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Relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus

in the 90s of the XX century

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Introduction

The actuality of the topic: Studying Turkey's foreign policy is the most actual issue in the recent history of Georgia and the South Caucasus. Especially at a time, when the end of the Cold War has spawned new developments in the world, and first of all, the replacement process of the countries united in various military-political unions, the formation of new sovereign states, which once again changed the political world map; There were occurred new problems, new approaches and consequently, the objective necessity of newly presenting and observing many earlier problems.

The current situation in the region is increasing the actuality of the topic (The Karabakh problem, the problem of Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia, the tensions between Armenia and Turkey, the Russian factor in the Caucasus, etc.). Against this backdrop, the political course and the attitude towards the South Caucasus region of Turkey are important, which was one of the first one to recognize the independence of the countries of the South Caucasus in the 90s of the XX century; How Turkey is trying to take the leading role in this region, which is expressed in economic, cultural, political or religious relations.

The doctoral dissertation covers one of the most actual issues of Turkish history in the 90s of the XX century - "Relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus countries in the 90s of the XX century".

Georgian Orientalists have devoted a great deal of scientific research to this issue, which discusses Turkey's relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia separately. The study of Turkey's relations with the South Caucasus countries in a unified context is not presented, which would discuss "Turkey's political relations with the South Caucasus

countries in the 90s of the XX century" in its entirety. Their collaborative study will allow us to generalize the problem and make more comprehensive and exhaustive conclusions.

In the dissertation, we will discuss both the political relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus countries in the 90s of the XX century, as well as the South Caucasus, as a Eurasian transport corridor and we will evaluate Turkey's political role in its development and security, which is less studied in Georgian historiography. The research will add more clarity to the study of the issue.

In this dissertation, we will try to study in depth the political reality that existed between Turkey and the newly created South Caucasus countries at that time. In addition, Turkey-Georgia relations and Georgia's role in Turkey's South Caucasus policy will be discussed in depth.

Research goals and objectives: The purpose of this work is to define and analyze the basic principles and directions of Turkey's South Caucasus policy. According to the requirements of modern historical science, explain the relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus in the 90s of the XX century on the basis of objective analysis and coherence of historical materials and sources that have been unknown to date.

The above mentioned period is important in the relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus countries. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of the key directions of the Turkish Republic has been to gain a leading role in the South Caucasus region and to increase its influence. Accordingly, our aim is to discuss the problems of political relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus countries, to study the measures taken and the existing challenges.

Before addressing these issues, let us partly overview some political processes that have accelerated the emergence of political cooperation between Turkey and the South Caucasus:

We discussed Turkey's strategic goals in the Caucasus and its striving for regional leadership;

Based on historical facts we have determined the geopolitical environment of the South Caucasus and the place and role of the regional states in that environment;

Considering the facts and realities of the 90s of the 20th century, we discussed the characteristics of the geopolitics of the South Caucasus and the interactions of the world geopolitical players and the regional leaders in the regional context;

By discussing and analyzing the South Caucasus political vectors of the Republic of Turkey, we have identified the expected threats and challenges that Ankara may face in dealing with the South Caucasus countries; and finally, we have defined Georgia's role and purpose in the foreign policy vector of the Republic of Turkey.

The object of the research is the political, cultural and economic vector of relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus countries.

The subject of the study is the geopolitical vectors of the Turkish Republic in the 90s of the XX century and the role of the foreign policy direction of the South Caucasus in this political environment.

Research Methods: : The dissertation deals with Turkey's relations with the South Caucasus countries in the 1990s and the increasing influence of Turkey in political, economic, cultural and religious spheres. This is so broad and at the same time a complex issue that undoubtedly requires serious research via several scientific disciplines such as: Political Science, Conflictology, International Relations, History, Sociology, International Law, etc. The paper is based on mixed (both qualitative and quantitative) research methods: except the literature analysis, the predictive methods of statistical, comparative and historical analysis of research are used. An analysis of the peculiarities of international relations, assessing their impact on the stability of the South Caucasus allows us to define the logic of transformational processes in three republics (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) with regard to Turkey; we made some comparisons throughout the whole region and used a comparative analysis method.

Scientific novelty and practical significance: "Relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus countries in the 90s of the XX century" have been thoroughly studied and analyzed by us. We did a comparative analysis of the South Caucasus countries in terms of relations with Turkey, one of the leading countries in the region.

The scientific novelty of this work is as follows:

1. Turkey's foreign policy vector with the newly emerged republics of the South Caucasus has been studied and analyzed in a complex manner;
2. A complex analysis of Turkey's South Caucasus political vector has been provided with Critical geopolitical reasoning, which makes it possible to predict near and medium-term prospects for Turkish foreign policy;
3. The hierarchy of Turkey's major geopolitical orientations has been identified and it was revealed that the South Caucasus takes an important place in Turkey's foreign policy;
4. It was determined that the South Caucasus has acquired a key importance in achieving the geopolitical objective of the Republic of Turkey, to control the energy resources in Central Asia.

