

REGIONAL DIMENSION OF GEOPOLITICAL PROCESSES OF DEFENSE CAPACITY AND DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT OF THE STATEHOODS OF GEORGIA, ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN IN 1919: A NEW LOOK AT HISTORY

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Abstract

The article provides a comparative analysis of the geopolitical situation in Transcaucasia during the period of 1919, when Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence and began nation-building and state-building.

The author focuses on the regional dimension of the geopolitical processes of 1919, arguing for the existential significance of issues of defense capability and diplomatic support for their new statehoods of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Based on the analysis of archival and diplomatic documents, as well as periodical press materials, the article determines the positions of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the formation of independent states. In this context, the article argues the main causes of ethno-territorial contradictions and the role of the Entente states. Based on historical facts, the author comes to the conclusion that, having given priority to issues of delimitation and demarcation in the formation of their own statehood, the Transcaucasian countries relied more on the arbitration of the Entente countries, without seeking to resolve the issue themselves.

Keywords: *military-political situation, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Transcaucasia, Paris Peace Assembly, international imperialism, anti-Russian alliance.*

Introduction

The official relations between the Republic of Armenia and the South of Russia had just been restored, when in the autumn the military-political situation of the republic became even more difficult, which is explained by the strengthening of the aggressive aspirations of the neighbors towards the Republic of Armenia and their practical steps in that direction. With this unfriendly and even hostile relationship between Azerbaijan and Georgia, by the fall of 1919, it intensified and turned into a threat. As for Türkiye, major changes were made here, which were encouraging at first, but after a short time

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Received: 01.05.2025

Revised: 28.05.2025

Accepted: 06.08.2025

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became a great danger for the Republic of Armenia (Mkhoyan 2017; Yemelianova 2023).

The Paris Peace Assembly put forward the problem of dissolving the Ottoman Empire, which was a real opportunity to solve the Armenian Question. However, the Milli movement led by Mustafa Kemal prevented the destruction of Türkiye and at the same time the realization of the political goals of the states of the Entente to solve the Armenian Question. Kemalist Türkiye entered the historical arena, striving to complete the process of the destruction of Armenians. After the departure of British soldiers from Transcaucasia in August 1919, favorable conditions were created for Kemalist Türkiye and Azerbaijan to finally destroy Armenia and bring the borders closer to Azerbaijan.

From July 10 to August 6, 1919, at the conference convened in Erzurum, Turkish nationalists officially announced their uncompromising anti-Armenian policy. In the first point of the Manifesto adopted at the conference, it is recorded that Western Armenia is an inseparable part of the Ottoman Empire. "The vilayet of Trabizon, the sanjak of Janik, as well as the vilayets of Urzrum, Svaz, Diyarbakır, Van, Bitlis, and the administrative regions included in these vilayets form a unified whole and cannot be separated from the Ottoman Empire under any pretext" (Kemal 1929, 381). Later, on October 17, Kemal telegraphed Mahmed Pasha. "We will not cede a single inch of land to Armenia" (Kemal 1932, 120; Simonyan 1986). Azerbaijan and Georgia, encouraged by the active support of Kemal Türkiye, sought to resolve territorial disputes with the Republic of Armenia by military means.

On September 25, 1919, A. Khatisyan informed in a telegram addressed to Av. Aharonyan and Poghos Nubar Pasha, the chairmen of the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian national delegations in Paris, that under the pressure of Azerbaijan, an agreement was signed between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan in Shushi on August 22, by which Nagorno-Karabakh temporarily, until the question is resolved at the Paris Peace Assembly, recognizes the sovereignty of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan also extended its power over the provinces of Shushi, Jhanshir and Karyagin, and Zangezur appeared in the ring on both sides. Now Azerbaijan is feverishly 'preparing for war', the telegram says, 'to capture Zangezur'. The leaders of Türkiye and Azerbaijan continue to create conspiracies against Armenia¹. Azerbaijan seeks to capture Zangezur and extend its control from Aghdam to Qamarlu, then join the Muslims of Arax and connect with Türkiye through them. In order to implement their military plans, secret military alliances were signed at the direct behest of Türkiye, which were directed against both the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia and the Republic of Armenia.

Spontaneity, lack of political experience of the elites and weakness of political forces

In 1919 at the conference of Svaz (Sebastia) (September 5 to 11), all the decisions taken by the Kemalites in Erzurum, their policy towards the non-Turkish peoples of Türkiye (Ataturk 1966, 49), which was directed against Armenia in all its severity,

¹ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, list 355, part 1, sheet 206.

were officially reaffirmed. In a special resolution adopted at the Svaz conference, the Kemalites declared that they would wage a decisive battle against any movement that would set itself the task of creating an independent Armenia (Sadiq 1981; Akin 2017; Simonyan 1991, 366). Representatives of Soviet Russia, Azerbaijan and Georgia participating in the forum were also supporters of that policy (Haratch 1919).

