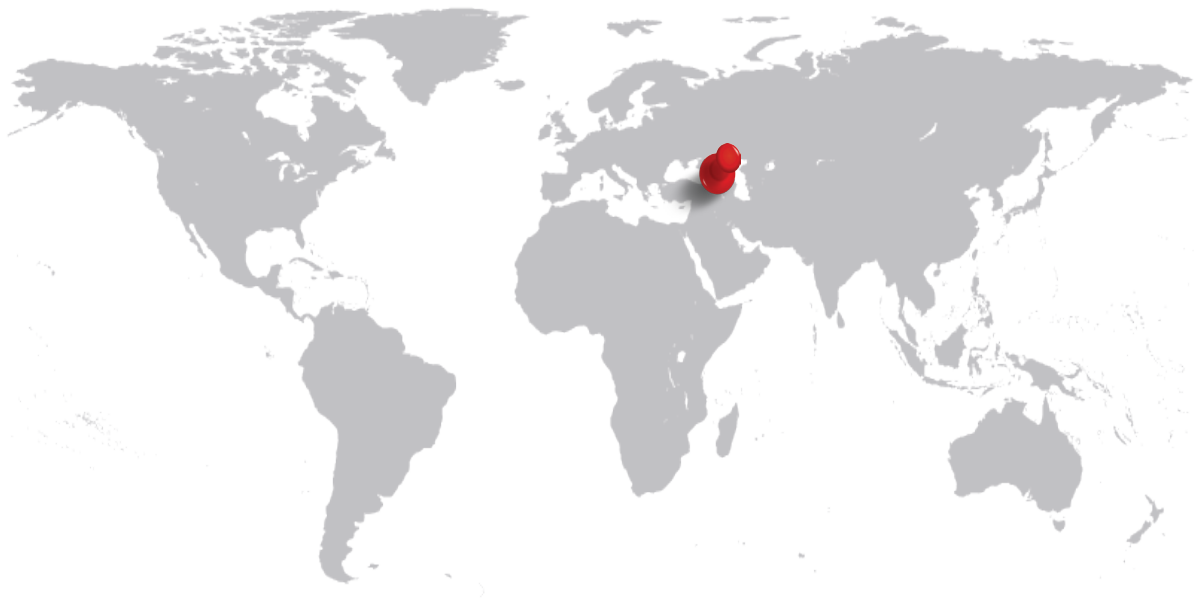


**Impact of the Current Situation  
in Nagorno Karabakh  
on Georgia's National and Regional Security**



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The Foreign Policy Council



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# Introduction

Georgia and countries of the South Caucasus are located in a particular place on the world's security map. The region is very important in the processes of building security and confidence by many global actors involved in the process of maintaining peace. NATO countries and their partners are extremely interested in ensuring not only security but also mutual trust based on understanding and cooperation. Hence the great emphasis on NATO's strategies in the field of cooperation around the Black Sea region. Every political event or conflict in this region is the subject of special attention and care by experts and diplomats in Europe

In recent months we witnessed a new wave of military activity resulting from the passiveness and lack of solutions over the frozen conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The last decades have shown that the engaged parties of this conflict and the countries behind them, could not find diplomatic or political solutions. This situation led to the war and another phase of the hot conflict.

To respond to these challenges, experts in Georgia try to find reliable answers and expertise to explain what and why it has happened. Another question remains – how this situation might affect Georgia's security and its cooperation with neighbors. Hence we would like to present an in-depth analysis. I'm very grateful to the group of Georgian experts for accepting our invitation. As the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Tbilisi, and in cooperation with the Georgian Foreign Policy Council, we bring a handful of considerations and analyses to a wider audience. In this way, we would like to contribute, at least to a modest extent, another brick to building permanent and constant solutions that could result in understanding what is happening and supporting peaceful cooperation in this region.

Our expert authors and their subjects are as follows.

**Grigol Julukhidze** outlines the chronicle of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Georgian Security Situation in the Context of Azeri-Armenian Clashes. He argues that nothing has happened that would seriously damage Georgia's relations with any of its neighbors. Both Azerbaijan and Armenia still need good relations with Georgia, and in each case this interest is mutual.

**Sandro Megrelishvili** and **Giorgi Gogvadze** – try to bring the answer to the question of why Georgia seeks to have an American Military Presence and whether this ambition is something achievable.

**George Medzmariashvili** reviews the need for Georgia's close involvement with NATO and the need for a qualitative expansion of US military-political support for Georgia and its democratic foundations. He writes that the relevant argument seeks

to substantiate the vital importance of strengthening US-Georgian military-political ties and Georgia's NATO integration possibilities.

**Emil Avdaliani** describes the Nagorno-Karabakh War and the Return of Great Power Competition to the South Caucasus. His opinion is that the second Karabakh war reflects deep structural changes that were building up in the region over the past decade. Russia's position changes as does Turkey's role. Armenia loses its meager change of foreign policy rebalancing, while Azerbaijan is victorious, though Azerbaijan will still be concerned by the presence of the Russian troops on its land.

**Nodar Kharshiladze** provides a very interesting analysis about Turkey, which has had its interests in the South Caucasus for centuries. Turkey's interests crossed with the interests of other major powers, specifically Russia and Iran, and rivalry with them meant expressing its strength in the region.

**Vakhtang Maisaia** shares his description of transformations in developing and understanding of true nature of Military Strategy and new realities. He argues that in this conflict we can find fresh trends in analyzing, planning, performing, and reviewing combat operations in the contemporary period. The transformation in Military Strategic Thoughts and Geostrategy is affiliated with a new conception of the Fourth Generation Warfare, adopted exactly at the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries.