Practical value of the research results is important as well, which will help historians, Orientalists and other scholars who are interested in the subject.

Chronological Framework of the Work: The chronological framework of the work is quite broad. Historical chronology is mainly used to describe the relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus countries, which enables us to better understand the links and challenges between states. To better understand Turkey's foreign policy, the South Caucasus direction, the history of the Ottoman and South Caucasus countries is also briefly reviewed. The chronology of relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus mainly covers the political, cultural and economic steps taken by Turkey in the period 1990-2000 towards Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Approval of thesis: Dissertation is performed by the Department of History, Archeology and Ethnology of Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, where it was discussed – the probation was on 19 July 2019 (Protocol No. 10). The author of the qualification thesis was recommended for obtaining an academic degree.

The separate sections of the work are published in scientific journals and proceedings, read at international conferences.

Structure and content of the dissertation: The thesis is scientifically valuable. It covers one of the most pressing issues of Turkish history in the 1990s - the relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus countries in the 90s of the XX century.

In addition to the introductory and concluding sections, the work consists of six chapters, twelve subsections and a bibliography. In total, it includes about 140 pages. The study has used up to 20 sources and up to 70 scientific (20 websites) papers.

Contents of the work

Chapter I. A brief historical overview of relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus

The first chapter, which consists of one paragraph, discusses events, a kind of background history, describing how the Ottoman and Persian had been attempting to gain control over the South Caucasus region since the 16th century. Russia has joined the struggle for the region since the beginning of the eighteenth century, which soon gained transitional advantage and its success in the Caucasus region became apparent.

By the end of the 19th century, Russia was able to weaken its rivals in the region and later defeat them. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 was the latest clash in which Russia gained complete hegemony in the region. In 1878, Russia finally established positions in the Balkans and Caucasus by the San Stefano Treaty.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1990s, the formation of new states in the region enabled Turkey to expand its spheres of influence, especially, against that backdrop, most of the newly created states in the Caucasus and Central Asia were perceived as a related nation of Turkey.

Chapter II. South Caucasus, Turkey and bipolar world

The second chapter discusses Turkey's relations with the South Caucasus countries and the factors of Russia, Iran and Europe and their attitude towards Turkey's South Caucasus policy.

2.1 Turkey and the South Caucasus in the Prism of European Relations

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of the main goals of the Turkish Republic has been to gain a leading role in the South Caucasus and to increase its influence.

By the end of the Cold War, Turkey was coping well with the task of the North Atlantic Alliance towards the USSR. During the conflict, with US assistance, Turkey successfully performed restraining springboard function and no wonder that Turkey and its Western strategists, with recognition of the sovereignty of the South Caucasus and Central Asian countries, practically expanded their geopolitical sphere of influence, when Russia's influence had been greatly reduced as in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, as in Balkans geopolitical space. In the initial phase, in 1991-1994, official Ankara did its best in terms of creation the most favorable conditions for the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the South Caucasian states. Once independence of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia had been recognized, Turkey established diplomatic relations with them and opened official representations in these countries. Following these steps, the Turkish government has put forward many initiatives aimed at regional integration and co-operation, the most prominent of these was the idea of Turkish President Turgut Ozal (1989-1993) for the establishment of the "Black Sea Economic Cooperation" (BSEC).

Following the creation of this organization, another important event was the idea of the new Turkish President Süleyman Demirel (1993-2000) to create a "Caucasus Stability Pact" to ensure regional security.

A further initiative by the Turkish government, supported by the West, was the establishment of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) in the South Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans, through which Turkey has actually paved the way for its businessmen and other private sector representatives to make small and large investments in the post-Soviet space.

Nevertheless, it cannot be underestimated that in 1991-1994 Turkey was practically left alone in this region, abandoned by its traditional allies, the US and Europe, which at that time did not actually have a clearly defined South Caucasus policy, that made it more difficult to fully accomplish the goals and objectives that had been set. This has prompted reactivation of the Russian Federation in the region as the successor of the Soviet Union, and the remarkable result of it was the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The West and the US opposed Russia's action with the project "Partnership for Peace", its purpose was to withdraw the above-mentioned region from the full influence of Russia. However, the emerging conflicts in the region (Samachablo, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh) and the representation of the South Caucasus region as a completely dangerous hub slowed down the withdrawal of the newly emerged states from Russia's influence. As a result, modern Europe has faced, primarily the need for conflict resolution. Turkey, however, has sought to use the West's support in its interests, to strengthen its influence in the region; this in turn meant for the newly emerged South Caucasus countries to escape from Russia's influence.