It is important to note that the Milli movement led by Mustafa Kemal would not have succeeded if it had not received the support of a major power. And that power was Soviet Russia, which at that time was waging a life-and-death battle against international imperialism. M. Kemal was able to diplomatically use that circumstance and present the movement he led as a revolutionary struggle against “imperialism”, which even has a tendency to establish totalitarian formation. The leaders of Soviet Russia and M. Kemal formed an alliance with, and the latter received great assistance (Hairenik 1926, 70; Hairenik 1940, 143). Garo Sassouni informs that after the signing of the armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918, “the leaders of the Ittihat party immediately visited Germany and Russia and entered into political relations with them” (Hairenik 1926, 70; Hairenik 1940, 143). And in 1919, relations between Soviet Russia and Kemalist Türkiye had entered a friendly course with secret or open pacts. Garo Sassouni also writes: “Bolshevik Russia’s aspirations were obvious, which apparently coincided with Turkish interests, and the very existence of Armenia and the Armenian people became of little value for Russia” (Hairenik 1928, 109). “For dubious advantages,” writes Zarevand, “Soviet Russia sacrificed the centuries-old right of the indigenous people of Turkish Armenia to the land of their fathers” (Zarevand 1971, 167-169). In fact, the alliance between Soviet Russia and Kemalist Türkiye first of all violated the interests of Armenia and the Armenian people.

We have already mentioned that the situation around the Republic of Armenia was getting worse, because its immediate neighbors, Georgia and Azerbaijan, signed a secret anti-Russian military alliance on June 16, 1919, which was also directed against the Republic of Armenia. In order to get out of that difficult situation, the government of the Republic of Armenia hastened to find ways of rapprochement with Georgia in order to thwart the actions arising from its military alliance with Azerbaijan. At the Svaz conference, they understood the purpose of the diplomatic move of the government of the Republic of Armenia and quickly resorted to drastic measures to disrupt the possible Armenian-Georgian rapprochement. It was certainly no coincidence that after the end of the conference, the Kemalites immediately started negotiations with the Georgian authorities, and at the end of September 1919, the second secret Georgian-Azerbaijani military anti-Russian alliance was signed. It was more offensive and more militant in its content compared to the previous one. The alliance stemmed from the strategic interests of both Kemalist Türkiye and the latter’s “friendly” Soviet Russia. This created an opportunity to attack both the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia and its friendly Republic of Armenia. On December 12, 1919, the newspaper “Haratch”, published in Yerevan, confirms the following information from the newspaper “Kubanskaya Zemlya” published in Kuban (from “Turkish Armenia and Transcaucasia” guide): “Bolsheviks seek to complicate the situation of the Volunteer Army, support the separatist tendencies of Georgia and Azerbaijan. The Young Turks, who joined the organizations of the national councils,

support Azerbaijan and Georgia in every possible way in order to gain allies against Armenia, whose existence they have not come to terms with”.

The struggle for defense capability and diplomatic support in the confrontation

The Bolsheviks are actively assistd by the Turks in order to make the situation of the Allies more difficult in Turkish Armenia. All this is confirmed by the following facts.

Geliladze, the representative of Georgia in Constantinople, is very close to Churuk-Suli-Mohammed Pasha and is negotiating with the Young Turks to take action against the Republic of Armenia, the volunteer army and allies. Negotiations between representatives of Georgia and Azerbaijan, Young Turks and Bolsheviks took place in Baku and Batum. The Turks received a lot of money from the Bolsheviks” (Haratch 1919).

That the second secret Georgian-Azerbaijani military alliance was mainly directed against the Volunteer Army and the Republic of Armenia is evidenced by its content.

1. To prevent the Russians from entering Transcaucasia.
2. Azerbaijan and Georgia together with the Bolsheviks should fight against the Allies to remove them from Transcaucasia.
3. Consider Armenians as enemies.
4. In case Azerbaijan declares war on the Republic of Armenia, Georgia is obliged to block all communication routes of the Republic of Armenia.
5. The Georgians undertake to withdraw two military units (divisions) against General A. Denikin in the direction of Petrovsk.
6. In order to act against General A. Denikin, Azerbaijan is obliged to remove an area along the northeastern borders of the Republic of Armenia.
7. The center of Turkish operations should be Transcaucasia, Trabzon, Dize and Batum.
8. The Turks are obliged to send 15,000 soldiers to help Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as to the Republic of Armenia in order to raise an uprising of the Muslim population there (Haratch 1919).

That military alliance was immediately put into action. At the end of September, the Georgian government, faithful to its alliance commitment, sent 400 Bolshevik generals to Baku by train to fight against Denikin during his attack². And in October-November 1919, in order to strengthen the defense of Azerbaijan, Baku sent eight machine guns, 3 wagon shells, bullets of different calibers, rifles, ammunition for one battalion and 48 officers to serve in the Azerbaijani military units³.

