

AZERBAIJAN-TURKISH RELATIONS (1992-2012): A FOREIGN POLICY  
ACCOUNT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE  
IN  
THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

JULY 2012

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **AZERBAIJAN-TURKISH RELATIONS: (1992-2012): A FOREIGN POLICY ACCOUNT**

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July 2012, 73 pages

This study aims to examine the foreign policy of Azerbaijan toward Turkey in a historical perspective on the one hand and to analyze foreign policy formations during the Abulfaz Elchibey, Heydar Aliyev and Ilham Aliyev periods on the other. The thesis argues that One nation, two states principle does not have a validity in dictating the bilateral relations, instead a realist engagement is being favored by Azerbaijan with an emphasis on national interest. As a result, it is asserted that Azerbaijan's foreign policy remains in a cautious and consistent manner toward Turkey.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy of Azerbaijan, Turkish Foreign Policy, Strategic Depth, Nagorno-Karabakh , Azerbaijan-Turkish Relations.

## ÖZ

### AZERBAJCAN TÜRKİYE İLİŞKİLERİ (1992-2012): BİR DIŞ POLİTİKA BİLANÇOSU

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Temmuz 2012, 73 sayfa

Bu tez tarihsel bir perspektif içerisinde Azerbaycan'ın Türkiye'ye yönelik dış politikasını incelemeyi ve Ebulfez Elçibey, Haydar Aliyev, İlham Aliyev dönemi dış politika yapılanmalarını analiz etmektedir. Tez genel kanının aksine Bir millet, iki devlet anlayışının ikili ilişkileri yönlendirmede geçerli olmadığını bunun yerine Azerbaycan'ın Türkiye ile olan ilişkilerinde ulusal çıkarları esas alan gerçekçi bir dış politika izlediğini tartışmaktadır. Sonuç olarak Azerbaycan dış politikasının Türkiye'ye yönelik tedbir ve istikrar odaklı bir çizgide devam ettiği savunulmaktadır

Anahtar Kelimeler: Azerbaycan Dış Politikası, Türk Dış Politikası, Stratejik Derinlik, Dağlık Karabağ, Azerbaycan Türkiye İlişkiler.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author wishes to express his deepest gratitude to his supervisor Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Bağcı for his guidance throughout the research and would like to thank the examining committee members Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oktay F. Tanrısever and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ceylan Tokluođlu for their comments and suggestions.

The author would also like to thank Hakan Karaaslan and Murat Demirel.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

JDP	Justice and Development Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation In Europe
UN	United Nations
PfP	Partnership For Peace
US	United States
GUAM	GEORGIA/UKRAINE/AZERBAIJAN/MOLDOVA
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSCE	Commission on Security and Co-operation In Europe
AIOC	Azerbaijan International Operating Company
BTC	Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan (Pipeline)
USSR	Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics
OMON	Otryad Politsii Osobogo Naznacheniya (Special Purpose Police Unit)
MIT	Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı (National Intelligence Organization)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
NK	Nagorno-Karabakh
EU	European Union
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to analyze the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship by focusing on Azerbaijan's foreign policy alignments as well as concentrating on certain break points in this relationship. The collapse of the Communist Block later paved the way for Azerbaijan's independence, at the same time providing some opportunities to maneuver beyond its post-Soviet space.

This also posed an opportunity for Turkey to penetrate the former Soviet space giving it the chance to follow a different kind of foreign policy. As the years would progress, this kind of relationship would attain certain labels such as brotherly nations giving emphasis on normative elements such as language, culture and history. This fact has always been limited and shared in the public opinion of the two countries. In other words, Turkey fully realized its post-Cold War legacy in transforming to a "security-producing" country from a "security-consuming" one, as opposed to the "reactive foreign policy" alignment during the Cold War period.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the Azerbaijani-Turkish engagement has always been a pragmatic one based on realist intentions instead of the popular sentiment of One Nation Two States which had a limited appeal even at the dawn of the Azerbaijani-Turkish engagement and became more apparent as the Justice and Development started to initiate a different kind of foreign policy initiative in the South Caucasus.

This fact is more related when the Turkish foreign policy making started to implement Islamic sentiments which resulted in a Middle East oriented foreign

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<sup>1</sup> Hüseyin Bağcı, "Turkey as a Partner for European Foreign Policy in the Middle East", 136<sup>th</sup> Bergedorf Rountable Report, 2007, p.32.

policy. This can also be explained by a paradigm shift regarding Azerbaijani-Turkish relations witnessed a foreign policy alignment when the coalition powers in Turkey came from a secular background and offered certain nationalist intensions, whereas the relations have taken a different approach since the Justice and Development Party shows moderate Islamic tendencies and in relation to that the lack of willingness to cooperate on the part of the Azerbaijani political elite with their counterparts with an Islamic background.

A major contributing factor is related with the fact that the majority of foreign policy makers of Azerbaijan are the continuation of the Russian speaking Soviet intelligentsia of whom are not favoring Islamic agendas in Azerbaijan's foreign policy making. Even though there were certain episodes of friction between Azerbaijan and Turkey were more or less related with energy routes that involved heavy negotiations, however with the start of the new millennium this relationship has entered a period in which the One Nation Two States approach started to be reconsidered.

## **1.1 Research Questions**

The thesis is based around the following sets of research questions:

- Can the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship be considered a stable one after 20 years of engagement? In the eyes of the Azerbaijani foreign policy making elite, Turkey has become more unpredictable after a few years when viewed from Baku in the sense of how Turkey's various policy moves affect Baku's sovereignty. The Turkish-Armenian rapprochement is an ideal example in this case. The so called rhetoric of the two countries being indivisible has been eliminated from that point onwards and started to question the One Nation Two States doctrine. Also, the two societies being estranged for decades during the Soviet era have hardly built up meaningful links since

Azerbaijan's independence. The prevention of Azerbaijanis from purchasing real estate, ridiculing Azerbaijani language and culture in several Turkish soap operas for comedy purposes on the national television and visa obstacle have been a few contributing factors.

- To what extent does the dictum of One nation, two states hold true in dictating the relations between these two states? When Azerbaijan began developing its foreign relations, the nationalistic characteristic of a newly independent state pulled it away from its colonial overlord, the Russian Federation. In the initial years there was a feeling of kinship with Turkey that most strongly engaged Azerbaijani intellectuals and government officials. However, since the second decade of Azerbaijan's independence both Turkey and Azerbaijan have changed. Turkey came under the rule of an Islamic conservative party that has a little enthusiasm for the Turkic world. Therefore, Baku and Ankara have found that their pragmatic interests do not always comport with the solidarity that might be expected notably in key areas such as energy politics.
  
- How does the foreign policy alignment differ between Elchibey, Heydar Aliyev and Ilham Aliyev periods? The Elchibey period stood for making a strategic choice after restoring the independence: whether to model the country after the Islamic Republic of Iran or model Azerbaijan after the Turkish model, integrating the country into the European Community. This is the period when the bilateral relations skyrocketed, during a time when the Turkish businessmen were the first to come to Baku. Heydar Aliyev on the other hand, would reverse his predecessor's strictly pro-Turkish foreign policy course. Therefore this is the period for the initiation of the balanced foreign policy between East and the West which became instrumental in the subsequent years and a necessity. The Ilham Aliyev period is seen as the

continuation of the Heydar Aliyev period in which assertive pragmatism is being championed.

- What are the factors influencing Azerbaijan in formulating its foreign policy? In the present day, Azerbaijan's foreign policy includes several features: balancing relations with major regional and global powers instead of being a member of an exclusive alliance, the absence of religious and ethnic identity factors in determining the state's alliances or main vectors of cooperation, politics that serve the citizens of the state of Azerbaijan and not the greater Azerbaijani ethnic community and active attempts to ensure the state has safe and recognized permanent borders.
- How does Azerbaijan fit in the context of Strategic Depth doctrine? Turkey's recent foreign policy making features a zero-problem approach in the neighboring regions. The Justice and Development Party is rooted in moderate Islam and therefore the foreign policy making mechanism is programmed to have a stronger self-identification as Muslims rather than as Turks. They therefore have only limited interest in the Turkic secularized world-including Azerbaijan of which its population is mainly Shiite rather than Sunni- and therefore putting priority to the Middle East.
- Does the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship manifest a two-dimensional trait? Overlooking the period of the last 20 years of engagement one would notice that this kind of relationship has been limited to energy related issues and on the Nagorno-Karabakh. With regards to the energy politics both parties have been successful in proposing their agendas and to benefit in terms of making use of different energy routes in the name of diversification of resources. Regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey's efforts have always remained in a meddling manner in terms of resolving the conflict.

## 1.2 Literature Review

The literature on the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship can be divided into three categories: think-tank policy reports, journal articles and academic books. It should be noted that an overwhelming majority of academic studies are tend to be written from the perspective of Turkey and its foreign policy priorities, concentrating on the issue of energy routes and having a strong tendency of viewing Azerbaijan as an object rather than subject concerning the bilateral relations. So there is a void in the literature in terms of analyzing the subject from the perspective of Azerbaijan. Moreover, a large portion of the literature is based on romantic sentiments far from offering objective analysis between these two countries and often making references how the relations are being followed in a brotherly fashion. Regarding the reports made by freelance political analysts, Fariz Ismailzade makes a striking observation by naming the latest stage of the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship as a “Honeymoon being over”.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Ismailzade goes one step further and asserts that the engagement has taken a pragmatic outlook especially by the time the ruling Justice and Development Party has taken over:

It is true that Erdoğan made his first foreign trip to Baku and met with the Azerbaijani leadership. But it was also clear that Erdoğan cared less about Turkic solidarity than previous Turkish governments. Instead of seizing on the great economic and political opportunities opened up in the Caucasus and Central Asia, where Turkey could play a dominant regional role, Erdoğan, instead, decided to completely focus on the EU accession and abandon the “Eastern” part of Turkey’s foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fariz Ismailzade, “Turkey-Azerbaijan: The Honeymoon Is Over”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Winter, 2005, Vol. 4, No. 4, p.7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

In terms of giving an account on how domestic politics shape the making of foreign policy, Tokluoğlu explores the influence of the Azerbaijani identity. Tokluoğlu explores this phenomena in the programs and agendas of the Azerbaijani political parties and points to the tensions between the Azerbaijanism which has been accepted by the governing New Azerbaijan Party and Turkism, an ethnocentric nationalism, which is accepted by the Popular Front and liberal nationalists.<sup>4</sup>

In his widely acclaimed book, “Small Nations Great Powers”, Svante Cornell brings an unconventional interpretation on the Azerbaijani-Turkish relations in the sense as the title of the book suggests that this kind of relationship offers a “Small Nation Great Power” connection. In other words, Turkey being the Great Power and Azerbaijan being the Small nation. Accordingly:

Turkey was the first state to recognize Azerbaijan, several weeks before it recognized the other states of the region. Azerbaijan was crucial for Turkey in more than one way. Naturally, any substantial Turkish influence in Central Asia depended on influence in the Caucasus; and in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan was defined as the strategically most important country not only by Turkey, but by Iran and later the United States as well. For Turkey especially, Azerbaijan was a logical strategic pillar for influence in the wider region because of the close ethnic affinity, all but lack of linguistic difficulties, potential petroleum wealth, and its strategic location as the only Caucasian state on the Caspian Sea.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ceylan Tokluoğlu, “Definitions of National Identity, Nationalism and Ethnicity in post Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2005, Vol. 28, No.4, p.725, p.728.

<sup>5</sup> Svante Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Curzon Press, 2001, p.281.

### **1.3 Main Argument**

The main argument present in this thesis is based on the fact that what has started as an engagement on normative and romantic grounds has over the years of engagement evolved into a realist political atmosphere. In other words, the relationship between these two nations is not based on shared culture or language instead it is strictly based on rigorous pragmatic engagement between Azerbaijan and Turkey. This means the popular One Nation Two State sentiment only had a marginal appeal in both parties to the point where it was only championed in the nationalist circles, however it should be pointed out that there had never been an occasion of a nationalist party being in a majority power in the Turkish parliament, instead only a limited time as a coalition partner.

The second argument is based on the reaction on the part of Azerbaijan as Turkey started to implement Islamic elements in its foreign policy making. This became more apparent as the Justice and Development Party guaranteed a second term in the Turkish Parliament which later gave rise to certain initiatives such as the attempt to normalize relations with Armenia. The Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship can be divided into two phases in which the initial years served as the years of convergence when the relationship started after Azerbaijan's independence, and the second phase as the years of divergence. Therefore this kind of relationship is no different than any other in the present international system, in the sense that it is dictated through pragmatic intentions and guided through national-interest of the both parties involved.

Why the initial period is being labeled as convergence depends on certain factors; this is the time frame witnessing the close cooperation and according to some as a form of close friendship between Süleyman Demirel and Heydar Aliyev as a factor determining the bilateral relations. According to the Ambassador Mammad Novruzoglu who served in Ankara during those critical years, this was the result of



these two statesmen sharing the same world view mainly inspired by the legacy of the Cold War power politics in the initial years of the post-cold war period.<sup>6</sup>

This would naturally first manifest itself through energy cooperation Contract of the Century being as the primary evidence as well as Turkey's initial stance on Nagorno-Karabakh. Another significant factor would be outlined Turkish State's secular nature which seemed as an attractive motive for the Azerbaijani government in engaging relations considering the volatile situation regarding with Iran. However, it should also be noted that the Azerbaijani perceptions would have already started to change with the initial years of the Justice and Development Party. Considering the time line in the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship, this was Azerbaijan's first experience with an administration having an Islamic agenda and managing to be the ruling party close to a decade. This is also significant in showing how Azerbaijan's foreign policy toward Turkey transforming in reflecting the changes in Turkey's domestic political thinking with the previously mentioned lineage toward an Islamic agenda.

