

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

***TURKEY IN TRANSCAUCASIA: A BIG POWER OR AN OUTSIDER AFTER THE
COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION***

A MASTER'S ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS FOR PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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NOVEMBER 2002

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study owes much to all those involved in this research and interested in the topic under the consideration. First and foremost, I express my deepest gratitude to my professor and advisor Dr. N. Shahgaldian for his assistance and sincere interest in the given research. He has not only demonstrated high expertise and professionalism but also genuine interest and concern for this work to be successfully completed. The multiple discussions with him on the subject of this essay have proved exceptionally useful serving as a guidance for my work.

The Faculty of the Political Science and International Affairs of the American University of Armenia has given me an opportunity to become acquainted with the fascinating world of political science and has equipped me with the knowledge without which this work would hardly have been written. It is to the faculty, Dr. L. H. Danielian – Associate Dean of the PS Department – and all my professors that I owe my deepest gratitude. My special thankful words to Dr. A. Aivazian for his assistance in the search of the materials for this work and his concern. Besides, I am thankful to the Yerevan Institute of Oriental Studies and the Department of Turkish Studies in particular for their assistance with the literature on the subject. Special thanks to my fellow students, Lilit Mkrtchyan, Irina Babayan and Arman Ghazaryan for their cooperation and assistance in conducting interviews for this research.

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Abstract

The whole purpose of undertaking this study lies in the necessity of assessing the new geopolitical environment created after the collapse of the Soviet Union – a major superpower that shaped not only the regional politics of Transcaucasia but also had a vast impact on the international scene. Being a part of Transcaucasia, Armenia, as well as the other two republics, Georgia and Azerbaijan, is vulnerable to the new influences emanating both from the Christian West and the Muslim East. And it is the latter that is the focus of this study since the relations with the Muslim states in general and Turkey in particular have been full of tensions. Turkey, as one of the regional actors, has constantly aspired to acquire dominance in the region, and its chances have considerably increased after the demise of the Soviet empire. So it remains to be seen whether Turkey will be allowed by the rest of the regional actors to realize its ambitious plans and what consequences may ensue for Armenia in the new political environment.

Introduction

The Turkic world is one in which Turkey, as the sole long-established sovereign state, will play a key role – Bernard Lewis.

It is not accidental that this study deals with the role of Turkey in Transcaucasia after the collapse of the Soviet Union since before the disintegration of the Soviet empire there was the so-called “bipolar system” in international politics to use the term by John Rourke (1991) in International Politics on the World Stage. Namely, the Soviet Union and the United States had their own agreement on the division of the world without any regional or subregional actors allowed to step in. Whereas after the demise of the “great” or “evil” empire as some may choose to call the USSR, the international scene acquired new overtones.

As Shi Ze notes in the article “Situation in Central Asia and Transcaucasia and its Prospects at the Threshold of the New Century” on the web, “Central Asia and Transcaucasia is a special region situated at the hub of Eurasia. Oriental and occidental civilization converge here. So does the Islamic culture and the Slavic culture” (Marco Polo Magazine 1998). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Transcaucasian region ceased to be a part of the USSR formerly not accessible to external influences and turned into “a priority area of competition among various forces and centers” (Shi Ze 1998). The countries of the Middle East have also manifested their keen interest in the region since, “The people of the Middle East, now more than ever before in the past two centuries, have responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs,” as Bernard Lewis states in “Turgut Ozal Memorial Lecture on Turkey and US-Turkish Relations” on the web (Special Policy Forum Report 1997). The idea expressed by Dr. B. Lewis in the Special Policy Forum Report on November 11, 1997 made it clear that now the region was open to regional actors as well, and Turkey has become one of the most active players in the region. Another interesting point is that the author calls Transcaucasia a part of the Middle East together with the Central Asian republics, “The Transcaucasus and Central Asian republics, historically and culturally part of the Middle East, are part of the

emergence of a Turkic world” (1997). Whether the Transcaucasian republics are a part of the Middle East is difficult to say at least from territorial perspective since there is no commonly accepted definition of the boundaries of the Middle East as it is often found in the literature on this region, nevertheless one thing remains clear – Transcaucasia and Central Asia have historically been linked with the countries of the Middle East either as subjugated peoples or as trading partners, the cultural ties have always been present. As a result, the influence of the Middle Eastern states in the region cannot be disregarded. At the present stage of the development of events, the growing influence of the Muslim states in general and Turkey in particular may give rise to a certain degree of concern for the political future of the region.

It is essential to note that the subject undertaken for study in this essay has been the focus of multiple research, however, it still poses a number of questions demanding profound research and new approaches to their solution. The significance of the topic lies in its relevance for Armenia and the Transcaucasian region as a whole which has been the center of international attention for the last decade or so when the geopolitical context of the region has undergone changes induced by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although this study attempts to focus on all the three republics of Transcaucasia, Armenia is the main locus for research since in the present international situation the newly independent country of Armenia faces not only the external threat of foreign domination but also internal instability of state-building and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Therefore, it becomes important to find out what position Turkey may take in the region and consequently what repercussions Turkish influence in the region (if allowed by other regional actors like Iran and Russia) may have for Armenia. The significance of the issue becomes evident when one considers the fact that the relations between the two countries have not been simple throughout the ages.

However, it is appropriate first and foremost to speak of the limitations this study faces. The topic under study is quite broad and complex, therefore some of its aspects are only

briefly mentioned in this essay to assign primary importance to the most relevant aspects. At the very start, it should be mentioned that although Transcaucasia has become the center of international attention in the last decade in particular, the study is limited to the position of the regional actors in Transcaucasus although this region is a priority for a number of non-regional powers like the US or many Western countries. What is meant by regional actors and what countries constitute this category is dealt with in a separate chapter of this essay but it needs to be stated that the emphasis is put on the Muslim states, Turkey and Iran in particular. It may be argued whether their influence is really large in the region, but the point is that the position of Turkey as a Muslim state is of special interest for this study for a number of reasons: first, Turkey is a country with a large potential, although it is now facing political and economic turmoil, second, it is a unique Muslim state that enjoys the credibility of the West in terms of its secular political order, third, Turkey is a country with which Armenia has repeatedly encountered throughout its history and will encounter in the future. Having a neighbor like Turkey may pose serious challenges for Armenian foreign policy which yet has to build bilateral relations with this state since they do not even exist.

Another serious limitation of this study is the fact that this essay does not concentrate on the “gloeconomics” of the region as Onnig Beylerian develops in “Geography and History: Concepts and Definitions” assessing the importance of this factor in international politics (Reading Book 1999, March 22-April 26). Although the oil factor seems to be primarily accountable for the keen interest this region raises in most countries, this study will nevertheless avoid profound research of this sphere. The reason for this omission is the extensive scope of the the notion of “oil politics” in the region. What is exactly meant by oil politics? Suha Bolukbasi dwells on this issue in his article “The Controversy over the Caspian Sea Mineral Resources: Conflicting Perceptions, Clashing Interests” where the author notes that there is a keen “rivalry” over the construction and location of oil pipelines in the

Transcaucasian region (Caspian zone in particular) among Turkey, Iran and Russia as regional actors on the one hand and the Western countries wanting to invest in the oil business on the other:

The rivalry between Turkey, Russia and Iran over the Caspian Sea mineral resources and the oil and gas export pipelines is a complex one. It involves not only the three rivals' efforts to outflank the others but, but also the Turkic Caspian littoral states' calculations how to reap the economic benefits of their mineral resources without antagonizing either Russia, Iran or Turkey, and without becoming dependent on any one of them... Another major factor influencing the competition is the US Administration's policy of opposing Tehran's participation in various Western oil and gas consortia or serving as a conduit for Azerbaijani and Kazakh oil and gas pipelines through its territory... Since Turkey is disadvantaged by the geographical reality of being cut off from all the Turkic states, Iran's exclusion from virtually all the projects will hurt Turkey's goals of having a major say in the regional oil and pipeline business, and strengthening its ties with the Turkic states. (S. Bolukbasi 1998, 410).

This excerpt from S. Bolukbasi's article seems to provide a short explanation of the general situation in the region with respect to the oil and gas business. It may be argued that politics and economics are inseparable, nevertheless this study will mainly deal with the "political animal" more than economic to have an insight into the intricacies of political bargaining and political ambitions. The limitations apply to the major conflicts raging in this area (Nagorno-Karabagh, Abkhazian and Chechen conflicts) as well. They constitute a separate topic for research and can hardly be included in this essay for the sole sake of simplicity. The reason for such ommittance is the fact that these conflicts have a tremendous impact on the region's security and may thus require in-depth analysis in a separate research.

Coming to the organizational part of this study, it needs to be specified that the essay is divided into separate chapters each dealing with a definite research question proposed for this study. At the very start, the methodology and the review of the literature need to be presented to have an initial understanding of the purpose and scope of this study.

The following issues in the form of a hypothesis and a set of research questions need to be clarified by this study:

Hypothesis: Islam has its impact on the Turkish foreign policy in Transcaucasia.

Research questions:

1. What are the strategic interests of Turkey in Transcaucasia?
2. Regarding the current balance of power in the region, what countries have their stakes in Transcaucasia?
3. How can Turkish relations with all the three Transcaucasian republics be characterized?
4. What are the prospects for the creation of Turkish-Armenian relations as Armenians themselves view them?

Each of these issues constitute a separate subject for research and consequently is organized into a separate chapter of this essay. Finally, as an attempt to answer these questions, this study provides a set of policy recommendations for Armenia, which becomes necessary regarding the complex geopolitical situation around the country forcing it to consider different political alliances among which Armenia has to distinguish priorities if it is allowed to do so at all.

Literature Review

By way of introduction, it should be stated that attempting to provide a more or less extensive overview of the literature in this field is if not an impossible at least an arduous task considering the abundance of literature and research on the subject. However, this study attempts to review the most essential and prominent works available, as well as a dozen of Internet sources providing if not an in-depth look into the problem but certainly serving as a useful and interesting source of information.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fate of the Transcaucasian region has attracted worldwide attention not only on the part of politicians and diplomats engaged in the political process but also a large number of scholars and specialists in political theory. A vast number of works on the geopolitics of Transcaucasia have appeared in the last decade analyzing the political situation in the region. This extensive supply of literature on the subject certainly may be indicative of the growing significance of the issue. Among these works one has to mention the book by Shireen Hunter The Transcaucasus in Transition: Nation-Building and Conflict which focuses on the situation of uncertainty the newly-independent republics of Transcaucasia face. The author analyzes not only the internal but also the external political factors in the three republics and gives practical recommendations for the new states dealing with the problem of national survival. Focusing on each of the republics separately, the author also deals with the foreign relations of these newly-emerging nations. In this respect, Turkey is assigned a special place. Among the three Transcaucasian republics, as S. Hunter notes, Armenia is the one that has the most tension regarding relations with Turkey. What is especially noteworthy is that the author considers Armenia “a part of the Middle East region” in the sense that “Armenia is not integrated with the rest of the Middle East but its interests, from the point of view of both economics and politics, dictate that it become integrated with the region” (1994, 43). It is important to note that S. Hunter is not the only author who views

Transcaucasia as a part of the Middle East due to historical ties between the regions. Thus R.G. Suny in his work Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, notes:

Historic attempts to link Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians politically have invariably faltered, and the cultural orientations of the three major nationalities of the region remain focused in very different directions. Azerbaijanis, though far more secularized than their neighbors and kinsmen across the Soviet borders, are part of the Eurasia, Turkic and Muslim worlds. Armenians pride themselves on their cosmopolitan horizons and see themselves as tied to an international Armenian community... The Georgians, more insular than the Armenians and as reluctant as the Azerbaijanis to migrate from their homeland, remain intent on maintaining their traditions no matter what the thrust of current Soviet policy (1996, 377).

It becomes evident from this quotation that the author puts emphasis on the lack of ethnic, cultural and religious cohesion among the three republics of Transcaucasia, although one might expect a natural proximity among these three countries due to the common territory, history and culture. What may be observed instead is an explosive mixture of different ethnicities – a factor which makes the Transcaucasian region a crossroad of different religions and cultures where the concept of the “clash of civilizations” by Samuel Huntington becomes especially relevant. (O. Beylerian 1999, 7).

This situation of diversity certainly makes the alliance of the three republics a difficult undertaking, especially if one considers the fact that each of the three republics sees itself as a major one not willing to concede this priority to the other, nor is any of the republics willing to unite in the Transcaucasian union once again. The status of independence seems to be the most appealing political choice for each of the republics, although very often it is this independence that creates economic and political problems for the Transcaucasian states. Besides, the complex relations between the three often take the form of hostility and severe competition making the region especially vulnerable to foreign domination. In short, as it is made clear in a number of works on this subject, Transcaucasia is a highly disintegrated, contradictory and volatile region provoking both external and internal conflict. As Edmund Herzig states in his book The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, “Ethnic

diversity, weakness relative to the empires of the Middle East and the steppe, a strategic location at the meeting point of those empires, tempting economic resources and trade routes, and openness to the passage of armies as well as merchants' caravans have combined to keep the region fragmented and to make it a favorite battleground for neighboring powers" (1999, 2).

It is of interest to note that among the authors reviewed there is a common perception that Transcaucasia is of vital strategic importance to the regional actors like Turkey, Iran, Russia and also non-regional actors having no territorial proximity with the region. Therefore, the region has become the "melting pot" of the political struggle and competition both among Muslim and non-Muslim actors. Since Turkey is of primary importance to this research, it is its intentions regarding the region that need to be considered as described in different works. Here what comes to the fore is the internal situation in Turkey itself which is far from stable and serene. After decades of attempts to introduce secularism as a dominant value to replace Islam, Turkey still remains a Muslim state although a moderate one. A number of prominent authors on the Middle East assign special importance to the role of religion in the politics of the Middle Eastern states since, as James A. Bill and Carl Leiden note in Politics in the Middle East, "The true Muslim state operates under the *sharia*, that is the Muslim law as derived from the Quran... Among the Quran's truths is a prescription for regulating the political and social affairs of man. Islam makes no distinction between the state and the realm of believers..." (1979, 41-43). The fact that Islam pervades the life of the Muslim in all of its spheres makes it a necessity to focus on the place of Islam in Turkish politics. An interesting insight into the role of Islam in Turkey as a whole is provided by Don Peretz in quite an extensive and profound work The Middle East Today. The author points out that although Turkey has undergone stages of reforms oriented at secularization and democratization to diminish the role of Islam in the life of the Turkish people, Turkey still remains a Muslim

country where Islam cannot be easily alienated from the Turkish society, especially its lowest layers, despite the stubborn movement of the Turkish nationalist government starting from Atatürk towards secularization of the country, or as it would be more appropriate to say – “antireligious” movement on a mass level, as a number of authors stress in their analysis of Atatürk reforms in Turkey.

