategy, the Biden Administration has strengthened efforts to upgrade the Quad, including regular maritime exercises, and has also launched a complementary strategic initiative with Australia and the United Kingdom (AUKUS). Regular engagement through the Quad also facilitates bilateral and trilateral cooperation, including with non-Quad partners. For instance, Australia, Japan, and the United States, have coordinated approaches to infrastructure financing. Australia, India, and Japan have collaborated on supply chain resilience. In October 2020, India and Japan signed a statement on digital encryption released by the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, which includes Australia and the United States. There is also a trilateral cooperation between Australia, Indonesia and India; and a joint Italy–Japan–UK fighter-jet project. These initiatives, aimed at enhancing security and stability across the Indo-Pacific, reflect the region’s ongoing transformation. By establishing regional alliances, the US counters the rapid rise of China, whose military expenditures in the Indo-Pacific region surpasses that of all other regional countries combined.

Though security concerns and the need for military cooperation is a primary objective of the Quad, at this point, it should not be considered a military alliance or Asia’s “NATO” aimed at containing China. “Multilateral military alliances have never worked

⁵ “Confluence of the Two Seas,” Speech by H.E. Mr. Abe Shinzo, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India, August 22, 2007, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>

⁶ Jackson, America’s Indo-Pacific Folly.

in the Asian region.”⁷ As John Bolton states, “*emerging Indo-Pacific security efforts like the Quad (India, Japan, Australia and America) and AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines can be enhanced and replicated. An Asian NATO isn’t imminent, but there is enormous room for innovative alliances with like-minded states, including more South Korea-Japan-U.S. cooperation.*”⁸

US geostrategic supremacy

The two concepts mentioned above raise the question of the strategic positioning of the most powerful state in the international system. Indeed, as the most secure power in history, the United States has more freedom to choose its strategy than other countries. The kind of supremacy the United States currently enjoys is complex and wide ranging, involving military power, technological innovation, the controversial but nonetheless important appeal of American society, and the role of America as the locomotive of the global economy. Despite some limitations, this American supremacy will likely remain a central reality in the foreseeable future.

The modern world, particularly over the last 200-300 years, rests on industrial production, finance, and trade. For its normal functioning, the stability and security of logistical links are essential. However, the efforts of some powers to undermine what they refer to as the “unipolar world” lead to disorder and a decline in globalization.

As noted by formidable geostrategist Zbigniew Brzezinski, “*Europe will not be able to play a role worldwide that might challenge American primacy, except in some specific financial and economic areas. These are important, but that will not be sufficient to make Europe an independent global player. An ambiguous relationship of partnership and tension with America will be a security necessity for Europe. Let us consider some other possibilities.*”⁹

Potentially, the most dangerous scenario would be a grand coalition of China, Russia, and perhaps Iran, an “antihegemonic” coalition united not by ideology but by complementary grievances. It would be reminiscent in scale and scope of the challenge once posed by the Sino-Soviet bloc, though this time China would likely be the leader and Russia the follower. Averting this contingency, however remote it may be, will require a display of US geostrategic skill on the western, eastern, and southern perimeters of Eurasia simultaneously.¹⁰

According to Brzezinski, the main objective of US engagement in Europe and Asia should be to support an equilibrium that discourages any one power from acting in an excessively assertive fashion towards its neighbors. In the foreseeable future, it is, in any case, unlikely that any single power will have military superiority that would enable it to

⁷ Zhang, Yun, Quad: A regional military alliance to contain China will not work, March 25, 2021, <https://www.thinkchina.sg/quad-regional-military-alliance-contain-china-will-not-work>.

⁸ Bolton, John, A new American grand strategy to counter Russia and China, Wall Street Journal, April 13, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-new-american-grand-strategy-to-counter-russia-and-china-asian-nato-aucus-collective-defense-taiwan-da555cf>.

⁹ Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *China and America in the Changing World*, Harvard Asia Pacific Review, Summer, No 1, 2003, http://web.mit.edu/lipoff/www/hapr/summer03_security/BRZEZINSKI.pdf.

¹⁰ Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York: Basic Books, 1998, p. 54.

assert itself in a hegemonic fashion on as a diverse, complex, and complicated mega-continent such as Eurasia.¹¹

That what we see in the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific. It has low importance for Washington, so here the United States prefer to delegate the power to India, Japan, Australia, and others. Recently, during the skirmish with China in the Himalayas, the US provided India with intelligence. The United States also welcomes French, and British involvement in the region, since it costs Washington nothing and has the potential to amplify Washington's voice while moderating its overzealous competitive impulse through democratic multilateralism.

The US strategy is also considered as “offshore balancing” one. *“First, offshore balancing calls for the optimization of defense posturing and expenditures by viewing them through the lens of national interests. This strategy prioritizes national interests and only commits resources offshore when vital interests are threatened, thereby reducing areas the U.S. military is committed to defend, and forces other nations to pull their own weight. Thus, offshore balancing not only reduces resources devoted to defense, but allows for greater investment and consumption at home and puts fewer American lives in harm’s way. Second, offshore balancing leverages regional allies to maintain global security. Instead of providing the bulk of deterrent forces and capabilities, the US will empower its allies’ abilities to do so through international institutions, diplomacy, economic support and military capabilities, if necessary. By empowering allies, US primacy as the impetus of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership is obscured by a network of equally contributing stakeholders bound together by liberal democratic values. Therefore, offshore balancing requires not only a serious assessment of national interests, but a strong network of alliances, which must be rebuilt based on trust and compromise rather than U.S. domination. Offshore balancing provides that trust by allowing allies to handle their own affairs with affirmation that the U.S. has their support in times of crisis. Finally, without a single common enemy — the US — the Sino-Russian partnership is likely to unravel.”*¹²

China's factor

The first and most prominent element of modern world politics is the centrality of great-power rivalry - above all, between the US and China. President Biden himself has spoken of “extreme competition” with China, and his coordinator for Indo-Pacific affairs Kurt Campbell has proclaimed that “the period that was broadly described as engagement has come to an end”.¹³

It is evident that the main challenge for the US in the foreseeable time is the containment of China. Practically any development, including those in the South Caucasus, should be viewed within the framework of this challenge.

¹¹ The Interview: Zbigniew Brzezinski, By Zachary Keck, September 10, 2012, <https://thediplomat.com/2012/09/the-interview-zbigniew-brzezinski/>

¹² Lt. Col. Ryan B. Ley, U.S. Air Force, Marshall Center senior fellow, America's Geostrategic Advantage, PerConcordiam, December 6, 2021, <https://perconcordiam.com/americas-geostrategic-advantage/>

¹³ Haass, The Age of America First.

For the first time since the end of the Second World War, the US confronts a country with economic and technological potential that is comparable to its own. Henry Kissinger warned that “endless” competition between the world’s two largest economies risks unforeseen escalation and potential conflict. In Kissinger’s view, the US-China competition today differs from Cold War competition in two crucial respects. First, the United States and China today are nearly equal in power, whereas the Soviet Union in the Cold War era was relatively weaker than the US and was not integrated into the global economy. Second, the current situation is more dangerous given the availability of “artificial intelligence (AI) and futuristic weaponry” in addition to nuclear armaments.¹⁴

Over the past two years, Washington has focused on improving its relationship with its allies to confront the growing power and influence of China. Beijing’s increasingly assertive conduct, both in the region and on the world stage — including the pressure campaign against Taiwan, economic coercion of Australia, and retaliatory sanctions targeting individuals and institutions in North America and Europe — has caused serious concern in the US and ally countries.¹⁵ According to the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the Biden administration’s approach to China will be “competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be.”¹⁶ From the Chinese perspective, many recent moves of the Biden administration indicate that a new anti-China Cold War is imminent. These actions include restructuring global industrial and supply chains, initiating the so-called “chip alliance” or “semiconductor industry alliance,”¹⁷ joining “like-minded countries” to boycott Chinese products and China-sponsored events because of human rights issues, urging EU countries to reconsider the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, and hosting the “democracy summit” at the White House.

As Biden administration’s main strategists Sullivan and Campbell note, “*in contrast to the military competition of the Cold War, which was a truly global struggle, the dangers for Washington and Beijing are likely to be confined to the Indo-Pacific. Even so, the region features at least four potential hot spots: the South China Sea, the East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the Korean Peninsula*”¹⁸.

¹⁴ Brennan, David, Endless U.S.-China Contest Risks ‘Catastrophic’ Conflict, Henry Kissinger Warns, *Newsweek*, March 26, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/endless-us-china-contest-catastrophic-conflict-henry-kissinger-1579010>.

¹⁵ Rajah, Roland, Vital Trade Lessons from China’s failed Attempt at Coercion, *The Australian*, April 14, 2021, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/commentary/vital-trade-lessons-from-chinas-failed-attempt-at-coercion/news-story/5bdde5f4e6e89e79818231fa7e1624a4>.

¹⁶ Wadhams, Nick, Blinken Says Only China Can Truly Challenge Global System, *Bloomberg*, March 3, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-03/blinken-calls-china-competition-a-key-challenge-for-the-u-s>.

¹⁷ Some Chinese analysts claim that the United States is now seeking to form a semiconductor industry alliance with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Netherlands. Deng Yuwen, The Real Gap between China and the U.S., *Deutsche Welle*, March 24, 2021, <https://p.dw.com/p/3r2SC>. On April 12, the White House convened a webinar focusing on the status of chip production in the United States and around the world, which was attended by 20 chip manufacturers. See Soho Website, April 12, 2021, https://www.sohu.com/a/460379090_465219.

¹⁸ Campbell, Kurt M., and Jake Sullivan, Competition Without Catastrophe, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/competition-with-china-without-catastrophe>

Admiral Phil Davidson, head of what was a few years ago renamed the Indo-Pacific Command from the Pacific Command, announced that the Pentagon was shifting away from its historic focus on Northeast Asia and Guam toward “revising our Indo-Pacific force laydown . . . to account for China’s rapid modernization.”¹⁹

To counter this strategic move, China has enhanced its diplomatic, economic, and military relationship with both Russia and Iran in recent months, resulting in the closest ties these countries have had in the post-Cold War era. These actions and the resulting reactions from China have increasingly driven the world into two trade and investment systems, two IT and internet systems, potentially two financial and currency systems, and two political and military blocs.