Therefore, in light of all these the arguments of the thesis, the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship is not based on One nation, two states principle, instead it is the kind of relationship in which national interest dictates the bilateral relations, a factor that can be detected through the foreign policy alignments of Azerbaijan throughout different administrations. Moreover, one can say that even though the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship was built on romantic ideals this started to develop into a realist framework as a result of twenty years of engagement.

Another factor is related with the revival of Islamic elements in Turkey's foreign policy with the Justice and Development Party taking the helm in managing the bilateral relations. This posed a different kind of dilemma to the Azerbaijani foreign

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<sup>6</sup> Interview by the author with Mammad Novruzoglu, Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Turkey (1992-2005), July, 16, 2011.

policy elite, since it was thought to be more appropriate to engage with Turkish officials coming from a secular background. Even though this is not prevalent in the initial years of the Justice and Development Party, it became more apparent with the second term when Turkey initiated efforts to normalize relations with Armenia. With regards to the above, through what kind of theoretical perspective would it be possible to explain the Azerbaijani-Turkish relations?

Realist IR theory is appropriately suited in explaining the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship. When looking at the basic assumptions of the realist theory, one would notice the following principles:

- The anarchical structure of the international system.
- The state derives its characteristics from the selfish state of human nature.
- State being the primary actor in international politics.
- State's objectives are not independent of the character of the international system.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, what has been mentioned above can be traced on how Azerbaijan started to formulate its foreign policy after gaining its independence. The first evidence in this case shows Azerbaijan by becoming a fully independent unit in terms of determining its own fate while conducting foreign policy without being bound to the former Soviet Union. This would necessitate Azerbaijan to concentrate on territorial security and other matters related with foreign policy, therefore the basic realist assumption has a plausible value in explaining Azerbaijan's foreign policy making.

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<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the term "realism" is being used in general terms since realist scholars diverge in their views regarding world politics, therefore being labeled as "classic realists" and "neo-realists". Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle For Power and Peace*. New York, 1985, p.4; John Stoessinger, *The Might of Nations*, New York, 1973, p.16; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, London, 1979, p.102; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge, 1981, p.10.

Another assumption of the realist theory is the state's need for survival in the international system, therefore regardless of the nature of the domestic political system, states give a priority on maintaining security in its border. By doing so, the state can decide upon acting in a collective manner either by joining alliances or bandwagoning with other states. This is another factor evident in Azerbaijan's foreign policy. As the historical accounts show of how the Azerbaijani government would consider options ranging from taking diplomatic measures to taking military action in showing a response against the Armenian aggression as a result of the war on Nagorno-Karabakh. This factor in itself is an evidence of how security formation is significant in terms of defining Azerbaijan's endeavor for territorial integrity.

Preserving the balance of power is another assumption being put forward by the realist school. A clear example would be Azerbaijan's avoidance in disruption the balance of power with Russia and Iran particularly during the Heydar Aliyev period and still continues today as an important foreign policy tool under the Ilham Aliyev administration. As for the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship, from an Azerbaijani perspective Turkey's role is seen as a tool to get close with the international community through cooperation on energy politics, which gives an idea on how Azerbaijan uses oil and natural gas as a leverage in foreign policy making.

#### **1.4 Chapters of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into six chapters and subsections in order to answer the above mentioned research questions. The first chapter attempts to clarify Azerbaijan's foreign policy mechanisms by making references to domestic both regional contexts, threat perceptions and energy politics.

The second chapter will cover and go into the depths of Azerbaijan's foreign policy making and its interaction with Turkey while constructing its foreign policy. The main focal point in this chapter will be the distinction between different periods of

policy making in different periods. The chapter will aim to enhance the notions of three periods of foreign policy making: Abulfaz Elchibey, Heydar Aliyev and Ilham Aliyev era foreign policy making.

The third chapter will focus on a conceptual subject which will revolve around the Strategic Depth doctrine and on how Azerbaijan positions itself around the doctrine while pursuing its foreign policy interests. The chapter will conclude on the outcomes of the Strategic Depth in terms of affecting the current state of Azerbaijani-Turkish relations.

The fourth chapter will concentrate on the dimensions of the Azerbaijani-Turkish relations by making distinctions between the two in terms of a separate analysis of the Foreign Policy making. These will revolve around the political dimension and energy politics as a separate chapter. Since these terms can be used interchangeably it is useful to further investigate the implications of different political aspects of the Azerbaijani-Turkish engagement and therefore dividing it into two different chapters.

The fifth chapter is based on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in dictating the Azerbaijani-Turkish relations. First a historical overview will be applied in terms of the emergence of the conflict and the national policies of the two countries, later the chapter will focus on the emergence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in Azerbaijani-Turkish relations. The chapter will conclude by making references on the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement and its implications in Azerbaijani-Turkish relations.

And lastly, the concluding chapter of the thesis will try to review the research questions introduced in the introductory part and revisit the main arguments outlined in the introductory part of the thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### DYNAMICS OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

#### 2.1 Introduction

As a small state, placed in a strategic position among great powers and with convoluted relations to its neighbors, Azerbaijan's foreign relations have ended up being critical not just to the country's security but undoubtedly to its survival. In fact, Azerbaijan is located in a central position along what has been called the arc of instability. It is the only country to border both Russia and Iran, framing a pivotal gateway connecting Europe to Central Asia and beyond. This location, and the country's significant energy resources, have made Azerbaijan a geopolitically key country in the intersection of Europe and Asia. That, in turn, has generated much attention from outside powers, to the country's advantage as well as detriment. In terms of the "brethren-like" relationship of Azerbaijan with Iran, the denial of Iran in giving support within the time line of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict created a paradoxical atmosphere.<sup>8</sup>

The most obvious forces are the three traditional power-brokers of the region Russia, Iran and Turkey as well as the sole superpower, the United States. But aside from these four and more cautiously the expanding European Union, countries as varied as Israel, Pakistan, Japan and China have shown a keen interest in developing relations with, and having a presence in, Azerbaijan. More than being in a strategic location, Azerbaijan faces the unpleasant reality of being located in a turbulent part of the world. Its own achievement of independence took place through one of the most dramatic upheavals of the twentieth century, the breakup of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>8</sup> Brenda Shaffer, *Borders and Brethren: Iran and the Challenge of the Azerbaijani Identity*, MIT Press, 2002, p.196.

Whereas this process was peaceful on the whole, it was not in the Caucasus, where it was associated with wars that tore across the region. Some forms of solidarity can be noted between Azerbaijan and their brethren in the North of Iran, particularly articles written by Nebi Khezri who acted in an instrumental way in supporting the rights of the Azerbaijanis.<sup>9</sup>

Even seventeen years into independence, the Russian invasion of Georgia showed that war was very much a factor to be reckoned with in this neighborhood. Aside from its own conflict with Armenia, Azerbaijan from the outset faced suspicious or directly hostile attitudes from its closest neighbors and historical overlords, Russia and Iran. Far from receding, Azerbaijan's geopolitical importance has increased significantly in the time since its independence. The exploration of Caspian oil resources was a major element in this, and has formed a cornerstone of Azerbaijani diplomacy. In a more detailed way, this seemed like a "zero-sum game" in terms of the realities of the pipeline politics being driven by economics and geography.<sup>10</sup>

## **2.2 Domestic and Regional Context**

Events in global politics since have underlined Azerbaijan's enduring importance in regional and world politics. The hype in energy prices, unlikely to be the last, added importance to Azerbaijan's role in oil markets as a supplier of its own as well as Central Asian oil and natural gas to the West. Moreover, the ensuing controversy over Iran highlighted Azerbaijan both due to its location near those hotspots in fact just on Iran's border also because of its singular symbolic value as a secular, western-oriented and pluralistic Shi'a Muslim society. Azerbaijan is quintessentially a borderland many times over between Europe and Asia, Islam and Christianity,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.196.

<sup>10</sup> Laurent Ruseckas, "Turkey and Eurasia: Opportunities and Risks in the Caspian Pipelines Derby", *Journal Of International Affairs*, Fall, 2000, Vol. 54, p.224.

Sunni and Shiite Islam, Russia and the Middle East, Turkey and Iran. This borderland status is the major determinant of its foreign relations and affects both the external and domestic determinants of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. According to Tadeusz Swietochowski, this fact also resulted in the creation of a "power vacuum" as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup>

In present day international politics, the interplay between the domestic and international realms is increasingly blurred by the ever stronger political and economic interdependence between nations. This is especially true for small countries like Azerbaijan, surrounded by great powers that have little qualms interfering in its politics whether seeking unashamedly to influence its policymaking as in the case of Russia, or having strong opinions about its governance and political system, as in the case of the United States. While many elements of Azerbaijani foreign policymaking are dictated by this external reality, a number of domestic determinants also have great significance, explaining to a considerable extent the stability of Azerbaijani foreign policy since the coming to power of non-communist forces. Moreover, considering the dynamics in the initial years of independence, Iran inevitably saw this as a threat for the possible rise in Azerbaijani identity especially years following 1992.<sup>12</sup>

These link both to Azerbaijan's cultural and national identity, its past, as well as the structure of its state. Azerbaijani society has multiple cultural and historical elements that link it both to the Muslim world and to Europe. In turn, the countries of the Islamic world to which Azerbaijan is most closely tied have been undergoing deep identity crises. Regarding Turkey, a gradually moderating form of political

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<sup>11</sup> Tadeusz Swietochowski, "Azerbaijan: A Borderland at the Crossroads of History", in *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (edited by Frederick Starr), M.E Sharpe, New York, 1994, p.296.

<sup>12</sup> Brenda Shaffer, *Borders and Brethern: Iran and the Challenge of the Azerbaijani Identity*, MIT Press, 2002, p.194.

Islam grew to become the dominant force in Turkish politics. Under the government of the Islamic conservative Justice and Development Party, Turkish society and politics have been affected by a gradual but powerful Islamization. Developments in Turkey and Iran have always had an outsize impact on Azerbaijan. These influences were especially important in the formative periods of Azerbaijani nationalism, in the late Nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as in the late twentieth century. However, to this should be added the European influences that Azerbaijan has been exposed to for centuries, mainly through its interaction with Russia. These were at their deepest during the Soviet era, when they permeated society to an unprecedented extent. In the case of Iran, the East Azerbaijan province managed to swiftly arrange assistance to the Republic of Azerbaijan without Iran interfering.<sup>13</sup>

These forces have combined to shape Azerbaijan's society and political identity in a secular manner, making it more similar in many ways to a European than to an Islamic society. Indeed, Islamic clerics have played only a very limited role in the formation of present-day Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's own intelligentsia has since the late Nineteenth Century developed a decidedly secular and liberal orientation; aside from the Elchibey period, Azerbaijani foreign policy has never aligned on the basis of ethnicity or religion, instead following a pragmatic course focused on defending the country's national interests. Interestingly, these include both Soviet-derived communist and Islamist currents, which moreover occasionally interact. In the case of Iran, for instance, the ratio of non-oil exports in the years leading to independence (1992-1993) were up to 450 percent in preceding years.<sup>14</sup>

Thus opinion surveys and sociological studies have repeatedly shown that between two thirds and three quarters of Azerbaijan's population support a Western foreign policy orientation, while minorities support either a Russia-centric or an Iranian,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.194.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.194.



Islamic orientation. Developments since the first years of independence have not changed the basic orientations of either Azerbaijan's elite or population, although the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and related developments have prompted an increase in nationalist and religious feelings as well as growing frustration and a sense of betrayal by the Western world. For instance Heydar Aliyev took a different stance than Elchibey, in terms of distinguishing the "internal enemies" and trying to centralize power, by doing so Heydar Aliyev favored the CIS membership of Azerbaijan.<sup>15</sup>

Azerbaijan has been experiencing unprecedented external influences on its society in the post-Soviet period. Western, Russian and Islamic currents of various types and shapes have affected the country, mixing uneasily in the fertile ground of post-Soviet identity formation. The resurgence of Islamic sentiment and growing feeling of disillusionment with the West have served to qualify, but not yet question, the generally pro-Western foreign policy orientation of the country. It should be recalled that Azerbaijan does not have a line drawn in the sand pushing it West as decisively and incontrovertibly as Kemal Atatürk's legacy generated in the Turkish case. And even there, signs of withering are present. Internal societal forces at play have contributed to shaping an Azerbaijani foreign policy that is mainly Western in its orientation, pledging allegiance but not always living up to the democratic model of a state based on the rule of law, and aspiring to membership in Euro Atlantic institutions. This has nevertheless not meant that Azerbaijan has eschewed contact with the Islamic world: indeed, Azerbaijan has sought close contacts with Muslim countries. In the case of Turkey, the relationship was determined by the ethnic, cultural and linguistic ties of the two nations, also being the first country to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan in November 1991.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Leila Alieva, "The Institutions, Orientations, and Conduct of Foreign Policy in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan", in *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (edited by Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha), M.E Sharpe, New York, 1995. p.296.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.296.