Despite the firm position taken by the Young Turks government, even the Atatürk reforms have not succeeded in eliminating Islamic influence altogether since Islam, as J. Bill and C. Leiden call it, “...is one of the great religions of the world” (1979, 40). According to D. Peretz, Islam in Turkey is closely linked with nationalism and Pan-Turkism experiencing revival after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This regeneration, or better to say repeated rise, of Turanism may be accounted for by the opening of the borders of the Turkish –speaking peoples of the former Soviet Union (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan). The fact that the idea of Pan-Turkism is alive and thriving has become an object of concern for a number of authors. Thus Mohiaddin Mesbahi in the book Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union: Domestic and International Dynamics, states that, “The collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of Communism as a competing ideology have given rise to the potential emergence of Islam and the Islamic world as replacements and new challenges facing the Western world in the Cold era... The emergence of independent states in Central Asia and the Caucasus has led to the significant enlargement of this perceived threat” (1994,2). Indeed, the “Islamic threat” as it is often called (as if a breathing object) has become a frequent theme for discussion, and it is often subject to different interpretations. However, Islam is very often politicized and has many names (Islamism, Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic revival). And it is when politicized Islam may prove to be problematic, according to a number of authors, not in the sense of religious intolerance and fanaticism of Islamic fundamentalism but as an ideology by the Islamic states to acquire

influence in those regions where cultural and religious proximity is observed. Turkey may prove to be no exception.

Among the authors concerned with the growth of Muslim influence in the former Soviet bloc K. S. Hajiev states that the South and North Caucasus is a region where leading world religions and first of all Christianity and Islam overlap. In analyzing the position of Turkey towards the newly-independent states of Transcaucasia and Central Asia, K. S. Hajiev in The Geopolitics of the Caucasus states that now Turkey experiences the revival of the idea of unifying into one whole the so-called Turan – the world of 120 million Turkish-speaking peoples from Western China to the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Here Turkey faces the resistance of Russia which by itself is enough to frustrate the ambitions of the Turk. (Hajiev 2001).

An interesting insight into the internal situation of Turkey is offered by Jeremy Salt in Current History where the author analyzes the political situation in the country in the article “Turkey’s Military Democracy” stating that military is still a potent force in the country leading to if not a complete failure of democracy in Turkey to at least a vast number of obstacles on the way to democratization. (Vol. 98, No. 625, February 1999). Another author focusing on the complicated domestic situation in Turkey is Nilufer Göle who states in “Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: the Making of Elites and Counter-Elites” that there is a conflict between “secular modernist elites and Islamist elites in Turkey today” (Middle East Journal, Vol.51, No.1997). It is obvious that Turkey with its internal instability is far from constituting a serious threat externally but it remains to be seen what the later developments will bring. Nevertheless, the interest of Turkey in Transcaucasia remains vital. Thus V. Tsepkalov in his article “The Remaking of Eurasia” points out that Turkey is inclined to develop relations with not only Central Asian states but also the Caucasus and Azerbaijan in particular (Foreign Affairs, March/April 1998).

An interesting point is made by W. Yale in his book The Near East where he refers to Transcaucasia as one of the possible ways for Turkey to invade Russia. In fact, the same argument is made by V. Cheterian in his article “Jostling for Oil in Transcaucasia” where he states that, “For Moscow, faced with expansionist pressure from NATO, the region is both a gateway to the Middle East and a bulwark against Western or Turkish influences in its Southern Borders” (Le Monde Diplomatique, October 1997).

As regards the issue of Turkish-Armenian relations as Armenians themselves see them, one has to mention the book by N. Hovhannisyan, The Foreign Policy of Armenia, as well as another Armenian author, R. Hovhannisian’s work, Historical Memory and Foreign Relations, where these authors compare the Armenian and Turkish approach to the creation of relations between the two countries. In this respect, the book by Markar Melkonyan, The Right to Struggle: Selected Writings of Monte Melkonian on the Armenian National Question, is especially relevant. The position of the author is most obvious in the article “Armenian-Turkish Dialogue” which dwells on the Armenian-Turkish relations. Here, the author puts forward the idea of developing relations not with the “Turkish state” itself but the Turkish revolutionary movements, “A state which does not even recognize the rights of over ten million Kurds within its own borders could never be expected to recognize the national rights of a few million Armenians living outside of these borders” (1993, 181).

Ending the literature review of this essay on this disappointing viewpoint does yet come to prove that “Turkish-Armenian dialogue” is an impossibility. In order to understand the main causes of this complex problem one certainly has to look back into the past, however this essay attempts to reveal certain dynamics of the present political developments in these two countries and to find out whether it is history and past grievances that set the tone for the relations between Turkey and Armenia or may be there more to say on the issue.

Methodology

Being a policy paper, this study is both explanatory and descriptive aimed at revealing different positions on the issue under study, assessing the general state of affairs regarding this policy problem and providing recommendations – a task that certainly demands an in-depth insight into the causes and effects, as well as the whole variety of relations between the concepts under study. It should be mentioned first of all that each research question will be conceptualized and operationalized to have a more or less accurate measurement of the variables constituting each research question.

Since the methodology used is of two types, the units of analysis are correspondingly distinct. The major method used is secondary analysis based on the review of various sources through a historical/comparative method. The positions of different authors and specialists on the problem are considered in a comparative perspective – both Turkish and Armenian standpoint on the issue is presented where possible to have a more or less complete understanding of the present development of events, as well as the historical perspective as presented in the extensive and diverse literature on the subject. The second method used is analysis of primary data based on the pilot survey of the issue of Turkish-Armenian relations from the Armenian perspective. The one-sidedness of this method may be accounted for by the lack of the opportunity to study the Turkish position as well based on primary analysis. This limitation mainly comes from the lack of resources and the existence of major obstacles in establishing any relations with Turkey – a problem that by itself has necessitated this study. So that the issue of Turkish-Armenian relations may certainly suffer from the unilateral approach to its analysis, however, where analysis of primary data proves insufficient, the study resorts to secondary analysis of various Turkish sources (speeches by Turkish officials, newspaper articles, commentaries by Turkish politicians and scholars).

Before specifying the procedure of data collection for the primary analysis, it should be pointed out that this survey research is a pilot study limited to the investigation of one particular neighborhood in Yerevan center. The research is limited by the lack of time and resources available to an average student in these cross-sectional studies of the population of the specified neighborhood of Yerevan. Data is collected by means of face to face interviews with a standardized questionnaire that reveals not only the respondent's attitude towards the subject under study but also gives the interviewer a good opportunity of observing his respondents through visual contact. The interviews are conducted by a group of four students in the center of Yerevan with a questionnaire on Armenian foreign policy issues where the attitude of the Armenian people towards Turkish-Armenian relations is intended to be revealed in a set of questions whose format is presented in the corresponding chapter of this essay.

As for the sample of study, a particular neighborhood inside the center of Yerevan is purposefully selected as a study population because of the constraints facing a pilot researcher. The sample size is also relatively small – 120 households. The neighborhood selected is comprised of five streets in the center of Yerevan: Amiryan, Koghbatsi, Mashtots, Zakyan, Khorenatsi. The units of analysis in this study are households, while individual members of the selected households represent the unit of observation. Multistage cluster sampling is used as a sampling design including the following steps:

1. The purposefully selected neighborhood comprised of the five streets is marked on the map as an interviewing site.
2. A relatively approximate estimation of households in the selected neighborhood is conducted alongside the comparison of private households to apartments. As the estimation shows, the selected neighborhood comprises approximately 1000 households

the ratio of private households to apartments being 10% to 90%. The relative homogeneity of the area provides more or less equal representation.

3. Every 8th household is selected inside the neighborhood with a random start. In case of any problem like refusal to participate, dropping out of the interview or absence of the respondent, the interviewer knocks on the next door.
4. One adult member (over 18) is interviewed from each selected household.

The questionnaire has been translated into Armenian beforehand and may be available upon request.

Chapter 1: Islam in Turkey

The Fatherland of the Muslim is the place where the Holy law of Islam prevails – Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire¹.

Starting this broad and fascinating subject for research provoking interest in both a theologian and a social scientist, it needs to be stated that although the aim of this chapter is to test the hypothesis, Islam has its impact on Turkish foreign policy in Transcaucasia, this part of the essay also intends to analyze the role of Islam in modern Turkey as a whole. It is essential first and foremost to find out whether Islam still has its impact on the political life in Turkey, whether it shapes its foreign as well as domestic policy. In short, the big question is: Does Islam still have its grip on the country after decades of reforms initiated by Atatürk and further supported by the secular elements in government?

At the very start, conceptualization of the hypothesis under study is to be made to single out the variables and to test the hypothesis by operationalizing it – giving definitions to the concepts under study for them to serve as measures of the given hypothesis: Islam has its impact on Turkish foreign policy in Transcaucasia. As it can be seen from the underlined variables, the hypothesis is bivariate – it consists of one independent (Islam) and one dependent (Turkish foreign policy in Transcaucasia) variable. The variable Islam may be defined for the purpose of this study as an ideology or Islamism which means politicized Islam. The issues to find out are the following: What is the true face of the current Islamic movements in Turkey? Do they have a radical or moderate leaning? Is acquisition of political power their ultimate goal?

As regards the second variable, Turkish foreign policy in Transcaucasia, it is assigned the meaning of the revival of Pan-Turkism in Turkish foreign policy. This study intends to focus on whether the old ambitions of the Turk are gaining new momentum? Is the idea of Pan-

¹ Lewis, Bernard. (1981) "The Return of Islam." Religion and Politics in the Middle East. In McCurtis (ed.).

Turkism politically viable? Can it be potent enough to pose a threat to the Christian nations of Transcaucasia?

In analyzing the role of religion in general and Islam in particular, the theory of John Rourke, as developed in the work International Politics on the World Stage, about the impact of ideologies on both international and domestic politics may be taken as a basis. Islam is first of all "...one of the great religions in the world," as James A. Bill and Carl Leiden put it in their book Politics in the Middle East (1979, 40). However, Islam may also serve as an ideology. Any religion may be politicized and be turned into an ideology, and it is in this sense that religion most often plays a "dual role in world politics" as John Rourke notes. Ascribing this contradictory role to religion, the author states that, "In one sense it has been the source of humanitarian concern and pacifism... At the other extreme, religion has played a role in some of the bloodiest wars in history" (1991, 168). In fact, J. Rourke makes it clear that secularization of politics is a Western notion that "...makes the idea of any religion acting as an autonomous political force..." Islam is ascribed special attention in this respect since, "Of all the dimensions of the interaction between religion and politics that exist in today's world, none is so important as the role of Islam" (1991, 169).

J. Rourke is not the only author defining Islam in ideological sense. Daniel Pipes speaks of "Islamism" or "fundamentalist Islam" and "Islam" as separate notions as it can be found in his article "Bottom of Distinguishing between Islam and Islamism" on the web (Center for Strategic and International Studies 1998). Here again, religion pure and religion politicized² clash. When the author speaks of "traditional Islam" he means a religion which has had enormous appeal throughout the ages. The potent character of this religion and the zeal with which its adherents have aspired to the spread of Islamic religion since the times of Prophet Muhammad is really impressive. No wonder, since it is the religious duty of the Muslim to

² Politicized Islam is used in the sense of Islam as an ideology (political ideology).

convert to Islam those who are yet “in the dark” – still living in “dar al –Harb” (World of war) – and to open the fascinating world of “dar al –Islam” (World of Peace) to them as Don Peretz puts it in The Middle East Today (1994, 36). In this sense, the quote by D. Pipes of the words by Ayatollah Mohammad Imami Kashani of Iran that, “Any Westerner who really understands Islam will envy the lives of Muslims,” makes it clear that Islam has a certain mission, as perhaps any religion, to perform. But in contrast to other religions, Islam “...is essentially a religion of success: it is a winners’ religion” according to D. Pipes. Therefore, Islam now experiences frustration and “trauma” because the dominance of the West, now the ruler, diminishes the significance of Islam and makes the scope of its realm much narrower. How Islam responds to this trauma is analyzed by D. Pipes who distinguishes three types of response:

Secularism, which means openly learning from the West and reducing Islam to the private sphere: reformism, which means appropriating from the West, saying that the West really derives its strength by stealing from Muslims, therefore, Muslims may take back from them, a middle ground: and Islamism, which stressed a return to Islamic ways but in fact takes hugely and covertly from the West – without wanting to, perhaps, but still very much doing so (Pipes 1998).

For the purpose of this study, Islamism is particularly important since it is essential to find out whether Turkish secularism has “given leakage” and left certain room for the penetration of Islamism into politics. Viewed as an ideology, Islamism may otherwise be called “politicized Islam.” Having so many names, Islamism is still an “ism” as D. Pipes puts it. In other words, it is an ideology (like nationalism, fascism). Therefore, it is appropriate to provide a definition of ideology as such. Thus J. Bill and C. Leiden put forward the following view of ideology as “...a widely used term that connotes those congeries of beliefs and assertions that rationalize behavior patterns” (1979, 281). The emphasis should be on “rationalization of behavior patterns” which may lead one to assume that a particular type of ideology is a convenient way to justify any form of behavior provided it is “persuasive” enough. Well, the ideology of Islamism certainly does not lack persuasion since, “Islamism turns the bits and pieces within Islam that deal with politics, economics, and military affairs

into sustained and systematic program” (D. Pipes1998). Once it is a program, it may be realized. The question becomes whether the groups undertaking the implementation of the program are politically strong and influential. R. Hrair Dekmejian in Politics of Islamic Revivalism: Diversity and Unity (1988), notes that the groups professing Islamic revivalism may be of different types. Some of these groups may aim at “a heightening of Islamic consciousness among the masses – benevolent societies and brotherhoods of Sufis³...” Still others, like fundamentalists, may prove dangerous and aggressive only when “instigated” by the government or any other force into hostility but otherwise, as the author notes, “...fundamentalism is usually characterized by political passivity.” There are also “...Islands of religious activism consisting of militant Islamic groups and societies.”