On September 20, 1919, when Azerbaijan launched its first attack on Zangezur from Jebrail province (Harutyunyan 1996,186-199), at the end of the same month, the Georgian government imposed an economic blockade on the Republic of Armenia. On October 30, “Veratsnund” weekly published in Paris reported that the goods delivered to the Republic of Armenia “will remain in Batumi until the states put the necessary pressure on the Georgian government. The siege of Armenia by Georgia, by which the

² National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 197, sheet 1.

³ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 33, sheet 33, fund 204, inv. 1, file 133, sheets 30, 33, 38, fund 276, inv. 1, file 183, sheet 122.

necessary military equipment and other various goods will enter Armenia, confirms the opinion expressed in many places that there is some agreement between Georgia and Turkish nationalists" (Veratsnund 1919, 342).

The idea of creating a Turkish-Azerbaijani military alliance, which would also be directed against the Republic of Armenia, was outlined at the Svaz conference. On October 29, 1919, Turkish Chief of Staff Javad Pasha and Azerbaijan's representative Kerimov signed a secret Turkish-Azerbaijani military pact in Constantinople, according to the first clause of which both sides undertook to preserve each other's territorial integrity. If one side is attacked, the other commits to providing military assistance. According to the 9th clause of the alliance, Türkiye undertakes to prepare instructors, officers, and soldiers for the Azerbaijani army and at the same time to train and enrich the military knowledge of the Azerbaijani officers.

The Turkish-Georgian-Azerbaijani military-political cooperation

According to clause 10, Türkiye undertakes to provide the Azerbaijani army with cannons, rifles, equipment and other munitions. According to clause 11, the government of Azerbaijan undertakes not to sign any agreements with other states without consent of Türkiye⁴.

The Turkish-Georgian-Azerbaijani military-political cooperation generated new problems for the Volunteer Army, the solution of which required new approaches in the changing political situation. General A. Denikin was immediately informed about Transcaucasian transitions, political movements and secret military alliances. At the end of October 1919, the Russian intelligence of the Transcaucasia stated in a report to the head of the General Command of the Volunteer Army that the relations between Georgians and Muslims were strengthened by the second secret military pact signed with Azerbaijan (September 1919), which was directed against the South of Russia⁵. General A. Denikin was also informed about the existence of the secret Turkish-Azerbaijani military alliance (October 29, 1919). In such a complicated military-political situation, General A. Denikin could not carry out military operations against Azerbaijan and Georgia, when even the English troops obstructing the Volunteer Army had left Transcaucasia. General A. Denikin would not take that step mainly because he concentrated all his forces in the military operations against Bolshevism in the auspices of Moscow.

In 1919 (September 6-14) during a meeting with A. Khatisyan in Tiflis, General N. Baratov announced that the Volunteer Army does not plan any military operations against Azerbaijan and Georgia until the capture of Moscow. The volunteers had said that at the moment their forces were needed to defeat the Bolsheviks⁶. In order to capture Azerbaijan and Georgia, it was necessary to direct five military units against each of them, but General Denikin could not withdraw so much power from the fronts, because decisive military operations for Moscow continued⁷. There was also another

⁴ National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 184, sheet 67-68.

⁵ State Archive of the RF, fund 446, inv. 2, file 34, sheets 96-97.

⁶ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 293, sheet 21.

⁷ Ibid, sheet 16.

important circumstance. In case of using military force against the independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia would be deprived of the help of the Entente states. However, it is an undeniable fact that General Denikin could not give up Baku, which is rich in oil products, because the latter had an important strategic and economic importance for the South of Russia. By subjugating Baku, he would first secure his rear from possible Bolshevik attacks and gain influence over the entire Caspian Sea, while improving his economic and financial situation. Therefore, General A. Denikin sought to solve the problem not by military force, but by diplomatic means, keeping Azerbaijan and Georgia constantly under the threat of military attack.

In September 1919, General A. Denikin sent a note to the Azerbaijani government, demanding to supply the South of Russia not only with the necessary amount of oil and oil products, but also to create an opportunity to thoroughly repair the warships of the Volunteer Army in the only workshop of the Caspian fleet⁸. There were conflicting approaches to the issue in the government of Azerbaijan. According to Military Minister N. Mehmandarov, it was necessary to accept General A. Denikin's note, but the Azerbaijani government was deliberately delaying the response⁹.

In October, another note from the General Command of the Volunteer Army followed, already in a rather stern tone. Atamanov (Atamanyan), military attaché of the diplomatic mission of the Republic of Armenia in Baku, reported that General A. Denikin demanded from the Azerbaijani government to stop the closure of Russian cultural centers, schools, violation of the rights of Russian citizens and persecution¹⁰. Then Colonel K. Palitsin¹¹, the representative of the main command of the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia, was recalled from Baku. It already meant a break in relations between the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia and Azerbaijan. The news spread widely in Azerbaijan and Georgia that the Volunteer Army was preparing and would soon begin military operations to capture Baku¹².