This was conditioned very much by the support that most Islamic countries with the notable exception of Iran provided Azerbaijan in regard to its conflict with Armenia. Given the West's lukewarm interest and close connections to Armenia, Azerbaijan used links to the Islamic world to put pressure on Armenia, not least through the voting power that these countries possess at the United Nations. An additional determinant of Azerbaijan's foreign policy has been the country's political system. As a presidential system that provides only a limited role for the legislature, the President has had the prerogative of formulating and implementing the country's foreign policy. Whatever one may think of this, it has contributed to the stability of Azerbaijani foreign policy, as the President has been able to adopt a long-term approach in setting foreign policy goals and in seeking to achieve them. In terms of formulating its foreign policy the motivating factors were creating the notion of both national and cultural identity.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, especially under Heydar Aliyev's presidency, foreign policy was very much tied to the personality of the leader, his name recognition, charisma, and the authority with which he acted on the international scene. That does not imply that Azerbaijan's foreign policy has been insulated from society. As the multiple turns in negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh suggest, Heydar Aliyev was repeatedly compelled to revise his position on a peace deal with Armenia given strong public opposition and opposition activism on the issue. In Azerbaijan, such a turn would be much more difficult to perform, given the pluralistic character of Azerbaijani society and the existence of a frank and open debate on foreign policy in the press, broadcast media and in society in general. In the shaping of foreign policy, the "January 1990" Soviet Army assault marked an instance in negatively effecting

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<sup>17</sup> Shireen Hunter, "The Evolution of the Foreign Policy of the Transcaucasian States", in *Crossroads and Conflict* (edited by Gary Bertsch), Routledge, New York, 2000, p.37.

relations between Azerbaijan and Russia which would influence Azerbaijan to determine its future foreign policy orientations.<sup>18</sup>

Hence even though the president's powers are extensive, foreign policy formulation must take into account the popular mood, and ensure that policies formulated have an implicit public legitimacy. By its geography as well as by its politics, the South Caucasus is a clearly delimited region. It is geographically defined by the Black Sea to the west and the Caspian Sea to the east; as well as by the Caucasus mountains that run between these two seas and forms the spine of the Caucasus, dividing its northern and southern parts. Only to the South, toward Iran and Turkey, is the region's external borders more blurred. Politically, the South Caucasus consists of three small countries surrounded by the three great powers that have traditionally dominated the area: Iran, Turkey and Russia. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict some experts argue that this kind of occupation is in Russia's favor since the conflict increases Russia's "sphere of influence".<sup>19</sup>

The size differential between the three large powers and the three Caucasian states is huge, whether measured in demographic, economic, or military terms. Put together, the three Caucasian states have a population of about fifteen million people less than a fifth of the population of either Turkey or Iran, and a tenth of Russia's. The fundamental defining condition of the Caucasus is one of the uneasy coexistence of small nations and great powers. In the post-Soviet era, the Caucasus developed into a turbulent region plagued by multiple layers of security risks and conflict, lacking institutionalized measures for cooperation of any form let alone in terms of security. Indeed, the region has been plagued by a security deficit, which

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>19</sup> John. J. Maresca, "Resolving the Conflict Over Nagorno-Karabakh: Lost Opportunities for International Conflict Resolution", in *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (edited by Pamela Aall, Chester A. Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson), United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, 1996. p.267.

coupled with the widely diverging threat perception of the three states, forms the basic reality in which Azerbaijan's successive governments have developed the country's foreign policy. For instance, the Elchibey period foreign policy alignment saw Russia and Armenia acting in an allied fashion, therefore, the main objective was to remove the Russian sphere of influence in Azerbaijan in the initial years of the independence.<sup>20</sup>

International security structures, such as NATO's Partnership for Peace program failed to stabilize the region, while the integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions such as the Council of Europe, NATO, and the European Union has progressed only slowly. Since the beginning of the new millennium, NATO's involvement has gradually increased, with PfP being the main vehicle for the intensified relationship between the Atlantic Alliance and the South Caucasus. This fact was also related with improving air space and traffic safety within the framework of NATO.<sup>21</sup>

The regional security deficit consists of internal, regional, and transnational challenges, which are in turn interlinked. The internal component of the security deficit is the risk of domestic civil and political conflict, which has affected all three states at different stages of their evolution. The second, intra-regional, challenge to security consists of the unresolved territorial conflicts, which form the single most dangerous threat to security in the region and whose perils have been increasing rather than decreasing. In line of all these considering the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship the two countries signed several military cooperation agreements in order to enable the Turkish Armed Forces to be involved in military assistance. One of the first manifestations of this military cooperation is the establishment of a management office in Baku by the Turkish military.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.267.

<sup>21</sup> Svante Cornell, Roger McDermott, William O'Malley, Vladimir Socor, and Frederick Starr, "Regional Security in The South Caucasus: The Role of NATO", Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Policy Paper, 2004, p.58.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.58.

In addition to the intra-regional security challenges, the countries of the South Caucasus are compounded by a fluid and unpredictable array of relations with the regional and great power that have interests in the region. The smaller states try to enlist regional powers to promote their interests in the conflicts, while the great powers use the conflicts to advance their own interests some of which are static and predictable, while also being prone to fluctuation. The political balance within and between the three Caucasian states and societies is a fragile one, and the weakness of these states and their various threat perceptions has compelled them to seek foreign patronage and support. In the case of the NATO framework, the training of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping and improving the border security of Azerbaijan can be regarded as significant measures.<sup>23</sup>

### **2.3 Threat Perceptions**

Dating back prior to independence, Azerbaijan identified Armenian aggression and Russian imperialism, in fact acting in tandem, as the leading threats to its national independence and security. To that was gradually added a rising concern over Iran's attitude to Azerbaijan. Aside from these major concerns, Azerbaijan also has the problem of territorial disputes with both Turkmenistan and Iran over the delimitation of the Caspian Sea and its legal status; and the development of East-West transport and trade corridors. A smaller, yet real security concern is the threat of externally sponsored Islamic extremism. This has primarily been connected to Iranian ambitions and transnational actors that are outside the control of any state authority. Considering the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan's ability to use its vast energy resources as a political leverage created a bargaining level.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.58

<sup>24</sup> Tamara Dragadze, "Azerbaijani and the Azerbaijanis", in the Nationalities Question In the Post-Soviet States, (edited by Graham Smith), 1996, p.288.

Perceiving threats from the south, north and west, Azerbaijani governments since 1992 have reached out to Turkey and the West, particularly the United States, for support as well as economic and trade relations. The Baku government has sought to use its energy resources and strategic location to develop its relations with states and organizations that could be enlisted to pursue the aims of consolidating independence, building a stable and prosperous country through the export of oil, and resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in a way acceptable to Azerbaijan. For instance, Azerbaijan's loss of territories in the latter part of 1993 resulted in an economic "downward spiral".<sup>25</sup>

Turkey remained Azerbaijan's key ally in the political, military and economic sectors. Azerbaijan also placed great emphasis on cooperation with the U.S. and NATO, becoming a PfP member and contributing to peacekeeping missions and was one of the first countries to render assistance to the U.S. The relationship between Baku and Tbilisi has been a major element in the country's foreign policy, particularly during the tenure of presidents Heydar Aliyev and Eduard Shevardnadze. Relations strengthened significantly since independence, as both understood that their security was intimately connected. Azerbaijan cannot export its oil without Georgia, which connects it to Turkey and the West; while Georgia partially relies on Azerbaijan's oil exports for its economic and political security and its own geopolitical importance. To illustrate this, during the initial years of Heydar Aliyev administration, the Russian company Lukoil was given a 10 percent share in terms of the sectors of the Caspian oil.<sup>26</sup>

The two were motors in the GUAM (Georgia Ukraine Azerbaijan Moldova) alliance that developed as a counterbalance to Russian hegemonic tendencies within the CIS. The Georgian-Azerbaijani relationship has been instrumental in leaving Armenia

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<sup>25</sup> Tamara Dragadze, "Azerbaijani and the Azerbaijanis", in the Nationalities Question In the Post-Soviet States, (edited by Graham Smith), 1996, p.287.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.287.

outside regional transportation schemes and cooperative efforts, thereby attaching a cost to its hold on Nagorno-Karabakh. Geographically, Azerbaijan and Georgia are better positioned than Armenia as a transport and communications route, as they form the corridor between the Black and the Caspian Seas therefore, with its rich oil resources Azerbaijan sought to incrementally break away from the Russian sphere of influence.<sup>27</sup>

## **2.4 Geopolitical Factors**

Geographic factors are a major and enduring influence on Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Three significant geographic factors that have an immense impact are Azerbaijan's landlocked status; its location on a strategic land bridge between Europe and Asia; and the immediate proximity of three major powers- Russia, Turkey and Iran. Azerbaijan is particularly challenged by its landlocked condition, due to its need to export oil via permanent pipelines through transit states. These arrangements create more vulnerability than faced by most oil-producing countries, which can export from home port to world markets. This can also be seen as the reason of the "US containment" to ensure a pipeline route that follows the Caspian states.<sup>28</sup>

An additional reflection of the impact the landlocked has had on Azerbaijan's foreign policy is Baku's preference for multiple export pipelines. Due to high costs, states rarely establish multiple energy import or export facilities, despite the benefits they can generate in terms of energy security. However, Azerbaijan adopted as its official policy and has strived to establish multiple oil and natural gas export routes

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.287.

<sup>28</sup> Carolyn Miles, "The Caspian Pipeline Debate Continues: Why Not Iran?", *Journal Of International Affairs*, Fall, 1999, Vol. 53, p.336.

to offset its potential vulnerability as a landlocked state. While Baku has established the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline as its main oil export route, it maintains its export infrastructure through Russia and its export exchange arrangements with Iran. Azerbaijan's geographic position also influences the way transportation issues are intertwined in Baku's foreign policy. From a historical perspective one can notice the endorsement of Azerbaijan during the initial years of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.<sup>29</sup>

A primary example of this is Azerbaijan's prominent role in the GUAM regional organization, which includes Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Transportation and trade linkages, including protection of energy export infrastructure, are GUAM's most concerned issue. Baku is also striving to become a major transit state itself, focusing on trade and transport to and from the greater Caspian region, in which Turkey's role played a decisive role in an attempt to restoring relations in the Caucasus.<sup>30</sup>

Azerbaijan's location on a strategic land bridge between Europe and Asia is an additional geographic factor influencing Baku's foreign policy. This location has endowed Azerbaijan with both foreign policy opportunities and challenges. Azerbaijan's airspace is the world's major air highways linking Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Baku has positioned itself as a major air hub and location for refueling of intercontinental flights. In addition, not only is Azerbaijan an oil and natural gas producer and exporter, but also it occupies a potential transit route for Central Asian oil and gas exports. Accordingly, following the Soviet collapse, global powers such as the United States, attempted to lure Azerbaijan into its strategic fold creating strategic and political advantages for Baku. Moreover, due to its strategic location on a land bridge between Europe, Asia and the Middle East,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.336.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.336.



Baku maintains intensive cooperation with a diversified group of states, in fact the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline serves as an example in the sense providing a security for the Western states that import oil.<sup>31</sup>

While many states maintain good ties with Azerbaijan, some of these states are members of competing alliances or are in conflict with each other. Thus, Azerbaijan has been and continues to be a meeting ground for officials and citizens from a number of states, such as the United States and Iran, which often do not have regular opportunities to interact. On the other hand, in terms of geographic proximity the Russian-Iranian-Turkish triangle affected the emergence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia in the post-Soviet period. Most significantly, Russia strove to ensure that the outcome of the conflict would guarantee the continued deployment of its forces in the Caucasus and prevent the deployment of Iranian, Turkish or U.S forces in the region. The signing of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline in 1994 manifested that Azerbaijan could act as an independent state by making use of its natural resources in full capacity.<sup>32</sup>

Despite its small size and relatively modest strength compared to regional powers in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan has chosen both today and in the past to retain its full independence and not serve as a de facto vassal state of any regional power. As part of its attempt to preserve its sovereignty in a challenging geographic location the Republic of Azerbaijan did not surrender its full independence. Azerbaijan's status as a major oil exporter plays a very significant role in its foreign policy. In the post-Soviet period, Azerbaijan has become a natural gas exporter, a role that is set to increase in coming decades. Azerbaijan's status as a landlocked state has a discernible impact on its foreign relations. Unlike most oil exporters, land locked

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p.336.

<sup>32</sup> Abdullah Çiftçi, Haydar Aliyev: Dünya Siyasetinde Azerbaycan Petrolü, Sabah Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998, p.170.