These groups display a heightened Islamic political consciousness that is opposed to the state and its ruling elements and institutions” (R. H. Dekmejian 1988, 4). The author also notes that the terms “fundamentalist,” “revivalist,” and “Islamist” are used interchangeably. However, the tendency to use these terms interchangeably often contributes to the common perception of Islamic religion (especially in the West) as a religion of radicalism, intolerance and hostility. Any religion is open to interpretation and, consequently, to distortion. So that the task of assigning labels becomes quite facile. In this respect, the idea of Leonid Sjukijainen in the article “Islam VS. Islam” seems to be supportive of the above-mentioned argument:

The Islamic ideological heritage contains opposite trends: some of them justify extremism and terrorism under Islamic banners while others stake on moderation, caution and realization of the Shari’a’s major aims. The trends have been competing among themselves for a long time. We shall live and see whether the humanitarian interpretation of Islam is able to take the initiative. The outcome of this opposition depends to a great degree on whether the so-called civilized world is able to approach Islam in a civilized way that will help separate Islamic radicalism from the genuine Islam and Sharia’a values (Central Asia and the Caucasus 2002, No.3 (15), p. 85-86).

³ The author defines Sufism as “a mystical interpretation of Islam.”

As it is obvious from the quotation, Islam as a religion has its right to a “civilized treatment” on the part of the Christian world as long as it is not turned into a militant and radical ideology by various essentially political movements in the disguise of religious brotherhoods with “moderate views.”

Yes, political and not religious and radical or fundamentalist or any other. Why? For the sole reason of the omnipresence of politics in all spheres of human life even the seemingly neutral religious world of the spiritual. Certainly, this argument may be rejected on the ground that Islamic fundamentalism is primarily a religious movement with religious aims. It may be true to a certain extent, but when it comes to the goals these movements pursue, it becomes evident that these are of political nature. So that it is appropriate to state that “Islamism is not Islam” as Orozbek Moldaliev states in the article “Islamism and International Terrorism: A Threat of Islam or a Threat to Islam” (Central Asia and the Caucasus 2002, No. 3 (15), p 90).

Having defined Islamism as opposed to Islam, it is appropriate to apply this analysis to Turkey as a case under study. In his work Turkey in Europe, Sir Charles Eliot writes:

Religion and politics interact on one another everywhere, but in the East more directly than in the West. The chief reason why the Turks have never been assimilated by the Europeans who surround them (as has been the case with the Magyars, Bulgarians, Finns, and other peoples who were originally pagan Asiatics) is that when they appeared in Europe, they had already adopted an Arabian religion...On the other hand, the mobility of the Byzantine Empire to resist the Turks was mainly due to the dissensions between the Eastern and Western Churches, which rendered it impossible for Christendom to unite and oppose Islam” (1908, 2).

The author, no doubt, ascribes a highly mobilizing role to Islam as opposed to Christianity – a view that may be disputed – however, the purpose of this essay is to focus on Islam in Turkey. Therefore, what is essential in Sir C. Eliot’s argument is the great mobilizing potential of Islam as a religion and as an ideology⁴. Historically Islam has played a significant role in Turkey which is a Muslim country despite its drive for secularization. Islamic religion

⁴ In this case it would be more appropriate to speak of Islamism as a politicized form of Islam but these two notions are often viewed as identical – Islam as a religion and ideology – that is where the confusion arises.

by itself seems to serve as a source of legitimacy for the rulers of Islamic states and Turkey is no exception. The phenomenon of Islamic revivalism has not circumvented Turkey on its way finding its reflection both in moderate⁵ and most radical religious movements gaining momentum in all the spheres of life in modern Turkey. Turkish officials may be very skillful in hiding the fact that religious movements are actually very active in modern Turkey thus diminishing their importance and scope of influence, but one thing is clear – Islam has not lost its appeal in Turkey – what has really changed is its form of expression. Thus it may be advocated either by the clergy and Islamic intellectuals as a revival of Islam, an increase of its influence in the formerly lost domains of social and political life, or by moderate Islamic brotherhoods as a peaceful ideology, or also as a radical fundamentalism by more aggressive groups whose aims are far from transparent. As a number of authors on this subject claim, despite the different faces of modern Islamic movements, their motives remain the same – acquisition of political power. Even the most moderate movements aspire to have influence (preferably political) to increase their membership and appeal to potential supporters.

The fact that Islamic⁶ movements are trying at present to become a part of the political life in Turkey may be supported by the emergence of Islamist political parties which enjoy popular appeal especially in the rural areas of Turkey as Don Peretz notes. However, in the article on the web “The Rise of the Islamist Movement in Turkey” Nilufer Narli states, “As Islamist supporters moved from provincial towns and villages to urban centers, they were more likely to gain access to formal education and opportunities for upward social mobility. Islamist groups responded to the needs and aspirations of the newly urban who might be university students, professionals, shopkeepers, merchants, or workers” (Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal Vol.3, No.3). It is obvious that the social status of the

⁵ Very often it is difficult to characterize a religious movement according to the ideology it pursues since the vast majority of these Islamic movements tend to disguise their true motives.

supporters of such groups is quite diverse, which may lead one to assume that such movements are gradually acquiring political force since as N. Narli notes, “The Islamist movement is an outlet to express political dissatisfaction with the existing order on the part of the geographical periphery and specific social groups and classes with grievances or different interests” (Vol. 5, No. 3).

Diverse interests in any society, Islamic is no exception, are to be represented. And political parties, as it is often stated, are perhaps the most popular mechanism of interest representation. In Turkey, for instance, various Islamic parties have undertaken the task of representing the interests of those who are against massive secularization, modernization and disregard for the religious and cultural legacy of the country⁷ and ties to the Islamic world. Thus Neil Hicks in the article “Does Islamist Human Rights Activism Offer a Remedy to the Crisis of Human Rights Implementation in the Middle East?” states that even after the reform of Ataturk “...a political party with an Islamist orientation has been part of the parliamentary scene for decades...Even though this party has from time to time been banned it has been permitted to re-open under a different name” (Human Rights Quarterly 2002, Vol.24, No.2, p 376). Indeed, Islamist political parties have gained momentum in Turkey since 1970s when the leader of the Refah (Welfare Party), Necmettin Erbakan became Turkey’s first Islamist Prime Minister according to N. Hicks.

Despite the fact that the country is officially on the way to democratization and secularization, the struggle between Islamist and militant elites is common for Turkey, and it remains essentially a military state. J. Bill and R. Springborg in “Institutions of Government: Militaries, Bureaucracies, and Legislatures” state that, “As long as those military regimes were able to claim success in domestic and foreign affairs, their ideological formulations

⁶ It should be stressed once again that practically no differentiation is made between the terms “Islamic” and “Islamist” in the literature on this subject although it is made clear by a number of authors that they have a different connotation.

went more or less unchallenged. When their performance lagged, however, they were immediately confronted by those religious and community-based organizations that had remained impervious to the protracted ideological onslaught” (2000, 186).

Coming back to the hypothesis, Islam has its impact on Turkish foreign policy in Transcaucasia, it may be assumed that Islam may be defined as Islamism in Turkey – that is Islam has a political connotation, it is an ideology first and foremost since it finds its expression in Islamic political parties striving for political power which in turn have their supporters among different layers of Turkish society. One way to explain the appeal Islamic parties have acquired in Turkey is the political and economic instability giving rise to frustration of the population and disappointment with the new secular ideas bringing nothing but privation for the lower layers of the society. The Turkish government fears the rise of the Islamists because these parties and movements express the interests of the widest sectors of the population. Still another possible explanation may be the fact that Turkey, after all, is a Muslim state with a long history of interaction with the rest of the Islamic world although the country is now “Europe-bound.” As Mohammad Nouredine writes in “The Sick Man of Turkey Isn’t Ecevit, but the System Itself” on the web, at present it is the military (Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit’s⁸ government) that is in power in Turkey and:

It is on Ecevit that the military relies in its self-proclaimed ‘1,000-year war’ against the Islamists Thus the demise or retirement of the premier,⁷⁶ would certainly cause a coalition crisis that would damage the ‘centers of power’ that stand behind the government, above all the military establishment...Moreover, the public opinion surveys show that the party that would win the most votes is the Justice and Development Party, whose Islamic leader, Recep Erdogan, has been reaching out to all sectors of Turkish society – advocating a democratic state that respects individual liberties and human rights and opposing the establishment of a state based on religious foundations (The Daily Star 18/05/02).

Thus it may be assumed that “Islam makes political push in Turkey” as Andrew West notes in The Christian Science Monitor on the web (June 5, 2002). It should be noted, however,

⁷ Anything connected with Muslim societies is regarded as backward by the secularists who came to power in Turkey after Ataturk’s reforms.

⁸ Who is currently seriously ill and is periodically taken to hospital.

that not all the writers are so pessimistic about the triumph of democracy in Turkey. James Morrow, for instance, in “Turkish Delight: Why the Middle East Needs Ataturks and not Ayatollahs” holds the belief that, “...Ataturk turned his nation Westward” stating that nowadays Turkey is “...a reasonably functioning democracy” (National Review Online 2001, October 25). The author attaches the label of a “democratic model” to Turkey. But the big question is: How can Turkey serve as a model to other Muslim nations if it is torn apart by the struggle between the military and religious groups? However, a wide variety of authors have the viewpoint that Islamist movements in Turkey are of moderate and even “democratic” character.

Thus in the article “Islam and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Reconciliation,” Metin Heper notes that, “In the second half of the 1990s, the leaders of the influential religious brotherhoods, movements, and sects, and the leading Muslim intellectuals appear to be fairly well integrated into the Turkish secular democratic state and display even more moderate views than the RP⁹” (Middle East Journal 1997, Vol.51, No.1, p.38). The author may be right to a certain extent but the fact that religion is currently suppressed in Turkey leads to the emergence of such Islamic movements which are an opposition to the secular government in power and which are far from moderate in their actions, as the regular clashes with the military demonstrate. Moreover, it should be pointed out that these Islamic movements do not openly disclose their intentions and are often not so peaceful as they want to appear. After all, Islam by itself is “a winners’ religion” as D. Pipes notes. Besides, it may be used as a political ideology – Islamism – and become a political slogan. In the article “Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites,” Nilüfer Göle states that, “Islamization, therefore, can be seen as a counter-attack against the principles of the Kemalist

⁹ The Refah Partisi (Prosperity Party or Welfare Party) got the plurality of votes in 1995 general elections.

project of modernization and the vested interests of the Westernized elites” (Middle East Journal 1997, Vol.51, No.1, p.57).

Is it not possible to hypothesize that eventually this discontent by the masses may lead to the increase of the appeal of Islamism in Turkey and eventually resurrect the idea of Pan-Turkism as a replacement of the Western idea of modernization? It is not accidental that Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism often come side by side. The Ataturk nationalism may take a different twist – the old Turkish ambition of unifying the Turkic world may acquire new appeal with the rise to power of Islamist groups which often view Turkish nationalism through the prism of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism. In this respect, Transcaucasia and Central Asia may prove to be a desirable “slice” for the future Turkish empire.

In Turkey, Terror and Globalization on the web, Keith Porter notes, “Turkey connects Europe and Asia. It also bridges the divide between ancient empires and modern worlds. Turkey is a member of NATO, but it shares a border with Iraq, Iran, and Syria. It is a largely Islamic society... And so Turkey remains frozen between two worlds” (K. Porter 2001). Being essentially an Islamic state, Turkey tries to establish contacts with the Islamic republics of the former Soviet Union. The true nature of these contacts is not easy to disclose but an attempt may be made to hypothesize what the nature of these relations actually is. The hypothesis put forward in this study intends to state that the purpose of Turkish foreign policy in Transcaucasia is the acquisition of influence first of all in Islamic countries of the former Soviet bloc. Transcaucasia, in this case, may serve as a corridor to Central Asia. In their article “Fethullah Gulen and his Liberal ‘Turkish Islam’ Movement” on the web, Bulent Aras and Omer Catra note that most Turkish Islamist movements already have good contacts with the Turkish-speaking republics of the former Soviet Union. What seems to be of special interest is the fact that, “The schools in the Turkic republics support a philosophy based on

Turkish nationalism rather than Islam” (Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal 2000, Vol.4, No.4).

However, Turkish nationalism historically has been interwoven with Islam due to the attempts by Islamist movements to turn it into a powerful and mobilizing force. Moreover, sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism. Here, the position taken by D. Pipes seems to be especially relevant, “There is a great battle underway for the soul of the Muslim world. This battle is not between the West and the Muslim world: we in the West are bystanders. It is essentially a battle between the Khomeini and Atatürk dispositions” (Center for Strategic and International Studies on the web 1998). As it is obvious from the author’s argument, Islam does play a role, or it would be more accurate to say Islamism does play a role in the political life of a Muslim state, and Turkey is no exception.

Another basis of support for the hypothesis may be taken from the article by Elie Kedourie, “Ethnicity, Majority and Minority in the Middle East,” where she notes that, “...in the Republic of Turkey, all citizens are Turks, ex definitione. But the idea that a non-Muslim or a non-Sunni native of Turkey is a Turk in the same way as a Sunni Muslim is somewhat artificial” (1988, 30). Indeed, Islam is still a mobilizing force in Turkey, nothing mobilizes the Turks (as any Muslims) better than the “Islamic banner.” Even the ambition of becoming a European state is not yet powerful enough to replace the lifelong desire of the Turk to assemble all the Turkic Muslims in one empire. This view is certainly open to dispute, however, one thing remains certain, Islam in Turkey is not subordinate to secular power, rather, it is an independently functioning element that has its “say” in the country’s political life.