2.2.Turkey's Geostrategic Goals in the Transcaucasia and The Russian factor

After the end of the Cold War, Turkish-Russian relations turned into a new environment, this led to a radical revision of Ankara's foreign policy. The struggle for hegemony in the region began. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, many unresolved conflicts in the region emerged, mainly in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (Abkhazia, Samachablo and Nagorno-Karabakh).

Turkey-Russia relations must be considered in the context of the relations of these countries and the existing conflicts, because both states are skillfully using the conflicts between Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to strengthen their positions.

Turkey and Russia found themselves in the conflicts in different unions. However, Turkey has avoided an apparent confrontation with Moscow over strategic and economic factors. As a result, Ankara was forced to pursue a delicate policy with Moscow, to maintain balance towards the Muslim and predominantly Turkic peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and at the same time, to stop the return of Russia's political monopoly to the region.

In spite of the fact that from an economic or military point of view, the Russian Federation, the legal successor of the Soviet Union, was a much weaker state than its predecessor, it maintained Russia's importance, as it continued to be an accountable force, especially towards the states existing in the region.

The first regional organization - BSEC - Black Sea Economic Cooperation should also be mentioned in the Russian-Turkish relations, founded by Turkey and it included Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, due to the differing positions

of the member states, the organization has not been able to develop effectively not only in political but also in economic terms.

Initially, the establishment of the CIS prevented Turkey from establishing strategic military ties with the countries of the region. On May 15, 1992, the CIS Collective Security Treaty was signed in Tashkent, by virtue of which, the participating states pledged their mutual assistance.

Under the existing agreement, Russia was allowed to deploy troops first to Armenia (1993) and later to Georgia (1994). In fact, Turkey and Russia were still militarily close.

By the end of the 20th century, Russian – Turkish relations were significantly influenced by the Karabakh conflict. That revealed the differences of interests of Turkey and Russia towards the countries of the South Caucasus region. The Karabakh conflict and Russia's active role in it showed that the Soviet legal successor would not allow other states to be involved in the ongoing processes in the South Caucasus region, which has become a prerequisite that Turkey has refrained from active support for Azerbaijan.

Apart from the conflict between Azerbaijan and Karabakh, Georgia has also played an important role in Russian-Turkish relations since 1993, one of the primary reasons for Georgia's rapprochement with Turkey has become the Abkhaz conflict and Russia's position in dealing with this conflict.

One of the most important sources of political conflict between Turkey and Russia should also be considered energy sources and the control over their sale, which involved the international exploitation of Caspian basin oil and gas resources.

Russia's main goal was to control over the realization of energy resources in the Caspian basin, Turkey, meanwhile, had been trying to divert energy to its own country and play a role in the Caucasus' energy security.

Projects launched and implemented in the second half of the 90's - (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi Erzurum gas pipeline), the liberation of the region's countries from Russia's energy monopoly was, to some extent, a reduction of Russia's influence on the region, and in this respect, Turkey achieved a small but one more victory.

By the end of the 20th century, it became apparent that two distinct regional powers in the South Caucasus, Russia, as the legal successor of the Soviet Union, and Turkey, as a

new power with the active support of the West, tried to make the most of their political, economic, cultural and even military resources (e.g. Russian military intervention against Georgia) to gain hegemony in the region.

2.3. Matching interests of Turkey and Iran in the Caucasus

Iran and Turkey are actively fighting to strengthen influence in the Caucasus region and in this struggle, Russia appears to be an obvious ally of Iran in certain geopolitical issues.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the interests of Turkey and Iran in the region did not coincide; the main reason for this was that Turkey's rise in political and economic interests in the South Caucasus region was supported by Western Europe and the United States. Consequently, the active engagement of the United States and the European Union in the regional processes in the Caucasus with the side of Turkey, has led Tehran to see a common language with Russia.

Consequently, the weakening of Tehran's interests in the Caucasus was partly due to its association with Russia, for it is not in Moscow's interest to increase Tehran's influence in the South Caucasus in any way.

Iran's strategic approach of foreign policy to the South Caucasus is as it follows: not to allow any force to take full control of the region, to maintain a balance so that no significant change can be made in the region that could strengthen the positions of the US, Turkey or Russia.

The main areas of cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the South Caucasus countries are: Cooperation in the framework of bilateral and multilateral political dialogue; economic cooperation, which is very important for the countries of the region; Cooperation in the field of transport; Cooperation in the format of international organizations; Cooperation in Education and Science etc.

Tehran had been actively involved in the Karabakh conflict and sought to adjust to the role of mediator. However, Turkey's activation as a direct ally of Azerbaijan did not allow Iran to become involved in the Karabakh conflict in any way.