Azerbaijan was preparing to resist General A. Denikin and simultaneously start military operations against the Republic of Armenia. Russian intelligence reported to General Denikin that on November 1, Azerbaijani troops under the command of General Ali Agha Shikhlinsky launched a general attack on Zangezur in three directions (Shushi, Jebrayil and Nakhijevan) and on November 5 captured the villages of Khoznavar and Bayandur¹³ (Harutyunyan 1996, 186-201; Simonyan 2004; Simonyan 2005). By attacking Zangezur, Azerbaijan had a goal to capture Sharur-Nakhijevan and become a border with Türkiye. By doing so, he would have a wide opportunity to import the necessary amount of arms, ammunition and even military force from Türkiye continuously, freely and unhindered (Hille 2010a; Hille 2010b; Simonian 2005). In the Russian intelligence summary "General Theory about Azerbaijan" of November 4, 1919, it is said: "There is no doubt that if Azerbaijan

⁸ National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 101, sheet 92, file 183, sheet 36.

⁹ National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 183, sheet 122.

¹⁰ National Archives of Armenia, fund 278, inv. 1, file 10, sheet 15.

¹¹ Ibid, sheet 18.

¹² National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 183, sheet 122.

¹³ National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 227.

succeeds in carrying out the Zangezur operation, then Azerbaijan will have a great opportunity to carry out large-scale military operations against the neighboring republic (the Republic of Armenia) and the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia.”¹⁴ In order to prevent the threat to the Republic of Armenia and Russia from the south, General A. Denikin signed the following order in Taganrog on November 9: “In connection with the hostile attitude of the Azerbaijani authorities towards the Russian army and the aggressive attack of the Azerbaijani troops on the territories of Armenia, I order all Russian officers serving in their troops to leave the military ranks”¹⁵ (Haratch 1919).

By the way, on the initiative of the government of the Republic of Armenia, on November 20, 1919, an Armenian-Azerbaijani forum was to be held in Baku to settle the disputed issues peacefully. A. Khatisyan informs the General Command of the Volunteer Army about this and suggests forcing the Azerbaijani government to immediately stop military operations in Zangezur, otherwise it may lead to a fire in the entire South Caucasus region¹⁶. A. Khatisyan sent telegrams with the same content to Deputy High Commissioner¹⁷ of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Armenia Colonel J. Ray¹⁸.

As can be seen from the order signed by General Denikin a harsh attitude was shown towards the government of Azerbaijan also on the occasion of the military invasion of Zangezur. The general also telegraphed the representative of the “Special Political Consultation” of the Russian Embassy Council in Paris S. Sazonov instructing “...to ask the Supreme Council to take measures so that the order in the Caucasus is no longer disturbed and the possibility of surprise attacks is eliminated”¹⁹.

Political orientation of the Transcaucasian government and their right to an independent foreign policy

Taking advantage of the difficult situation of the Republic of Armenia, Azerbaijan tried to realize its strategic goal of connecting with Türkiye through Zangezur. However, this attempt failed. In short fierce battles, the Armenian military forces gave a worthy counterattack to the enemy and pushed him back to the exit positions. On November 18, 1919, in a letter addressed to the diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia in Washington, A. Khatisyan informs that “...after fierce battles, near Khoznavar and Bayandur, not far from Goris, they massacred the Tatars and pushed them back to Karabakh, the Turks left behind 14 machine guns, 150 prisoners, a huge amount of food, ammunition, tents, etc.”²⁰.

¹⁴ National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 183, sheet 53.

¹⁵ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 131, sheet 127, file 164, sheets 58, 71, 256, fund 276, inv. 1, file 183, sheet 123.

¹⁶ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 164, sheets 67, 95-96.

¹⁷ On December 3, 1919, Colonel W. Haskell returned from Paris to Tiflis. He had participated in the Paris Peace Assembly to report on Transcaucasia and particularly the situation in the RA.

¹⁸ National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 179, sheet 268.

¹⁹ National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 196, sheet 120

²⁰ Museum of Literature and Art, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Archives, N 4063, Boston.

The significance of Zangezur heroic battle is great. With that experience, Azerbaijan was also checking the degree of combat capability of the Armenian forces, assuming that it would not face serious resistance. However, it was badly mistaken.