Therefore, it may be stated that the hypothesis put forward in this essay is confirmed: Islam has its impact on Turkish foreign policy in Transcaucasia if one assumes that Turkish

foreign policy in the region cherishes not only economic (oil politics)¹⁰ but also political ambitions which very often are indistinguishable. What is actually meant by Turkish political ambitions in the region of Transcaucasus and Central Asia? The point is that the idea of Pan-Turkism is alive and thriving after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which has been a decisive factor in this respect. As it is stated on the Internet site of the Library of Congress, “For Turkey, the practical consequence of the Soviet Union demise was the replacement of one large powerful and generally predictable neighbor with five smaller near neighbors characterized by domestic instability and troubling foreign policies” (Federal Research Division: Country Studies 1995). The idea that Pan-Turkism is actually experiencing revival has been supported by a number of authors. Thus Anthony Hyman in the article “Central Asia and the Middle East: The Emerging Links,” notes that Turkey enjoys enormous appeal among the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia. The fact that Central Asia is often used alongside Transcaucasia is explained by the author in the argument that, “Both for Iran and Turkey, relations with Central Asia cannot be disentangled from those with the Transcaucasus...” (1994, 253). These regions of the former Soviet Union represent an area of potential influence for a number of regional actors¹¹ of which Turkey is one. What is especially important is that for Turkey Transcaucasus is not only a strategically important area but also an opportunity to realize its lifelong ambition. As A. Hyman notes, “After decades of neglect, the emphasis on developments in Central Asia has had definite political repercussions in Turkey, too, resulting in a revival of pan-Turkic ideas and hopes. Some ultranationalist circles in Turkey see their country as the obvious patron and champion of all the Turkic-speaking peoples in the vast region stretching from Azerbaijan to Xinjiang in China” (1994, 251). Still another author, Yildiz Atasoy in Islamic Revivalism and the Nation-

¹⁰ The Caspian region is rich in oil resources which make the region an attractive site for investment in various pipeline projects for which East competes with the West.

¹¹ For the purpose of this study the regional actors are those countries having territorial proximity with the region such as Turkey, Iran, Russia with an emphasis on the Muslim neighbors of the Transcaucasian states.

State Project: Competing Claims for Modernity on the web (1996), speaks of a “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” ideology in the Turkish state structure. He also draws a parallel between Islamism and nationalism in Turkey. Certainly, there are a number of authors who reject the significance of the idea of Pan-Turkism in Turkish politics, and in this respect they are unanimous with the official view of the Turkish government which holds that Turkey is bound for modernization and democratization where there is no room for the backward ideas of the Turkish past. However, certain religious and intellectual movements in Turkey, as well as the majority of the population, which still preserves Islamic traditions, holds a different view according to which Turkey still has a chance to resurrect the past and restore its former might.

To conclude, it should be stated that the aim of this chapter has been fulfilled – and the hypothesis put forward tested and confirmed. Whether this attempt has been a success or failure is open to future observation and research. What is certain is the fact that the foreign policy of any country is not open to public observation – a circumstance that leaves room for more theorizing and hypothesizing than asserting and explaining.

Chapter 2: Turkish Strategic Interests in Transcaucasia

Turkey is still more Middle Eastern than European, although its leaders have aspired to become the thirteenth member of the European Community – Don Peretz.

By way of introduction, it is essential first and foremost to state that Turkey is a unique country in the sense that it is a curious mixture of the past and present – of the old, backward¹² and of the new, modern realities. This may also be characterized as the clash of the two worlds – the Eastern world which lives by the past and the Western world that looks to the future. What exactly East means to Turkey as a whole is difficult to define since a wide number of authors insist that Turkey is Europe (West) bound. Still, there is also a popular argument supported by a number of authors that Turkey is predominately an Eastern country that is an inalienable part of the Middle East. An interesting viewpoint is expressed by Dietrich Jung and Wolfango Piccoli in the article “The Turkish-Israeli Alignment: Paranoia or Pragmatism” on the web, where the authors note, “Since the establishment of the Republic in 1923, Turkey’s relationship with most of the Middle Eastern neighbors has been awkward, if not overtly hostile. Despite its geographical position, Turkey decided to isolate itself from developments on its southern periphery and has traditionally adopted a very cautious and hands-off approach to the region” (Copenhagen Peach Research Institute and University of Bologna 2000).

It is obvious from the above quote that Turkey is not open to easy interpretation as regards either its domestic or foreign policy. It is a country of contrasts where the researcher may be lost in the labyrinth of ancient traditions (alive and active) and at the same time be constantly assured that the past no longer has its hold on Turkish society which is now devoted to the values of secularism and democracy, Nor is it an easy task to access Turkish

¹² It is important to note that for Turkey everything Eastern has become a token of backwardness since Ataturk, whereas the West is an embodiment of modernization to which Turkey is now committed.

sources of information on its foreign policy issues,¹³ so that one may assume that Turkey remains an essentially closed country in the sense that it is very cautious (in the best traditions of Middle Eastern states) in disclosing information on the true development of events within the country. The reason this study dwells on some internal aspects of Turkish politics is the fact that the role of such factors as traditional and cultural values (religion, custom, ethnicity) is quite considerable in shaping not only the domestic but also international dynamics of this or that country, as a wide number of authors point out in their works on this issue. Nevertheless, it has become a priority for the current Turkish government to characterize Turkey as a “model for the rest of the Muslim world.”

This term is encountered in a considerable number of works on Turkish politics, to be more precise, this perspective is mostly supported by Turkish writers and those Western authors who are in agreement with this line of argument. Thus Ali L. Karaosmanoglu in the article “European Security and Turkey in a Changing Strategic Environment,” writes, “Turkey’s success in the process of democratization and in its support of Western ideals would constitute a remarkable example for the developing countries in general and for its Middle Eastern neighbors in particular” (1989, 185). Another interesting point to consider is found in Freddy De Pauw’s article “Turkey’s Policies in Transcaucasia” on the web where he quotes an excerpt from the November 1992 issue of the Wall Street Journal, “Turkey is trying to help new Muslim countries become secular democracies. It is acting as a bridge between the West, the Balkans and the Middle East” (Contested Borders in the Caucasus 1996). These authors express the view held by both Turkish and Western authors that Turkey may potentially become “a democratic model” for the Middle Eastern countries.¹⁴ But what the real interests of Turkey are is not so easy to define because the sources of information on this subject are so diverse and contradictory that it is quite an arduous task to embark on a single

¹³ This is one of the serious limitations an Armenian researcher may face.

line of thought. Nevertheless, this essay will try to provide this diversity of viewpoints and attempt to theorize and hypothesize.

It is essential to refer to the main subject of this chapter – the analysis of the first research question put forward in this study, What are the strategic interests of Turkey in Transcaucasia?

As it can be seen from the underlined variable, this research question is univariate (it has only one variable). For the purpose of this study, the variable, the strategic interests of Turkey in Transcaucasia, is defined as follows:

1. First and foremost it may be viewed as Turkey's expansionist policy aims to establish its influence in the region and thus increase its importance for potential allies in both the West and the East.
2. One should not exclude also the possibility of the revival of the "old" Pan-Turkism sentiments in Turkish foreign policy and consequently the resurgence of Turkish imperialistic policy interests of creating a new Turkish empire.
3. Finally, economic factors need to be addressed, to be more precise – the issues of oil and gas pipelines construction as well as economic integration of the region under Turkish umbrella should not be excluded as a possibility.

Before assessing the importance of each of these factors as regards their place in the strategic interests of Turkey in Transcaucasus and Central Asia, it would be useful to provide the definition of "strategic geography" by Onnig Beylerian in "Geography and History: Concepts and Definitions." The importance of strategic geography cannot be overestimated in the strategic interests any country may have, "Strategic geography refers to the control of, or access to, spatial areas (land, water, and air, including outer space) that has an impact – either positive or negative – on the security and economic prosperity of nations. It embraces all

¹⁴ As previously defined, the Middle East is often referred to as including the Transcaucasus and Central Asia in its geographic boundaries.

dimensions of geography, which includes both physical and human geography (1999, 8). It is obvious that the control of territory may serve as a sort of a trump card in the hands of a considerably less powerful state, as a guarantee for national security of a country through the cooperation of more powerful states due to its important strategic position. In short, Turkey's control over the Transcaucasian and Central Asian regions may considerably raise its "price" as an ally on the international market of political and military bargaining. To clarify this point, it is essential to bring forward the argument supported by a number of authors that at present Turkey has lost its importance for Western powers after the collapse of the Soviet Union because now it does not serve as a "buffer state" any more blocking communist expansion further to the South as a number of authors hold.

Thus, in the work The Transcaucasus in Transition S. Hunter notes, "Although Turkey welcomed the elimination of the Soviet threat, it was concerned about the consequent erosion of its geostrategic importance to its Western partners. Indeed, Turkey worried that with the end of the cold war it would become irrelevant to Western strategic calculations and would lose the West's military and financial support" (1994, 162). The term used by E. Herzig in his work The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia characterizes the Turkish current security concerns most precisely, "Turkey has also exploited its Caucasus policy to reaffirm its importance for Western strategic interests (an importance which was less obvious following the Soviet collapse)..." (1999, 109). However, this "exploitive policy" of Turkey did not bring fruitful results because the international scene has greatly changed after the demise of the Soviet empire, the Cold war was over and a dozen of smaller powers came into existence. For Turkey, this new cast of the cards was not advantageous because now the country has to struggle for the restoration of its importance. Politics, as well as economics, appears to be a huge market where profits are made by those actors which are able to be politically attractive. What options are left for Turkey to increase its importance in the new

strategic environment? If one considers the argument by L. Caldwell, Turkey appears to be the most “vulnerable” nation, “ No nation today is free from military vulnerability. But Turkey, more than most nations and throughout its existence, has been forced to reckon with military insecurity...Both the Thracian-Anatolian landway and the Black Sea-Mediterranean seaway have been routes of military invasion, as well as avenues for the flow of commerce and ideas” (1968, 29-30). Indeed, Turkey is sort of caught between the two opposite poles – East and West. According to B.M. Potskhveria, Turkey is in a difficult situation of balancing between the Muslim and Christian worlds and often it fails to keep the equilibrium. In his work The Foreign Policy of Turkey in the 60s and 80s of the XX Century, the author writes that, “The Arab press accused Turkey of siding with imperialistic powers in its support of Israel thus causing considerable trouble to Arab countries...In fact, Turkey supplied Israel with weapons of both its own and Western production” (1986, 103). The “Turkish Dilemma” becomes obvious – as an ally of NATO and US, Turkey should not support the claims of Arab states, whereas the necessity to strengthen the country’s positions on the international arena for the resolution of the Cyprus issue demand rapprochement with the Arab world (1986, 103).

Speaking of “Turkish vulnerability, one has to mention the argument by D. Jung and Wolfango Piccoli in the article “The Turkish-Israeli Alignment: Paranoia or Pragmatism?” on the web, where the authors note that there is a “...paranoid sense of mistrust that characterizes the Turkish perceptions of both its Middle Eastern neighbors and its Western allies” (Copenhagen Peace Research Institute and University of Bologna 2000).

Does it follow from this vulnerability that Turkey’s best option is expansion beyond its current borders to secure its flanks and raise its stakes? The region of Transcaucasus and Central Asia seems to be a “convenient” solution to this vulnerability problem. Why? Because the collapse of the Soviet union, despite its negative implications for Turkey as

discussed above, still has made it possible to access the formerly inaccessible region. Despite the fact that quite a number of authors state that Turkey lacks the resources (both economic and military) to acquire dominant position in the region, still there are concerns expressed that Turkey after all has a big army which is well equipped and trained. Besides, in a state where the military repeatedly comes to power, the army is constantly kept ready for military action. In his article "Turkish Military 'Democracy'," Jeremy Salt notes that, "...the past 40 years make it clear that the court of last resort in Turkish politics is not the ballot box but the military" (Current History 1999, Vol. 98, No.625, p.72). According to the author, the military in Turkey has been quite active in practically all the spheres of Turkish reality. J. Bill and C. Leiden in their article "Violence and the Military" state that, "The Turkish army, too, is a powerful army, well equipped and well trained" (1979, 253).

Another author expressing his concern about Turkish "military might" is Armen Ayyazyan who states in his article "The Elements of the ROA National Security Doctrine" that the Turkish military command plans in the future to wage wars beyond Turkish borders, and this perspective is expressed in a number of Turkish official documents. What is especially important is the fact that Turkish military forces are not only capable but also willing to "act" outside of Turkey ("Droshak" 2002, No.3 (1575), p.15). It appears, that Turkey is no exception from the Middle Eastern countries where the Army is deeply entrenched in the state structure as Elizabeth Picard writes in her article "Arab Military in Politics: from Revolutionary Plot to Authoritarian State." In Turkey as well, "Officers coordinate government departments, run industries and public works enterprises and even administer land reform" (1990, 211).

Will a militarily potent state abstain from expansionist policy when its national security depends on it? This is a question to be posed for research. It is essential for this reason to find out why Transcaucasus is strategically important for Turkey. The fact that the Transcaucasian

region is a strategically important area is above doubt since abundant post-Soviet literature constantly stresses this point. A number of views are expressed concerning the importance of the region: some focus on political (military, strategic), others emphasize economic benefits the region offers. However, essentially what matters most is politics¹⁵ since, as Laurent Ruseckas notes in Energy and Politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus: State of the Field Report on the web, “Central Asia and the Caucasus would occupy an important position in the post-Cold War world even if they held no hydrocarbons. The Caspian basin happens to lie near the center of a huge area that in 1991 became, almost overnight, the world’s most important and contentious geopolitical no-man’s-land” (NBR Publications: Access Asia Review 1998, Vol.1, No.2, Essay 2). The following excerpt from the article by Vicken Cheterian “Jostling for Oil in Transcaucasia” on the web demonstrates why Transcaucasia is a priority for a number of countries:

The emergence of Transcaucasia is of major geopolitical importance (1). For Western companies it is a bridge linking the Caspian and Central Asia with the open seas, enabling them to avoid both Iran and Russia. For Moscow, faced with expansionist pressure from NATO, the region is both a gateway to the Middle East and a bulwark against Western or Turkish influences on its southern borders. And Turkey and Iran are both hoping to gain from the historic opportunity of extending their own ascendancy (Le Monde Diplomatique 1997).