Tehran's attempt to demonstrate its impact in the new political reality of the Caucasus at the end of the 20th century failed.

However, it should be mentioned that the balance of forces in the South Caucasus that emerged in the 1990s is more or less acceptable to Iran. Although Iran-Russia relations are characterized by multilateral cooperation, changing any regional state, even Russia or Turkey, is not in Tehran's interest. In addition, in the long term, joining Azerbaijan, Russia, and even Turkey to the integration processes, in exchange for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, means having a strong Azerbaijan at Iran's borders, which is also not in the interest of Iran.

As for the place of Georgia, it has a long history in Iran's South Caucasus politics. Since gaining independence, Iran has been one of the first countries to recognize Georgia's independence and establish political relations with it.

The Islamic Republic of Iran supports Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Iran has its own approach and position towards the conflict regions of Georgia. Unlike the Karabakh conflict, the Islamic Republic of Iran has not expressed a willingness to serve as a mediator in the conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but the position is obvious. Official Tehran supports Georgia's territorial integrity, and we do not face the threat of recognition of Georgia's occupied territories by Tehran in the present reality. It is unacceptable for Iran to change internationally recognized borders in the South Caucasus and at the same time, Iran does not "support" separatism due to the ethnical variety of its own population and allow such a precedent.

Chapter 3. Turkish-Georgian Relations in the 90s of the XX century

Chapter 3 consists of two subsections describing the establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Georgia, what led to the establishment of close political and economic relations between the two countries that formed the basis for interstate partnership, the economic relations between Turkey and Georgia are also given separately, which became very important especially for Georgia during the severe economic crisis of the 1990s.

1.1. The establishment of diplomatic ties between Turkey and Georgia in the 90s of the 20th century

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the destabilization of the Armenian-Azerbaijan relations, Turkey's aspiration to establish cultural and economic relations with Azerbaijan and Central Asian countries have led to a significant increase in Georgia's political role, because Georgia was considered the only link between Turkey and Azerbaijan, respectively between Central Asia. It should also be noted that Turkey was also important for Georgia to free itself from Russian economic and political pressure and to connect with the West.

Turkey officially recognized Georgia's independence on December 16, 1991, recognized his statehood and established diplomatic relations with him.

Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel said during his first visit to Georgia: I am happy to have arrived in Georgia to discuss the ways of broader cooperation between our neighbouring countries. Georgia is on the path to democracy. We have one border, one sea, one interest. Our path is the path of close political, economic, cultural cooperation. "

During the same visit, Eduard Shevardnadze drew attention to the fact that since independence, such a visit to Georgia had been significant.

"Agreement on friendship, cooperation and good neighborly relations between Georgia and the Republic of Turkey" was signed between the two states. Under the treaty, both countries recognized each other's independence, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, non-interference in each other's domestic affairs, and expressed a desire to deepen cooperation.

Following the signing of the agreement, a new phase of Turkish-Georgian relations began, about what the first extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassador to Republic of Turkey, Nodar Komakhidze wrote: " Georgia-Turkey relations have great prospects. It is about close, equal, growing neighbourly relations that our government gives great value to."

The most important issue that contributed to the development of Turkish-Georgian relations was transportation of Caspian oil and gas through Georgia to Turkey. Turkey has tried hard to have Georgia to fulfill this function. The Georgian government, led by President Eduard Shevardnadze, has also shown great interest in delivering Caspian energy

pipelines through Georgia to Turkey. At the same time, this project was considered vital to Georgia's security, as the delivery of existing Caspian energy supplies to Turkey via Georgia meant that Georgia could escape from Russia's economic and political influence.

The Turkish-Georgian combination of interests has created favorable conditions not only for political, but also for close cultural, educational and economic ties between the two countries.

Political or cultural relations that began in the 90's became one of the good ways to bring the Georgian and Turkish people closer together, these relationships are getting deeper and deeper day by day.

Regardless of close political, cultural or economic relations with Turkey, we think the Georgian government should pay more attention to the issue, as far as the whole Caucasus, including Georgia, is part of Turkey's sphere of interest. Ankara is also interested in Central Asia, with which the only way to land transport is through the geographical corridor between Georgia and Azerbaijan. If we consider the given Turkey's high level of economic development, its growing suburban political influence, and its powerful resources for relevant services, then it is apparent that Turkey's gaining some influence over Georgia is inevitable. This can lead to both positive and negative results. In order not to exceed the negative, two conditions must be met: First, Georgia should not be an obstacle to Turkey's regional policy; it should support all Ankara initiatives in the Caucasus region that are in the interests of Georgia. Moreover, at the same time, Georgia should not allow Turkey to have an uncontrolled influence over certain regions of Georgia. Georgia's goal should be to maximize the positive aspects of the Turkish-Georgian relationship and minimize the dangers posed.