On the other hand, China is a significant regional, but not a global power. It is the second largest economy in the world, but it is still relatively impoverished on a per capita basis. China is a dominant regional player in its immediate regional environment, particularly in Southeast Asia. It has also entered Central Asia, initially through economic engagement and now with cautious political involvement. However, China is still unlikely to become a global power in the coming years, as it lacks the full range of attributes needed for comprehensive global influence—political, economic, military, technological, and cultural.

It should also be taken into account, that since the 2019 crisis in Hong Kong, China has been experiencing a deep economic crisis. The negative impact of the recession that began in Hong Kong on the Chinese economy was pedaled by the coronavirus outbreak.

It should also be noted that since the 2019 crisis in Hong Kong, China has been experiencing a deep economic downturn. The negative impact of the recession in Hong Kong on the Chinese economy was further intensified by the coronavirus outbreak.

There is also a tendency in Chinese diplomacy which sometimes can be very adept but also in its “Wolf Warrior diplomacy” is sometimes overreached and antagonized a lot of countries across the Indo-Pacific.²⁰ China is now a lonely power. So, it will be an increasingly important global player and certainly a very important player regionally, and therefore China will be more of an independent player on the world scene than anyone else except the United States.²¹

China’s strategy regarding the South Caucasus and Middle East rests on its cooperation with Turkey and Iran. Yes, Turkey has been a strategic ally of the US for nearly 70 years, serving as NATO’s trusted southern wing. Nevertheless, since 2010s Ankara positions itself as a logistical and military-political supplier of China’s geo-economic plans, advancing its own agenda. Ankara’s cooperation with Moscow in the South Caucasus and its support for the Baku regime in the war against Armenia have actually opened up a new geopolitical space for Turkey to enter Central Asia and increase its geopolitical and economic value both for the West and for China and Russia.

The China-Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey-Europe multimodal cargo transportation route, part of the Belt and Road Initiative, has become vital for China, as the China-Russia-Belarus-Poland route faced a serious obstacle and block due to the war

¹⁹ Jackson, America’s Indo-Pacific Folly.

²⁰ Rice University, April 11, 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/static/4888127e2193ed9bf68b9ccfb7b36197/DCIA-at-Rice-University-11-April-2023.pdf>.

²¹ Brzezinski, *China and America in the Changing World*.

between Russia and Ukraine and the Western sanctions. On the one hand, uninterrupted land transportation in Eurasia has become of utmost importance for China amid escalating US-Chinese tensions in the Pacific and over Taiwan. In this regard, the fact that the Baku-Kars railway passing through the Azerbaijan-Georgia junction is mostly out of the control of Russia and Iran and under the supervision of Turkey, is of crucial importance for China. Additionally, the land transportation of goods, including multimodal routes through the Black Sea, is a key project for both India and the European Union.

At the same time, Turkey currently lacks sufficient political and economic resources to continue its expansion. If it continues, it will become more dependent on Western power centers, and the China-Turkey connection will face a big risk.

Meanwhile, for China, the tension between Iran and its regional rivals is increasing in an unprecedented way, and if this souring tension is not contained, the consequences arising from a regional clash would endanger China's interests perilously. Therefore, de-escalation in the region is one of China's priorities, and it is quite natural that China will use the opportunity to convince Iran's leadership to take Beijing's security plan seriously. The same will relate to Iran's policies in the South Caucasus. If China can involve Iran in its security arrangement, the ground for boosting economic cooperation between Tehran and Beijing will also be provided. Otherwise, it is very unlikely that the Chinese-Iranian relationship will lead to a significant economic achievement.

India's Factor

Since 2001, India's rise as a strategic regional partner of the US has become evident. India is currently considered a reliable partner for the US in the Indo-Pacific region. India's economic, military and technological dimensions and strength make it one of the most influential powers in the region, and its democratic order is the most attractive for the United States. After events of 9/11, 2001, India announced its involvement in the US-declared war on terror, considering the fight against Islamist groups operating in Kashmir and sponsored by Pakistani military intelligence.

India's weakness also lies in its ethnic and religious diversity, as conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups within the country often turn violent: "India has a population bigger than in China. It certainly has major international ambitions. It measures itself by its rivalry with China. There is a remarkable democratic record in the country. And there is growing evidence of strains between the Muslims and the Hindus, and the Muslims in India number between 130 to 140 million people. Furthermore, a large portion of the population is still illiterate, much more so than in China, and politically passive."²²

India's foreign policy concerns are mainly focused on China and Pakistan. India views Pakistan as the primary instigator of the Kashmir conflict, as well as a threat, based on Islamic faith and ideology that rejects India's Hindu identity. Pakistan's close association with China heightens its perception as a national security threat in Delhi.

As Indian analyst C. Raja Mohan noted, "*far from being in an unenviable bind, New Delhi now looks well placed to leverage its position in the middle for its own benefit in*

²² Brzezinski, *China and America in the Changing World*.

the short and long term. From Russia, India is getting discounted oil, fertilizer, and other commodities as Moscow desperately seeks new buyers. From China, India is looking to extract an easing of the Sino-Indian military confrontation in the Himalayas. With the United States and other Western partners, India is looking to modernize its defense industrial base and reduce its dependence on Russian military supplies."²³

He also adds that India's most immediate concern is ending its low-intensity border war with China in the Himalayas, where Beijing has yet to signal serious movement. *"Just as India considered itself nonaligned during the Cold War but tilted to the Soviet Union, India's current constellation—a multi-alignment among China, the United States, and Russia—will be weighted in favor of the United States and the West. For all the maneuvering, India's difficulties with China are not about to disappear, nor can Moscow prevent the steady diminution of Russia's importance for New Delhi."*²⁴

The Bidens administration has tried to involve India in the strategy of containing China in the Indo-Pacific region. *"The larger challenge posed by China - its economic practices, its aggressive military moves, its efforts to dominate the industries of the future and to control the supply chains of the future have had a profound impact on the thinking in Delhi,"* said Jake Sullivan, Biden's National Security assistant.²⁵

It should be noted that the US currently deploys more technology, including military ones, to India. Washington also encourages companies from both countries to collaborate on military equipment like artillery systems.

Conclusion

The hypothesis of this brief, generalized analysis, presented in the form of theses, is the assumption that the intermediate joint goal of the Western Pole of the global world order is the formation of deep contradictions in Central Eurasia between the Eurasian continental powers, Russia and China, with its further transformation into confrontation.

a/ The transformation of the global world order and the formation of new geopolitical regions of the Greater Middle East, Central Asia, and the Indo-Pacific herald major dramatic changes: the end of the post-9/11 world order and the beginning of an era of great power competition. This means that the US implementation of the Greater Middle East and the Indo-Pacific strategies, including the establishing of the still fragile Quad format, especially the inclusion of India in it, is becoming the focal point of modern world politics. Consequently, we can assert that the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific are moving closer to one another. Due to this phenomenon, a new situation has evolved fundamentally different from the one that existed before.

b/ The US effectively returned to the Reagan-Bush Administrations' idea (1988-1992) of establishing a New World Order as an American global strategy. Washington simultaneously adopted the concept of "strategic restraint," which implies that no major global power should dominate Europe or Asia. This approach requires US allies to take

²³ C. Raja Mohan, For India, Russia's War on Ukraine Could Be a Gift, Foreign Policy, March 30, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/30/india-ukraine-russia-war-china-oil-geopolitics/>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Hunnicutt, Trevor, U.S., India partnership targets arms, AI to compete with China, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/technology/us-india-partnership-targets-arms-ai-compete-with-china-2023-01-31/>.

the brunt of maintaining security in their regions and relies on local forces to balance regional powers such as Russia and China. The ultimate goal of the US is to keep its geostrategic supremacy, where all geopolitical actors adhere to the American rules of play. In a certain sense, the current conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Greater Middle East (including the South Caucasus) are leading to a complete change of the balances in the Black Sea and the Greater Middle East regions, as well as the strong leaning in Indo-Pacific to the US-India-Japan triangle.

c/ China, on one hand, is advancing its Belt and Road Initiative through the Caspian Sea-Azerbaijan at the Georgia-Turkey junction, while, on the other hand, it supports Iran as a key factor in maintaining regional stability. At the same time, China does not have a global or civilizational offering or project for the entire world, focusing primarily on its Belt and Road Initiative, which lacks formal alliances and a strategic framework. In contrast, the U.S. operates on multiple tracks, including the Euro-Atlantic, East European (new Rzeczpospolita), Black Sea, Greater Middle East, and Indo-Pacific regions. For example, the emerging “Rzeczpospolita-2” project - a political and military alliance of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Baltic and Visegrad group states - could block the rapprochement of Russia and Germany, as well essentially reduce the interdependence between China and the EU. Without Ukraine and Poland, the Chinese “Belt and Road” strategy would become highly virtual, and if China explores alternative routes through the South Caucasus, Iran, and Turkey, it will not be the sole and main beneficiary of these logistics, as India, Southeast Asian nations, and Gulf states will also benefit.

d/ India is becoming one of the powers which helps reduce both global and regional risks, including in the South Caucasus. The war in Eastern Europe and situation in the Greater Middle East strengthens the positions of India in regional and global arenas. The entry of India into the Middle East’s political and economic domain is an extension of the geostrategic model of the Indo-Pacific and Indian strategy of “neighborhood policy plus extended neighborhood.” With India as the link between the Indo-Pacific and the Greater Middle East, a continental Asian order is beginning to take shape.

e/ The Greater Middle East and the Indo-Pacific are both entering a phase of prolonged turbulence, marked by shifting roles, alliances, and antagonisms. In the Greater Middle a system of alliance-competition relations—such as those between China, Russia, Pakistan, and Turkey—is expected to develop. Meanwhile, the management or containment of these coalitions will be largely driven by Western power centers (U.S. and U.K.) and their allies (India and France). In the Indo-Pacific, China’s military, political, and economic influence will be checked by a robust system of deterrence, notably through the Quad and other formats.

f/ For European countries and India alike, the South Caucasus serves primarily as a natural bridge connecting Europe with the Middle East, Central Asia, and further with India, China, Japan, Korea, and other Far Eastern nations via the shortest and most convenient routes. In this regard, therefore, the bridge region has a strategic significance for Europe and India.