Does it mean that Turkey still cherishes expansionist ambitions? Authors express diverse viewpoints, but one thing is clear, one should not exclude the second element in the strategic interest of Turkey in the region – the revival of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in Turkish foreign policy. In this respect, most authors are cautious about expressing their opinion because the official course of the Turkish government is democratization, modernization and secularization. This slogan has been vociferated by the Turkish government since Ataturk. However, there is also a different viewpoint provided by less “credulous” authors. Thus, Ervand Sargsyan in Turkey and its Imperialistic Policy in Transcaucasia of 1914-1918, states that according to Turkish expansionists, Transcaucasia belongs to Turkey “by the right

¹⁵ Some may argue that politics alone (without economics) is only rhetoric.

of law” (1964, 6). Whose law it is, can hardly be defined. But one thing is for certain, Armenia is the link that constantly breaks the chain of the integration of many Muslim nations of Eurasia with Turkey. Another author pointing to the possible revival of Pan-Turkish sentiments is K.S. Hajiev. He states in The Geopolitics of the Caucasus that:

The emergence of new Turkish-speaking states, rich with natural resources, on the international arena is considered in Turkey as an opportunity to foster its geopolitical interests. It may be said that they have in a certain way revived the idea of unifying into one whole the so-called Turan – the world of 120 million Turkish-speaking nations spreading from Western China to the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean (2001, 347).

The main goal of Turkey, as it is often stressed by a number of authors, is Central Asia; whereas the Caucasus seems to serve as a transit route towards the Muslim nations of Central Asia. According to Mehmet Tutuncu, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey has been given a chance to become a “regional power.” In “Turkey’s Foreign Policy in the Caucasus” on the web, he mentions that before the collapse of the Soviet Union Turkish foreign policy did not bother much about the “relatives of Turkish origin which outnumbered the Turks from Turkey” (Turkistan-Newsletter 1997, June 23).

This does not mean that the Turkish government was not concerned about the fate of its Turkish “relatives,” the Soviet Union was a superpower impossible to challenge, especially for a country like Turkey with no adequate resources. However, Turkey waited for its chance. As Freddy De Pauw states in “Turkey’s Policies in Transcaucasia” on the web, Turkey had “high hopes” after Soviet Union demise, “The independence of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian republics of Turkmenia, Uzbekistan and Kirgistan seemed to pave the way for a unification of all the Turkic populations in the region, including the Turkish-Tatar populations in the Russian Federation. It also looked as if Turkey would be able to extend its model as a secular state in the Islamic world and strengthen its strategic position as a bridgehead between East and West” (Contested Borders in the Caucasus 1996).

Turkey did not stop at “dreaming” but embarked on an active expansionist policy in the region. Brenda Shaffer in It’s Not about Ancient Hatreds, It’s about Current Policies: Islam

and Stability in the Caucasus on the web, writes that “In terms of export of Islamic radicalism to Caucasus, the most active external forces are from countries with a Western security orientation...Ankara is also active in fostering its official version of Islam in the region through the institutions and employees of its Ministry of Religious Affairs...” (Harvard University 2000). The fact that there are sectors of population of Caucasian and Central Asia origin in Turkey intensifies the rapprochement intentions with the region in Ankara. Gareth M. Winrow in “Turkey’s Relations with the Transcaucasus and the Central Asian republics” on the web notes, “Currently there are an estimated 25,000 Turkish citizens of Chechen descent. There are approximately ten million inhabitants of Turkey whose families originate from the north Caucasus and the Transcaucasus” (Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs 1996, Vol.3, No. 4). According to Mehiaddin Mesbahi, “In Turkey, there are large Turkic migrant communities originally from Central Asia and the Caucasus.” The author notes in Central Asia and the Caucasus After the Collapse of the Soviet Union, that these communities exert considerable influence on Turkish foreign policy towards the region and lead to the paternalistic attitude Turkey now shows to its Turkic relatives. “In the cultural field, Turkish help and advice is much appreciated... Turkey is currently training over one thousand students from Kazakhstan alone in its universities in a program that takes in students at all grades from six republics¹⁶” (1994, 255). The fact that Turkey is actively engaged in cultural, economic and political aid to the region of Transcaucasia and Central Asia is mentioned by a large number of authors. Thus, K.S. Hajiev also notes in The Geopolitics of the Caucasus that the number of the Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey is about seven million. And Ankara is now trying to use these sectors of the population to exert influence in the region. Despite its economic problems¹⁷, Turkey has given over one billion

¹⁶ Turkish-speaking republics are meant.

¹⁷ Turkey has a foreign debt over 70 milliard US dollars, besides the country suffers from permanent hyperinflation.

US dollars in loans and credits to the newly-independent states of Transcaucasus and Central Asia (2001, 350).

Here, the role of ethnicity in the politics of Middle Eastern states becomes evident. Milton J. Esman and Itamar Rabinovich in the article “The Study of Ethnic Politics in the Middle East,” state that there is the so-called notion of “dominant group” which is also relevant in Turkey, “Nonmembers were expected to accept a different relationship to the state than members of the dominant group, They might enjoy explicit and recognized minority rights, they might be encouraged to assimilate as individuals, or they might be culturally repressed, economically subordinated, and in some cases encouraged to emigrate” (1988, 16). Besides, the Turkish historians (in order to show their affinity with Central Asian nations) are also following the course of the Turkish government in legitimizing its claims for the region. In the article “History Textbooks As the Reflections of the Political Self: Turkey (1930s AND 1990s),” Büşra Ersanli notes that, “Mainstream historians based their theory on the premise that the Turks were members of the White race, the Aryans. The creation of a modern national identity mainly followed these lines... The Turks came from Central Asia during early historical times...” (International Journal of Middle East Studies 2002, Vol.34, No.2, p.339).

It is more appropriate to speak of the ethnically dominant group in Turkey in the present tense since non-Turks in Turkey¹⁸ actually have no rights. This clearly demonstrates that Turkey is still far from being a democratic state and still farther from serving as a democratic model for the Muslim states. Egun Özbundun in “State Elites and Democratic Political Culture in Turkey” seems to support this argument stating that with a number of democratic achievements made, still the results are not satisfactory, moreover, “Rather, the result has been a chaotic situation characterized by the personalistic style of government of Özal and his

¹⁸ By the way, a Muslim and a Turk often are used interchangeably in Turkey

entourage, frequent disregard for the rules and regulations, conflicts of jurisdiction among various public agencies, and a general decline in the quality and effectiveness of the state bureaucracy” (1993, 265).

It is obvious from this quote, that the slogan of being a democratic model in the region, adopted by the Turkish government, has no ground, rather, it serves as a disguise for its imperialistic intentions in the region, despite the fact that a number of Western authors still cherish the ideal of making Turkey a model for emulation. For instance, Bernard Lewis notes in “Turgut Ozal Memorial Lecture and US-Turkish Relations” that, “Turkish democracy has been experiencing and will continue to deal with the challenge of Islamism and the Iranian model of theocracy” (Policy Watch 1997). Dr Bernard Lewis is not the only author supporting this viewpoint. However, according to the research question put forward in this study, Turkey has strategic interests in the region which are far from spreading democracy.

Moreover, as a number of authors state, Turkey now is faced with the dilemma of choosing between East and West, in the sense that it has to define where the priorities are – to acquire dominant position in Transcaucasus and Central Asia and antagonize the West or continue its policy of Westernization and democratization in the region alienating the Muslim states. Mehmet Ögütçü in Turkey’s Place in the New Architecture of Europe on the web, writes, “Developments in the former Soviet republics are pushing Turkey towards a more active and partisan role in the Caucasus and Central Asia. In both cases, a re-orientation of Turkish foreign and security policy eastwards would be unavoidable” (Yayın Tarihi:Ustatların Kaleminden 1998). Valery Tsepikalo in “The Remaking of Eurasia” also focuses on the “Turkish dilemma” and notes that often the priority is nevertheless on the side of the East, “Turkey’s new mission would demand its liberation from the Western political, social, and cultural values of many of its elite and reanimation of the idea of the pan-Turkic state. The 1996 election of Islamist Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan as prime

minister signalled that Turkey is breaking away from the West...” (Foreign Affairs 1998, Vol.77, No.2, p. 114).

However, it remains to be seen whether Turkey will be able economically to sustain its ambitious policy in the region. This leads to the third element in the strategic interests of Turkey in the region – economic opportunities. The role of this factor should not be underestimated since, as Mustafa Aydin notes in “Ethnic Conflict and Security in Central Asia and Caucasus” on the web, Turkey needs resources to implement its aid programs in the region, “As observed by a Turkey’s analyst ‘public interest in the Turks living outside Turkey is one thing, the willingness to devote resources to new policies is something else’...” (Marco Polo Magazine 1998). Indeed, a large number of authors state that “Turkish ambitions outrun its resources,” however, it is one more element (economic gain) that makes up Turkish strategic interest in the region. Why is the region so important economically? The reason may simply be put in one term “oil politics.” What is meant by it is the huge issue of “who gets what” in the Caspian, as Leonard Stone puts it in “Turkish Foreign Policy: Four Pillars of Tradition.” (Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs 2001, Vol.6, No.2). The dispute is about the construction of gas and oil pipelines: the routes carrying Caspian oil will bring profit and influence to those countries through whose territory they pass. According to Ian Bremmer’s article “Oil Politics: America and the Riches of the Caspian Basin,” Turkey mostly favors the Baku-Ceyhan¹⁹ route that by-passes Russian territory and consequently decreases Russian influence in the region (World Policy Journal 1998, 32).

Despite the importance of the economic factor in the strategic interests of Turkey, the focus of this essay is on the political aspect of the problem, mainly Turkish foreign policy trends which may acquire an aggressive and expansionist twist calling for the revival of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism – a development that may raise serious concerns about the

¹⁹ Ceyhan is a Turkish sea port.

security of the volatile and unpredictable region we call Transcaucasia. The big question is: Will Turkey be able to implement its expansionist policy in the region or it will be stopped by Iran and Russia whose interests in the region are also vital? The next chapter of the essay intends to elucidate this issue.

Chapter 3: Turkey and the Regional Powers

Politics makes strange bedfellows²⁰

By way of introduction into this highly complex subject of foreign policy analysis attempted in this essay, it should be pointed out that “the great game” called politics by itself defies exact definitions, fixed labels, arbitrary assumptions and predictions in particular. Rather, it is open to multiple interpretations, diverse viewpoints and the domain of guessing and hypothesizing. Therefore, it becomes an arduous task to analyze the underlying factors driving a definite country’s foreign policy mechanism, especially when the officially promulgated course differs greatly from the real motives driving a given state into a particular policy.

As regards the “cast of the cards” in the region of the Transcaucasus, here one may speak of the “mosaic of alliances,” as Vicken Cheterian notes in the article “Jostling for Oil in Transcaucasia,” rather than an equilibrium or balance of power because the alliances made and the interests involved are so diverse and so volatile that the regional setting constantly changes. In this respect the second research question proposed for this study should be taken for consideration: *Regarding the current balance of power in the region, what countries have their stakes in Transcaucasia?* As it is obvious, there are two variables in this research question that need to be defined.

First and foremost one has to address the concept of the “balance of power” and provide a more or less accurate definition of this term so frequently used in the realm of international affairs. In this respect, one has to bring forward the argument by John Rourke who writes in International Affairs on the World Stage, that there is no commonly accepted definition of this concept, “...Scholars have used the term with many different connotations. These include, among others, whether or not there is an equilibrium (balance); what the power distribution is even if it is not balanced (imbalance); attempts to achieve a balance (balancing); or a multipolar, balance of power system” (1991, 78). With respect to Transcaucasia, the definition may be applied in all of the above mentioned connotations.

For the purpose of this study, the concept of the balance of power is viewed from the angle of the involvement of the three regional powers – Russia, Iran and Turkey in the political dynamics of the Transcaucasian region. The following issues may arise: Is there a single dominant power or the influence of the three countries is equal? Which country is supposed to be an outsider? Can the involvement of these three regional powers constitute serious threat to the Transcaucasian republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia? Here are the multiple issues provoking interests and raising concern among both those involved and the outsiders. As regards the second variable, stakes in Transcaucasia, it may be referred to as the place the Transcaucasus occupies in the foreign policy of each of the three regional powers and the extent to which the region is vital to their interests. Here, the issue of commitment becomes central in the sense of the willingness by a given country to contribute its state resources (economic, military, political) to establish friendly relations with the Transcaucasian republics in order to increase its influence in the region.

It is therefore appropriate to focus on each of the three regional powers in a separate section of this chapter because, as Martha Brill Olcott notes in the article “The Caspian’s

²⁰ An old saying once again emphasized by John Rourke in International Politics on the World Stage.

False Promise,” the fate of the region is in the hands of the greater powers, “...the futures of all the nations of this landlocked region ultimately depend on the stability and goodwill of the states (Afganistan, China, Iran, and Turkey) through which they must ship goods to reach global markets” (Foreign Policy 1998, No.111, p. 95-96). Why the author excludes Russia from the list of regional powers is a mystery but it is essential to note that the impact of Russia on the region’s destiny has always been immense as a number of authors hold. Therefore, one needs to focus on this country first and foremost to be able to assess Turkey’s chances for regional influence weighed against the other two powers.

Russia

It should be noted that the approach the majority of authors hold as regards Russian position towards the region is quite controversial: some view this country from the perspective of the successor of the “Evil Empire”²¹ which still pursues the policy of regional hegemony with no other actors allowed to step in. Others view Russia as a “weak state” not interested in the development of events in the region. Still another group of scholars refer to Russia as a new democracy cautious and moderate in its regional policy. It is necessary to discuss each of the arguments separately before making any final judgement.