3.2 Turkish-Georgian Economic Partnership

The independent republic of Georgia, which has been in existence since 1991, had been in deep political and economic crisis.

The conflicts in the country, the war in Abkhazia and the civil war have done irreparable damage to the country's economy. In spite of these harsh conditions, a certain awakening of the economy begins in the second half of the 1990s, in which the biggest contribution was made by the Republic of Turkey, which first extended its support to Georgia in times of difficulty.

In May 1994, the first Turkish-Georgian trade agreement was concluded, involving cooperation in the field of customs. This further facilitated trade between the parties and in 1995 Turkey became Georgia's main trading partner.

Since the economic stabilization of Georgia in 1995, trade and economic relations between the two countries have developed. Various kinds of food and building materials had been imported from Turkey to Georgia, while Georgia was exporting some agricultural products and steel products.

According to official data, 45 Turkish food industry firms had been operating in Georgia from the 1990s to 2000 in communications, transport, construction and some other fields. Due to the difficulties in Georgia, during the winter of the early 1990s, Georgia was receiving about 250-300 million kW of electricity from Turkey, which was returned by the Georgian government during the summer months by agreement.

The implementation of energy projects is the most important factor in Turkish-Georgian relations. The implementation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline was a proof of the close trade-economic partnership between the two states. We should also mention the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway that would link the Asian and European markets, that would be another step forward in Turkish-Georgian trade or political relations.

From the above mentioned, the close political, cultural, or economic ties between the two countries constitute the steady union of the two equal states, when the dynamic and productive partnerships between them contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the Caucasus.

Chapter 4. Turkey's Relations with Armenia

This chapter is divided into two paragraphs, which discuss the basics of relations between Turkey and Armenia, What caused the political conflict between the two countries that ended with the closure of the border and the breakup of the political union, and what were the expectations for resolving the relationship. What is important is how the conflict resolution will affect other countries in the region, including Georgia.

4.1. Turkish-Armenian Relations in the 90s of the XX century

The Armenian-Turkish relations have been going through a rather dramatic scenario throughout history, which reached its peak in the years of World War I, when Armenians were massacred, deported from the peripheral or inland regions of the Ottoman state.

During the First World War (1914-1918), the propaganda of the "Young Turks" government referred to the Armenians living in Ottoman as saboteurs and pro-Russian "fifth columns". "Young Turks" believed that anti-Turkish sentiment was rising among Armenians living in Turkey, which threatened Turkey's interests. That is why, the Ottoman rulers massively deported Armenians from eastern Anatolia to the Syrian desert. As a result of the deportation, hundreds of thousands of Armenians died, most of whom died of starvation and illness.

This fact was perceived by the Armenians as genocide, which the Turkish authorities strongly deny.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey was one of the first to recognize Armenian independence. However, this has not helped to soften the relationship between the two countries. The Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict has further aggravated the relations between the two countries. Turkey closed its border with Armenia in 1993 after Armenians occupied Kelbajar.

Despite the current conflicts, the first Armenian president, Ter-Petrosyan (1990-1997) and his associates, believed that the historical experience between Turkey and Armenia should not have prevented the beginning of pragmatic relations between the two states.

Armenia's approach to the issue has changed radically since 1998, when Robert Kocharian (1998-2008) came to power. One of the major challenges during his presidency was the genocide recognition; during his reign, relations between Armenia and Turkey became even more strained.

The warming of relations between Armenia and Turkey would have been omened by the Zurich Protocol of 10 October 2009, which aimed at restoring diplomatic relations and respect for sovereignty between the two states. Some experts believed that a new phase of relations between the two states was beginning and the pragmatic political course would replace politics based on historical narratives. However, the round of negotiations failed, with the Armenian Diaspora playing a major role in opposing the ratification of the Zurich

Protocol, as they demanded recognition of the Armenian Genocide from Turkey. In addition, the second major impeding factor was the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Turkey's partner Azerbaijan.

The issue of so-called "Armenian Genocide" remains an unresolved problem that impedes the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations and hinders Turkey's growing political influence in the South Caucasus. Moreover, with its closed border with Turkey and the conflict over mountainous Karabakh with Azerbaijan, Armenia is forced to turn its political course to the Russian Federation, which is a hindrance to the establishment of a unified stabilization of the region.

4.2 Prospects for restoring diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia

One of the major impediments to opening the border between Turkey and Armenia is the "Karabakh conflict" and the so-called "Armenian Genocide".

Most importantly, in case of an optimistic outcome, what will the regulation of Turkish-Armenian relations bring to the region? Especially what will be the impact on Georgia?