The implementation of several important projects, including the North-South and Gulf-Black Sea International Transport Corridors, the Great Silk Road, TRACECA, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the construction of gas pipelines, oil pipelines, and

railways, will greatly contribute to regional integration and the shaping of the Greater Middle East and Indo-Pacific regions.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that this is perhaps one of the most complex and contradiction-filled regions in the world today. Various issues and opposing forces are at play, with significant disagreements and even serious conflicts both within sub-regions and between them. Therefore, it is premature to speak of a harmonious alignment of interests across these emerging macro-regions.

g/ The stability and architecture of the Greater Middle East and Indo-Pacific are increasingly dependent on the situation in Eastern Europe, Black Sea, and the South Caucasus regions and vice versa. We should take into account that the current situation in the Greater Middle East and Indo-Pacific regions will create long-term instability around Armenia in the coming years. Permanent military threats for Armenia, stemming from the nature of conflicts in the Greater Middle East and Indo-Pacific regions, is a long-term reality. At the same time, Armenia is facing a challenge to be integrated in the new world order.

These new realities will require Armenia to refrain from engaging in global and regional confrontations. In this situation, Armenia's foreign policy will likely adopt a more cautious and precise approach in the West-India-China-Russia-Iran-Turkey conflict zone or on the edge of the dividing line, where serious military and other conflicts are possible. Notably, this situation enables Armenia to raise its level of sovereign responsibility.

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THE US PLACE AND ROLE AS A GLOBAL PEACEKEEPER AND PEACEBUILDER: HISTORY AND PROSPECTS IN CHANGING GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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Abstract

The paper discusses the US place and role in global peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding processes. First, it traces the transformation of US strategic perception regarding peacekeeping and peacebuilding from 1991 to 2022. Second, on the example of Desert Storm, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, it reveals the US approaches to the peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding processes at the practical level. Finally, the paper explores potential scenarios for US engagement in the South Caucasus and particularly, in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, based on US strategic approaches and their practical implications. The paper argues that given the current political, geopolitical, and security landscape in the world and South Caucasus, the most realistic scenario may be the US direct diplomatic engagement with major support to the EU mission in Armenia.

Keywords - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh, the United States, peace-keeping, military engagement, geopolitical landscape, strategy.

Introduction

The changing global geopolitical landscape comprehensively impacts major power politics in various parts of the world. This leads to rising confrontation on global, regional, and local levels, driving the rise of multiple conflicts in the periphery.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is one of those conflicts, which heated up and erupted into the 44-day war in the autumn of 2020, when the whole world was dealing with the Covid pandemic, on the one hand, and world order transformations, on the other.

Though the war was stopped by the Trilateral Statement of the Presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan, and the Prime Minister of Armenia, followed by the placement of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh, in fact, the war has never stopped since then, ending up in ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

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In the meantime, starting from at least the end of the Second World War the US has taken major responsibility for the fate of humanity by, inter alia, engaging in numerous peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding activities.

From this perspective, the main objective of this research is to study the US experience in peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding processes, and reflect that experience towards the South Caucasus, discussing the potential US engagement on the example of Armenian-Azerbaijani, in particular, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The main hypothesis is that given the shifting major power politics in the South Caucasus, when the US demonstrates comprehensive and multifaceted interest towards the South Caucasus, the US might directly or indirectly (through the third parties, such as NATO, UN, and so on) get involved in the peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding processes in the South Caucasus, in particular, in the framework of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

Methodology and Scope of Research

The research starts with comprehensive analysis of definitions to establish a working approach for peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It will be continued by the study of the US engagement in peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding activities, revealing both the historical path and contemporary state. This will be followed by the analysis of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and, in particular, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a case study for peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Finally, the results will be discussed in relation to US interests and priorities to reveal potential US engagement with conflict management and resolution. The research is primarily based on such methods as discourse analysis, historical and comparative study, case study, and scenario building.

US approaches towards peacekeeping and peacebuilding: Strategic level

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the unipolar world order led to fundamental shifts in global politics. The rise of regional wars and ethno-political conflicts around the globe were among multiple signs of global changes.

The Persian Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm (even before the formal dissolution of the USSR)¹ demonstrated the US will for the support of the rules-based international order. In the meantime, the later history of the 1990s and beginning of the 21st century explicitly showed the US commitment to enforcing peace and stability in various parts of the world.

The most recent US National Security Strategy (2022) contains 4 “peacebuilding” and 1 “peacekeeping” words. In particular, it states that *“we will work to strengthen democracy around the world because democratic governance consistently outperforms authoritarianism in protecting human dignity, leads to more prosperous and resilient societies, creates stronger and more reliable economic and security partners for the United States, and encourages a peaceful world order”* (Strategy p. 8). *In the meantime, it contains the following paragraphs:*

¹ Britannica, Persian Gulf War, 1990-1991, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Persian-Gulf-War>

- *Second, our **alliances and partnerships** around the world are our most important strategic asset and an indispensable element contributing to international peace and stability. A strong and unified NATO, our alliances in the Indo-Pacific, and our traditional security partnerships elsewhere do not only deter aggression; they provide a platform for mutually beneficial cooperation that strengthens the international order (p.11),*
- *We will work to confront these shared challenges and recommit to advancing the **Sustainable Development Goals by pursuing more inclusive development partnerships**, especially by putting local partners in the driver's seat, and by deploying a more expansive set of tools, including catalytic financing and integrated humanitarian, development, and **peacebuilding actions** (p.19),*
- *We will support African-led efforts to work toward political solutions to costly conflicts, increasing terrorist activity, and humanitarian crises, such as those in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and the Sahel, and invest in local and **international peacebuilding and peacekeeping** to prevent new conflicts from emerging (p.44).²*

In the meantime, tracing back to the 1990s, for instance, the US National Security Strategy (1995) contains the “peacekeeping” word 14 times and a separate chapter titled “Peace Operations.”³ The same chapter appears in the 1996 Strategy as well.⁴

The 1999 Strategy, titled “A National Security Strategy for a New Century”, includes a section called “Smaller-Scale Contingencies,” which states the following:

In addition to defending the U.S. homeland, the United States must be prepared to respond to the full range of threats to our interests abroad. Smaller- scale contingency operations encompass the full range of military operations short of major theater warfare, including humanitarian assistance, peace operations, enforcing embargoes and no-fly zones, evacuating U.S. citizens, and reinforcing key allies. These operations will likely pose frequent challenges for U.S. military forces and cumulatively require significant commitments over time. These operations will also put a premium on the ability of the U.S. military to work closely and effectively with other U.S. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, regional and international security organizations and coalition partners.

It often will be in our national interest to proceed in partnership with other nations to preserve, maintain and restore peace. American participation in peace operations takes many forms, such as the NATO-led coalitions in Bosnia and Kosovo, the American-led UN force in Haiti, the recently concluded Military Observer Mission Ecuador and Peru (MOMEP), our participation in the coalition operation in the Sinai,

² US National Security Strategy, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

³ US National Security Strategy, 1995, <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss-1995.pdf?ver=pzgo9pkDsWmIQqTYTC6O-Q%3d%3d>.

⁴ US National Security Strategy, 1996, <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss1996.-pdf?ver=4f8RiCrLnHIA-H0itYUp6A%3d%3d>.

*military observers in UN missions in Western Sahara, Georgia and the Middle East, and the UN mission in East Timor.*⁵

It is worth mentioning that 1997 became well-known with the so-called Clinton Doctrine, which proposed military interventions to prevent humanitarian crises.⁶ This concept later evolved and was adopted in a UN General Assembly Resolution.⁷

In the 2000s, when the National Security Strategy was published in 2002, the US was waging a war against terrorism. That reality left its clear mark on the Strategy, stating that:

*Today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence. In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty. In a world that is safe, people will be able to make their own lives better. We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.*⁸

Meanwhile, regarding the African continent, the Strategy states that “coordination with European allies and international institutions is essential for constructive conflict mediation and successful peace operations...”⁹

The US National Security Strategy of 2006 went further, and in the chapter entitled “Work with Others to Defuse Regional Conflicts” it appeared with a separate subdivision on “Conflict Intervention,” which states:

*Some conflicts pose such a grave threat to our broader interests and values that conflict intervention may be needed to restore peace and stability. Recent experience has underscored that the international community does not have enough high-quality military forces trained and capable of performing these peace operations. The Administration has recognized this need and is working with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to improve the capacity of states to intervene in conflict situations. We launched the Global Peace Operations Initiative at the 2004 G-8 Summit to train peacekeepers for duty in Africa. We are also supporting the United Nations (U.N.) reform to improve its ability to carry out peacekeeping missions with enhanced accountability, oversight, and results-based management practices.*¹⁰

However, the 2010 Strategy witnessed a change in wording. The “Sustain Broad Cooperation on Key Global Challenges” section states:

⁵ US National Security Strategy, 1999, <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss-1999.pdf?ver=SL0909OTm51Ah0LQWBrRHw%3d%3d>.

⁶ The Clinton Doctrine, by Patrick Clawson, December 28, 1997, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/clinton-doctrine>.

⁷ Ivan Šimonović, The Responsibility to Protect, December 2016, no. 4 vol. LIII, Human Rights, <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/responsibility-protect>.

⁸ US National Security Strategy, 2002, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss-2002.pdf?ver=oyVN99aEnrAWijAc_O5eiQ%3d%3d.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ US National Security Strategy, 2006, <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss-2006.pdf?ver=Hfo1-Y5B6CMI8yHpX4x6IA%3d%3d>.