Azerbaijan's export infrastructure passes through neighboring states before reaching world markets. In his reference to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline project, Heydar Aliyev personified the project as "manifesting Azerbaijan's independence" that would sustain for the years to come.<sup>33</sup>

As a major source of oil, Azerbaijan has continually been on the international political system's radar screen, starting from the post-Soviet period. Moreover, due to its challenging geographic situation as an oil exporter that does not border open seas, Azerbaijan and interested investors have enlisted international financial organizations and major powers to ensure an atmosphere of stability in the region. This stability is essential for foreign investments in energy exports in a geographically and geopolitically complex location like Azerbaijan. Prior to making investments that would only produce a yield after almost a decade and a half of operation, foreign energy companies needed assurances regarding Azerbaijan's political and economic orientation. In some cases, this required major powers to foster ties with Azerbaijan. On the other, what was referred as the "contract of the century" created an antagonistic alignment between Turkey and Russia due to competition between these two states.<sup>34</sup>

While oil and gas exports serve as important strategic and financial assets, they also create vulnerability for Azerbaijan. Major disruption of the country's energy production or export infrastructure could create economic havoc in the long run. This fact dates back to the initial years of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project in which Turkey also had an alternative route which was named as the "Caspian Sea to Mediterranean Sea Pipeline".<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.170.

<sup>34</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "The Controversy over the Caspian Sea Mineral Resources: Conflicting Perceptions, Clashing Interests", *European-Asia Studies*, 1998, vol.50, no.3, p.402.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.402.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

In the times following the foundations of both the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Azerbaijan, the types of leaders and regimes in the region have changed radically numerous time. These have had significant influence over Azerbaijan's foreign policy decisions, options and calculations. Despite radical changes in the borders of two of the region's powers and significant changes in Iran's strategic posture both regionally and internationally, the power relations between these three states have continued to serve as a major influence on Azerbaijan's foreign policy options. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the coalescence of the European Union, and the emergence of an interconnected globalized economy and worlds culture, prevailing paradigms in the international relations discipline downgraded the importance of certain factors such as domestic-regional contexts, geography and energy related factors in a state's foreign policy making scenario.

## CHAPTER 3

### EVOLUTION OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

#### 3.1 Introduction

The formulation of Azerbaijani foreign policy has gone through several phases, largely coterminous with the changes in government in the country. Hence the first eight months of independence saw Azerbaijan remaining in the Russian orbit, something that changed dramatically with the Popular Front coming to power. The Front espoused a more nationalistic and ideological foreign policy, and was succeeded by the Heydar Aliyev government, which followed the main outlines of the Front's foreign policy, but did so in a more pragmatic and discrete manner, and in a less antagonistic style, than its predecessors. Mutalibov made his first foreign trip as president of an independent state to Iran, in a quest to allay Iranian fears of Azerbaijani irredentism, restore economic relations, and to use Iranian territory to link Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan. He found himself in Tehran once again already in February 1992, celebrating the anniversary of the Islamic revolution, having visited Turkey briefly to sign agreements on friendship and cooperation that carried little of the later bond between the two states. In fact, Mutalibov's foreign policy was clearly Russia-centric. He seems to have stuck to his pre-independence analysis: only Russia could give Azerbaijan control over Nagorno-Karabakh back. His worldview did not seem to fully grasp the meaning of the Soviet Union's collapse, seeming to believe that a Russia-centric alliance or union would be rebuilt in one way or another with the baseline being that Moscow was still the major arbiter of Caucasian affairs. Hence distancing Azerbaijan from Russia would be counter-productive, since it would only anger Russia and make Moscow support Armenia. In the Soviet context, his policy had provided some results Operation Ring to the Nagorno-Karabakh, where Soviet forces supported the disarming of Armenian

armed groups and dislocation of some Armenian civilians, perhaps being the main example. The Russia focus of his foreign policy was so strong that in spite of being at war, Azerbaijan did not begin the building of a national army until well into 1992, when Armenian forces were consolidating their grip on Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>36</sup>

### **3.2 Abulfaz Elchibey Era Foreign Policy Making (1992-1993)**

The foreign policy of the Popular Front government had its basis in the Front's January 1992 congress, where a conservative and nationalist foreign policy concept won over a more liberal, almost neutralist rival concept. It ascribed to the same western principles of international law, but emphasized such concepts as confronting imperialism and developing democracy, and solidarity among the peoples of the Caucasus, including the concept of a Caucasian home. More importantly, the Front made it clear it would prioritize relations with Turkic nations, primarily Turkey, and also seek to develop relations with Muslim countries.<sup>37</sup>

In this sense, the Front pledged allegiance to the Turkist agenda of emphasizing modernity in its quest for membership in the contemporary world; Turkism by prioritizing the ethnic and cultural link among Turkic nations; and Islam in a cultural and secular rather than religious manner by connecting to Islamic culture and civilization. In his election platform, Elchibey made it clear that Azerbaijan under his rule would have a Western and Turkish orientation, would work to remove Azerbaijan from the Russian orbit, and avoid falling under Iranian influence. He lashed out at both Russia and Iran, especially before his election, when he famously predicted Iran would fall apart just like the Soviet Union, condemned the discrimination of thirty million Azerbaijanis, and called for the unification of Azerbaijan. Some also argue that Elchibey's anti-Russian, anti-Iranian and pro-

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<sup>36</sup> Nazim Cafersoy, *Elçibey Dönemi Azərbaycan Dış Politikası*, ASAM Yayınları, 2001, pp.67-68.

<sup>37</sup> Nazim Cafersoy, *Elçibey Dönemi Azərbaycan Dış Politikası*, ASAM Yayınları, 2001, pp.70.

Turkish foreign policy alignment contributed in disrupting Azerbaijan's foreign policy interests within the framework of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict.<sup>38</sup>

Elchibey was no friend of Iran's, and this exacerbated the already existing fears of the Iranian regime, for whom the creation of a state of Azerbaijan was anathema. Hence Iran became much less than helpful on most issues of interest to Baku, primarily Nagorno-Karabakh but also trade and transit to Nakhchivan and Turkey. Conversely, Iran's relations with Armenia improved. As far as Russia was concerned, Elchibey refused to ratify Mutalibov's accession to the CIS, thereby failing the earlier government's commitment to join the organization. In Elchibey's analysis, the CIS was nothing but a thinly veiled attempt at resurrecting the Soviet Union, and hence an incarnation of the evil empire that Azerbaijan needed to escape. If the CIS today seems of little value even to Russia, the early 1990s were different: the adherence of the former Soviet States to the CIS was a central Russian foreign policy objective, seen as a way of preventing the slippage of Russian influence in the former Soviet space.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, forcing Azerbaijan and Georgia into the CIS was one of the major objectives of Russian pressure on these two countries. Given the problems, Elchibey instead placed his bets on solving the conflict with the help of Turkish support and engaging Western institutions like the CSCE. With the benefit of hindsight, this was as big a miscalculation as Mutalibov's. In spite of early euphoria and some saber-rattling on the Armenian border, Turkey was clearly not willing to challenge Russia to the point of offsetting Russian support for Armenia. Indeed, faced by Russian threats, Turkey limited its support to diplomatic and political efforts that were

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<sup>38</sup> Shireen Hunter, "The Evolution of the Foreign Policy of the Transcaucasian States" in *Crossroads and Conflict* (edited by Gary Bertsch), Routledge, New York, 2000, p.40.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

significant to bring the Azerbaijani cause to the international arena. Yet this changed little on the ground as Azerbaijan was losing territory.<sup>40</sup>

However, it was not only the policies of the Front leadership that had a negative impact on Azerbaijan. Indeed, the ideological aspect of its foreign policy and the leadership style of President Elchibey himself were equally harmful. Indeed, Elchibey's foreign policy lacked long-term strategic objectives and a cool analysis of how those objectives could be achieved in the given situation. Instead, it was mainly declaratory, and did not give much consideration to the consequences of its decisions. Effectively, Azerbaijan was at war with one of its two smaller neighbors, and on a confrontational course with both of its larger ones, however one thing that should be mentioned is the fact that the "post-Mutalibov" Azerbaijan Foreign policy was resulted in a "political vacuum" that was expected to filled by Elchibey.<sup>41</sup>

This strategy could hardly be termed ideal. Elchibey's Russia policy did understand the true nature of Russia's interest in the region. However, it showed little insight of the remaining levers available to Moscow to achieve its objectives in the Caucasus. Hence it is conceivable that the Front could have lessened the damages it incurred by pursuing these objectives more discretely, without overtly alienating Moscow. But the Front had a very bad position to begin with. In this sense, the Front charted out a course of Azerbaijani foreign policy that contributed to the military loss of Nagorno-Karabakh in the short term, but that worked to strengthen Azerbaijani independence in the long run. In the backdrop of events surrounding the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Popular Front manifested itself as a committee other than acting in the capacity of a political party.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Nazim Cafersoy, *Elçibey Dönemi Azerbaycan Dış Politikası*, ASAM Yayınları, 2001, pp.75.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Van der Leeuw, *Azerbaijan A Quest For Identity*, London, 2000, p. 173.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

The alternative would have been, perhaps, to capitulate to Moscow, avoid an equally disastrous defeat in Nagorno-Karabakh but still failing to gain the territory back, and effectively lose independence. That would likely have meant exporting Azerbaijani oil through Russia, and deferring to Russia on foreign policy issues, in a way similar to Armenia, Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan. Even choosing between these alternatives, the latter may not necessarily have been preferable, as it would have put the country in a situation from which it would be extremely difficult to extricate itself. Elchibey's foreign policy generated great opposition not only in Iran and Russia, but caused alarm inside Azerbaijan as well, as society was not ready for such an unconditional embrace. Azerbaijan managed to successfully internationalize the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, leading to the involvement of the CSCE as a mediator, as well as several UN resolutions condemning the use of force in Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupation of Azerbaijani territory. Though these did not name an aggressor, they served to underline the international community's recognition of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity which political leadership was consolidated through a political movement lacking a substantial party programme and discipline.<sup>43</sup>

### **3.3 Heydar Aliyev / Ilham Aliyev Era Foreign Policy Making (1993-2003/2003-Present)**

With few exceptions, Heydar Aliyev's government built on the foreign policy of the Popular Front. Contrary to expectations, the former Politburo member was no Russian stooge, any more than his colleague Eduard Shevardnadze. But given his experience in Moscow at a union-level political position, Heydar Aliyev knew the working of the Russian state extremely well, and was also well-versed in the functioning of international politics. In so doing, Aliyev began with a reassessment

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.173.



of the situation. It was clear to him that Azerbaijan needed to normalize relations with Russia and Iran. For that reason, one of his first steps was to bring Azerbaijan into the CIS. Nevertheless, in spite of Russian pressure, he did not allow the return of Russian forces as peacekeepers nor Russian border forces along the Iranian border. With Iran, Aliyev had developed working relations as leader of Nakhchivan, and even received some Iranian assistance. Hence Aliyev could easily use his contacts to calm Iranian concerns spurred by the Elchibey era. Concomitantly, Aliyev took one step back from Elchibey's embrace of Turkey, though in no way downgrading the long-term contents of the relationship. In fact, the main difference between Elchibey and Aliyev in the realm of foreign policy was style and strategy, not orientation. This kind of difference in orientation dates back to the February 17 1990 when several members including Robert Kocharian and Levon Ter-Petrosyan forming an Armenian paramilitary force in the Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>44</sup>

Where Elchibey appeared erratic and ideological, Aliyev was diplomatic and pragmatic. Where Elchibey aroused strong feelings, Aliyev allayed concerns. But it soon became apparent that Aliyev was pursuing the very same objective that Elchibey was aspiring to: consolidating the independence of Azerbaijan. In so doing, Aliyev had a clear set of priorities. The first was to bring the war in Nagorno-Karabakh to an end. Having understood that the prospects for a military victory were absent, Aliyev settled for a cease-fire. Second, he sought to balance relations with all major powers to decrease the overt and covert pressures on the country, including on his own position in power, while preventing the return of Russian military presence. The same parallel can be held in the initial years of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project when authorities would analyze the possible benefits for Azerbaijan, in which they concluded that Azerbaijan would profit and estimated \$78 billion.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, *Azerbaijan: A Political History*, L.B Tauris, New York ,2011.p.150.

<sup>45</sup> Terry Adams, "Will Azerbaijan Really Benefit From The Consortium Contract?", *Azerbaijan International Magazine*, Summer, 1995, p.1.