In a letter addressed to Colonel Arsen Shahmazyan on December 10, 1919, A. Khatisyan writes: "The last heroic battle of Zangezur, the military spirit and indomitable character of the people of that country proved once more, and your tireless efforts and organizational talent were also revealed. Greeting you warmly on behalf of the government and congratulating our people on their brilliant victory, I am sure that they will protect their independence and freedom from now on, as they have until now."²¹

On the recommendation of Colonel J. Ray, General A. Denikin, High Commissioner of Allies in Transcaucasia M. Wardrop, the presidents of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Armenia and Azerbaijan left for Tiflis on November 19, 1919. On November 20-22, the negotiations of the two prime ministers on the issue of Zangezur took place with the participation of Colonel Ray and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Ye. Gegechkori²². The result was that the four participants signed a five-point agreement²³ on November 23. According to clause 1 of the ZST agreement, military operations had to be stopped. On the same day, November 23, A. Khatisyan sent a telegram from Tiflis to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Military Minister General K. Araratyan about stopping military operations²⁴.

By clause 2 they agreed to open the roads through Zangezur to peaceful passers-by, by clause 3 all disputed questions, including border issues, were to be settled by peaceful agreement and, if this process is failed, to be left to the discretion of a neutral party as conciliator, and the said party must be the High Commissioner. According to the 4th clause of the agreement, an Armenian-Azerbaijani forum was to be held in Baku on December 4, which was to be continued on the 10th of the same month in Tiflis with the participation of the three Transcaucasian republics. An agreement was reached to resolve the disputed territorial issues through peaceful negotiations²⁵ (Kirakosyan 1972, 599). It is true that the enemy did not succeed in annexing Zangezur to Azerbaijan, but it did not give up the aggressive ambitions.

On December 6, 1919, the "Azerbaijan" newspaper published in Baku published General A. Denikin's order of November 9, which created great tension in the political circles of Azerbaijan and Georgia. "Azerbaijan" and Georgian "Struggle" newspapers, with special editorials, called that step of General Denikin a provocation against the independence of the Transcaucasian republics. On December 9, 1919, A. Khatisyan reported in a letter to L. Yevangulyan that A. Denikin's order made a great impression in Yerevan, and everyone has the feeling that Armenia is beginning to be recognized²⁶.

²¹ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 50, sheet 372.

²² State Archive of the RF, fund 446, inv. 2, file 67, sheet 287; National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 131, sheets 98-100, 88-91.

²³ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 50, sheet 318; fund 276, inv. 1, file 227, sheets 6-7.

²⁴ National Archives of Armenia, fund 199, inv. 1, file 110, sheet 26.

²⁵ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 50, sheet 318; fund 276, inv. 1, file 227, sheet 67.

²⁶ National Archives of Armenia, fund 199, inv 1, file 211, sheet 6.

On December 13, “Haratch” newspaper, published in Yerevan, correctly analyzed the content of “On General Denikin’s order” in a special editorial (on December 19, the same was published in “Worker” newspaper, published in Tiflis): “No matter how we refer to the political and social nature of the Volunteer Army, it is impossible not to accept that it, as an organized force pursuing certain political goals, cannot take into consideration the condition of the rear, what kind of relations are now in its neighboring countries. From this point of view, Denikin, rightly, should pay attention to the steps taken by the Turks in the Caucasus and, in particular, in Azerbaijan and Dagestan” (Haratch 1919; Worker 1919). Then, talking about the connection between Turkish nationalists and Bolsheviks, the newspaper presents the actions of the Turkish pashas against the Republic of Armenia and the Volunteer Army, which, naturally, could not follow all this indifferently and had to take practical steps.

In the end, the journalist expresses his belief that “if Denikin’s intervention in the affairs of Azerbaijan is vulnerable, the intervention of Nur Pasha is even more reprehensible. And since the Turkish nationalists will consider the Transcaucasia as a theater for their conspiracies, because the agents of Enver and Mustafa Kemal will find patronage here, it will be completely unnecessary to be angry against the behavior of the volunteers. The one who patronizes Nur Pasha, Kemal Bey and Khalil Bey, the one who every minute calls pashas in Constantinople and Svaz to interfere in the affairs of Transcaucasia, should be subject to such surprises. The Transcaucasia will be free, yes, the Transcaucasian republics must be free from any interference, but not only from the interference of the north, but also of the south” (Haratch 1919; Worker 1919).

General Denikin’s order of November 9 somehow prevented the threat to the South of Russia and the Republic of Armenia. The publication of the order certainly had certain consequences, the myth of the alleged secret military alliance between the Volunteer Army and the Republic of Armenia was circulated with renewed force, as well as the belief that the Volunteer Army and the Republic of Armenia were preparing to attack Azerbaijan. In fact, in the hands of General Denikin, that fake news became a restraining factor to dispel the belligerent sentiments of Azerbaijan and its allies. Azerbaijan did not dare to start military operations against the Volunteer Army.