First and foremost, it is essential to note that Russia has vital interests in Transcaucasia and it is these interests that primarily shape its foreign policy towards the region. The major Russian concern in the area certainly remains national security. To clarify this argument, one has to consider Edmund Herzig’s work, The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The author divides Russia’s interests into 3 clusters:

A North Caucasus cluster revolving around the concern to maintain stability and control in this fragile border region; a Transcaucasian cluster connected with Russia’s involvement in the unresolved conflicts in Azerbaijan and Georgia, with threats from the south to Russian security (pan-Turkism, Islamic fundamentalism, narcotics, organized crime, migration and hostile foreign penetration) and with relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; and a Caspian cluster centered on Russian interests in the development and export of the Caspian basin’s oil and gas...” (1998, 105).

²¹ Here the former Soviet Union is meant.

Another author dwelling on the vital security concerns of Russia in the region is K. S. Hajiev (2001) who argues in The Geopolitics of the Caucasus that it is mainly the security concerns that drive Russia to achieve political control in the area. This argument is further supported by Vitaly Naumkin in the article “Russia and Transcaucasia” on the web. Here the author focuses on the link between “the Southern and the Northern Caucasus” stating that, “One can say that in defending its interests in Transcaucasia and Central Asia, Russia is above all preoccupied with its security, giving present priority to the military-political means of ensuring its positions” (Caucasian Regional Studies 1998, Vol.3, Issue 1).

What is it that makes Russia so vulnerable to the developments in the Southern Caucasus? Certainly, it is the ties this region has to the Northern Caucasus (Chechnya, Daghestan, Ingushetia) – an explosive hotbed of ethnic tension and unrest – that concerns Russia most. What may still aggravate these tensions is their manipulation by other regional powers like Turkey and Iran which, as Svante E. Cornell notes, “...immediately entered a race in which they at first could not accurately gauge their place.” Further on, the author writes in “Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia” on the web that Russia itself instigates conflicts in the region (Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabagh) in order to destabilize the region and take control of this former Soviet space again, “One can claim the existence of a link between Russia’s actions in the Transcaucasus and the Chechen rebellion in the North Caucasus, insofar as the separatism Russia encouraged in the Transcaucasus spilled over to Chechnya” (Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs 1999, Vol.4, No.2).

Certainly, the argument put forward by the author would have been convincing if not for the fact that it is more in the realm of subjective thinking and not scientifically proved hypothesis. What the intentions of Russia are, only Russia knows and is not supposed to

disclose taking into account the fact that each and every state pursues its own national interest – quite a legitimate action as such. However, one can certainly state that a country fearing unrest within its borders will hardly embark on the policy of destabilization outside its borders in the region so vital to its security interests. In this respect, one has to address Nikolay Hovhannisyan’s article “The Russian Policy in the Region and the Armenian-Russian Relations” where the author notes that, “The Russian government, after a bitter experience, understood that the internal peace in Russia, including the Caucasus, significantly depended upon the situation in the near abroad, mainly Transcaucasia and Central Asia (1998, 22).

However, the interests of Russia in the region are not limited to political and military ones, the region is also important to this country economically. The Caspian oil and gas resources constitute a convenient and cheap²² energy source for Russia. And it is in this sphere that its interests clash with those of Iran and especially Turkey which opts for the construction of Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline circumventing Russia and thus limiting its control over the regional politics, as most authors on this subject note. A question may arise: How is the control over the gas and oil pipelines may be connected with political influence over the region? The answer is provided by Laurent Ruseckas’ article “Energy and Politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus” on the web where he puts it in a nutshell, “Agreements, treaties and alliances can, to varying degrees, be ignored, disavowed or reinterpreted, while pipelines outlive the circumstances that produced them as “steel umbilical cords” that tie together economic interests and often link political interests as well” (Access Asia Review 1998, Vol.1, No.2, Essay 2).

As regards Turkey, its interests in the region have already been considered in a separate chapter of this essay, it will not be dealt with in this section of the paper. However, as regards

²² In the sense of the geographic proximity of the Caspian region with Russia.

Russian response to Turkish expansionist policy in the region, it is certainly not a passive stance toward Turkish involvement in the regional politics. Turkish interests have often clashed with those of Russia in the region, moreover, Turkey lacks the capacity to compete with Russia for regional dominance, therefore it has to pursue cautious policy in the region. The authors on this subject refer to this as the “Turkish Dilemma” because on the one hand Turkey is extremely interested in developing friendly relations with the states of Central Asia and Transcaucasia to achieve proximity with them; on the other hand, Turkey has to be careful not to antagonize Russia. However, the argument to be considered is one of viewing Turkey as a potential actor in Transcaucasia. Despite the view held by a number of authors that Turkey lacks the resources, political will and economic might to establish its dominance in the region, this country, according to a different perspective, still pursues aggressive (imperialistic) policy in the region. A major proof of this point is found in the work Turkish and Ottoman Studies – a collection of articles on Turkey. One of the authors supporting the feasibility of the revival of “the Turkish Threat” is Suren Baghdasaryan who notes that the vast military potential of Turkey and the attention its government devotes to the increase and modernization of Turkish military forces leads one to assume that “Turkey pursued, pursues and will pursue a political course which is far from peaceful” (2002, 78). In support of this argument, Ruben Safrastyan notes that Turkey views itself as “the central power” which not only falls under the influence of global and regional powers but also has reciprocal influence on them itself (2002, 93). How will Iran respond to this challenge?

Iran

There is a general perception that Iran pursues a peaceful and cautious policy in the former Soviet area of Transcaucasia and Central Asia although this region is strategically important to Iran. Moreover, according to Shireen Hunter, Iran is more desirable as a partner for the Transcaucasian republics than Turkey for a number of reasons:

Theoretically, Iran was in a good position to expand its relations with all the Transcaucasian states. It has a relatively large market that can easily absorb certain of their industrial and other exports. It can provide the energy-poor countries with oil and gas – something that Turkey cannot do. And it can offer them easy access to the sea through the Persian Gulf ports. Iran also does not suffer from the burden of history as do, for example, Russia and Turkey. Indeed, Armenia and Georgia favored Iran as a partner in part as a counterweight to Turkey and Russia.” (The Transcaucasus in Transition 1994, 173).

However, Iran does not seem to be willing to make use of this opportunity for a number of reasons. Besides, what is more important, Iran is not willing to put its relations with Russia at risk. Despite the fact that Russia is often viewed as a weak state, its influence in the region is still strong and the Russian government is especially interested in keeping other forces out to secure its “soft underbelly” as this region is often referred to. Transcaucasia may offer a direct passage (corridor) to Russia, therefore this passage is jealously guarded by Russia. In this respect, Iran finds it more useful not to aggravate Russian animosity but to foster mutual cooperation between the two countries in the region, especially when there still exist immense barriers to Iran’s foreign policy in Transcaucasia in particular and the Middle East at large. Here, the containment of Iran by the West (USA in particular) is meant. As S. Hunter notes, however, Iran’s exclusion for the reason of its being a state spreading Islamic fundamentalism and nuclear weapons has not affected the region positively because the possible balance of power in the region ensured by the involvement of all the three regional powers has been reduced to two alternatives: either “Russian hegemony” or “Turkish-Iranian rivalry.” (1994, 174).

However, one should note that it is not appropriate to speak of “Russian hegemony” in the region at the current stage of the development of events. Nor is it appropriate to assume that either Turkey or Iran are the potential dominant forces. For the time being, the policy these three regional countries pursue or appear to pursue is quite cautious because none of them wants a destabilized Caucasus. According to K. S. Hajiev, the Russian government has repeatedly announced that the territorial integrity of the Transcaucasian states is a priority for the Russian policy in the region. As regards Iran, it fears the upheaval of its Azeri minority in

the so-called “Southern Azerbaijan” and consequently it would hardly encourage Turkish involvement in the region especially with currently strained relations with Azerbaijan – so obviously pro-Turkish. According to A Memorandum on The Nagorno-Karabagh Crisis: A Blueprint for Resolution, “Iranian leaders fear that an independent, oil-rich and affluent Azerbaijan might negatively influence the well-integrated Azerbaijani minority in Iran (10 - 20% of Iran’s Population) and that Azerbaijani nationalism might even jeopardize the integrity of the Iranian state in the long term” (2000, 12-13). It becomes clear why Iran has to pursue a policy of cooperation with Russia. It is left no alternatives.

As regards Turkey, the picture is less clear in the sense that this country with over a 60 million population and a vast military potential may be referred to as everything but an outsider in the region. One also has to take into consideration the close ties between Turkey and the Turkic-speaking republics of the former Soviet union. In this respect, it is appropriate to quote Oleg Stolyar – the author of the article “Geopolitics in the Caspian: Can Russia Keep Control in its Own Backyard?” on the web where he states that the Russian government considers the Turkish threat quite seriously, “... Russia continues to view Turkey as a strategic rival in the area” (Stolyar1998). What is essential in this case is the position taken by the three Transcaucasian states because, as Martha Brill Olcott notes in “The Caspian’s False Promise,” these republics are now independent actors which have to decide what road to take. However, the road taken by them is not always the right one in the sense that instead of uniting their efforts (at least Armenia and Georgia) to provide for the regional integrity they take different directions and enter into opposite camps. It is in this sense that Nikolay Hovhannisyan notes in the article “On Some Peculiarities of Ethnoregional Policy of Armenia” that “...the discrepancy in the orientation of the vectors of the regional policies of Armenia and Georgia is evident, and the formation of the axes Ankara-Baku-Tbilisi and Moscow-Yerevan-Tehran is rumored” (1999, 51).

To conclude, one may note that the situation in the region is far from stable and predictable, to speak in N. Hovhannisyan's terms, either of the two "axes" may prevail – a development of events not really advantageous to any of the three Transcaucasian states because the dominance of one side will necessarily provoke the opposition of another. The very fact that Iran is more inclined to have friendly relations with Christian countries rather than its "Muslim brethren" testifies to the relevance of the old saying that "politics makes strange bedfellows." It remains to be seen whether Transcaucasian republics will have to choose such "bedfellows" or prefer an independent existence – a luxury they cannot afford without external assistance.

Chapter 4: Turkey and the Three Independent Republics of the Transcaucasus

No visitor to the Caucasus, even to Armenia with which Turkey has a closed border and no direct relations, can fail to notice the Turkish economic presence – Svante E. Cornell.

As a starting point, it is essential to note that this chapter of the essay has a special significance with respect to its contribution to the general analysis on the situation in the Transcaucasian region. Why? Because the three independent republics of Transcaucasia have become self-sufficient actors on the international arena as a number of scholars note. Whether they may be referred to as skillful and flexible players is a different matter. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union has given them a chance (fortunately or unfortunately) to "have it their own way." Still, the strategic geographical location of these republics does not leave them much political latitude in selecting their own alternatives since this region has become a priority for a number of regional powers of which Turkey is not the least influential.

It is important, therefore, to proceed with the analysis of the research questions put forward in this essay and take up the third research question as the focus of this chapter: *How can Turkish relations with all the three Transcaucasian republics be characterized?* The variable to be defined is underlined and is referred to in this study as the whole complex of political, social and military interaction Turkey has (or does not have) with all the three republics in the region. Consequently, the chapter will have its separate sections to deal with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia separately with respect to their position taken towards Turkish involvement in the region.

Turkey and Azerbaijan

This section may be started with the quote from Shireen Hunter's Transcaucasus in Transition: Nation-Building and Conflict, "Aliev... said that Azerbaijan and Turkey were two states but one nation" (1994, 93). The relations between the two countries could not have been closer to an outside observer. In fact, the two countries share similar views on a number of issues in the regional politics, besides Turkey views Azerbaijan as a potential ally in Transcaucasia providing access to more remote parts of the region and opening access to Central Asia as well. The point is that Turkey does not have such a close territorial proximity to the region as, for instance, Iran. Nor does it have a direct border with Azerbaijan, which, according to a number of authors makes Armenia especially important as a sort of a "transit corridor" to the region. According to S. E. Cornell's article, "Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia" on the web, "Armenia's geographical location is crucial in that it forms a wedge in the otherwise unbroken 'Turkic' chain that theoretically stretches from Istanbul to Chinese Xinjang" (Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs 1999, Vol.4, No. 2).

Azerbaijan appears to occupy a firm position (if not a leading one) in this chain. Indeed, since the creation of the APF (Azerbaijani Popular Front) and the accession to power of A. Elçibey, Azerbaijan has embarked on the policy of rapprochement with Turkey in practically

all the spheres. This republic has always been famous for its anti-Russian stance as S. Hunter notes. No wonder Azerbaijan prefers Turkey to Russia and even Iran as a partner despite the religious affiliation to Iran²³. However, there exists a conflict among the Azeris as to their belonging (whether they are closer to Iran or Turkey). According to Alexey Malashenko, Islamic revivalism is also alive and active in Azerbaijan, and a number of Islamic fundamentalist groups have acquired considerable influence in the republic as, for instance, “Jeyshullah” (Army of Allah) – a radical religious group known for its terrorist activity on the territory of the republic. Besides, there are several Islamic parties active in the country: “Azerbaijan Islamic Party (AIP), the Islamic Progressive Party of Azerbaijan, “Tovbe” (Repentance) society. In his article “Azerbaijan: Between Islam and Turkism” on the web, A. Malashenko writes in this connection, “Low life standards, unemployment, pendency as regards the Karabakh problem call forth distrust in the ruling elite, disappointment in its modernization programs and force many people to seek a way out in traditional, above all in religious values formerly forgotten” (Moscow Carnegie Center 2002). In this respect Iran appears to be the “big brother” and not Turkey with which Azeris consider themselves ethnically but not religiously related.

However, for the time being, Turkey remains a more stable partner for the Azeri government than Iran because of a number of barriers in creating Baku-Tehran relations. First, there are tensions with Azeri minority in Northern Iran (Southern Azerbaijan) where separatism and irredentism are much encouraged by Azerbaijan – a fact that cannot be overlooked by Iran. Second, Iran has become a “pariah” in the region because of the sanctions put by the West (US in particular) on this country for being a source of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism (be it true or not). It is much more advantageous to develop relations with Turkey – a Western ally in the region than with Iran or Russia. Forth, there is

²³ Azeris, like Iranians are Shii Muslims, whereas Turks are Sunni.

the issue of the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline supported by the Turkey-West-Azerbaijan axis where Georgia also has its say. Iran and Russia oppose the construction of this route because it does not pass through their territory and leaves low leverage to these two states both politically and economically as it is often stated by most authors on this subject.