Third, he worked to speedily sign a contract with multinational oil companies in order to give stakeholders from as varied a group of powers as possible an interest in Azerbaijan and to attract signing fees the AIOC came to include American, European, Turkish, Russian, Arab, and Japanese companies. Fourth, he built on increased stability in Azerbaijan, oil interests, and the increasing reaction to Armenia's excessive territorial appetite to improve Azerbaijan's standing in the West. Regarding the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project 80 percent of the profit from the consortium share would benefit Azerbaijan.<sup>46</sup>

In retrospect, the policy was largely successful, though it never managed to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, although the cease-fire achieved in mid-1994 has largely held. Azerbaijan built working relations with Russia, which improved especially after Putin's coming to power in 1999. With Iran, the oil contract was a setback, since American pressure forced Aliyev to exclude Tehran from the deal. Nevertheless, Iran's meddling in Azerbaijani affairs decreased as the earlier rhetoric in Baku on southern Azerbaijan was stifled. The Contract of the Century was signed in October 1994, forming the beginning of Azerbaijan's gradual rise on the international scene. It was also projected that AIOC would need an offshore supply base for offshore activities within the framework of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project.<sup>47</sup>

As for relations with the West, Azerbaijan scored a diplomatic victory in the OSCE Lisbon summit of 1996, while Aliyev was invited to Washington in 1997, indicating a dramatic improvement of Azerbaijan's position in world politics in three short years. Azerbaijan also worked as a motor of the GUAM alliance, formalized in 1999, which was important in effectively torpedoing the CIS as an instrument to

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>47</sup> Terry Adams, "Will Azerbaijan Really Benefit From The Consortium Contract?", *Azerbaijan International Magazine*, Summer, 1995, p.2.

restore Russian control over the former Soviet Union. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Heydar Aliyev had managed to turn Azerbaijan into the only truly independent state of the Caucasus. On the other hand, Brzezinski makes a prophetic analysis dating back to 1997 that in case Turkey adopting an Islamic agenda the international community would follow an indifferent policy regarding the South Caucasus.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijan had no foreign troops on its territory. Unlike Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijan was not dependent on either Russia or the West for its security. Indeed, although it is usually Armenia that is credited with a foreign policy based on complementarity, this term is in fact more suited to Azerbaijan: Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan has managed not only to balance the four major powers with influence in the Caucasus, but to remove itself from a situation of dependence on any of them and to formulate its foreign policy independently from them. Brzezinski makes note on the process of “nation-building” and underlining its complex nature particularly in a region like the South Caucasus.<sup>49</sup>

The timing coincided with the growing profile of the freedom agenda in President Bush’s foreign policy, which became official a year later with the inauguration of Bush’s second term. This development, coupled with the peaceful revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, ironically brought back in a different guise the tight interlinking of domestic and foreign policies that had been characteristic of the early 1990s. Ilham Aliyev took a considerably more cautious on a gradual liberalization process focused on economics more than politics, while seeking to retain the initiative and enough control over the domestic political scene to safeguard his position in power. In so doing, it became increasingly clear that energy wealth was a key factor enabling the government to retain a level of popularity strong enough to

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<sup>48</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Caucasus and New-Geopolitical Realities: How the West can support the region?”, *Azerbaijan International Magazine*, 1997, Vol.2, No.5, p.43.

<sup>49</sup> Brzezinski., p.42.

stay in power without jeopardizing its relations with the West. By presiding over a booming economy where wealth trickled down to the population, Ilham Aliyev seemed able to have it both ways.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.4 Conclusion

Azerbaijan has gradually developed into a stable and independent actor on the regional scene in a turbulent environment, and to that an increasingly influential one in its neighborhood. The stability and independence of Azerbaijan are nevertheless not a reason for complacency. Aside from an unresolved territorial conflict of its own, Azerbaijan is located in a region that will almost certainly develop crises that could test the foundations of its foreign policy. Georgia's instability and adversarial relationship with Russia is of utmost concern to Azerbaijan, as is the transformation of Turkey, the increasing anarchy in the North Caucasus, and the international tension surrounding Azerbaijan's closest neighbor, Iran. The bottom line is that Azerbaijan remains a small state, which will continue to be affected by a multitude of developments among and between the larger powers of Eurasia. As Azerbaijan has little influence over these relationships but stands to be affected by them, the risk of being drawn into confrontations that it would prefer to avoid is ever present and will come to require continued statesmanship of successive Azerbaijani governments. This increases the strategic importance of the country, particularly to the West, and makes Azerbaijan a pivotal state in Eurasian geopolitics, as Brzezinski put it in 1997, in other words by diversifying its energy politics which in the final analysis enables Azerbaijan not to be trapped under Russia's sphere of influence.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Mammad Novruzoglu, Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Turkey (1992-2005), 16.07.2011.

<sup>51</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, 1998, p.47.

## CHAPTER 4

### DAVUTOĞLU DOCTRINE AND AZERBAIJANI-TURKISH RELATIONSHIP

#### 4.1 Introduction

The change of an economical, geo-strategic, social and energy related environment urged Turkey to establish a new foreign policy doctrine. Ahmet Davutoğlu considered foreign policy as the continuation of domestic policy and therefore he believed that domestic reforms in Turkey would reinforce foreign policy. So, the changes in the domestic policy of Turkey were necessitated from the changes needed in the foreign policy of this country. Internal security problems were tracked internally, not externally. Due to the internal reforms, efforts were mobilized to combine cultural, political and economic issues around foreign policy.<sup>52</sup>

Internal policy reforms and economic development would introduce Turkey as a peaceful and attractive country in the visions of neighboring states. Thus, foreign policy of Turkey emerged with a new role of Turkey in the neighboring countries and in the world, under the cover of strategic depth stretching beyond the borders of this state. In fact, the new foreign policy of Turkey removed geographical lines in policy thinking. Therefore, the concept of strategic depth introduced by Davutoğlu into the foreign policy of Turkey is the product of two components: historical cultural inheritance and geographical position of Turkey.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Bülent Aras, “Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy”, SETA Policy Brief, 2009, p.4.

<sup>53</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007”, *Insight Turkey*, 2008, Vol. 10, No.1, p.79.

Davutoğlu interprets his foreign policy doctrine with these two components saying that historical responsibility attached to Turkey and its geographical position demonstrate that Turkey cannot be indifferent to a geopolitical gap in any region. He argues that after the events of September 11th, the geographical position of Turkey should be redefined. Similar to Russia, Germany, Iran and Egypt, Turkey should not be seen as a country attached to a single geographical space. As being part of the several regions, Turkey has an advantage of being able to maneuver in these different regions. By taking all these in regard, in order to determine the position of Azerbaijan in the strategic depth of Turkish Foreign Policy, one main aspect need to be addressed being the position attributed to Azerbaijan in the strategic depth doctrine.<sup>54</sup>

#### **4.2 Azerbaijan's Position In Davutoğlu Doctrine**

In his foreign policy concept, Davutoğlu mentions Azerbaijan not as a neighbor of Turkey (although in Nakhchivan area Azerbaijan has 13 km land border), but a country located in its geopolitical space. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey discusses three geopolitical spaces in his book "Strategic Depth":

1. Near land bordered areas: the Balkans - Middle East - the Caucasus
2. Near sea bordered areas: Black Sea - Adriatic Sea - East White Sea - Red Sea - the Gulf - Caspian Sea.
3. Near continent area: Europe - North Africa - South Asia - Middle and East Asia.<sup>55</sup>

Claiming that power of Turkey lays in its historical background and geographical location, Davutoğlu positions Azerbaijan into two of the three geopolitical areas

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.79.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.79.

directly contributing to the formation of foreign policy and protection of internal integrity: West Asia, as a gate of Turkey to Central Asia, Caspian Sea area and Caucasus area in the north-south corridor. Davutoğlu reveals the importance of events happening in the Caucasus - the near land bordered area, for Turkey saying that “An Anatolian state with no influential role over the events in the Balkans, the Caucasus region and Middle East can neither be able to protect its integrity, nor open up for the world”.<sup>56</sup>

Davutoğlu describes Azerbaijan as part of the Caucasus and considers this region as a south-north transition point of Eurasia and buffer zone for Turkey against the threats of Russia. Essentiality of the Caucasus as a buffer zone against threats from Russia is explained with two examples: Russian-Turkish war in 1877-1878 and menace by Soviet Union towards Anatolia through South Caucasus after the Second World War. Moreover Davutoğlu argues that Turkey is not psychologically and diplomatically ready for Caucasus region after the cold war and the steps of Turkey towards the geopolitical changes in the region are not sufficient.<sup>57</sup>

The deficiencies of politics followed by Turkey towards Azerbaijan and other Turkic states after the collapse of the USSR, mentioned by Davutoğlu, have also been acknowledged by the decision makers of that period, as well as politicians and academicians. Davutoğlu criticizes the policy of Turkey over Caucasus after the 1990s of the previous century and claims that the policy over South Caucasus has not been able to cover the whole Caucasus and has only been assessed within the framework of Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict. The multidimensional nature of policy over Caucasus is expected to increase Turkey’s sphere of influence. This political discourse related to South Caucasus is shared by many writers and politicians supporting Armenian expansion. If read between the lines, Davutoğlu’s views can

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<sup>56</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, Küre Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009, p.119.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.125.

be interpreted as the Post Cold War policy of Turkey over Caucasus not being multi-dimensional. This serves as an example positioning Turkey-Armenia relations at the foreground of Turkey's policy over Caucasus.<sup>58</sup>

Davutoğlu mentions Azerbaijan as an important ally in the whole Caucasus and especially South Caucasus and believes that Turkey will not be able to increase its sphere of influence and expand it towards Caspian Sea region until Azerbaijan gets a strong regional position in the Caucasus. He considers that occupation of part of the Azerbaijan's territory as a result of Azerbaijan-Armenia war is the greatest strategic loss for Turkey.<sup>59</sup>

According to Davutoğlu, the confrontations in the region have produced a risk of involvement of Iran, Russia and Turkey. Bilateral relations of Turkey-Azerbaijan and Russia-Armenia have urged Georgia and Iran to follow a different political discourse. Davutoğlu criticizes the lack of Turkey's sea policy during the Cold War and suggests having an active and attack-based sea policy to replace defense based concept left from Cold War. He further explains: "The main factor ensuring the government of Ottoman state over three continents was the possession of sea power enabling it to have an access to nearby waters, such as Red Sea, Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea through its control over Aegean Sea, White Sea, and Black Sea".<sup>60</sup>

Davutoğlu considers that it is necessary to have an influence over several sea areas in order to make Turkey a stronger state. Among the others, the Caspian Sea is a knot for the access of Turkey to Central Asia. The access of Turkey to Central Asia is ensured through the Caucasus-Caspian Sea-Central Asian route and he suggests three main policy tracks: Firstly, to strengthen the status of North Caucasus

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.128.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.126.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.151.



republics within the Russian Federation and to ensure Caspian-Black Sea tie over this region; secondly, in order to balance the influence of Russia over Central Asia and Black Sea, to expand trade relations with Iran and thus decrease the ideological tensions in Turkey-Iran relations; lastly, to promote cooperation among Central Asian countries. The principles suggested by Davutoğlu for the Caucasus and Caspian region in fact match with the policy of Azerbaijan for the region. Davutoğlu considers that even though Azerbaijan is located in the Caucasus, it is an extension of Central Asia geography, because of access to Caspian Sea and its geo-cultural ties. It means that Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey sees Azerbaijan as a country with the capacity to influence a large area.<sup>61</sup>

Because of these attributes, Azerbaijan has a labyrinth-like role among Russia, Turkey and Iran. By saying “Azerbaijan has a capacity of defining the position of Turkey in Caspian Sea politics,” Davutoğlu emphasizes that a state willing to be powerful in the Caspian Sea region, as well as in the Caucasus region, should consider the attitude of Azerbaijan necessary. He views Azerbaijan in the union to be established by Turkic states such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan against Russia in the Caspian Sea region and hence, makes a suggestion which is very challenging to realize.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of relations between Turkey and Central Asia, Azerbaijan is an important player in Davutoğlu’s foreign policy concept as being a West Asian country. To put it in other words, Northern Middle East geopolitical space covering the Caucasus including Azerbaijan, East Anatolia and Gulf-East White Sea region, oil resources in Northern Iraq and Azerbaijan, water resources in East Anatolia is forming a geo-economical integrity. The events happening on these geopolitical and geo-economical lines cannot be assessed separately. Calling this line West Asia,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.181.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.464.

Davutoğlu views this region as a sphere of influence, in terms of Turkey's relations with Central Asia, economic interests and security politics.<sup>63</sup>

However, in terms of Davutoğlu's suggestions regarding the access of Central Asian countries to the West, there is a contradiction between his views in the book, as well as practical experience and the politics of Azerbaijan. Four alternative corridors suggested to open up Central Asian Turkic states having no access to sea borders to the world, are missing Azerbaijan. The corridors include:

1. Central Asia-Russia-Euro Atlantic
2. Central Asia-China-Pacific Ocean
3. Afghanistan-Pakistan-India-Indian Ocean
4. Central Asia-Iran-Turkey-Europe.<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, Azerbaijan views itself as one of the main chains in the land and energy corridor between East and West. However, at this point, Davutoğlu puts more emphasis on Russia and Iran and in some way, contradicts suggestions about decreasing the influential role of Russia over these regions. The increasing role of Russia in the transportation of energy resources from Central Asia to the West means the growth of its influence over the region. During his tenure, Davutoğlu realized steps as reflected in his statements. In order to increase position of Turkey in terms of energy corridor, an agreement on Central Asia energy links was signed with Russia and Iran. According to this agreement, oil and gas from Central Asia will be delivered to Turkey through Russia and Iran. As phrased in the book, Turkey tried to support this geopolitical advantage with active diplomacy. In Davutoğlu's strategic depth, Azerbaijan is playing an important role for the relations with Caucasus, Caspian region and Central Asia. Especially in the Caucasus and Caspian region, the future success of Turkey's politics depends on the power of Azerbaijan

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.464.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.182.

in the region. Eventually, Azerbaijan seems to be a part of Turkey's policy over Asia either within land or sea bordered areas. Especially considering the decrease of Turkey's relations with the West and expansion of its relations with Asian countries during Davutoğlu's tenure, the role of Azerbaijan is reinforced. Therefore, his presence in active politics avails him to test whether he applies theories and suggestions in his book or if there is a contradiction or compliance between the theory and practice.<sup>65</sup>

While the misunderstanding regarding the protocols between Turkey and Azerbaijan continued, the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkey faced a change on May 1, 2009 and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who has always been supervising Turkish foreign policy from behind during the last seven years, replaced Ali Babacan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and became the only Minister appointed out of Parliament. On May 1, at the press conference held after the handover ceremony, Davutoğlu stated that Turkey will continue to expand relations with all its neighbors, including Armenia. The eight year-status quo (1994-2002) in Caucasus was being continued when Davutoğlu started his position. Armenia continued occupation, South Ossetia and Abkhazia were separated areas and border between Turkey and Armenia was closed.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.145.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.178.