*Peacekeeping and Armed Conflict: The untold loss of human life, suffering, and property damage that results from armed conflict necessitates that all responsible nations work to prevent it. No single nation can or should shoulder the burden for managing or resolving the world's armed conflicts. To this end, we will place renewed emphasis on deterrence and prevention by mobilizing diplomatic action, and use development and security sector assistance to build the capacity of at-risk nations and reduce the appeal of violent extremism. But when international forces are needed to respond to threats and keep the peace, we will work with international partners to ensure they are ready, able, and willing. We will continue to build support in other countries to contribute to sustaining global peace and stability operations, through U.N. peacekeeping and regional organizations, such as NATO and the African Union. We will continue to broaden the pool of troop and police contributors, working to ensure that they are properly trained and equipped, that their mandates are matched to means, and that their missions are backed by the political action necessary to build and sustain peace.*¹¹

However, already in the 2015 Strategy, there was a noticeable decline in peacekeeping-related issues. In particular, it states that:

We are deepening our security partnerships with African countries and institutions, exemplified by our partnerships with the U.N. and AU in Mali and Somalia. Such efforts will help to resolve conflicts, strengthen African peacekeeping capacity, and counter transnational security threats while respecting human rights and the rule of law...

...We will meet our financial commitments to the U.N., press for reforms to strengthen peacekeeping, and encourage more contributions from advanced militaries. We will strengthen the operational capacity of regional organizations like the African Union (AU) and broaden the ranks of capable troop-contributing countries, including through the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, which will help African countries rapidly deploy to emerging crises...

*...We will work vigorously both within the U.N. and other multilateral institutions, and with member states, to strengthen and modernize capacities—from peacekeeping to humanitarian relief—so they endure to provide protection, stability, and support for future generations.*¹²

Finally, the US National Security Strategy of 2017 did not contain any single word on “peacebuilding” or “peacekeeping.” Instead it speaks about cooperation with various partners to provide peace, security and stability in some regions of the world. For instance, it states: “We will catalyze regional efforts to build security and prosperity through strong diplomatic engagement. We will isolate governments that refuse to act as responsible partners in advancing hemispheric peace and prosperity” (p. 51). In addition, the US Government committed that, “the United States will also encourage Pakistan to continue demonstrating that it is a responsible steward of its nuclear assets. We will continue to partner with Afghanistan to promote peace and

¹¹ US National Security Strategy, 2010, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/-NSS2010.pdf?ver=Zt7IeSPX2uNQ00_7wq6Hg%3d%3d.

¹² US National Security Strategy, 2015, <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/-NSS2015.pdf?ver=TJJ2QfM0McCqL-pNtKHtVQ%3d%3d>.

security in the region. We will continue to promote anti-corruption reform in Afghanistan to increase the legitimacy of its government and reduce the appeal of violent extremist organizations. We will help South Asian nations maintain their sovereignty as China increases its influence in the region” (p. 50).

Thus, the content and context analysis of several US National Security Strategies demonstrates the transformation of US approaches to its military engagements in the world to provide justice, peace, and stability. In particular, while in the 1990s and early 2000s, the US government was much more determined to use force, later it became more reluctant and did their best to rely on diplomacy and non-military means.

US experience in peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding processes: from Kosovo to Syria and beyond

The transformation of the strategic vision and thought towards peacekeeping and peace enforcement found direct implications for US foreign and security policy making. The examples of operations in Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria clearly demonstrate the shift in US approaches to the peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding processes at a practical level.

First Gulf war

Following the end of Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 and multiple domestic problems, on August 2, 1990, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invaded oil-rich neighbor, Kuwait, seeking relief in economic issues. However, his actions provoked a strong response from the international community and, particularly, from the US. Being the first international crisis after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US managed to assemble a diverse and powerful international coalition, which consisted of US NATO allies and Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt. The 100-hour land war called “Operation Desert Storm,” which followed an air campaign, pushed the Iraqi forces back inside Iraq.¹³

Kosovo operation

The NATO “Kosovo operation” started in the late 1990s as a response to the extending conflict between Serbian forces and Kosovo Liberation Army. NATO’s air campaign against Serbian forces lasted for 78 days, after which a NATO-led peace support mission has been operating in Kosovo since June 1999.¹⁴ Since then, US troops have participated in the NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Kosovo (KFOR).¹⁵

Afghanistan

The official U.S. military operation against the Taliban government in Afghanistan, initially supported by the UK government and later joined by other allies, began on October 7, 2001, in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

¹³ A Short History of the Department of State: The First Gulf War, <https://history.state.gov/departments-history/short-history/firstgulf>.

¹⁴ NATO’s role in Kosovo, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm.

¹⁵ US peacekeepers ready to prevent violence in north Kosovo, commander says, *Reuters*, February 16, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-peacekeepers-ready-prevent-violence-north-kosovo-commander-says-2024-02-16/>

The war against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan continued until 2021, when U.S. and allied forces withdrew from the country.¹⁶

The Iraq war (2003-2011)

The Iraq War was an armed conflict between a US-led coalition against the regime of Saddam Hussein. The war was part of a broader campaign against terrorist activity known as the Global War on Terror.¹⁷

Libyan war (2011)

In 2011, the Arab Spring spread to Libya, sparking an uprising against Muammar al-Qaddafi's four-decade rule and leading to civil war and international military intervention. Following the March 17, 2011, UN vote and UN resolution S/RES/1973 to establish a no-fly zone over Libya, the coalition of US and European allies began airstrikes against Libyan forces on March 19, 2011.¹⁸

According to the FP:

On March 28, 2011, U.S. President Barack Obama addressed the nation: “The task that I assigned our forces [is] to protect the Libyan people from immediate danger and to establish a no-fly zone. ... Broadening our military mission to include regime change would be a mistake.” Two days later, Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon declared, “The military mission of the United States is designed to implement the Security Council resolution, no more and no less. ... I mean protecting civilians against attacks from Qaddafi’s forces and delivering humanitarian aid.” The following day, Clinton’s deputy, James Steinberg, said during a Senate hearing, “President Obama has been equally firm that our military operation has a narrowly defined mission that does not include regime change.”¹⁹

On the other hand, in comparison to the previous operations, the US role was quite limited, leaving the major operational volume to the European allies. In the meantime, many experts argue that NATO’s Libyan operation marked the beginning of the end of the concept of humanitarian intervention, which had been on the rise since the 1990s.²⁰

Syrian conflict

The Syrian conflict was another outcome of the Arab Spring and domestic uprising, which followed by an internationalization and engagement of multiple foreign powers.

According to the US Department of State, since the rise of ISIS in 2014, the U.S. government has worked closely with the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS to achieve a lasting defeat of the terror group. Working by, with, and through local partners, the Coalition achieved the territorial defeat of ISIS in Syria in March 2019. The Coalition remains committed to ISIS’s enduring defeat through stabilization support to liberated areas, facilitating the return of displaced individuals, finding long-term solutions for

¹⁶ The U.S. War in Afghanistan, 1999 – 2021, *CFR*, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>

¹⁷ The Iraq War, <https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/the-iraq-war#:~:text=The%20Iraq%20War%20was%20an,the%20Global%20War%20on%20Terror.>

¹⁸ UN Security Council, S/RES/1973 (2011), <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/s/res/1973-%282011%29>,

¹⁹ Zenko, Micah, The Big Lie About the Libyan War. The Obama administration said it was just trying to protect civilians. Its actions reveal it was looking for regime change, *Foreign Policy*, March 22, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/22/libya-and-the-myth-of-humanitarian-intervention/>.

²⁰ Hamid, Shadi, Everyone says the Libya intervention was a failure. They’re wrong., *Brookings*, April 12, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/everyone-says-the-libya-intervention-was-a-failure-theyre-wrong/>

*detained foreign ISIS fighters, and promoting justice and accountability efforts in Syria and Iraq.*²¹

The US involvement in Syria has been limited to a small number of ground forces, without direct engagement against Assad's army and controlling key areas and supporting certain anti-government forces. Even in 2013, when chemical weapons were allegedly used by government forces (though some argue they were used by opposition forces), the U.S. refrained from an open anti-Assad operation.²²

Thus, the first four cases are about direct US military involvement, while the last two (though with some reservations) showed the increasing role of diplomacy for the US instead of application of military force, Clinton's Doctrine and/or R2P concept.

Discussion and Conclusions

The continuing Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict raises questions about potential third-party engagement to foster peace and stability.

In this regard, given the recent intensification of Armenia and US relations, one might consider the possibility of a more active US peacekeeping engagement in the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process to create a more stable strategic environment and contain further aggression by Azerbaijani towards the Republic of Armenia.

Given the above, the following potential scenarios of the US engagement might be specified:

- Direct military engagement
- Support for a UN (or other international organization, for instance, OSCE) mission
- Support for the EU mission in Armenia
- NATO engagement
- Distancing

Given the current political reality in the US, its strategic interests and priorities, the direct peacekeeping engagement in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict currently seems unrealistic. On the other hand, the 'distancing scenario' also seems not very realistic, given the recent developments in Armenia – US relations, especially over the last three years.

The second scenario might have been workable if there was that kind of agenda on the table. The same might be true with regard to potential NATO engagement.

Therefore, given the current political, geopolitical, and security landscape in the world and the South Caucasus, the most realistic scenario may involve direct US diplomatic engagement, with major support to the EU mission in Armenia.

²¹ U.S. Relations With Syria, October 17, 2023, *US Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-syria/>

²² Antony J. Blinken, SECRETARY OF STATE, Tenth Anniversary of the Ghouta, Syria Chemical Weapons Attack, *US Department of State*, August 21, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/tenth-anniversary-of-the-ghouta-syria-chemical-weapons-attack/>

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DER 44-TÄGIGE KRIEG ALS KAMPF UM PROFITABLE GESCHÄFTE

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Abstract

In der vorliegenden Analyse werden einige der wesentlichen wirtschaftlichen Profiteure des 44-tägigen Krieges vom Herbst 2020 Aserbaidshans und seiner Verbündeten gegen Berg-Karabach vorgestellt. Daraus abgeleitet wird versucht, die Durchsetzung von wirtschaftlichen Interessen - neben innenpolitischen und geopolitischen Zielvorstellungen – als eine ergänzende Motivation für Aserbaidshans und seiner Verbündeten Aggression gegen Berg-Karabach indirekt in den Raum zu stellen. Es werden dabei aufschlussreiche Erläuterungen nicht nur zur Dimension des wirtschaftlichen Gewinnstrebens der Aggressoren, sondern auch zu dessen Charakter und den sich daraus ergebenden Geschäftspartnerschaften gegeben.