The main thing for us at least is, whether Georgia will lose its transit function and what political or economic threat, or new opportunities, might bring the regulation of Turkish-Armenian relations?

Regulation of Turkish-Armenian relations may change the scenario of the impact of global players in the region, that will also change the control leverage of the South Caucasus Corridor.

For its part, we should note that Europe, and especially America, while Turkey has slowed its movement towards the West, is actively supporting the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations. What Georgian policy should be in maintaining the active role of the South Caucasus Corridor, which is expressed in this aspect of Turkish-Armenian relations and how Georgia can manage this difficult unpredictable situation.

It is obvious that Georgian government has no significant leverage to influence Turkish-Armenian settlement process And it doesn't need to be activated in this regard. Its action must be based on the assumption that any possible outcome of this process, the normalization of relations, or the disruption of the agreement is not an immediate threat to

Georgia. At the same time, the following political strategies should be supported: the Georgian government should actively support the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, especially if it will make progress in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. At the same time, the government should promote the development of economic ties between Georgia and Armenia. The public and public authorities should understand the need for these links and their value to Georgia's national interests. Against this background, Georgia will be able to maintain an important role in the existence of the South Caucasus Corridor. It should also be noted that the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border is not enough to move the vector to the Armenian side. Furthermore, if the Karabakh conflict is resolved, we believe that a more favorable environment for the further development of the region, including Georgia, will be created, which will bring more profits to Georgia than it receives from transit, because the creation of a secure South Caucasus implies much faster economic development.

Against such a large-scale political change, Georgia cannot remain a spectator and not only should it actively promote the normalization of Turkish-Armenian and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, but it should also receive serious benefits if it acts correctly.

Chapter 5. Strategic Cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan

Turkey-Azerbaijan strategic cooperation and the Karabakh conflict are important issues that have a major impact on the South Caucasus region, because on the one hand, Georgia's foreign policy is partly conditioned by Turkish-Azerbaijan cooperation, and, on the other hand, Armenia's isolation is linked to the Karabakh conflict.

5.1 Turkey-Azerbaijan Strategic Partner

The Republic of Azerbaijan declared its independence on August 30, 1991, prior to the official dissolution of the USSR on December 8, 1991. The Republic of Azerbaijan initially linked its foreign course with Turkey. Turkey has expressed its readiness for that since the founding of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ankara viewed Azerbaijan as an important political partner to link Turkey with Central Asian countries and at the same time, it would help Turkey gain influence in the South Caucasus.

President of Azerbaijan Abulfaz Elchibey (1992-1993) openly stated, "We are first of all Turks and then Muslims." He even said that Azerbaijan and Turkey were "one nation, two states". In addition, Turkey was also seen as a bridge to the West, which first

recognized Azerbaijan's independence. At the same time, Turkey's support for Azerbaijan's position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has created thorough and favorable conditions for alliance between the two states.

With the direct assistance of Turkey, Azerbaijan joined the NATO Partnership for Peace program in 1994, and in 1999 participated for the first time in NATO peacekeeping operations in Kosovo. In 2000, after long negotiations, Azerbaijan became a member of the Council of Europe, which was regarded as one of the major achievements of Azerbaijan's pro-Western orientation in the post-communist era.

The peak of Turkish-Azerbaijan relations was Istanbul Summit on European Security and Cooperation held in the late 90s. On November 18, 1999, in Istanbul, the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey signed the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline construction document, which laid the groundwork for a large-scale project.

Establishing diplomatic ties between Turkey and Armenia may be named as the only impediment to Turkish-Azerbaijan relations, that Turkey had been attempting in the 90s and it was hampered namely by Azerbaijan's sharp reaction.

The disagreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is part of Azerbaijan, is a determining factor in Turkey's relationship with these countries. The Nagorno-Karabakh issue has had a significant impact on the normalization process of relations between Turkey and Armenia.

That is why all the issues between Ankara, Yerevan and Baku are directly or indirectly related to the Karabakh conflict.

Since 1992, negotiations within the OSCE with the Minsk Group format have not yielded any results so far. For much of Armenian society, Azerbaijanis are "Turks." Because of this, there was a quick connection between the so-called "Armenian Genocide" of 1915-1916 and the possible goals of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh.

As mentioned above, like Azerbaijan, Turkey has been locking its border with Armenia for two decades. Neither does it have diplomatic relations with the neighbouring state. Ankara will only try to normalize relations with Armenia if Yerevan makes concessions to Azerbaijan, but Armenia does not intend to make any concessions on Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey was an important partner for Azerbaijan in the Karabakh conflict. In 1992, Ankara and Baku signed a military assistance pact that would make it easier for both sides to assist each other in case of a third-country aggression. However, this agreement contained a substantial condition: 1) It was governed by UN principles and international treaties, which excluded Turkey's direct involvement in the Karabakh conflict. This would require not only the official recognition of Armenia as an aggressor by the UN Security Council but also the consent of the Turkish allies in NATO.