### 4.3 Outcomes of the Doctrine

Following the dissolution of the USSR, Turkey recognized all three South Caucasus countries, however it did not establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, and in 1993 closed borders with it, when Armenia occupied the lands of Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, secret meetings between the two countries in 2007 aimed at normalization of relations that were made public with the invitation by the Serzh Sargsyan and Abdullah Gül. Considering the effect of Turkish-Armenia meetings over Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh policy, Azerbaijan was closely watching all the developments, and while declaring that it did not get bothered with such meetings, Azerbaijan did not wish opening of Turkey-Armenia borders and therefore was clearly expressing protest against it. During Abdullah Gül's visit to Armenia, Ahmet Davutoğlu was occupying a position of foreign policy advisor at the office of Prime Minister and he interpreted this visit with two reasons: Obama's coming to power at the US and the threat caused by Russia-Georgia war in the region in August 2008. In his own words this is how interpreted the course of relations after the signing of the protocols: "All of these normalization processes are parallel to each other. Those who are asking us and praising us because of our normalization process with Armenia should also propose that Armenia should stop the invasion of 20% of Azerbaijani territories. It is against international law, and international criteria of norms and values. This a division we have."<sup>67</sup>

All these events occurring between Turkey and Armenia coincided with the critical period for Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Kosovo's declaration of its unilateral secession in 2008, and Russia's declaration of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia following Russia-Georgia war in the same year, brought up the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, known as a separated area into the agenda. Availing itself of these events, Armenia wanted the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan

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<sup>67</sup> Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu addressing at SETA Foundation, Washington D.C., December 8.2009.

was anxious after all the developments and therefore needed support from the strategic allies.<sup>68</sup>

With Barack Obama's victory in the U.S presidential elections the Armenian problem for Turkey and Azerbaijan was brought up into the agenda. During previous years, the allies tried to settle this issue with more cooperation among them and more pressure was exercised on Armenia. Now the situation is different.<sup>69</sup>

The Armenian issue, bringing together national interests of Turkey and Azerbaijan confronted the two states with each other. For instance, the "football diplomacy" in September 2008 and the signing of the protocols in October 2009 can be regarded as the attempts toward normalization in relations between Turkey and Armenia.<sup>70</sup> In 2009, Azerbaijan got concerned because it was receiving the information about the details of normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia from third party sources, Turkish officials were making statements differently from each other, Turkey was not protesting news in Armenian media claiming that Nagorno-Karabakh is not a primary condition for the process of normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia.

Moreover, for the first time since 1993, there was an impression that the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is not as a primary condition in Turkey-Armenia relations. The number of opinions criticizing lack of sufficient awareness on the process of normalization for Azerbaijan from Turkey, as well as lack of attention towards Azerbaijan, was increasing. Eventually, these events caused mutual unreliability.

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<sup>68</sup> Mustafa Aydın, "Turkish Foreign Policy; Framework and Analysis", *SAM Papers*, 2004, No.1, p.224.

<sup>69</sup> Bülent Aras, Fatih Özbay, "*Türkiye ve Ermenistan. Statüko ve Normalleşme Arasında Kafkasya Siyaseti*", SETA Analiz, 2009, p.5.

<sup>70</sup> Ahmet Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges", *Turkish Studies*, 2010, Vol. 11, No. 1, p.116.

Davutoğlu took the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs during the period when Turkey-Azerbaijan relations reached the highest level of dissatisfaction in post-Cold War history. Davutoğlu visited Azerbaijan 10 days after his appointment together with the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.<sup>71</sup> However, Armenia managed to make a political and diplomatic leverage by not including the Nagorno-Karabakh within the framework of the protocols.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, the Azerbaijani foreign ministry repeatedly put forward the notion of that “Azerbaijan would follow a balancing foreign policy by putting an emphasis on its national interest”.<sup>73</sup>

After the signing of the protocols, the emotional part of Azerbaijani-Turkish relations became one of the questioned principles. One political leverage manifested itself when President Ilham Aliyev decided not to attend the Alliance of the Civilizations meeting in April 2009 and instead visiting Moscow<sup>74</sup>. Discussions over taking the bilateral relations between the two countries beyond the energy, started. At this point, one of the things making Azerbaijan resentful was the effort to realize Armenian expansion through the critiques towards Azerbaijan. Even beyond Davutoğlu’s direct responsibility, a number of articles circled in subjective and objective manners about Azerbaijan increased during this period and high appreciation expressed for the Armenian leaders caused confusion and concern in Azerbaijan. Despite the growth of the soft power mechanisms in the foreign policy discourse of Turkey, the relations with Azerbaijan continued just at the level of leaders. Moreover, this fact is bound to be limited on the intellectual realm as well

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<sup>71</sup> Mustafa Aydın, “Turkish Foreign Policy; Framework and Analysis”, *SAM Papers*, 2004, No.1, p.224.

<sup>72</sup> Bülent Aras, Fatih Özbay, “*Türkiye ve Ermenistan. Statüko ve Normalleşme Arasında Kafkasya Siyaseti*”, SETA Analiz, 2009, p.5.

<sup>73</sup> Mustafa Aydın, “Azerbaycan, “Türkiye-Ermenistan Anlaşmasının Neresinde?”, *Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları*, 2009, p.4.

<sup>74</sup> Mesut Özcan & Ali Resul Usul, “Understanding the “New” Turkish Foreign Policy: Changes Withing Continuity- Is Turkey Departing From The West?”, *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, 2010, Vol. 6, No. 21, p.132.

since there is a lack of knowledge regarding Azerbaijan and the unwillingness on the part of both the Turkish intellectuals and academics, such as learning the Azerbaijani language.<sup>75</sup>

Azerbaijan and its geographical location received an importance with the search of Europe for natural gas sources as an alternative to Russia. Turkey wanted to get a role of bridge for Europe's energy needs. Having the same allies and same opponents in energy issues has made the countries not opponents, but allies. During Davutoğlu's term as the foreign minister, both parties focus and therefore, energy negotiations between the two countries could not reach contracting phase. The crisis of Armenian issue emerged within Turkey-Azerbaijan relations during Davutoğlu's term influenced energy negotiations as well. While energy negotiations with Turkey were delayed, Azerbaijan signed agreements on gas with Russia and Iran. However, despite all these developments, withdrawal of certain requirements and unification on common point during negotiations for the sake of continuation of cooperation reveals the importance of the two countries for each other. However, the Turkish political elite's lack of understanding in terms of Azerbaijan's socio-economic and political features creates a stumbling block in understanding Azerbaijan's internal political dynamics, especially a country whose population has Shiite and Sunni division from 60 to 40 percent ratio.<sup>76</sup>

Previously, when Turkey was viewed as a representative of the West in the region and Azerbaijan as part of Turkey's pan-Turkism policy, both countries were included into the list of distrustful countries by Russia and Iran. However, the efforts of Azerbaijan to establish mutual confidence with both of its neighbors produced an outcome. The policy pursued by Turkey, recognized as an ally of Azerbaijan, to achieve close cooperation with Russia and Iran also brought out

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<sup>75</sup> Mustafa Aydın, "Azerbaycan, "Türkiye-Ermenistan Anlaşmasının Neresinde?", *Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları*, 2009, p.4.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.4.

positive effects for Azerbaijan. Especially, when Turkey did not act as a representative of the West during Russia-Georgia war in and Caucasus Regional Peace and Cooperation Platform. On the outset of the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement there is the risk of Baku “not answering the phone call from Ankara”, which should be seen as a potential political signal.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, Turkey’s disapproval of sanctions and possible military intervention during the Iran-US nuclear crisis and Turkey’s non-support for the sanctions against Iran at UN meetings positively altered the image of Turkey in Iran and eventually, the image representative of the West in the region changed. Cooperation the three regional opponents abated tensions in the region and it decreased trilateral pressure on Azerbaijan. Competition between the three powers was reinforcing regional competition over Azerbaijan was reflected in the form of pressures towards it. Consequently the trust demonstrated by two powers of the region - Russian and Iran towards Azerbaijan, was also reposed in Turkey. Turkey and Azerbaijan fostered energy cooperation with Russia trying to gain its confidence. This trilateral cooperation disturbed Armenia. However, the regional competition between Russia and Turkey was not over. Before the regional competition is over, it is impossible to say that there is a real, fully mutual confidence between Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Harmonization of Turkey-Russia and Iran-Turkey energy relations did not bring positive effect for Azerbaijan’s energy policy. In the case of Turkey particularly in energy politics, its inherited role from the Ottoman Empire as a “land bridge” between Europe, Asia and the Middle East gives an idea on the interplay in that region. This is also related with the state’s geographic location influencing its foreign policy making.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.p.6.

<sup>78</sup> Mustafa Aydın; “Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 1999, Vol.35, No.4, p.157.



#### 4.4 Conclusion

The change introduced into the foreign policy of Turkey by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu influenced Azerbaijan as well. It was mainly caused by the real change of Turkey's eighteen year policy for the Caucasus. While the relations with Armenia are being continued within framework of programs and plans, relations with Azerbaijan are realized through individual activities and in an unplanned manner. As stated previously, there are no serious projects. Therefore, this deficiency should be taken into consideration. Regional projects had an important stake in the expansion of relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan, as Graham Fuller refers it as the "yellow peril" in explaining the imperial legacies of the past empires including both the Ottoman and the Russian empires considering the "pan-Turkic" aspects.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Graham Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey As a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*, Washington, 2008, p.129.

## CHAPTER 5

### DIMENSIONS OF ENGAGEMENT IN AZERBAIJANI-TURKISH RELATIONSHIP

#### 5.1 Introduction

At the time of the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, both the Turkish government and Turkish society had spent seven decades in isolation from the Turkish people's ethnic cousins in Azerbaijan and Central Asia. On Turkey's part, this extended separation contributed to an early neglect and ignorance of these two areas to its east, which had a significant influence on Turkish policy in the region, especially toward Azerbaijan. First, the poor understanding of the region led to an ill-conceived euphoria regarding future Turkic unity, which had as its backdrop the 1989 rejection of Turkey's request for admission to the European Community. When it comes to the South Caucasus it is apparent to see their foreign policy alignment is being shaped by their history which is also motivated through "Realpolitik". This also reflects on their security policy arrangements.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Svante Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Curzon Press, 2001, p.387.

## 5.2 Political Dimension

From the mindset of Turkey Azerbaijan was from the outset the most important country in the South Caucasus, and the Turkish government recognized Azerbaijan several weeks before it recognized the other newly independent states in the region. Azerbaijan was both geographically and culturally the closest of the Turkic republics. Strategically, it was the only Caucasus state on the Caspian Sea, and was thereby crucial to Turkish access to Central Asia; Azerbaijan also had substantial energy reserves. As outlined by Süha Bölükbaşı, Turkey's policy toward Azerbaijan was guided by five priorities: support for Azerbaijan's independence; support for Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh; a desire to prevent or limit a Russian return to the South Caucasus; participation in Azerbaijani oil production and the export of Azerbaijani oil through Turkey; and preservation of a friendly, though not necessarily pan-Turkist, government in Baku. Mutalibov had been decidedly cautious in building ties to Turkey. When Abulfaz Elchibey came to power, his fancy for the Turkish model of governance, his militant secularism, and his strongly anti-Iranian views may have aligned well with what many leading Turks privately believed. But Elchibey's erratic style did not align with the traditional cautiousness of Turkish foreign policy. Indeed, Elchibey was a bit too pan-Turkic even for Ankara's taste, and certainly too indiscreet a pan-Turkist. Elchibey's lack of political tact caused influential circles in Turkey to see him as a destabilizing factor, unfit to govern, as well as an impediment to Turkey's regional objectives. The same attitude can be observed during the initial stages of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline in the sense that Turkey would try to pose its political stance so that the pipeline route would follow either one of the Caucasus states (Georgia and Armenia) or Iran for economic feasibility.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "Ankara's Baku-Centered Transcaucasia Policy: Has It Failed?", *Middle East Journal*, 1997, Vol.50, No:1, p.89.