Schlüsselwörter - Armenien, Aserbaidshan, Türkei, Berg-Karabach, 44-tägiger Krieg 2020, Anglo Asian Mining, Reza Vaziri, John Sununu, Ilham Aliyev, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Einleitung

Im Juli 2021 unterzeichnete die aserbaidshanische Regierung ein Abkommen mit der britischen Anglo Asian Mining Company und übertrug dem Unternehmen den Betrieb einer Reihe von Minen im Austausch für 3 Mrd. USD. Dazu gehörte auch Kashen, eine Kupfer-Molybdän-Mine in der Region Martakert in Artsakh, die derzeit von der armenischen Base Metal Company betrieben wird.

Martakert blieb nach dem Ende des Karabach-Krieges 2020 unter armenischer Kontrolle.

Die Anglo Asian Mining Company, die offiziell in Großbritannien registriert ist und ausschließlich in Aserbaidshan tätig ist, gibt auf ihrer Website an, dass der

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Konzessionsvertrag vom 5. Juli 2022 drei Minen mit einer Gesamtfläche von 340 Quadratmeilen umfasst. Eine dieser Minen, die Aserbaidsschan dem Unternehmen übertragen hat, ist die Kupfer- und Molybdänmine Kashen in der Region Martakert in Artsakh. Anglo Asian Mining verwendet den aserbaidsschanischen Namen für Kashen, Demirli, und berichtet, dass die Mine im Januar 2016 275.000 Tonnen Kupfer und 3.200 Tonnen Molybdän enthielt.

Die Anteilseigner

Mit 28 Prozent der Anteile ist der gebürtige Iraner und der ehemalige Beamte in der vorrevolutionären Regierung des Irans, **Reza Vaziri**, der größte Aktionär von Anglo Asian Mining. Nach Angaben des Unternehmens ist Vaziri seit der Unabhängigkeit Aserbaidsschans geschäftlich in Aserbaidsschan tätig.

Im Jahr 2016 wurde das Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) auf Vaziri aufmerksam und stellte fest, dass der Geschäftsmann bei seinen ersten Unternehmungen in Aserbaidsschan Rückschläge erlitt, aber die internationalen Goldpreise halfen ihm, sich zu erholen. In dem Bericht wird auch erwähnt, dass Vaziri versuchte, die aserbaidsschanische Goldmine Chovdar in West-Aserbaidsschan zu erwerben, was ihm jedoch nicht gelang, weil sich ein Unternehmen namens Londex Resources S.A., das den Kindern des aserbaidsschanischen Präsidenten Ilham Aliyev gehört und in Panama registriert ist, dem Kampf um die Lizenz zum Betrieb der Mine anschloss. In einer Bestechungsuntersuchung der *Huffington Post* wird Vaziri als eine Person mit großen Ressourcen erwähnt, die jederzeit Zugang zum aserbaidsschanischen Premierminister und zum Ölminister haben könnte.

Reza Vaziri wurde von einer anderen Führungskraft von Anglo Asian als „persönlicher Freund“ von Präsident Ilham Aliyev bezeichnet, der das Land seit 2003 regiert. Vaziris Zugang zu Aserbaidsschans herrschender Elite wurde in durchgesickerten E-Mails hervorgehoben, die 2016 veröffentlicht wurden und die Geschäfte des Ölberatungsunternehmens Unaoil im Land in den 2000er Jahren betreffen.

Laut einer durchgesickerten E-Mail, die die australische Zeitung *The Age* erhalten hat, wurde Vaziri, der zu dieser Zeit für Unaoil arbeitete, so beschrieben, dass er „jederzeit ein Treffen mit dem aserbaidsschanischen Ölminister Natig Aliyev und dem Premierminister Artur Rasizade arrangieren konnte. Vaziri konnte Ölminister Natig dazu bringen, „genau das zu sagen, was wir wollen“.

Als Teil seiner Arbeit für Unaoil hat Vaziri, wie die durchgesickerten Dokumente von *The Age* zeigen, offenbar auch „Insider-Informationen von einem ‚Freund‘ in Aserbaidsschan über Projektmeilensteine und Shortlists von Bietern für die Arbeit an einem großen Pipeline-Projekt, das mehrere Länder in der kaspischen Region verbindet.“

„Unaoil war für eine kurze Zeit ein Kunde von Herrn Vaziri“, sagte Anglo Asian gegenüber openDemocracy.

Die Vorwürfe gegen den Geschäftsführer von Unaoil Aserbaidsschan zeigen, wie riskant es ist, in dem Land Geschäfte zu machen. Wie *The Age* berichtete, deuten die durchgesickerten Informationen darauf hin, dass der Geschäftsführer von Unaoil in Aserbaidsschan ein Drahtzieher für Bestechungsgelder im Zusammenhang mit dem Öl- und Gasgeschäft des Landes gewesen sein könnte. Der Bericht von *The Age* enthielt keinen Hinweis auf ein Fehlverhalten von Vaziri.

Vaziri steht nicht alleine. Aserbaidischans Goldindustrie wurde durch Untersuchungsberichte befleckt, die zeigen, wie die Töchter von Präsident Ilham Aliyev, Arzu und Leyla Aliyeva, in anderen Bergbauunternehmen Millionen von Dollar an Gewinnen abzogen, sie im Ausland versteckten und dann die ländlichen Bergbaugemeinden, in den Worten des Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OC-CRP), „auf dem Trockenen sitzen ließen“.

Ein weiterer Anteilseigner von Anglo Asian Mining, der 9,3 Prozent der Aktien hält, ist **John Sununu**, Stabschef von US-Präsident George Bush Sr. und ehemaliger Gouverneur von US-Bundestaats New Hampshire, dessen Vater aus dem Libanon in die USA eingewandert ist. Auch andere Mitglieder der Familie Sununu sind an der Leitung des Unternehmens beteiligt.

Nach dem Ende des Artsakh-Krieges 2020 verstärkte die Familie Sununu ihr direktes Engagement im Unternehmen, als im Dezember letzten Jahres **Michael Sununu** von Anglo Asian Mining als nicht-exekutiver Direktor in den Vorstand aufgenommen wurde. Michael ist der Sohn von John Sununu und ist Gründer und Manager von Sununu Enterprises und Sununu Holdings.

Die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen der Familie Sununu zu Aserbaidischans haben natürlich auch politische Konsequenzen nach sich gezogen. John Sununu ist Mitglied des **Honorary Council of Advisors** der **United States-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce** und erhielt 2017 von dieser Organisation einen Anerkennungspreis für seinen „Beitrag zu den diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen den USA und Aserbaidischans“.

Die aserbaidischansche Verbindung mit den Sununus ist offensichtlich nicht einseitig. Die Firma **BGR Government Affairs**, die Lobbyarbeit für die Republik Aserbaidischans betreibt, spendete 2017 1000 Dollar an Chris Sununus Wahlkampf für das Amt des Gouverneurs und veranstaltete einen Fundraising-Empfang.

Weitere 3,5 Prozent der Anteile gehören **Limelight Industrial Developments**, einem Unternehmen, über das keine öffentlichen Informationen vorliegen.

Das Vorgängerunternehmen von Anglo Asian Mining, das von demselben CEO, Reza Vaziri, kontrolliert wird, unterzeichnete 1997 einen Vertrag mit der aserbaidischanschen Regierung über Rechte an sechs Minen, darunter drei, die damals unter armenischer Kontrolle standen. Als Ergebnis des jüngsten Artsakh-Krieges sind zwei dieser Gebiete unter vollständiger aserbaidischanscher Kontrolle. Ein drittes Gebiet, Sotk/Soyudlu, liegt an der Grenze zwischen Armenien und dem aserbaidischansisch kontrollierten Kelbajar.

Anglo Asian Mining hat auch ein Auge auf die Kasha-Lagerstätte mit Molybdän und Kupfer im Norden von Martakert (Kyzylbulag), einem Teil des Territoriums der Republik Artsakh, das derzeit unter der Kontrolle der russischen Friedenstruppen steht, geworfen. Wie es auf der Website des Unternehmens heißt, „hängt unser Zugang zu Kyzylbulag von der endgültigen Klärung des Status von Berg-Karabach ab.“

Bezeichnenderweise erhält die aserbaidischansche Regierung aufgrund des bestehenden Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) einen saftigen Anteil an den Gewinnen von Anglo Asian Mining. Die eigene Website von Anglo Asian versucht, Aserbaidischans in einem guten Licht darzustellen. Sie beschönigt zum Beispiel die vielen Probleme der undemokratischen und autoritären Regierung Aserbaidischans mit Aussagen wie „Aserbaidischans ist eine Mehrparteiendemokratie und Präsidialrepublik mit einer

Trennung von Exekutive und Legislative. Es gehört zu den stabilsten Ländern in der Region.“

Nur drei Jahre nach dem Waffenstillstand unterzeichnete eine in Delaware registrierte Firma, **R.V. Investment Group Services**, einen Vertrag mit Baku über die exklusiven Rechte an sechs Minen, drei davon auf Gebieten, die de facto unter armenischer Kontrolle stehen. Der Mann, der diese Vereinbarung unterzeichnet hat, ist Reza Vaziri.

Die Minen, an denen Anglo Asian Mining Rechte hält **Soyudlu/Sotk**

Bis zur Einstellung der Arbeiten im November war die Tagebau-Goldmine Soyudlu (auch bekannt als Soutely, Zod oder, auf armenisch, Sotk) an der Grenze zwischen dem aserbaidzschischen Bezirk Kelbajar und Armenien außerordentlich produktiv. Sie wurde von GPM Gold betrieben, dem viertgrößten Steuerzahler in Armenien im Jahr 2020 nach Angaben des staatlichen Finanzkomitees, als es über 30 Mrd. Dram (58 Mio. USD) in die Staatskasse einzahlte. Mit Stand Oktober beschäftigte die Mine, die auch Silber produziert, 1.654 Mitarbeiter.