The news of the so-called “secret Armenian-Russian military alliance” was deliberately spread by individual Bolshevik figures. In those days S. Kirov announced that the government of the Republic of Armenia has big plans to expand its territories and widely benefits from the sympathy and protection of the Entente and the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia, that General A. Denikin has a secret military alliance with the Republic of Armenia (Kirov 1936, 143). By doing so, the Bolsheviks tried to attack the Republic of Armenia, an apparent ally of the forces fighting against them, in the event that the Government of the Republic of Armenia maintained neutrality, not intervening in the struggle of either Soviet Russia or General Denikin.

The restraining power of the order of November 9, 1919 was also expressed against the opponents of the Republic of Armenia. In Azerbaijan’s behavior, Prime Minister N. Usubbekov stated that Azerbaijan is the least interested in resolving border issues with the Republic of Armenia by force of arms, as there is a great threat from the north²⁷. In

²⁷ National Archives of Armenia, fund 223, inv. 1, file 113, sheet 78.

those days, A. Khatisyan reported that after General A. Denikin's order became known, the severity of the Tatar attacks eased²⁸.

The members of the Georgian delegation from Paris, worried by General A. Denikin's order, immediately instructed their government to be in good relations with the Republic of Armenia. They also demanded to send a representative to negotiate with general in Yekaterinodar²⁹. In a telegram sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, L. Yevangulyan informed that during the Armenian-Georgian consultation held on December 9, he proposed Gegechkori to restore the neighborly relations of the three republics of Transcaucasia. He also warned that our deputies should be alert, because it is not excluded that they will once again propose to create a united front against General A. Denikin. At the end of the telegram, he again warned that the assembly being convened in Baku might fail³⁰.

Worried about the situation of those days, the Azerbaijani government offered to make concessions to the Republic of Armenia if it started negotiations immediately. The government of the Republic of Armenia considered negotiations possible – “to talk and find out what concessions the Turks are making”³¹.

Thus, during that difficult period General A. Denikin supported the Republic of Armenia. This is evidenced by the aforementioned order, which was issued in connection with the forceful attack of the Azerbaijani forces on the territories of the Republic of Armenia, forcing them to stop the aggression. General A. Denikin's order significantly eased the unfriendly attitude of the neighbors towards the Republic of Armenia. The move of the General Command of the Volunteer Army to support the Republic of Armenia was not accidental. Georgia and Azerbaijan took a hostile position towards the Russian army; its prop in Transcaucasia was the Republic of Armenia, which needed to be supported. However, it was negatively received by the Entente states, as their goal was to push Russia out of Transcaucasia, a policy that has not lost its relevance to this day.

In another letter addressed to L. Yevangulyan on December 9, Khatisyan reported: “It seems to me that this order is semi-recognition of Armenia by the Russian Volunteer Army. I mean, England and America do not welcome our relations with Russia, and I think Wardrop will not like the order. That is why the question of a confederation between the three republics is now being raised again. It is aimed at Russia with a sharp edge”³². Campaign against the spread of Russian influence, the problem of the unification of the republics of the Transcaucasia, which had to be solved by the creation of a confederation, was again raised. A new political situation was emerging, which demanded reasonable steps from the leadership of the Republic of Armenia. Having a good understanding of the new situation, Khatisyan writes: “It is necessary to carefully avoid between the Entente, Denikin and the Caucasian Confederation. Therefore, I need to know every detail about the mood in Tiflis.”³³ A.

²⁸ National Archives of Armenia, fund 199, inv. 1, file 211, sheet 7.

²⁹ National Archives of Armenia, fund 57, inv. 5, file 205, sheet 6.

³⁰ National Archives of Armenia, fund 276, inv. 1, file 196, sheet 46, inv. 179, sheet 279.

³¹ National Archives of Armenia, fund 57, inv. 5, file 205, sheet 5.

³² National Archives of Armenia, fund 199, inv. 1, file 211, sheet 9.

³³ Ibid.

Khatisyan instructed the delegation of the Republic of Armenia (T. Bekzadyan³⁴, V. Papazyan, M. Harutyunyan and H. Arghtyunyan) participating in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conference to be held in Baku: "If Azerbaijan raises the issue of confederation at the conference, our representatives will talk about this issue, but they will not come to a conclusion"³⁵. During the meeting between M. Harutyunyan, H. Arghtyunyan and Prime Minister N. Usbekov on December 9 in Baku, the latter's first question was: "Did you bring an answer about the confederation or not?",³⁶ The issues put forward by the delegation of the Republic of Armenia - temporary establishment of the demarcation line, reception and accommodation of migrants and signing of trade and railway contracts, etc. - were not accepted in Baku. The delegation of the Republic of Armenia telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Yerevan informing them that the Azerbaijanis do not want to talk about anything for now. "...They advance only and only the question of the confederation".³⁷

On the same day, December 9, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Armenia discussed the proposal of the governments of Azerbaijan and Georgia to form the Transcaucasian Confederation. The meeting of the Council recorded that "Denikin's attitude towards Armenians is generally good. Our neighbors notice and know that. Denikin's order, by which he forbids Russian officers to serve in the army of Azerbaijan, made a particularly big impression on Azerbaijan. The government believes that it is possible to enter into a relationship with Azerbaijan and conclude various pacts, apart from the military one, for example, customs, border, railway, etc."³⁸ (Documents of the History of the Armenian Church 1999, 203).