As Thomas Goltz documents in this book, Demirel tried to convince Heydar Aliyev to assume a more active role in influencing the Elchibey regime, however Aliyev refused to be associated with the government. Later on, Demirel prompted Elchibey to ask Aliyev to come to Baku. In this sense, Ankara played a crucial role in thwarting Moscow's plan to put insurgent commander Surat Huseynov in power in Elchibey's place. This is also important to illustrate Demirel's decisive role in convincing Aliyev to assume the leadership role in Baku.<sup>82</sup>

Aliyev, hence, saw Turkey as one of Azerbaijan's partners, not as its sole partner. He purposefully broadened Azerbaijan's links with the West as well as the Muslim world, focusing on establishing better relations with the United States and Iran, but also countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. For Turkey, the replacement of Elchibey with Aliyev meant a less devoted but more pragmatic regime in Baku. Aliyev also made a point of showing that the relationship was a two-way street: it was not only Azerbaijan that needed Turkey; Turkey also needed Azerbaijan. This was also a preemptive attempt on part of Aliyev because the "contiguity factor" influenced the regional powers' foreign policy alignments to influence Azerbaijan.<sup>83</sup>

Turkey's post Nagorno-Karabakh relations with Azerbaijan began with an embarrassing coup attempt. The 1994 action by members of the special-purpose police force known as OMON, acting under the direction of Deputy Minister of the Interior Rovshan Javadov, set off a crisis in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations when the involvement of high-level Turkish figures was uncovered. This vacuum allowed the military, the foreign policy establishment, and President Demirel to step in to take the lead in determining policy toward the Caucasus. By this time, the Turkish

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas Goltz, *Azerbaijan Diary: A Rogue Reporter's Adventures in an Oil-Rich, War-Torn Post-Soviet Republic*, New York, 1998, p.366.

<sup>83</sup> Nazrin Mehdiyeva, "Azerbaijan and Its Foreign Policy Dilemma", *Asian Affairs*, 2003, Vol.4, No.2 p.273.

military had come around to espousing many of former president Turgut Özal's ideas about international relations, in practice if not in name. The General Staff was now advocating and driving a more assertive foreign policy, the most important element of which was the alliance with Israel.<sup>84</sup>

Aside from this alliance, which revolutionized the geopolitics of the Middle East, this renewed assertiveness had the effect of suppressing the PKK terrorism in southeastern Turkey and forcing Syria and Iran to curtail their support for the Kurds and other separatist elements operating inside the country. Turkey began to see itself as a regional power in its own right. In spite of having had his own bouts with the military throughout his long career, President Demirel was now acting very much in unison with the top brass. Turkey refined its policies toward the East, and began to put increasing emphasis on the Caucasus, including a bolstered strategic partnership with Georgia. A pragmatic understanding of the region developed in Ankara in place of the emphasis on ethnic ties that had dominated previously. Ankara saw the South Caucasus in strategic terms, and defined Georgia and Azerbaijan as the key countries whose independence needed to be supported if Turkey were to project its influence eastward, and if the movement of Caspian Sea energy resources through Turkey were to be possible. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, in particular, was key to the region's development, and a concrete issue around which multilateral cooperation among Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the United States could grow. With Turkey's alliance with Israel, there was ample discussion of a U.S.-supported Israel-Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan axis developing, countered by a Syria-Iran-Armenia-Russia axis. The geopolitics of the former Soviet space were becoming increasingly linked to the Middle East.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Interview by the author with Murad Ismailov, Political Analyst at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy , August, 22, 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Interview by the author with Fariz Ismailzade, Academic Dean at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy , August, 25, 2011.

Three factors combined to produce the disengagement, which has been described as resulting in the end of the honeymoon between Turkey and Azerbaijan. The first was the financial crisis of 2001, which intensified Turkey's focus on domestic issues while, in regard to foreign affairs, orienting it more toward Europe. The second factor was the election to power of a government led by the Justice and Development Party. The third was the end of Süleyman Demirel's term as president and his replacement by the chairman of the Constitutional Court, Ahmet Necdet Sezer.<sup>86</sup>

The Turkish military's stiff stance on Azerbaijan in 2001 was especially significant because of the dire straits in which Turkey found itself at the time. Between November 2000 and February 2001, the worst financial crisis in the country's modern history hit Turkey. Large segments of the banking sector collapsed, and resulting in devaluation, plunging the country into chaos as millions lost the value of their savings. The unemployment rate soared. These events set off a political crisis, as the public ran out of patience with the bickering among Turkish politicians. In the November 2002 parliamentary elections, called eighteen months early, all of the parties that had been elected to Parliament just three years earlier were thrown out, all having failed to cross the ten percent threshold for representation. In effect, the entire Turkish political class was voted out.<sup>87</sup>

Süleyman Demirel's retirement also meant the loss of statesmanship and vision in Turkish foreign policy. The leadership vacuum in foreign policy created by a sequence of coalition governments had been filled by Demirel, who used his age, the respect he commanded, and his personal relationships with many world leaders, including Heydar Aliyev, to put Turkey on the map. Sezer, by contrast, was a lawyer, who made a point of doing no more and no less than the constitution

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<sup>86</sup> Interview by the author with Mammad Novruzoglu, Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Turkey (1992-2005), July, 16, 2011.

<sup>87</sup> Interview by the author with Mammad Novruzoglu, Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Turkey (1992-2005), July, 16, 2011.

prescribed. He took few initiatives in foreign policy, and his foreign visits, such as to Baku, were primarily of symbolic importance. For Azerbaijan, the personal link between Demirel and Aliyev had been the cornerstone of the bilateral relationship. In the absence of such ties, the relationship subsequently suffered. The parameters of Turkish Foreign Policy affected Turkey's policies toward the Caucasus both directly and indirectly, and mainly to the detriment of the country's interests in the first half of the 1990s. This also coincides with the attempts of regional powers such as Iran and Russia to influence the domestic politics of the country by taking the advantage of lack of "national cohesion" and "identity".<sup>88</sup>

Since the late 1990s, moreover, campaigning to have the 1915 massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire recognized as genocide had become official policy in Yerevan, bringing the Armenian government in alignment with the diaspora groups and irritating Ankara further. Turkey's consistent approach since the mid-1990s had been to make the normalization of Turkish relations with Armenia an element in the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan essentially offering to open its border with Armenia at some point in a coordinated sequence of events that would contribute to resolution of the conflict. Turkey refused to take that step unilaterally, demanding prior Armenian concessions in the conflict; to do otherwise, the logic went, would lead to abandonment of the remaining leverage on Armenia to vacate occupied territories, and essentially to acquiescence in the ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis. This logic continues to command strong public support in Turkey. Thus, linking the Turkish Armenian relationship with the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict remained conventional wisdom in both Turkey and Azerbaijan, however Western officials and pundits especially the International Crisis Group had other ideas. For instance one of the group's

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<sup>88</sup> Svante Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Curzon Press, 2001, p.283.

reports Azerbaijan is trying to be convinced on the grounds of “trade relations”, “energy politics” and “shared common identity in terms of culture and linguistics”.<sup>89</sup>

Ankara’s problem was that as long as the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict remained unresolved and Azerbaijani internally displaced persons were unable to return to their homes, Turkish policy toward Armenia could not be dissociated from relations with Azerbaijan. In the context of the officially supported maxim one nation, two states, any unilateral opening to Armenia that was perceived as detrimental to Azerbaijan would be explosive stuff. This conundrum was reflected in the government’s contradictory statements. In signing the protocols, Ankara effectively committed to opening the border within two months of ratification. But in statements making explicit reference to the border opening, foreign minister and other officials also stated that no move injurious to the interests of Azerbaijan would be made. The only way these conflicting statements could be reconciled would be through progress in the parallel process of conflict resolution between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ankara’s hope lay in the conclusion of a preliminary deal between Baku and Yerevan envisaging the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the five occupied provinces of Azerbaijan outside Nagorno-Karabakh itself. This fact can also be explained by Turkey’s “neutral” foreign policy in the conflict acting as an “impartial mediator”, which influenced Turkey to take upon “shuttle diplomacy” within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> International Crisis Group, “Turkey and Armenia: Opening Minds, Opening Borders”, Report no.199, 2009.,p.18.

<sup>90</sup> Svante Cornell, “A Delicate Balance: Turkey and the Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 1998, vol.34, no.1, p.60.



### 5.3 Energy Politics Dimension

Trade and energy had always been key elements in the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship. As Azerbaijan has become an important potential transit country for East Caspian resources, its strategic importance to Turkey's business and political relations with Central Asia has grown as well. Energy was a key area of cooperation in the 1990s. This discord focused mainly on the second stage of the development of Azerbaijani natural gas exports to and through Turkey. Indeed, when phase two of development of the Shah-Deniz oil field was poised to get under way, this meant that the South Caucasus pipeline needed to be upgraded just as Turkey was sorting out the conflicting objectives underlying its ambition to become an energy hub. Central to that ambition is the Nabucco pipeline, the leading project to bring Caspian Sea and Middle Eastern gas to Europe via Turkey. This fact also resulted in the emergence of two power blocks in the late 1990s in the borderlands of the Caspian: Russia and Iran on one side and Turkish-Western presence on the other.<sup>91</sup>

The planning or construction of several energy projects that would require the involvement of Turkey not only the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline but also Iraqi energy projects, a proposed pipeline linking Ceyhan with the Black Sea port city of Samsun, boosted Turkish self-confidence and strengthened Turkey's chances of becoming an energy hub. Yet Turkey's own intransigence has, paradoxically, helped undermine that very prospect. Turkey has demanded the right to purchase the gas at discounted prices and to resell the gas that enters its territory, and has voiced various claims regarding transit fees. Turkey's insistence that it continue to benefit from the flow of cheap gas from Azerbaijan's Shah-Deniz field gas that it acquired at well below market prices, indeed, at levels about a third of what it pays for Russian gas has upset Baku as well as gas-producing companies. Turkish policies have been driven by three factors: Turkey's need to consider both domestic

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<sup>91</sup> Michael Croissant, "US Interests in the Caspian Basin", *Comparative Strategy*, 1997, vol.16, no.1, p.360.

consumption and transit politics, its wish to keep domestic prices low, and its attempts to turn itself into a regional energy hub rather than a mere transit country.

Turkey's hub ambitions are more complex. At times, certain policymakers in Ankara have appeared to toy with the idea of turning Turkey into a second Gazprom by buying gas at low prices at its eastern borders and reselling at higher prices on its the western borders rather than have it function as a transit state operating according to market principles and European business practices. While obviously bad for producers such as Azerbaijan, this idea was ill fated for at least two other reasons. First, under such conditions, Western governments and companies would be unwilling to make the investments Turkey would need in order to realize these projects. Indeed, the corridor through Turkey has become attractive precisely because it operates under European market conditions, something that would change should Turkey turn into a gas hub. Second, such Turkish ambitions were effectively killed by Russia's decision to offer Caspian Sea producers much higher prices than it had set earlier very much in order to undermine Turkey's chances of becoming a major transit state. This is also evident in Turkey's ambitions within the framework of the Nabucco Project- particularly in the year 2009- when the Turkish Prime Minister personified them as the "leap year".<sup>92</sup>

A key problem was that Turkey appeared to lack a coherent strategy until 2009. In reality, Turkey lacked a coordinated energy policy, not to mention a diplomatic strategy linked to energy policy. The leadership of the Ministry of Energy, often at odds with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was a leading impediment during the tenure of Hilmi Güler as energy minister. The appointment of a new minister, Taner Yıldız, in mid-2008 appeared to be an improvement. Well versed in energy affairs compared to his predecessor, Yıldız espoused a more realistic view of Turkey's role

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<sup>92</sup> "European Energy Security and Nabucco Occupy a Central Place in Erdogan's Brussels Trip", Eurasia Daily Monitor, retrieved from: [www.jamestown.org/single=no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Cd=34377](http://www.jamestown.org/single=no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Cd=34377).

in European energy supplies. In particular, Yıldız regarded as unrealistic the prospect of Turkey becoming a gas hub. He favored instead making Turkey a transit country, a role that could provide long-term geostrategic benefits. Meanwhile, Russia was not slow in capitalizing on the discord between the two Turkic states, as Gazprom moved in and offered to buy all of Azerbaijan's gas at European netback prices in other words, three times what Turkey was paying. In what was more a symbolic move than anything else, Baku agreed in 2009 to supply half a billion cubic meters of natural gas per year to Russia a small quantity, but nonetheless a signal to Turkey and the West that Azerbaijan had options and was running out of patience. Indeed, Baku was now torn between economic and political considerations. Russia's offer was financially lucrative if genuine but politically dangerous, it being clear that it was geostrategically and not economically motivated, since Russia would not profit from reselling Azerbaijani gas to Europe if it paid European prices to Azerbaijan. The politically favorable option, Nabucco, on the other hand, failed to materialize, and appeared increasingly distant on account of European indecision and Turkish confusion. According to some analysts this kind of confusion is related to the Turkish governments lack of "three significant policies"; mainly "cohesive", "coordinated energy" and lastly "foreign policy".<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> "Ankara's Growing Realism on the Nabucco Project," Turkey Analyst (2009), retrieved from: [www.sikroadstudies.org/new/inside/turkey/2009/090522b.html](http://www.sikroadstudies.org/new/inside/turkey/2009/090522b.html).

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The Turkish Parliament's role in this process should not be underestimated. Indeed, loud voices within the party were in strong disagreement with the leadership. Then, the party leadership had allowed members to vote according to their consciences, thereby avoiding the need to enforce party discipline on an unwilling parliamentary group and thus giving itself an exit strategy. The same strategy could well be used if the Armenian protocols ever got to Parliament. Indeed, the court's caveats in interpreting the Protocols not to mean any end to Armenia's quest for recognition of the 1915 massacres as genocide, emphasizing the de-linking of the Turkish Armenian relationship from the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, and murky legalistic language on the common border all offered the Turkish leadership an opportunity to lambast Armenia for changing the game.