The Karabakh conflict, according to many international organizations, is a national war, Sometimes it is even discussed in terms of the "Muslim-Christian" controversy. That is why resolving this conflict, at the turn of the century, remains a major challenge for the South Caucasus region.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continues to have a decisive impact on the development of international relations in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan and Turkey are still closely linked. They have closed the border with Armenia. The isolated Armenia, however, expects a threat from Azerbaijan and is seeking a defender in Russia for its security reasons. Turkey responds to Baku's demand to maintain Armenia's isolation. Baku, for its part, supports Turkey's ambitions to be a major player in the region.

Chapter 6. Importance of Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan Political Relations for the South Caucasus Region

The last chapter, which consists of two subsections, discusses the importance of Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan political relations for the South Caucasus region in world politics. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of the South Caucasus as one of the key Eurasian connecting regions that can make a significant contribution to Europe's energy supply.

6.1 Caucasian Triangle: Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan

Since the 1990s, official Ankara has been pursuing a very pragmatic and stable policy in the South Caucasus. Turkey prefers relations with Azerbaijan.

This is explained both by the cultural and linguistic proximity of the two countries and by the significant geopolitical location of Azerbaijan. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, as well as the launch of the Baku-

Tbilisi-Kars railway project, have created a huge economic and political burden on the South Caucasus, which is extremely important for Turkey. From the beginning, its wish had been as it follows: to fulfill the energy and transport corridor function between Europe and the Caspian region. The logical consequence of this was that Turkey's interest in Georgia, which is a geographical link between Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as Central Asia, has increased significantly. Turkey developed close ties with Georgia, which later became a form of strategic partnership.

How close and promising is Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan-JAN cooperation, and what drives the union of Shiite Azerbaijan with Orthodox Georgia and Sunni Turkey?

One of the main reasons for the conflicts in the region is that Georgia and Azerbaijan blame Russia for making them, which further determined their political course in favor of Turkey.

As for the pro-Turkish course of Azerbaijan, it is caused by Turkey's support for Azerbaijan's position on the Karabakh conflict, which created favorable conditions for alliance between the two states.

And Ankara was also seen as a bridge linking the West. In addition, Turkey has become an energy partner of Azerbaijan, which is of the utmost importance in the global world.

As for Turkey's goals in the relations between these two countries, it is more global. Its main purpose is to:

- Maintain the function of a bridge between Europe and Asia;
- Suppress of Russian dominance in the Caucasus;
- Maintain peaceful relations with neighbours.

All this was aimed at establishing hegemony in the region.

Turkey's need for direct contact with Azerbaijan dictated that it needs at least one of two controls - either Georgia or Armenia. Due to Russia's control of Armenia and historical disagreement between Armenia and Turkey, Ankara decided to adopt a strategy of cooperation with Georgia and isolation of Armenia.

Accordingly, Turkey's geostrategic goals for the South Caucasus following the end of the Cold War were as follows:

- Establish sufficient control over Georgia;
- Establish a strategic connection with Azerbaijan;
- Set up a political stronghold in the North Caucasus and pave the way for Russia to the South Caucasus;
- Exile Russia from Armenia and secure its long-term influence on the region.

From the above, Turkey performed the first two steps brilliantly, and whether the third and fourth steps can also be performed brilliantly and maintain the first two is a matter of time.

From the above mentioned, we need to analyze Turkey's geopolitical interests strategy for the South Caucasus states in the 1990s properly, especially against the background of strategic relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan for Georgia.

Any Georgian government should deeply understand the conjuncture, which implies the Georgia-Turkey-Azerbaijan partnership, and properly identify the pros and cons of this partnership.

6.2 Energy Projects and their Impact on Turkey and the South Caucasus Region

The South Caucasus is one of the most important parts of world politics. Any political developments in the South Caucasus will be reflected in events around the world in the context of modern globalization, and the reason for this is its geostrategic location.

On the one hand, the emergence of the South Caucasus corridor is due to its proximity to Central Asian energy resources, by weakening Russia's energy monopoly and Iranian radicalism, on the other hand, the prospects of the North-South corridor have been weakened by the conflicts between Russia and Georgia, the east-west corridor cut across the Georgian territory was encouraged with the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and the tense relations between Armenia and Turkey.

In 1993, the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Transport Corridor (TRACECA) project was launched in Brussels. It is one of the European transport corridors passing from Europe through the Black and Caspian Seas to Central Asian countries. Since the launch of the project, TRACECA has funded numerous projects aimed at supporting the political and

economic independence of partner countries, to help them increase their potential to enter European and world markets and to find alternative transport routes.