Michael Lelyveld in “Azerbaijan: Turkey Pursues Ambiguous Ties” on the web dwells on Turkish-Azeri cooperation in the military field, “Turkish aircraft visiting Azerbaijan have been portrayed alternately as an aerobatic group and a squadron of warplanes... Both Turkey and Azerbaijan seemed content to have it both ways” (Radio Free Europe 2001). In fact, Turkish-Azeri military cooperation has a long history, it started after the collapse of the Soviet Union and has intensified since the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict which has become a Turkish-Azeri-Armenian affair rather than a Karabagh-Azerbaijan dispute. The involvement of Turkey was so feasible that Russian commander Marshal Shaposhnikov declared that unless Turkey withdrew its troops from the Armenian-Turkish border, Russia “would start a third world war” as a number of sources report.

It is obvious that the relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan are mutually beneficial and are not likely to deteriorate in the near future, especially if one takes into consideration the fact that there exists cultural and ethnic affinity between the two states. In short, Azeris appear to view themselves as Turks, moreover, as Audrey L. Altstadt puts in The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity Under Russian Rule, “Ethnic identity was linked in part to the Ottoman Turks” (1992, 69). Consequently, Armenia’s situation becomes twice as complicated with two hostile camps bordering on its territory. In this respect, the position taken by Georgia becomes especially vital.

Turkey and Georgia

As regards the relations between these two states, the situation is far from clear. Georgia, according to a number of authors, has a dual attitude to its Western neighbor: on the one hand the Georgian government welcomes cooperation between the two countries, whereas on the other hand, Georgia continues to view Turkey with suspicion:

Relations with Turkey have been good on the surface. A number of economic and trade agreements were signed between the two countries, and Georgia joined the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone. But deep suspicions exist in Georgia regarding Turkey's ambitions. Two issues, namely the existence of large numbers of Abkhaz in Turkey and the ties between the Georgian Muslims, or the so-called Adzhar, and Turkey, plus the fact that parts of Georgia, such as Batumi on the Black Sea, once were part of the Ottoman Empire, create an underlying wariness regarding Turkey's objectives (S. Hunter 1994, 139). It is obvious from this quote that Georgia has to pursue a very cautious policy to profit economically from its cooperation with Turkey on the one hand and avoid Turkish involvement in the country's affairs on the other hand – a task the Georgian government has not been skilful enough to perform according to a variety of authors. In fact, there is a third contribution to the so-called Georgian "predicament" – relations with Russia which is not willing to lose control of the former Soviet space especially to a country like Turkey.

It is really the destiny of smaller states to "flirt" with their more powerful and influential neighbors. As regards Georgia, this country has not been cautious enough not to make "enemies" alongside making friends. As Svante E. Cornell notes, "...today, Georgia's interests and orientations coincide in many respects with those of Turkey." (Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs 1999, Vol.4, No.2). In what spheres do these interests coincide? First of all economically, the fact that the Baku-Ceyhan route will pass through Georgia really may raise the country's political leverage and make it attractive to foreign investment. However, Georgia may antagonize Russia – a development of events certainly not advantageous to Georgia considering the fact that there are still Russian military bases on its territory. Therefore, Georgia has to weigh all the pros and cons before making alliances. However, this is exactly what this country is not bound for, rather the Georgian government, as various sources report, has taken an anti-Russian stance stating that the two assassination attempts against the Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze were aimed at destabilization in the country (this appears to be direct hint at Russian involvement in the affair).

As regards its relations with Armenia, there is tension here as well concerning an Armenian minority in Georgia after Georgian independence and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The discriminatory policy of Z. Gamsakhurdia against ethnic minorities in Georgia has considerably aggravated the situation. Besides, as S. Hunter notes, “In regard to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, Georgia has had to walk a tightrope between the two belligerents in order to avoid antagonizing them, without always succeeding” (1994, 139).

It is obvious that Georgia may find itself at an impasse forcing it into “the arms” of Turkey and consequently alienating its Christian neighbors – Armenia and Russia. Whether Georgia will opt for this alternative is not clear but at present the relations between Turkey and Georgia are slowly progressing at the expense of the country’s rapprochement with Russia and Armenia. According to Manos Karagannis’s article “The Turkish-Georgian Relationship and the Transportation of Azerbaijani Oil” on the web, still Georgia seeks Turkey as a partner, “From the Georgian point of view, Turkey could be a valuable ally in the region, aiding Georgia’s effort to maintain its independence by acting as a counterbalance to the neo-imperial Russian policy in the Transcaucasus and providing Georgia with an alternative source of trade and investment. Indeed, Turkey dominates Georgia’s economic sphere, having overtaken Russia as Georgia’s largest trading partner (University of Hull, Department of Politics and Asian Studies 2002). As the author notes, Russia responds to the Turkish-Georgian rapprochement with instigation of ethnic tensions in Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) to force Georgia into compliance. At the present stage of the development of events, Georgian leadership seems to be walking on the edge because it risks losing a “valuable” partner like Turkey and antagonize a powerful neighbor like Russia. Armenia in this case also appears to be forced into making priorities.

Turkey And/Versus Armenia

“Armenia and Turkey are very much prisoners of history” as Raffi K. Hovannisian, Former Minister of ROA Foreign Affairs, notes in “The Caucasus and Its Geopolitical Neighborhood: Horizons for Peace and Security” on the web. (International Conference by ACNIS 2000). In fact, this argument by R. K. Hovannisian is supported by a number of authors on the problem of Armenian-Turkish relations. Yes, it is a problem because no such relations exist and, as some scholars believe, are hardly to be developed in the near future.

There is a separate chapter in this essay devoted to Turkish-Armenian relations from the angle of what Armenian people think about the prospect of creating such relations. It is the opinion of common people that matters because politicians should rely on public opinion for their decisions to be legitimate (if Armenia claims to be a democracy). Therefore, it is allotted a separate chapter in this essay. As regards the Armenian government’s stand on this issue, it is taken up in this section. Besides, one should attempt to provide the position of the Turkish side on the issue (at least the officially available one), which is certainly a difficult task.

As far as Armenia is concerned, there is a desire for rapprochement with Turkey “without any preconditions” as Nikolay Hovhannisian puts it in The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Armenia in the Transcaucasus-Middle Eastern Geopolitical Region (1998). What these “preconditions” mean is that Armenia will not place any demands on the recognition of the Genocide of 1915, will not claim the lands lost in Western Armenia and in general will not look to the past in creating diplomatic relations between the two countries. Armenian Foreign Minister, Vartan Oskanian, in his interview to the Radio Free Europe on the web notes, “...no improvement was registered in Armenian-Turkish relations despite Yerevan’s repeated calls to establish diplomatic relations with no preconditions” (9 January 2002). This is what the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs thinks about this issue, “Turkey aims at normalizing its

relationship with Armenia under the conditions that Armenia fully respects territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders of its neighbors and complies with the basic norms of international law as well as takes concrete steps toward the resolution of its conflict with Azerbaijan” (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Web 2002). However, this demand by the Turkish government is by itself groundless since Armenia has not placed any demands on Turkey as the Turkish government implies. In his interview to Mediamax, Vartan Oskanian notes, “It is unfortunate, but true, that Armenian-Turkish relations today are – if we don’t say non-existent – then completely unsatisfactory. I say unfortunately because today those relations could have been on a wholly different plane, had Turkey not adopted the wrong policy regarding Armenia in 1991-92” (2001, April 23). It is obvious from this interview that the position of the Armenian government has been that of reconciliation and normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations since its independence from the Soviet Union. According to Glenn E. Curtis, Armenia is a small state that is vulnerable to external domination due to its strategic geographic location. What the author means by this is explicitly stated in the work Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia: Country Studies, where he notes, “Armenia’s location between two larger states, Russia and Turkey, has long forced it to orient its policies to favor one or the other” (1995, 71).

In fact, this type of foreign policy appears to be the right alternative for Armenia since it lacks the capacity of strong states to decide what type of alliances it prefers, instead Armenia is forced to weigh all the consequences of a decision taken and enter into those alliances that will not antagonize all the sides involved, in short, it has to maneuver. It is for this reason that Armenian government attaches great importance to the development of friendly relations not only with all the three regional powers involved but also the other two independent Transcaucasian republics. Here as well, it appears that the republics greatly depend on their more powerful neighbors, and each of them has its own perceptions of what is better for the

country's stability and prosperity. As regards Azerbaijan, its relations with Armenia are very tense because of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, moreover, Azerbaijan is in close cooperation with Turkey – a fact that still more alienates it from Armenia. Georgia is a different matter, it is a Christian republic despite its Muslim sectors of the population and, consequently, it is supposed to have good neighborly relations with Armenia. However, Georgia is more inclined towards Turkey and the West than Russia and Armenia despite their religious affiliation. Why? Because Turkey appears to be a stable economic partner with Georgia. When the issue of construction of the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline via Georgia came about, it was a chance that Georgia could not miss because the passage of this route through Georgian territory may boost Georgian economy and open new opportunities for investment into Georgian economy, according to many authors. Armenia is excluded from this bargain, Russia is also neglected. In fact this isolationist policy towards Armenia makes it turn away from Georgia because of Turkish-Azeri-Georgian alliance. According to Armenia Daily Digest, "Relations between Armenia and Georgia have become frosty..." Further on, the article on the web provides Vartan Oskanian's explanation of the reason for such a development of events:

We have frequently said that Turkish-Georgian military cooperation concerns us and, we believe, can fundamentally disrupt the regional equilibrium. Armenian-Georgian relations are the link which serves as the fundamental guarantor of the region's, albeit fragile, stability, and which does not allow the establishment of divisive lines in the region. That equilibrium may be disrupted if the Georgian-Turkish military cooperation deepens, and if Georgia gradually and even unnoticeably becomes more and more dependent on Turkey, and perhaps unknowingly, is pulled into the formation of a Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan axis, thus becoming involved in the Turkish and Azerbaijani policy to isolate Armenia" (Mediamax News Agency 2001).

Russia also cannot stay away from the formation of such an axis because it is a direct threat to its own security. Moreover, it opts for the formation of the alliance between Russia, Iran and Armenia as a possible response to Georgian and Azerbaijani pro-Turkish and anti-Russian stance. What about Armenia?

This country is certainly in a difficult position: on the one hand, Armenia avoids taking extreme positions and basing its hopes on Russia alone, on the other hand, there is Turkey with which Armenia is eager to normalize its relations but the former constantly places demands on Armenia to renounce the occurrence of the Genocide and confirm Turkish territorial integrity. It is a claim Armenia cannot confirm and will not confirm, as both the Armenian government and the Armenian people hold. Turkey constantly declares that the Genocide of 1915 has not occurred and demands the same declaration from Armenia. Under such conditions, it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve any rapprochement. What is strange, is the fact that Turkey, more often than Armenia, raises the issue of the past when it comes to the creation of Armenian-Turkish relations. Armenians, however, tend to separate the past and the present and attempt to negotiate an economic cooperation between the two countries. It should be stated that Turkish businessmen pressure their governments to open the Turkish-Armenian border according to Jolyon Naegele, who states in “Caucasus: Burden of History Blocks Turkish-Armenian Border” on the web that, “...both sides are eager to resume direct trade and eliminate the circuitous travel and the middlemen in Georgia and Iran” (Radio Free Europe 1998). Certainly, there is a desire for rapprochement from both sides but still it is not as simple as it appears because the Turkish government is categorical in its statements against Armenia and it continues to connect the issue of lifting the blockade against Armenia with the Nagorno-Karabagh issue which has now given a fresh impetus to the Turkish-Armenian confrontation. Markar Melkonyan puts forward an alternative to develop closer relations with the “Turkish people” and not the “Turkish state.” In the article “Armenian-Turkish Dialog,” he writes, “The Turkish state should not be considered the representative of the Turkish people” (1993, 181). Certainly, it would be wrong to claim that all the Turks hold the same anti-Armenian stance, however, this issue is to be profoundly investigated – something that is impossible under the current conditions when Turkey is

closed to any Armenian. However, one cannot but note that whatever the difference that exists between the Turkish people and the Turkish State (government), still the nation-state of Turkey is the representative of its nation (at least according to the Constitution), and the official position of the Turkish state is anti-Armenian.

As regards Armenia, Turkish-Armenian reconciliation is also a problematic issue here. According to S. Hunter, "...there are differences of opinion in Armenia regarding relations with Turkey and the conditions under which Turkish-Armenian rapprochement and eventual reconciliation should take place... Second, the most thorny and divisive point is, understandably, the question of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Most Armenians – irrespective of political affiliation – maintain that, so long as Turkey does not recognize that this tragedy took place, normal relations will not be possible" (1994, 44). Still another support of this argument is given by Arsen Ghazaryan, the President of Armenian-Turkish Business Development Committee, who notes in "The Turkey-Armenia Relationship: Searching for Dialogue" on the web that the issue of Genocide stands as a major obstacle in such relations and for most Armenians the resolution of this issue is a priority, he even notes that the Armenian Diaspora in the United states unifies , "...the entire concept of Armenian identity around the word 'genocide.' This concept keeps American-Armenians active in many arenas by giving them a sense of common purpose and identity" (Türkiye 2002). However, the author notes that still the Diaspora, as well as the rest of the Armenians, are not against Turkish-Armenian cooperation. How this cooperation is to be achieved, there is no definite answer. However, certain steps have been taken from the both sides (more on the Armenian initiative) to "break the ice." The creation of the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Committee and the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission is a major step forward, although, according to the Turkish Press Review, it provoked dual reaction in Armenia, "Ultrationalist groups such as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)...had come

out with strong statements opposing this commission and all but calling its Armenian members ‘traitors.’” (Hale Akal 2002). This statement by the Turkish press demonstrates how the Turks themselves still view Armenians through the prism of history. Armenians, on the other hand, do not trust Turkey and find themselves at an impasse when they try to isolate the issue of Genocide from economic cooperation with Turkey. The demand that Turkey recognize the Genocide and apologize, and yet not be obliged to satisfy Armenian territorial claims appears as unrealistic to Turkey as to Armenians themselves. In his article “Facts and Comments” on the web Omer E. Lütem notes that the request by the Chairman of Armenia’s Human Rights Commission Paruyr Hayrikyan to annul the Kars Treaty, “... have created a very negative impact on Turkish public opinion, making impossible any kind of recognition” (Yayinlarimiz 2001). The author hints at the interview by the Armenian President Robert Kotcharian on the CNN/Türk television where President stated that “...if Turkey recognizes the Armenian ‘genocide’ and apologizes it will not create any legal grounds for territorial claims or compensation from Turkey.” It is evident, that the Turkish side appears to be exploiting the disagreement among the Armenian politicians on the issue to emphasize the aggressive character of the Armenian foreign policy towards Turkey and the desire by the Armenian side to discredit Turkey internationally. This disagreement certainly exists, however, the general attitude seems to be “moral retribution” if it may be so stated. The Armenians have the right to hold the Turks responsible for the Genocide of 1915 but it does not mean that Armenia has the intention to claim back the lands and view Turkey as an enemy. In fact, the issue of Genocide by itself places an enormous psychological burden on both Armenia and Turkey – a burden hardly possible to solve by setting the interaction between the two countries on the economic plane with no political and moral implications.