The approach of the Republic of Armenia regarding the confederation was definite and absolutely correct. Having discovered the real intention of the neighbors to create a military alliance against General A. Denikin, the Republic of Armenia agreed to establish multilateral alliance relations with them, except for the military alliance.

By the way, during the conversation with A. Khatisyan, Colonel W. Haskell also advised to avoid signing a military alliance in case of accepting the confederation's proposal, it will be harmful for the Republic of Armenia, because 240 thousand bushels of bread and seeds are imported from the South of Russia. Back in Tiflis, Colonel Haskell suggested to the members of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia to temporarily determine the borders, sign commercial and other types of agreements, however "in no case should you join them against Denikin".³⁹ The point was that the Entente states were against the destruction of General Denikin's forces fighting against Bolshevism and demanded not to prevent him from confronting with Bolshevism. That is why colonel W. Haskell and M. Wardrop, being in favor of creating a union of Transcaucasian republics, believed that they should not conclude a military alliance, but mainly focus on economic, railway, post-telegraph and transit agreements⁴⁰.

³⁴ On February 2, 1920, the Council of Ministers of the RA appointed Martiros Harutyunyan instead of Tigran Bekzadyan, the diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia in Azerbaijan.

³⁵ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 158, sheet 116.

³⁶ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 365, sheet 24.

³⁷ National Archives of Armenia, fund 57, inv. 5, file 205, sheet 3.

³⁸ National Archives of Armenia, fund 57, inv. 5, file 205, sheet 3.

³⁹ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 365, sheet 24.

⁴⁰ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 440, sheet 5.

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Armenia, taking into account all that, decided that "...now it is impossible to conclude an agreement on confederation with Georgia and Azerbaijan, because our borders are not definitively known. To conclude a confederation under the conditions that are proposed means also to conclude a military alliance against Russia, by which we will have allowed Turkish troops to pass through our country to fight against Denikin, and so on"⁴¹. The government of the Republic of Armenia considered it possible to accept the idea of a confederation if the territorial issues with Azerbaijan and Georgia were justly resolved, and, secondly, if such a clause was included in the treaty that the alliance was not directed against Russia⁴².

There was also another important circumstance. The government of the Republic of Armenia could not enter the confederation without solving the issue of Western Armenia. "Droshak" journal writes on that occasion: "For our neighbors, the Caucasus ended in best case with the 1914 border, and in general, they (Azerbaijan, Georgia) spoke about the borders, created by Turks. Armenians could not come to terms with that fact, in their political consciousness; Armenia was not only on one side of Masis, but also the other side. What kind of confederation in such psychological and factual conditions?" (Droshak 1931,198).

According to Georgians and Azerbaijanis, the Transcaucasian Confederation is an alliance that should only be directed against Russia, relying on Türkiye, that is, "...with Türkiye against Russia" (Droshak 1931, 200).

The offer of a confederation by Azerbaijan and Georgia was not news, which they remembered only when there was a threat from the North. A similar offer was made by Georgia and Azerbaijan back in April-May 1919, when a threat was created by General A. Denikin. On May 31, 1919, during a meeting with the chairman of the Azerbaijani delegation A. Topchibashev in Paris, A. Aharonyan and H. Ohanjanyan stated that they were not against and are not against now "...the union of the Caucasian peoples, but first each of them should have their own state. For us, the problem is complicated by Turkish Armenia, which we have to join us, but since that issue has not been officially decided yet, we are unable to make new political combinations without Turkish Armenians. As for Caucasian Armenia, it will never undertake to present itself separately again" (Aharonyan , 23-24).

"Droshak" journal rightfully reminded the neighbors of the Republic of Armenia that if the union of the three Transcaucasian republics is a dire necessity, then why in 1918 at the end of May, they destroyed "...the Union of the Caucasus, the Transcaucasian Seim was destroyed, as is known, as a result of the internal conflicts of the Caucasian peoples and, for the most part, Turkish pressure.

The Georgians, led by Jordania, secretly agreed with Germany in advance and left the pan-Caucasian positions. Seduced by the Turks, the Azerbaijanis brought the troops of Vehib and Nuri pashas to the Caucasus. It was under the direct patronage of the Turks that the division of the Caucasus took place. Vehib Pasha drew the border line that the Azerbaijanis demanded, mercifully leaving Yerevan to the Armenians. Later, until the defeat and departure of the Turks, the leaders of Azerbaijan did not make any

⁴¹ National Archives of Armenia, fund 57, inv. 5, file 2005, sheet 3.