GPM Gold ist vollständig im Besitz der in Zypern registrierten GeoProMining Investment, die über ein Netz von Offshore-Firmen verwaltet wird. Letzten Sommer wurde der russische Immobilien- und Flughafen-Tycoon Roman Trotsenko der Hauptaktionär von GeoProMining. Trotsenko ist ein ehemaliger Berater von Igor Setschin, dem CEO von Russlands größtem Ölkonzern Rosneft, und ein enger Verbündeter von Vladimir Putin.

Sotk erzielte 2019 einen Bruttogewinn von 126 Mio. USD und ist damit der mit Abstand größte Betrieb von GeoProMining. Auf der Website des Unternehmens heißt es, dass die Mine 2018 130.000 Unzen Gold lieferte und eine Betriebsdauer von weiteren 18 Jahren hat. Dennoch können seine Anleihegläubiger nicht zufrieden sein: In seinem geprüften Finanzbericht für 2019 führte das Unternehmen Aserbaidschan nicht als politisches Risiko auf; tatsächlich wurde Aserbaidschan in dem Dokument überhaupt nicht erwähnt. (Genauso wenig wie die großen Ratingagenturen.)

Innerhalb Armeniens betreibt GeoProMining auch die Ararat-Goldgewinnungsanlage, die 2014 modernisiert wurde, und eine Kupfer-Molybdän-Anlage im Süden. In Russland betreibt das Unternehmen mehrere Felder in Sibirien.

Vejnali/Tondirget

Vejnali wurde in den späten 1950er Jahren entdeckt und enthält nachweislich bis zu 6,5 Tonnen Gold. In den letzten Jahren wurde Vejnali von einem Unternehmen namens Gold Star abgebaut, das nach Angaben des staatlichen Finanzkomitees im Jahr 2019 der viertgrößte Steuerzahler in Berg-Karabach war. Über das Unternehmen ist wenig bekannt, obwohl ein Finanzbericht für 2020, der von *Eurasianet* eingesehen wurde, einen Verlust von 1 Mrd. Dram (2 Mio. USD) ausweist. Gold Star wird von einem schweizerisch-armenischen Staatsbürger, Vartan Sirmakes, geleitet, der Armeniens Konsul in Marseille, Frankreich, ist und Mitbegründer der Luxusuhrenmarke Franck Muller. Baku hat die Schweiz um Hilfe bei der Verfolgung von Sirmakes wegen seiner Rolle beim Betrieb der Mine gebeten.

Gyzilbulakh (Drmbon auf Armenisch) ist eine unterirdische Kupfer- und Goldmine, die in den frühen 2000er Jahren gegründet wurde. Vor fast einem Jahrzehnt war sie Berichten zufolge kurz vor dem Ende ihrer Lebensdauer.

In einer Erklärung vom 21. Januar 2021 behauptete Anglo Asian Mining, dass die Anlage wieder unter aserbaidtschanischer Kontrolle stehe und dass sie, da sie innerhalb von Berg-Karabach liegt, von russischen Friedenstruppen geschützt werde. Der Zugang, so das Unternehmen, „wird von der endgültigen Klärung des Status von Berg-Karabach abhängen.“

Noch interessanter ist heute die nahe gelegene Demirli (Kashen auf armenisch) Tagebau-Kupfer- und Molybdän-Mine in der Nähe von Aghdara (Martakert), die 100 Millionen Tonnen Kupfer enthalten soll. Vallex behauptete im Juli 2020, 250 Mio. USD in den Standort investiert zu haben, der fast 1.500 Menschen beschäftigte.

Die Dominanz türkischer Unternehmen in Aserbaidtschan

Um befreundete und brüderliche Länder zu belohnen, vergibt Aserbaidtschan Aufträge für den Wiederaufbau von konfliktgeschädigten Regionen an Unternehmen aus diesen Ländern. Der aserbaidtschanische Präsident Ilham Aliyev sagte in einer Rede, dass Wiederaufbauverträge mit türkischen Unternehmen unterzeichnet werden, und fügte hinzu: „Das ist ganz natürlich, denn die Türkei ist ein brüderliches Land.“ Der aserbaidtschanische Premierminister Ali Asadov gab während seines Besuchs in Ankara auf dem türkisch-aserbaidtschanischen Wirtschaftsforum bekannt, dass „türkische Unternehmen den Zuschlag für eine Reihe von Infrastrukturprojekten erhalten haben, darunter den Bau einer neuen Straße nach Schuscha und Kalbajar, einer weiteren Region, die Aserbaidtschan im Krieg zurückerobert hat“. Asadov erklärte, dass türkische Unternehmen auch am Bau des neuen Flughafens in Fuzuli beteiligt sein könnten, und sagte: „Generell freuen wir uns sehr über die Beteiligung unserer türkischen Brüder an Restaurierungsprojekten.“

Diverse Projekte

Während des Wirtschaftsforums Türkei-Aserbaidtschan im Februar 2021 wurden 11 weitere Abkommen zwischen aserbaidtschanischen und türkischen Unternehmen unterzeichnet. Das größte dieser Abkommen ist das „Kooperationsabkommen“, das zwischen dem aserbaidtschanischen Wirtschaftsministerium und Eti Bakır A.Ş., einer Tochtergesellschaft der Cengiz Holding, unterzeichnet wurde. Im März empfing ein anderes staatliches Unternehmen eine Delegation von Eti Bakır unter der Leitung von Şeref Cengiz, dem Bruder des Vorsitzenden der Cengiz Holding, Mehmet Cengiz, der für seine engen Beziehungen zu Präsident Erdoğan bekannt ist. Artvin Maden, ein gemeinsames Unternehmen der Cengiz Holding und der Kalyon Group, erhielt ebenfalls Lizenzen für den Betrieb in Elbeidas und Agduzdag. Im Anschluss an dieses Treffen unterzeichnete Aliyev ein Dekret, mit dem Eti Bakır die Explorations- und Betriebslizenz für die Gashgacai-Mine für 30 Jahre erteilt wurde.

Die Agduzdag-Mine liegt im südöstlichen Teil der Region Kalbajar, die erst kürzlich nach einer fast drei Jahrzehnte dauernden Besetzung durch armenische Truppen befreit wurde.

Aliyev wies das Ministerium für Umwelt und natürliche Ressourcen und das Wirtschaftsministerium an, innerhalb von drei Monaten Verträge für den Betrieb der Minen vorzubereiten und mit den Unternehmen zu unterzeichnen.

Die Agdudzag-Mine liegt im südöstlichen Teil der Region Kalbajar, die erst kürzlich nach einer fast drei Jahrzehnte dauernden Besetzung durch armenische Truppen befreit wurde.

Dies ist nicht der erste und einzige wichtige Vertrag, den die Cengiz Holding in Aserbaidshan unterzeichnet hat. Im Jahr 2007 unterzeichnete ein anderes von Mehmet Cengiz kontrolliertes Unternehmen einen Vertrag mit Aserbaidshan über den Bau eines weiteren Staudamms für Wasserkraftwerke. Im Anschluss an diesen Vertrag bezahlte das von der Cengiz Holding kontrollierte Unternehmen eine andere Offshore-Gesellschaft für den Kauf einer Luxuswohnung in London.

Der nüchterne Geschäftsmann Mehmet Cengiz kann auch durchaus emotional auftreten:

„Wir sind eines der größten Bergbauunternehmen in der Türkei mit unseren drei separaten Produktionsanlagen und Minen, die Eti Bakır und Eti Aluminium gehören. Wir produzieren jährlich 100 Tausend Tonnen Kathodenkupfer, 80 Tausend Tonnen Aluminium und 2 Tausend 500 Tonnen Kobalt. Unsere beiden Anlagen sind die einzigen in ihrem jeweiligen Bereich, die von der Mine bis zum Endprodukt produzieren. Seit 17 Jahren setzen wir unsere Produktion im Bereich des Bergbaus auf die effizienteste Art und Weise fort, indem wir die neuesten Technologien einsetzen. Nun ist es unser größter Wunsch, diese Erfahrung auf das brüderliche Aserbaidshan zu übertragen.“

Es ist für uns von großer Bedeutung, dass zwei der drei Minen, die mit der Exploration beginnen sollen, in Karabach liegen. Das Ziel, zur Entwicklung dieser vom Krieg zerrissenen Regionen beizutragen, wird für uns eine große Motivation sein. Im Falle eines positiven Ergebnisses der Bohrungen werden wir mit unseren neuen Investitionen einen Beitrag zur aserbaidshanischen Wirtschaft und zur Beschäftigung leisten und gleichzeitig die unerschütterliche Einheit der beiden Länder stärken.“

Auch „familiäres Engagement“ ist mit von der Partie

In einigen Fällen gehen die Beziehungen über Wirtschaft und Politik hinaus: In einem großen neuen landwirtschaftlichen Komplex in der Region Zangelan sind Mitglieder der Familie Erdoğan Geschäftspartner von Mitgliedern der Familie von Präsident İlham Aliyev.

So legten Erdoğan und Aliyev im Oktober 2021 den Grundstein für den Dost Agropark („Freund“) und besuchten ihn am 20. Oktober erneut, als sie im Rahmen der Einweihung eines neuen Flughafens in Zangelan, nahe der Grenzen zu Armenien und Iran, eine Rundreise durch Karabach unternahmen.

Der Dost Agropark ist als 100-Millionen-Dollar-Projekt geplant, das 500 Menschen beschäftigen und bis zu 10.000 Rinder züchten soll.

Begleitet wurde Erdoğan auf seiner Reise durch Karabach von Abdulkadir Karagöz, dem Eigentümer von Dost Ziraat, dem türkischen Investor des Dost Agropark. Karagöz ist nicht nur ein Geschäftspartner, sondern auch ein Mitglied von Erdoğan's Familie; er ist mit Erdoğan's Nichte verheiratet, der Tochter von Erdoğan's Bruder Mustafa Erdoğan.

Kurz nach der Hochzeit 2016 begann Karagöz (über ein anderes Unternehmen, das er ebenfalls leitete), auffallend viele Regierungsaufträge zu erhalten, an denen seine Firma oft als einzige beteiligt war.