Chapter 5: Turkish-Armenian Relations from an Armenian Perspective

The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the point of what Armenian people themselves think about the prospect of the creation of Armenian-Turkish relations and what position they may take in response to the policy of rapprochement the Armenian government now pursues. In order to find it out, a pilot research undertaken by four second year students of the American University of Armenia (Graduate School of Political Science and International Affairs) is useful to investigate the subject. The research was conducted with Dr. Lucig H. Danielian as the instructor, and its main aim was the investigation of a small neighborhood in the center of Yerevan for the purpose of finding out the people's attitude to a number of foreign policy issues. The methodology of the research is explicitly stated in a separate section (Methodology) of this essay. Data was collected by means of face-to-face interviews with the members of about 120 households.

What is essential for this particular study are the results of data processing by means of the statistical program SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) which makes it possible to draw scientific conclusions and answer the last research question posed by this essay: *What are the prospects for the creation of Turkish-Armenian relations as Armenians themselves view them?* The information obtained from data collection consists of the responses to the empirical measures aimed to measure the research question of what the people's general attitude is towards Turkish-Armenian cooperation in the political, military and economic fields . The following questions were asked to the people based on the Likert scale of the following format: *I will read out a number of statements for you, please say whether you Strongly Approve (SA), Approve (A), Disapprove (D), Strongly Disapprove (SD):* Table 1 shows the format and the questions asked:

Table 1. Questions:

	SA	A	D	SD	DK ²⁴
Turkey is an important trade partner of Armenia.					
Turkey cannot help Armenia to get out of the economic crisis.					
An Armenian embassy in Turkey may be a step forward in Armenia-Turkish relations					
A joint Turkish-Armenian NATO project may ensure Armenian national security					

The responses to these questions are later processed by running frequencies on SPSS which reflect the opinion Armenians hold on the issue of Turkish-Armenian rapprochement in a number of spheres. Table 2 shows the responses to the first question:

Table 2. Turkey is an important trade partner of Armenia:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	17	14.2	15.0
Disagree	14	11.7	12.4
Agree	62	51.7	54.9
Strongly Agree	20	16.7	17.7
Total	113	94.2	100.0
Missing/DK	7	5.8	
Total	120	100.0	

²⁴ DK stands for Don't Know.

As Table 2 shows, the majority of the respondents agree with this measure if we combine Agree and Strongly agree answers (68.4%), whereas the number of those saying DK is quite low (5.8%). The second question reveals the following results as Table 3 shows:

Table 3 Turkey cannot help Armenia to get out of the economic crisis:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	35	29.2	31.3
Disagree	25	20.8	22.3
Agree	42	35.0	37.5
Strongly Agree	10	8.3	8.9
Total	112	93.3	100.0
Missing/DK	8	6.7	
Total	120	100.0	

As the table reveals, more respondents disagree (50%) than agree (43.3%) with the fact that Turkey cannot help Armenia to get out of the economic crisis. It appears that Armenians really want to establish economic relations with Turkey and view this country as a potential partner in this sphere realizing the importance of opening the borders and establishing commercial ties.

As regards the next question, which is about diplomatic relations between the two countries, the results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4. An Armenian embassy in Turkey may be a step forward in Armenia-Turkish relations:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	17	14.2	14.9
Disagree	27	22.5	23.7
Agree	58	48.3	50.9
Strongly Agree	12	10.0	10.5
Total	114	95.5	100.0
Missing/DK	6	5.0	
Total	120	100.0	

It is clear from the above table that the majority of the respondents tend to agree (58.3%) with the possibility of opening an Armenian embassy in Turkey. This testifies to the fact that the people are not against developing diplomatic relations with Turkey. The next table shows the results for the last question asked:

Table 5. A joint Turkish-Armenian NATO project may ensure Armenian national security:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	11	9.2	12.1
Disagree	19	15.8	20.9
Agree	47	39.2	51.6
Strongly Agree	14	11.7	15.4
Total	91	75.8	100.0
Missing/DK	29	24.2	
Total	120	100.0	

Table 5 clearly demonstrates the fact that Armenians, in fact, tend to accept the possibility of Turkish-Armenian military cooperation as well.

To summarize the findings of this pilot research, it is essential to note that Armenians are positively inclined towards establishing Turkish-Armenian cooperation, moreover, the people interviewed demonstrated knowledge and awareness of the Armenian foreign policy issues in general and its Turkish-Armenian aspect in particular. However, one should also speak of the limitations of this study which may not certainly be representative of the Armenian population as a whole. Besides it is cross-sectional – it investigates the subject under study at a definite point in time. A longitudinal study – showing possible shifts in public opinion over time – may prove more effective to reflect the general situation. Besides, the pilot research was conducted in Yerevan alone. A more large-scale research including a number of Armenian regions may be more reliable. Still, the Armenian people (at least those interviewed) seem to be willing to support the government's policy of rapprochement with Turkey, if the government decides to implement it.

To conclude the chapter, it is necessary to point out that this research dwells upon a quite sensitive issue for the Armenians – relations with Turkey which is a country rarely referred to by the Armenians with neutrality taking into account the Genocide factor. Therefore, before the start of the research one might expect quite a negative attitude on the part of those interviewed, however, the respondents demonstrated considerable knowledge and sound judgement as regards the political part of the issue. The answer to the question whether Armenia should develop relations with Turkey is positive, as far as the findings of this research show. Consequently, the main question posed by this pilot research may be considered to be resolved. In general, people are ready to support the government on its way to establish relations with Turkey. However, one should bear in mind the fact that by giving their approval to the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement, the Armenians have the memory of

the Genocide fresh in their mind. The observations of the respondents made during the interviews may lead one to assume that Turkey and Genocide still are inseparable notions for most Armenians, and the Armenian people are ready for reconciliation without preconditions but certainly with an emphasis on Genocide recognition – a moral right each nation is entitled to.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The time has come to draw a conclusion to this work and put forward a number of practical recommendations – something that has brought about the very idea of writing this essay. The point is that the topic undertaken for research in this work is not only of particular interest to a political scientist but it is also of paramount importance to an Armenian living in the region where the past and present merge and where different cultures, religions and customs put their imprint on the political set-up of the states involved in the regional dynamics.

Like the other two independent republics of the Transcaucasus, Armenia is now striving for national survival in a highly complicated world of independent states which have to decide for themselves which way to go now that the Soviet Union does not exist any more. Besides their domestic problems of state building, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia also face the phenomenon of economic, political and military interdependence which has become the rule of the game for smaller states. In this respect, Armenia faces but few alternatives considering the involvement of such powers in the regional politics as Turkey, Iran and Russia. Turkey is a country that is not only a neighbor for Armenia but also a source of mistrust and bitter memories of the past grievances. So that on the one hand, Turkey is viewed by the Armenians (certainly not all of them) as a potential ally and partner due to its

geographic position but on the other hand, it is also viewed as the perpetrator of the events of 1915 – an event not all the authors dare to call Genocide since Turkey continues to reject the very fact of its occurrence and refuses to recognize it. Certainly, Armenia holds a moderate position on the Genocide issue not to provoke Turkey to further hostility but the Turkish government is quite categorical and does not even want to hear about recognition and apologies without any preconditions, as the current Armenian government proposes.

As the purpose of this essay is to define the position and role of Turkey in the region of Transcaucasia, the preceding pages have come to prove that Turkey is not an outsider in the region, moreover, it is viewed as a desirable partner by the Transcaucasian republics (Armenia is not an exception) and it has more or less equal influence with Russia (although the latter may certainly be referred to as the dominant player) in the region. When compared to the chances of Iran in the regional influence, Turkey appears to have more weight considering the support it gets from the West (US in particular). Therefore, it becomes important for Armenia if not to foster the rapprochement with Turkey then at least not to antagonize this regional actor alongside favoring the other two (Russia and Iran).

However, there appears to be an impasse in the development of Turkish-Armenian relations, which today are inexistent, as a number of authors claim. Indeed, the past has still much to say in the relations between the two countries despite the efforts taken for reconciliation from the Armenian side. The position taken by Turkey is quite logical; this country fears any territorial claims (although now inexistent) on the part of the Armenians and tries to secure itself against future appearance of such claims. What can Armenia undertake under the circumstances? This is certainly a difficult question but this essay attempts to bring forward a number of policy recommendations which may have their share in the resolution of the Turkish-Armenian “predicament,” if such a resolution is feasible. It is essential to understand at the very outset that the Genocide issue has become primarily a

political one and consequently, it demands a political decision, a mutual compromise from the both sides, something Turkey is not ready for. There is a common argument made by a number of authors that these two countries should “sit down and talk” about the past, or the historians should discuss possible ways of reconciliation based on historical records. None of these options appears to be politically viable because each and every state first and foremost is on the guard of its national interests. Therefore, more practical and down-to-earth solutions are required to bring the both sides to a compromise:

- First and foremost, it is important to note that Armenia needs Turkey as a partner but as one of the political science students here at AUA once stated in a discussion on this issue, we are not in a desperate need for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Turkey. Certainly, Turkey may open the borders with Armenia and make the transportation costs much cheaper but there are always alternative “loopholes” for Armenia. Its relations with Iran appear to be on an even and friendly plane, so that Armenia may transport what it is willing to transport via Iran or Georgia – the relations with the latter are a separate issue for consideration however.
- Second, Economics, it may be said, has become an integral part of politics at least in the recent decades because any state needs resources to have political leverage and be able to bargain. Armenia, being economically weak, experiences multiple problems in its foreign policy as well. It much depends on foreign aid and credit – something that makes her vulnerable to a dependence on a number of external actors. However, Armenia now experiences such a period of instability in all the spheres that makes external assistance quite indispensable. The problem lies in the fact whether Armenia will use this credit to become economically viable and stable or the money will be used for current consumption instead of long-term investment in future prosperity.

Being an economically viable state, Armenia may have more weight in the regional politics.

- Third, Armenia may develop relations with not the “Turkish state” as Markar Melkonyan puts it in his article “Armenian-Turkish Dialog,” but the “Turkish people” – that is to say, Armenia and Turkey may have unofficial relations between the communities of either businessmen or intellectuals for them to discuss the future prospect for the improvement of such relations and further cooperation. The fact that the Turkish state opposes any rapprochement by putting forward its own conditions for Armenia (to recognize the integrity of the Turkish state) by itself poses serious challenges to those that opt for the establishment of Armenian-Turkish relations most actively. Certainly, the business people have their own considerations regarding the opening of the borders between the two countries but it cannot be said that public opinion in both countries is ready to accept the reconciliation factor.
- Next, Armenia may secure its positions by developing good relations with Georgia to have it as an ally in the region; it is certainly difficult to do taking into consideration current Georgian-Turkish military cooperation, as it is often stated. However, Armenia should pursue a cautious policy of neutrality and skilful manoeuvre to avoid taking extreme positions – on the one hand, there is Russia with which Armenia has signed multiple security and cooperation treaties. On the other hand, Armenia does not want another dominant regime and carefully escapes totally falling under Russian influence. The difficulty lies in having good relations with all the three regional powers but these relations should not be those of dependence. This is certainly a serious challenge to Armenian foreign policy.
- Further, the Armenians have to admit that currently there is a conflict between Turkey and Armenia because the former continues to connect the lifting of the blockade and

the creation of Turkish–Armenian relations with the Karabagh conflict. The national security of the country mostly depends on having a well-equipped and strong army ready to withstand possible attack from any hostile neighbor. Why? Armenia is located in the region where its very survival depends on its ability to demonstrate itself as a viable state attractive as an ally to the regional powers. Therefore, a strong army will constitute a necessary basis for Armenia to secure its positions against possible advance upon its sovereignty and integrity. The ability to make good friends and evade enemies is no easy task for our foreign policy.

- Last but not least, the Armenian government should let time take its course and not focus much on Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. If the Turkish government avoids the discussion of this issue, why should the Armenians vociferate their good intentions for reconciliation? It is much more effective to have constant ties with the Diaspora and unify our efforts in political bargaining. As the Chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America, Kenneth V. Hachikian, stated at the October 25, 2002 lecture at AUA, the Armenians both here in Armenia and outside its borders have to fight for the issue that is of greatest concern to them – recognition of the Genocide – it is primarily an issue of political bargaining which may be resolved with skilful strategy. If Armenians want to become a viable state, if they want to have the Genocide recognized and at the same time have diplomatic relations with Turkey, let them find ways to achieve it. The Armenian Diaspora worldwide and the US in particular is very active on that matter, it is essential therefore to build Armenia-Diaspora nexus on a firm and cooperative basis with a well developed communication system.

To conclude, it is important to note that at the present stage of the development of events, Turkish-Armenian relations are difficult to establish. Therefore, Armenia has to balance

between not antagonizing Turkey still more and being militarily viable to defend the Turkish-Armenian border. Although Armenia is involved in the great game where it is the powerful who set the rules, it is still a player in that game and it depends much on its ability to bargain and manoeuvre whether it will remain *just a player* or *one of the players with the most trump cards*.

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