⁴² National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 440, sheet 6; inv. 2, file 56, sheet 16; fund 276, inv. 1, file 116, sheet 129.

changes in their mentality and practical policy. Azerbaijani officials wanted to create a national federation under such conditions" (Droshak 1931, 196-197). It is natural that the government of the Republic of Armenia did not go to such a deal because it did not trust the sincerity of the authors of the proposal of the Transcaucasian Confederation.

On January 4, 1920, the Council of ministers of the Republic of Armenia again referred to the question of the confederation. The Council heard the report of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia in Baku. MP M. Harutyunyan reported that Azerbaijan failed the work of the conference (the Armenian-Azerbaijani conference that started on December 14 was interrupted on the 21st of the same month). "... All those were some kind of games to achieve other goals"⁴³. The government of the Republic of Armenia knew that on November 27, 1919, an agreement was reached between the Bolsheviks and the Turks in Baku, according to which Turkish troops should pass through Armenia "...to capture Denikin's rear" (Haratch 1920).

In January 1920, the political situation changed. The Volunteer Army of South of Russia was defeated in a bloody civil war against the Bolsheviks. On December 26, 1919, the Soviet army occupied Rostov, and at the end of March 1920, Dagestan and the entire North Caucasus. On January 21, 1920, A. Aharonyan reported in a letter-report addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia from Paris. "...The advance of the Bolsheviks and the hopeless defeat of Denikin cause general anxiety in the political circles. They are working to block the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus Mountains. The representatives of Azerbaijan and Georgia - Topchibashev and Chkhheidze, Tsereteli and Avalov - three days ago made a solemn promise to fight against the Bolsheviks with their armies, and to supply them with weapons and ammunition. One thing that is certain for me is that the Armenians should not fight against the Bolsheviks, but only protect their borders from the Turks"⁴⁴.

Conclusion and discussion

It is true that the idea of the Transcaucasian Confederation lost its importance as a result of the defeat of General A. Denikin, but the diplomacy of Azerbaijan and Georgia tried to lead the Republic of Armenia into the confederation again, this time proposing to create a united military front against Soviet Russia, which the Government of the Republic of Armenia opposed in principle.

On February 13, 1920, British High Commissioner M. Wardrop arrived in Yerevan from Baku, whose goal was to influence the government of the Republic of Armenia to create a union with Georgia and Azerbaijan and stop the Bolshevik invasion by all possible means. M. Wardrop asked to attend a meeting of the Council of Ministers to present his concerns. At the meeting of the council convened on February 14, he clearly presented England's position: "I and the British government are Russian haters. Our interests are opposite to Russia's everywhere in the East. Anyone who loves Russia is a suspect for us. Whoever follows a policy against Russia is our true friend, always worthy of our help. You should interpret all our steps from this point of view. ... All Transcaucasian republics now have one big and dangerous enemy, and that enemy

⁴³ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 365, sheet 25.

⁴⁴ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, inv. 1, file 290, sheet 63.

is Russia. It is against this enemy that you must direct all your forces by creating a common front together with your neighbors. You must arm yourself and unite against the North. For this, it is necessary that you sign a political and military alliance with Georgia and Azerbaijan by forming a confederation" (Hairenik 1950, 29). Members of the government, opposing M. Wardrop, answered that he was forgetting that the main danger of the Republic of Armenia is Türkiye rather than the North. "...Free us from that deadly danger, and then we will agree with you. Then it will be very easy for us to find a common language with our neighbors who, like you, did not want to recognize the danger of the South now. In addition, we have important border disputes with our neighbors, the satisfactory solution of which can only pave the way for the confederation we all desire" (Hairenik 1950, 29). The Chief Commissioner replied to the justified explanations of the government. "...Your border disputes with your neighbors are of secondary importance. The main thing is your unity against the common enemy, the North" (Hairenik 1950, 30).

In April 1920, the discussion of the issue of confederation on the agenda of the assembly of the three Transcaucasian republics convened in Tiflis remained unfinished due to the Sovietization of Azerbaijan.

Thus, in the autumn of 1919, the difficult military-political situation of Armenia presented difficult problems to the leadership of the republic, the solution of which required an extremely careful and circumspect policy. It was necessary to reveal the true goals of the neighbors' political games, to thwart their aggressive actions. In that case, the Republic of Armenia was supported by the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia. General A. Denikin's order of November 9 confused the plans of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye regarding the Republic of Armenia, weakened the tension created around it. The attempts of the neighbors to create a military-political alliance against the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia and to involve the Republic of Armenia in it were in vain.

The idea of confederation failed, despite the great efforts of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Entente, they failed to push the Republic of Armenia to anti-Russian positions, and the leadership was at its height at that moment.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and critiques.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical standards

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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