Ebenfalls nach der Hochzeit begann er, die Kontrolle über das Unternehmen Dost, das er 2010 mitgegründet hatte, zu verstärken. Bis 2017 hatten die anderen Aktionäre das Unternehmen verlassen.

Aus Dokumenten im offiziellen türkischen Handelsregister, die *Eurasianet* eingesehen hat, geht hervor, dass etwas mehr als ein Jahr nach der Hochzeit weitere Mitglieder der Familie Erdoğan (zwei Neffen) Aktionäre von Dost Ziraat wurden: Üsâme Erdoğan, Sohn von Mustafa, und Ahmet Enes İlgen, Sohn von Erdoğan's Schwester Vesile İlgen. Im Jahr 2020 weisen jedoch andere Dokumente im Register darauf hin, dass die beiden Neffen keine Anteile mehr an dem Unternehmen hielten und Karagöz der einzige Aktionär war.

Auf aserbajdschanischer Seite ist der Investor Pasha Investments, Teil der Pasha Holding, in der alle Unternehmen der Familie von Aliyevs Ehefrau und erster Vizepräsidentin Mehriban Aliyeva zusammengefasst sind.

Die Leitung des Agrarparks liegt in den Händen eines weiteren Erdoğan-Verbündeten: Geschäftsführer ist Mehmet Zeki Tuğrul, der sowohl stellvertretender Vorstandsvorsitzender von Dost Ziraat als auch Vorstandsmitglied des Jugendflügels der türkischen Regierungspartei für Gerechtigkeit und Entwicklung AKP war.

Bei ihrem Besuch im Park am 20. Oktober beantworteten beide Präsidenten die Fragen der Journalisten. Erdoğan bezeichnete Karagöz als „den Verantwortlichen hier“, und auf die Frage, ob der Agropark später erweitert werden könne, antwortete Aliyev: „Das hängt von Herrn Abdulkadir ab.“ Erdoğan fügte hinzu: „Was immer er will, wird der Fall sein.“

Karagöz selbst meldete sich zu Wort: „Natürlich wird es expandieren. Inshallah werden wir in Latschin weitermachen“, sagte er und bezog sich damit auf ein weiteres Gebiet, das im Krieg von 2020 zurückerobert wurde.

Karagöz war nicht der einzige türkische Geschäftsmann in Erdoğan's Gefolge. Zu den anderen gehörten Cemal Kalyoncu, der Vorsitzende der Kalyon Holding, Mehmet Cengiz, Vorsitzender der Cengiz Holding, und Yıldırım Demirören, Vorsitzender der Demirören Holding. Alle drei hatten Erdoğan auch bei seinem letzten Besuch in Karabach begleitet.

In seinen Ausführungen in Jabrayıl spielte Erdoğan auf den schlechten Zustand der dortigen Straße an. „Ich denke, dass wir in einem Jahr die Straße nach Jabrayıl in einem völlig anderen Zustand sehen werden, weil auch in Bezug auf die Infrastruktur ernsthafte Schritte unternommen werden“, sagte er. „Dank der gemeinsamen Arbeit der Unternehmen Cengiz und Kalyon wurden hier Schritte unternommen.“

Obwohl diese Unternehmen keine familiären Verbindungen zu Erdoğan haben, sind sie wichtige politische Verbündete. Cengiz und Kalyon sind zwei der als „Gang of Five“ bekannt gewordenen türkischen Unternehmen, die enge Verbindungen zu Erdoğan und der Regierungspartei haben und während Erdoğan's Herrschaft die meisten großen öffentlichen Aufträge erhalten haben.

Nun haben sowohl Kalyon als auch Cengiz lukrative Aufträge für Arbeiten in Karabach erhalten, darunter den Bau von Straßen und den Betrieb von drei Minen, insbesondere für Gold und Kupfer. Kalyon baut die Eisenbahnlinie Horadiz-Aghband, die als Teil des Verkehrswegs geplant ist, der die aserbajdschanische Exklave Nachitschevan über Südarmenien mit dem Festland verbinden soll. Dieses Projekt soll mehr als 312 Mio. Manat (über 180 Mio. USD) kosten und 2023 fertiggestellt werden.

Ein weiteres Unternehmen der „Gang of Five“, Kolin İnşaat, hat ebenfalls einen lukrativen Straßenbauauftrag in Karabach erhalten und soll zusammen mit einem aserbajdschanischen

Unternehmen, Azvirt, die „Siegesstraße“ nach Schuscha bauen. Kolin war auch an der Errichtung eines Marktes (an der „Straße der türkisch-aserbaidtschanischen Freundschaft“) in dem Dorf Agali beteiligt, in das die ersten Aserbaidtschaner, die sich in Karabach niedergelassen haben, umgezogen sind.

Insgesamt hat die aserbaidtschanische Regierung über 4,8 Mrd. Manat (fast 2,9 Mrd. USD) für Wiederaufbau- und Restaurierungsprojekte in Karabach bereitgestellt. Es wurden keine Daten veröffentlicht, in denen aufgeschlüsselt wird, welche Unternehmen aus welchen Ländern Aufträge erhalten, und auch andere Länder, die als befreundet gelten, wie Italien, Israel und das Vereinigte Königreich, haben Aufträge erhalten. Aber türkische Firmen scheinen die größten Gewinner der Verträge zu sein.

Nach Angaben der türkischen Botschaft in Baku sind rund 30 türkische Unternehmen in Karabach tätig. „Diese Unternehmen haben bereits 1 Mrd. USD investiert, und diese Investitionen werden weiter zunehmen“, sagte Yakup Sefer, der wichtigste Handelsberater der Türkei in Baku, auf einem Wirtschaftsforum im Juli.

Ein weiteres großes türkisches Unternehmen, die Demirören Holding, hat zwar noch keine öffentlichen Aufträge für Projekte in Karabach erhalten, aber es hat in letzter Zeit andere große Aufträge in Aserbaidtschan erhalten. Im Jahr 2021 erhielt das Unternehmen einen 10-Jahres-Vertrag für die Verwaltung der staatlichen Lotterie und unterzeichnete eine Absichtserklärung mit dem Wirtschaftsministerium zum Bau einer pharmazeutischen Fabrik im Wert von 40 Mio. USD.

Auf die Frage eines italienischen Journalisten in einem Interview im September, wie die Aussichten für Firmen aus diesem Land seien, Bauaufträge für Karabach zu erhalten, antwortete Aliyev, dass Italien an zweiter Stelle stünde - hinter der Türkei. „Die Türkei ist unser Nachbarland und hat sehr prominente Baufirmen“, sagte er über die Türkei. „Denn sie ist unser Verbündeter und enger Freund.“

Zusammenfassung

Beim 44-tägigen Angriffskrieg Aserbaidtschans und seiner Verbündeten im Herbst 2020 gegen Berg-Karabach ging es nicht nur um Geopolitik, sondern auch darum, daraus wirtschaftliche Profite zu ziehen. Ein Überblick über die wirtschaftlichen Profiteure offenbart sowohl private Personen als auch verschiedene Unternehmen, die dabei vielfach in enger Kooperation mit dem Aliyev-Clan in Aserbaidtschan gehandelt haben. Zu ihnen zählten u.a. auch türkische Unternehmen, die eine Geschäftspartnerschaft mit der Familie Erdoğan und/oder der Familie des aserbaidtschanischen Präsidenten, İlham Aliyev, entwickelt haben.

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BOOK REVIEW

Marc Sinan: Gleißendes Licht. Roman
by Tessa Hofmann, Bremen: Rowohlt, 2023. 273 pp. ISBN: 978-3-498-00314-2

Abstract

Marc Sinan's debut novel is the latest contribution of German-language post-genocidal memoir prose. This, in turn, is the latest branch of transnational or internationally distributed fictional and non-fictional literature by authors of Armenian descent. On the one hand, they are in the narrative tradition of the languages they each use; on the other hand, they are united thematically by the intergenerational trauma of the genocide against the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. In terms of genre, this literature belongs to family novels, and in some cases to travel prose.

In Turkey, people of Armenian origin formed a discriminated and socially despised minority until a few years ago. They were virtually invisible. The memoirs of the lawyer and human rights activist Fethiye Cetin ("Anneannem" - My Mother's Mother, 2004) have contributed significantly to the de-tabooing. The author reviewed here writes in German and grew up in Germany, but his clearly autobiographical novel is based on his Turkish-Armenian family history. It is the story of his grandfather Hüseyin Umut, then a 15-year-old boy, who in 1915 observes Armenian children being pushed off his boat into the Black Sea. Later Hüseyin Umut marries Ani, the daughter of a wealthy Armenian. Her grandson Kaan, the author's alter ego, decides as an adult to retaliate and plans to kill the Turkish president.

Keywords - Turkey; Armenians; Genocide against Armenians; identity conflict; intergenerational genocide trauma; post-genocidal memory prose; German literature.

Writing about genocide is one of the greatest literary challenges, especially when it involves one's own or family experience. Most often, the crime closes the mouths of the surviving victims for life, especially if the state or society that perpetrated the genocide denies the crime and, conversely, accuses the victims of having been perpetrators, as is still happening 109 years later in the case of the Ottoman genocide of some three million indigenous Christians - Armenians, Greek Orthodox, and Syrians.

However, this persistent silence and denial of the Turkish state as well as the Turkish majority society has promoted a remarkable literary phenomenon: the post-genocidal memory prose, which has developed in Turkish-language as well as in English- and French-language transnational narrative prose. It confronts readers with the darkest chapter of Turkish Ottoman history in deliberate challenge.

In the vast Armenian and Greek diasporas of the United States, a memoir prose has emerged since the 1980s that is as numerous as it is impressive. German translations such as the memoir *Black Dogs of Fate* (1997) by the U.S. poet and literary scholar Peter Balakian or Micheline Marcom Aharonian's debut novel *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* (2000) embody the range of this post-genocidal prose between factual report and fairy-tale fictionalization of the Ottoman genocide and its psychological

consequences. Internationally known Greek-born authors such as Jeffrey Eugenides (b. 1960, USA; currently Berlin) and Aris Fioretos (b. 1960, Stockholm) also processed the genocidal extermination and uprooting of their ancestors in the late Ottoman Empire in their novels *Middlesex* (2002) and *The Last Greek* (2009).