## CHAPTER 6

### NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT IN AZERBAIJANI-TURKISH RELATIONSHIP

#### 6.1 Introduction

Turkey was the first state to recognize Azerbaijan, several weeks before it recognized the other states in the region. Azerbaijan was crucial for Turkey in more than one way. Naturally, any substantial Turkish influence in Central Asia depended on influence in the Caucasus, and in the Caucasus Azerbaijan was defined as the strategically most important country not only by Turkey, but by Iran and later the United States as well. For Turkey especially, Azerbaijan was a logical strategic pillar for influence in the wider region because of the close ethnic affinity, all but lack of linguistic difficulties, potential petroleum wealth, and its strategic location as the only Caucasian state on the Caspian Sea.

#### 6.2 Significance In Azerbaijani-Turkish Relations

Despite Turkey's overtly pro-Azerbaijani stance during 1992– 1993, Ankara did not supply Baku with anything that could have helped it turn the tide of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Some retired Turkish army officers were sent to help train the Azerbaijani army; Armenian sources claim that Turkey provided weapons, but if such shipments took place, these weapons were insignificant, given the readily available Soviet weaponry in the region. Turkey's policy on Nagorno-Karabakh illustrates the profound restraint exercised by Turkish leaders, who very likely would have wished to do much more for Azerbaijan. A clear divide emerged between elected officials and political appointees, on the one hand, and the career

military and civil service establishment, on the other. As politicians in government as well as the opposition outbid one other in expressing pro Azerbaijani statements, the establishment was not about to let elected leaders drag the country into a war in the Caucasus. It is hence doubtful whether the military would have followed orders of direct intervention, had these been given. In other words, the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict served as a case study for the limitations that Turkey may encounter if it opted for military intervention.<sup>94</sup>

Turkey's active policy in the South Caucasus first revealed itself in the aftermath of the Georgia-Russia August 2008 war. After the conflict, Turkey proposed to create a South Caucasus Security and Cooperation Platform that would include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, and Turkey. Interestingly, Turkey did not include the United States in this platform and decided to proceed independently together with Russia, even though the United States is one of the official mediators for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under the aegis of the OSCE. In 2008, Turkish and Armenian presidents watched the World Football Cup qualification match between Armenia and Turkey together. This was a very symbolic gesture indicating the beginning of rapprochement between the two countries. The media was quick to dub the event as football diplomacy between Turkey and Armenia. Tensions escalated between Azerbaijan and Turkey in 2009, which is a sharp contrast to the years of the BTC's construction. Azerbaijan's concerns over Turkish policies became even more pronounced after the so-called "football diplomacy" between Turkey and Armenia.

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<sup>94</sup> Mustafa Aydın, "Foucault's Pendulum: Turkey in Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Turkish Studies*, 2004, Vol.5, No.2, p.18.

<sup>95</sup> "Turkey, Armenia pursue Football Diplomacy", Associated Press, retrieved from: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0.29933.495>.

Until a few years ago, it was inconceivable in Azerbaijan that Turkey would trump its most important foreign policy priority, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey's aims to eventually open its borders to Armenia and its strengthening cooperation with Russia, was perceived as abandonment by Azerbaijan, especially with respect to the conflict. Azerbaijan is also acutely aware that without Turkey, it loses a great deal of leverage in the conflict. This is also evident within the scope of the protocols that Turkey is not mentioned as a mediator regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict.<sup>96</sup>

It was becoming evident that borders were going to be reopened. In order to pacify Azerbaijan and Turkey's nationalist opposition, Erdoğan of Turkey visited Azerbaijan in 2009. However news started spreading that Turkey and Armenia were expected to sign two protocols, whereby diplomatic relations would be established between the two countries and borders between them would be reopened. The new wave of disappointment came to Azerbaijan during the second football match between Turkey and Armenia, in September 2009, this time in Bursa, Turkey. The match was followed by barring the Azerbaijani flag from entering the stadium. Azerbaijan responded by bringing down the Turkish flags at the military memorial in Baku. Despite all these, in his 2009 Baku visit Prime Minister Erdoğan reassured Baku to "overcome the misunderstandings and to keep Baku's interests as top foreign policy priority".<sup>97</sup>

Tensions, however, eased after Davutoğlu's visit to Baku, where he reassured the Azerbaijanis that the borders will remain closed until Armenia withdraws from the Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite Davutoğlu's reassurances, on October 10, 2009, the

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<sup>96</sup> "Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement and Disagreements with Azerbaijan: A View from Baku," retrieved from: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3258/turkish-armenian-rapprochement-disagreements>.

<sup>97</sup> "In Baku, Erdogan pledges continued support for Azerbaijan," retrieved from: <http://www.asbarez.com/62270/in-baku-erdogan-pledges-continued-support>.

protocols were signed in Zurich by him and his Armenian counterpart Edward Nalbandian, establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries and further creating the possibility of the border opening in the future. Both protocols were meant to enter into force two months after ratification by the legislatures of both states. The parliaments, however, have not ratified the protocols yet. Turkey argues that ratification may be possible if Armenia releases five districts adjacent to the Nagorno-Karabakh. It should be noted that the majority of the Turkish public is against the reopening of borders with Armenia before the progress on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijan, however, views the signing of both the protocols as a threat to its stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On the other hand, soon after the signing of the protocols in 2009, Prime Minister Erdoğan called the process as an “important step” both within the political and diplomatic realm.<sup>98</sup>

It is very likely that Azerbaijan will be using its gas resources to inform Turkey and the West of its concerns with Turkish-Armenian rapprochement and its implications for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. More interestingly, Azerbaijan only agreed to sell gas to Russia in October 2009, when the Turkish-Armenian protocols on normalizations of relations and opening their mutual border were signed. Azerbaijan’s active promotion of the BTC oil pipeline in the 1990s and 2000s is an unprecedented step to deliver gas to Russia, while at the same time holding talks on another energy pipeline that was meant to provide Europe with gas. Turkish rapprochement with Armenia has also made Azerbaijan consider the Russian option more closely. Russia now has greater political weight in Eurasia, which was especially evident after the Russia-Georgia War of August 2008. The war altered the traditional political configuration in the region and pushed Azerbaijan more into the Russian political orbit.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> “Turkey: Armenia Must Pull Out Of Nagorno-Karabakh,” retrieved from: [www.foxnews.com/story/0.2667373](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0.2667373).

<sup>99</sup> Interview by the author with Murad Ismailov, Political Analyst at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, August, 22, 2011.



### **6.3 Conclusion**

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh at an early stage shattered the illusions of certain Turkish policy-makers about the capacities of their country with regard to its relations with its lost cousins of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Indeed, as if subjected to a cold shower, the Turks which had not done so realized the complexity of their country's relations with the United States, Western Europe, Russia, and the Middle East, and the constraints upon it that prevented Turkey from pursuing a truly independent policy in the region. Turkey found itself involved in a myriad of liabilities, as it was compelled to take into account the stance of the West and that of Russia while formulating its policy in the Caucasus. In view of the difficult conditions it was subjected to Turkey nevertheless managed to keep its relations with all involved powers avoiding to compromise its position in any center where that would have been to its detriment.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

After 20 years of engagement, Azerbaijani-Turkish relations still remain a focal point in foreign policy making. Even though these two countries share certain aspects in terms of language and culture it is of utmost importance to underline the fact that international relations is not area of ordinary citizens, instead it is the apparatus of official government representatives in which the final outcome is dependent on. The feeling of kinship in the initial part of the Azerbaijani-Turkish engagement proved to be an ideal one that was felt strongly among the intellectuals and government officials. However, since the second decade of Azerbaijan's independence, both Turkey and Azerbaijan has changed. Turkey came under the rule of an Islamic conservative party favoring moderate Islam and has little enthusiasm for Turkic brotherhood, while Azerbaijan gained increasing self-confidence as its independence consolidated and its economy boomed. This naturally affected the relationship between the two countries which was once romantically considered to be under One Nation Two States. In other words Baku and Ankara have found that pragmatic and realists interests do not always comport with the solidarity notably in the area of energy politics.

Therefore, in light of what has been stated in the introductory part of the thesis, it can be concluded that the extent of Azerbaijani-Turkish engagement is merely based upon pragmatic and realist assumptions, even though there have been certain instances that statesmen from both parties made references to nationalist rhetoric and other bonding elements. One such instance is the One Nation Two States principle that was popular in the 1990s during a time when this engagement was flourishing and became especially useful when the decision making elite in Turkey

originated from a secular background. In his book, “Azerbaijan Since Independence”, Svante Cornell makes striking references regarding this phenomena:

To varying degrees, this group espouses some form of nationalism, and therefore feels strong cultural affinities with Azerbaijan and other Turkic nations. For this large segment of society, including the political class, it is natural for Turkey to keep close ties with Azerbaijan and actively support its interests and its independence.<sup>100</sup>

Other evidence as far as showing the recent phase of the Azerbaijani-Turkish relations can be traced to other platforms such as the leaked U.S Dept. of State files, also known as the “Wikileaks”.<sup>101</sup> In such an example, the documents contain harsh criticisms of the ruling Justice and Development Party by the President Ilham Aliyev. Accordingly, Aliyev is reported to dismiss Turkey’s recent foreign policy establishment as being “naive”.<sup>102</sup>

These revelations confirming an open factor, that behind “One Nation Two States”, tensions and misunderstanding abound. The signing of the Geneva protocols between Turkey and Armenia signaled a reality check for the Azerbaijani decision makers in the sense that the steps taken without meaningful progress in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and being perceived as a betrayal by Turkey. Moreover, the intensity of the Azerbaijani reaction to the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement revealed growing resentments in Azerbaijan at the tendency of many Turkish politicians, religious missionaries and businessmen to treat Azerbaijan as an extension of Turkey. While the two countries share a lot in terms of language and

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<sup>100</sup> Svante Cornell, *Azerbaijan Since Independence*, M.E Sharpe, 2010, p.361.

<sup>101</sup> Wikileaks is commonly known as the virtual platform of the U.S State Department files which became instrumental in distribution of the Diplomatic Cables.

<sup>102</sup> US. Dept Of State Diplomatic Cable, No.EO12958. p.4.

culture, Azerbaijanis have their own distinct multi-layered identity, with a strong, European and Caucasian heritage that set it apart from Turkey.

What is more, while Azerbaijanis admire Turkey's economic dynamism and military prowess, they also feel their own society is more progressive due to higher literacy rates, more profound secularization and higher levels of female emancipation.

Svante Cornell goes one step further in explaining the societal factors in affecting the current state of Azerbaijani-Turkish relations by making several connections with Azerbaijan's pragmatic behavior in terms of Turkey. As Cornell states:

Turkey will always be more important to Azerbaijan than Azerbaijan is to Turkey. Furthermore, as Islamic solidarity increasingly rivals Turkic solidarity in Turkey, this is likely to further temper the intensity of the relationship on the Turkish side. But it is also possible that as Azerbaijan becomes wealthier and more self-conscious, its population may not continue to acquiesce in being treated as the neglected younger brother. As Azerbaijan matures as an independent nation, its ties to Turkey may very well become less emotional and eventually more pragmatic.<sup>103</sup>

These factors have resulted Azerbaijan and Turkey to be estranged from each other on an array of international and foreign policy issues Azerbaijan, for example, has made a point of continuing close relations with Israel after Turkey fell out with the Jewish state. Azerbaijan is much more critical of Iran's current leadership than Turkey is, and its policies on Iran are aligned to those of the West. As far as domestic policies are concerned, many in Turkey see Azerbaijan as an authoritarian petro-state with scant regard for the rule of law. The Azerbaijani elite on the other hand generally don't see any merit in a JDP style moderate Islam. Moreover, some circles in Azerbaijan assert once being hopeful of a positive spill-over to Azerbaijan from Turkey's European integration, now watch with dismay of how certain

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<sup>103</sup> Svante Cornell, *Azerbaijan Since Independence*, M.E Sharpe, 2010, p.390.

freedoms in everyday life is increasingly becoming under threat in Turkey where the majority ruler Justice and Development Party hold a firm grip.

On another note, as the Azerbaijani-Turkish relations become strained one should also notice the possibility of Azerbaijan falling under Russia's sphere of influence. It is evident that Azerbaijan using energy politics as a political leverage to remind Turkey of the Nagorno-Karabakh by signing vital energy agreements with Russia.

In line with the research questions and the main arguments outlined in the introductory part, this thesis concludes that the formal dictum in international relations discipline no eternal friends, only eternal interests, appears to be increasingly true in Azerbaijani-Turkish relations. The aphorism of One Nation Two States seemed to have long occupied the two countries' relationship seems to be in contradiction in this current decade by the time this thesis is being published. However, it should be once reminded that states identify their interests separately, instead of jointly, through calculation and political processes as the Realist international relations theory suggests. In the case of Azerbaijan and Turkey remain distinct states their interests as defined by their respective leaderships will to likely to align. The contradiction between the claim of belonging to a single nation and the realities of two states is therefore likely to continue to be the main feature of Azerbaijani-Turkish relations and particularly will likely to last in this manner as the Justice and Development Party remains as the majority power in Turkey.

In other words, since with the recent ups and downs in the current decade, the romantic phase of One Nation Two States phase in the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship is over. Azerbaijan is likely to continue in engaging in a more realistic and pragmatic manner in the years to come.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

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