The second major project, which helped to establish the regional transit corridor of Eurasia, was launched in 1995 and it is known as the INOGEO program.

Strategic cooperation between Georgia and Azerbaijan is essential in establishing the energy transit corridor in the South Caucasus.

The relations between these two countries are a successful and rare example of strategic partnership, especially in a region like the South Caucasus. Partnerships have been shaped by many factors. These were common problems and challenges - undermining territorial integrity and the accompanying wars, civil strife and economic problems caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union; However, a common vision was more important - both countries decided in time to get rid of the Soviet political-economic model and move to a larger, practically global scale.

The two countries are linked by large-scale, regionally significant energy advances such as the "Kulevi" oil terminal, "Baku-Supsa" and "Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan" oil pipelines.

Georgia and Azerbaijan are jointly involved in the implementation of the "South Derry" initiative. Practical implementation of global energy projects ("Nabucco", "Trans-Caspian Pipeline", "White Stream", "AGRI") will contribute to a significant increase in the energy security of the participating States.

That are these projects and the strategic partnership between Georgia and Azerbaijan determine the existence of a corridor connecting the South Caucasus, Europe and Asia, which has a growing prospect of ensuring Central Asian energy transit to Europe and European energy security.

However, the world energy policy is crucial not only to the countries that directly extract it, but also to the countries through which these energy sources are transported to their destination.

One of the leading players is Europe itself, which is the world's leading oil and gas producer, that is why it is trying its best to diversify energy dependency.

For its part, Russia has become a serious player, making energy resources a major foreign policy tool. It is Europe's biggest energy supplier and is trying to make Brussels increasingly dependent on Russian energy.

Another player that, though, is not itself a power-owning country, but the interest in Europe's alternative energy sources and the ways it is transported has given geostrategic significance to is Turkey. The proximity of 72% of the world's approved oil resources and 73% of the gas reserves allow Turkey to become one of the most important hubs for the transportation and distribution of world energy resources.

Conclusion:

Existing scientific literature, archival documents, evaluations of expert-political scientists and politicians, their study and confrontation allow us to make the following conclusions, thus the relations between Turkey and the South Caucasus in the 90s of the XX century are as follows:

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ankara's Caucasian policy was "zero tensions" with its neighbours, which was expressed by the recognition of the independence of the states of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan by Turkey. Turkey initially sought to create a secure environment in the region that would promote further political, cultural or economic cooperation with the above-mentioned states.

The first steps that contributed to the stability and security of the region and also to Russia's political failure in the Caucasus were Caspian energy resources and And their transportation on the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey line.

Turkey's strategic attitude towards the Caucasus region has not changed since the 1990s, on the contrary, it was further enhanced by the launch of energy corridors ("Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan" oil pipeline, "Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum" gas pipeline), by constructing the "Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, with the beginning of military cooperation and other important political or economic agreements. Turkey, through active politics at the end of the XX century, achieved the status of an important player in the region and became a strategic partner for the West as well.

Georgia, as a country of Western orientation, is distinguished by close diplomatic economic and cultural relations with Turkey. Ankara supports Georgia's territorial

integrity, which over the past 30 years has proven that Georgia's stability and security are particularly important to him.

The only country in the South Caucasus with which Turkey has no diplomatic ties is Armenia. There is no serious progress in Turkish-Armenian relations today, the borders between the countries are still locked up and they have no diplomatic relations.

Azerbaijan is the most strategically important country in the South Caucasus region for the Republic of Turkey. Culturally and linguistically, the two countries are intertwined, giving their relationship even more strength. Azerbaijan's foreign policy focuses on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and accordingly Azerbaijan establishes relations with any state based on this aspect.

Although Azerbaijan is a CIS member state and has good neighbourly relations with the Russian Federation, in the present reality, Turkey is still considered as its main partner in withdrawing from the sphere of Russian influence.

Therefore, not only for the region, but also for the whole world, it will be important to determine Turkey's final place in today's geopolitical area.

Unless Turkey has taken serious geopolitical steps towards Eurasianism, which would be disastrous as for Turkey's democratic policies and values, as for the independence of the South Caucasus countries themselves; and, if Ankara has maintained its old geopolitical course and allies, then it will get the age of absolutely new opportunities and promising initiatives, both for the international community and for small countries in the region such as Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

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2. Z. Beridze, Turkish Army on the Republic's Watch, *Proceedings of the III Scientific Conference of PhD Students and Young Scientists of the facultie of Humanities, Batumi ShotaRustaveli State University*, Batumi 2018, ISBN 978-9941-462-79-5 p. 136-139.

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