Four generations after the World War I genocide of the Young Turks, these themes entered German-language prose. Actress and author Katerina Poladjan and journalist Laura Cwiertnia (b. 1987, Bremen) are daughters of Armenian fathers and descendants of genocide survivors. Their novels *Here Are Lions* (2019) and *On the Streets We Are Called Otherwise* (2022) form a peculiar hybrid. For on the one hand, they belong to the genre of the family or generational novel, which was considered a ‘worn-out genre’ after World War II but has experienced a resurgence since the 1990s and is currently arguably the most productive novel genre in European and North American narrative prose. On the other hand, they are also conceived as travelogues. In Marc Sinan's debut novel *Gleißendes Licht* (“Dazzling Light”, February 2023), the genre hybridity is even more distinct, for it can also be read as both an artist's novel and a coming-of-age narrative.

At its center is Kaan, growing up in Munich, the son of his German-assimilated Turkish mother, Nur (“Dazzling Light”) and a German father, but they play little or no role in the plot. Above all, Kaan is the grandson of the “*legendary hazelnut magnate of the Black Sea*,” Hüseyin Umut, and the Armenian Ani, who is left behind by her mother in the Black Sea port city of Ordu in 1915, when Ani's mother flees to Batumi with her son and her husband Artun. Hüseyin, an enterprising “dede” (grandfather) from his youth, serves as an auxiliary soldier in 1915, supplying the Ottoman troops with tea and tobacco; later, thanks to his good relations with the republican Kemalists, he takes possession of the lands of Artun, “*the most respected Armenian far and wide*,” and marries Ani, Artun's heiress, who has since been raised in Islam by an adoptive Muslim family. Bringing heiresses of wealthy Armenians permanently into their possession through (forced) marriage to the often underage girls was a widespread practice among Ottoman Muslims during and after the 1915/6 genocide. Author Sinan, however, interprets the relationship between Hüseyin Umut and Ani/Vahide as a love match. Like the protagonists of his novel, Marc Sinan's grandparents and mother bear the names Hüseyin, Vahide (“the lonely one”), and Nur.

The birth of their daughter Nur, whose conception Hüseyin forces during a marital rape, coincides with Hüseyin's economic ruin during World War II. Sinan describes the circumstances and reasons from different, sometimes contradictory points of view. Ambiguity as a design principle in character portrayal pervades his entire work and could be misunderstood as a design weakness.

Growing up in Istanbul, Kaan's mother, Nur feels that she does not belong, without realizing the reasons. She wants to go to Germany to escape the constant tutelage of women in Turkey. She encourages her egomaniacal son's musical ambition to the best of her ability. Kaan studies in the USA thanks to a scholarship abroad, his German school friend Susanne (“Zizi”) accompanies him there, but becomes increasingly estranged from the ambitious, arrogant, often empathy-less and aggressive, at the same time depressed young man with suicidal thoughts. Zizi is the first to recognize that Kaan is psychically “ill”, but still accompanies him to the funeral of his grandmother

Vahide in Trabzon (Trapezunta) in 1999. Ten years earlier, Vahide/Ani had already confided to her grandson her story of suffering and the loss of her Mayrik (little mother), whom, despite all her love, she calls a sinner “because she worships a false god.” Ani/Vahide is also not presented as a unambiguous character. As a committed Muslim, she shares the religious prejudices of the majority population against Christians. She demands that her underage grandson be able to slaughter a chicken as evidence of his manhood.

The death of his once-Armenian grandmother does not cause Kaan any grief. It is only decades later that he will explain to Zizi, by now the mother of Kaan's daughter Aurora, in a telephone conversation that his grandmother “had everything in her luggage, the genocide, the loneliness, the sadness. This unconditional link between self-worth and work.” (232) It is a finding that also fits the grandson and illustrates what is described as the intergenerational impact of genocide trauma.

The night after Vahide's funeral, Kaan's mother, Nur abruptly appears at his bedside and presents him with Vahide's jade dagger, demanding that he avenge her, Nur. Here, too, it remains unclear which crime is to be repaid. In the post-genocide family novels, such heirlooms play a major role, such as a golden bangle in Laura Cwiertnia's novel or an Armenian family Bible that Katerina Poladjan's protagonist comes across during her internship in Yerevan. The Armenian father in Cwiertnia's family novel advises the protagonist against taking up her Armenian heritage: “*Much too heavy to carry!*”

Kaan, on the other hand, reaches for the inherited dagger, albeit decades after his grandmother's death. He is now a scholarship holder in the villa of the German Academy in Tarabya (Istanbul), where he befriends the supposed gardener in the neighboring property. It is the property of the Turkish president's official villa. Kaan discusses music and art with the old gardener in the presidential garden and talks himself into a mad frenzy. His remarks are anti-capitalist, anti-Western or anti-American and culminate in the demand for an indiscriminate art for all people, for a music that does not divide but unites.

The Dede accuses him of being a “fascist of the past,” a person who lives in the past and believes in “*the moral superiority of the losers. Free yourself from pain (...)! It means great injustice to future generations if we build our identity on the aberrations and injuries of past decades and centuries.*” (144) At the *iftar* celebration in the presidential garden, Kaan wants to pounce on the president as an avenger with his dagger, but the president turns out to be the nice gardener next door and invites Kaan to contribute music. In his second song, Kaan refers to the Turkish version of the *Song of the Nibelungs*, namely the eighth of twelve stories from the collection *Heroic Tales by Dede Korkut* (mid-15th century): A shepherd of the Turkic people of the Oghuz, the Central Asian ancestors of today's Turks and Azeris, rapes a nymph in a sacred place. She gives birth to a polyp-like child and curses the Oghuz invaders, for whom the one-eyed revenge monster quickly becomes a threat. At first, they drive him into the solitude of the steppe. In the end, the outcast is killed by his ‘milk brother’ Basat.

Marc Sinan dealt with this theme years ago, which he interprets as an inner-Turkish fratricide. His “Docufictional Music Theater for Orchestra, Voice, Movement and Video Installation” was performed in 2014 at the Gorki Theater in Berlin. However, the ambassadors of Turkey and Azerbaijan, who had been invited to attend, did not attend

the performance and thus the challenging interpretation by the Turkish writer Sema Kaygusuz, who interpreted the figure of Tepegöz as the exemplary Other, who is excluded in order to make people forget their own guilt.

The crucial question is, of course, whether the Tepegöz material is suitable for symbolizing the intergenerational Armenian trauma and deriving future prospects for Turkish-Armenian relations from it. Kaan's song says: *"But we are brothers, your dede is my dede. My forgiveness is your salvation. Your salvation is my salvation."* The convictions of the Armenian journalist Hrant Dick, who was murdered for this in early 2007, resonate here.

In fact, however, Armenian-Turkish relations were never about a fratricidal war, but about centuries of subjugation and legal and social discrimination against indigenous Ottoman Christians, including Armenians, and their extermination in the course of Turkish nation-building. The novel's constructed antithesis of retribution and forgiveness is a bogus alternative, for retribution four or more generations *post factum* is as absurd as forgiveness is impossible in the face of ongoing official Turkish denial and threat. And even in the Korkut saga, Tepegöz and Basat are by no means blood brothers but just milk brothers.

Sinan seems to have recognized this himself by having his grandmother Vahide appeal to Kaan to look for a third way between forgiveness and retribution: *"(...) don't be a Basat, don't be a Tepegöz. Only if you are not both, you can create a balance in the world, you can solve what happened to my Mayrik, what happened to me. Choose a path other than that of cruelty."* (186) His Dede recommends therapeutic writing: *"Finally write down the story, Kaan. Write so that you can forget it. For only in forgetting is there a chance to survive (...)."*

Even Kaan must realize that his hope of triggering a nationwide revolution and thus a lasting improvement in the treatment of minorities by assassinating the Turkish president must fail, because *"the paranoia is too strong."* To overcome mistrust, fear and prejudice, it would take another thousand years. Sinan hints that Armenians could also currently become the victims of Turkish exterminationism with a song that praises the Young Turkish War Minister Enver and the *"martyrs of the great Islamic army"* and threatens the *"Armenian fascists"* at the presidential iftar celebration in 2023 (236).

Sinan's dystopian outlook on the near future in November 2023 matches this grim summary: An imagined tanker accident finally destroys the piano of Komitas, the Armenian clergyman and composer that sank in the Bosphorus in September 1913, through a mishap of the young Hüseyin Umut. Komitas saved him from punishment at the time, and when Hüseyin meets Komitas again in 1915, the Armenian deportee recognizes him and blesses him for Hüseyin's benevolence when the latter hands him water. Thus, a lasting bond is formed between the two.

Sinan's novel does not follow any chronology but spans a plot time of one hundred years with frequent, unmediated changes of place and time. Not only the narrative styles - personal perspective, experienced character speech, inner monologue and auctorial narrator - change in rapid succession, but also the perspectives and evaluations, which lends the content statements an often irritating, dazzling ambiguity. At the beginning of the novel, there is a monstrous crime, which was characteristic for the Black Sea region and especially Trabzon: 15-year-old Hüseyin is hired by soldiers

to row a boat with 14 children into the open sea, where they are pushed into the water one after the other. Hüseyin is surprised that the children do not scream: "*Armenians, that's all.*"(26)

Dede Hüseyin is not only a relatively empathy-free eyewitness to this crime, but also a profiteer from the genocide and his marriage to an Armenian heiress. How does one live as an heir to a family of victims and perpetrators? By drawing characters that are ambiguous and contradictory, neither really good nor bad? By interpreting the same events differently, even contradictorily, like the economic ruin and the death of Hüseyin Umut? Marc Sinan has attempted his literary liberation from the trauma of the genocide of his Armenian ancestors by means of his primary art - music - in which simultaneity, contrariety, and polyphony are possible. His debut novel is a largely successful translation of polyphonic rules into literary forms. However, this design approach also explains some weaknesses in composition and content.

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