**Ghia Nodia** provides inspiring expertise focused on what Georgia expects from NATO and the European Union. And **Volodymyr Kopchak** brings his thoughts on challenges and risks for Azerbaijan and Armenia with the Russian "peacekeeping" contingent in Karabakh. A new reality and threats are peeking out from behind both for the winners and the losers in this conflict.

I honestly hope that these lectures and findings draw the reader's interest and somehow can bring us closer to future peaceful solutions.

**Mariusz Maszkiewicz**

**Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary of the Republic of  
Poland to Georgia**

## **Chronicle of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Georgian Security Situation in the Context of Azeri-Armenian**

The years 1992-1994 proved to be crucial for the First Karabakh War. Backed by official Yerevan and the Kremlin, the Armenian military units of Karabakh managed to occupy not only most of the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Karabakh but even 7 adjacent Azerbaijani districts. With this, the Armenian separatists tried to create a kind of paramilitary buffer zone around Karabakh and the so-called front line. The “line of contact” was moved as far away from populated cities as possible into the depths of Azerbaijan. The victorious Karabakh Armenians declared the independence of the Artsakh Republic, which is part of a united Armenia in the vast majority of Armenian maps.

The conflict in Karabakh lasted from 1919 to 1920, before the formation of the Soviet Union. Armenia and Azerbaijan then disputed the territories of the Nakhichevan region, the Syunik region, and Nagorno-Karabakh, but negotiations between them ended with no success. After that, the Soviet authorities handed over the Nakhichevan side to Azerbaijan, Syunik to Armenia, and the decision on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh was modified several times, leaving Azerbaijan with the promise of creating an autonomous republic within the Soviet Union.

The confrontation between local Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Republic continued during the Soviet era and entered an intense phase in the second half of the 1980s, coinciding with Gorbachev’s “Perestroika” and “Glasnost” reforms. The government of the republic expressed a desire to join Armenia in 1988 but was refused. The Soviet Union itself did not have a positive attitude towards the demands of the Armenians, which strengthened the positions of Azerbaijan, although it contributed to Armenian nationalism. Demonstrations took place both in the capital of Karabakh, Khankendi (Armenian: Stefanakert), and in Yerevan. Despite the earthquake in the Armenian city of Spitak, which killed more than 20,000 people, Armenian nationalists named resolving the Karabakh issue in their favor as their number one priority. Both sides began to prepare weapons and harass on ethnic grounds. Moreover, sources of controversy arose even within the Soviet army and police based in the South Caucasus, although it was not until 1992 that the full-scale war came to an end. Backed by Yerevan and the Kremlin, the Armenian separatist movement has been able to occupy both the main transport corridor through Karabakh and Armenia via Lichin, as well as the other seven Azerbaijani districts, leading to ethnic cleansing and settlement of villages.

The Kremlin has not accidentally supported Armenia. Russia was looking for an ally in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan's political elite was of Pan-Turanian (Pan-Turkism) sentiments, electing Abulfaz Elchibey, a leader who wanted to get closer to Turkey, as the first president since the start of the Karabakh crisis. The Armenians, who were looking for weapons and allies for the war, quickly surrendered to Russia, which provided them with a large number of weapons, information, and technology. Russia's support in the war proved critical. The better-armed, organized, and consolidated Armenian army of Karabakh sank deep into the depths of Azerbaijan, leading to the overthrow of the Elchibey government, the coming to power of Heydar Aliyev, and soon, a ceasefire. After the war in Azerbaijan began to reconsider the mistakes made during these years. Corruption, unprofessionalism, lack of organization, and internal political chaos have led to the existence of up to 800,000 refugees and also the fact that Azerbaijan got seven more occupied territories besides Karabakh. One of the main weaknesses was the relative scarcity of technological and military knowledge in the Azerbaijani army. That is why the government of Ilham Aliyev has made the modernization and training of the army one of the number one tasks, which Turkey has been assisting with intensively, through joint combat exercises, the opening of training centers and the exchange of information, as well as the transfer of weapons. Turkish-Azerbaijani relations reached a new level when they created the concept of "one nation in two states". This approach expresses the will of Turkey to help Azerbaijan as a key ally.

In April 2016, clashes in Karabakh resumed for four days. Despite the advantage of Azerbaijan and its return of 8000 hectares of land, Azerbaijan did not gain a turning point. Maintaining the status quo was unacceptable, first of all, for Azerbaijan. Negotiations in Minsk did not yield real results.

In 2018, the Armenian government changed. Nikol Pashinyan became the Prime Minister who wanted to change the country's political stagnation. He also discussed some changes concerning Karabakh, although one way to resolve the crisis was to annex Karabakh, by merging it with the rest of Armenia. Positive expectations were further dashed at the 2020 Munich Security Conference, where President Aliyev and Prime Minister Pashinyan met. Pashinyan decided to continue the discourse of his predecessors - Karabakh is an integral part of historic Armenia, where Armenians have lived for millennia. International law, the international community, and international order, in general, have little recognition of history as a source of international dispute resolution. The logic is simple, if history becomes a source of re-establishing international order, then we will have to find a time point from which to produce historical disputes correctly. This will open a territorial dispute around the world like a Pandora's Box. Prime Minister Pashinyan mentioned the time of King Tigran II (95-55 BC) at the Munich Conference and said that at that time Azerbaijanis did not live in the South Caucasus at all. But if we take the Kara-Koyunlu period (15th century) and a



few decades later, Yerevan was one of the centers of the Turkic-speaking peoples. Consequently, the dispute is less acceptable due to its historical past and may even be quite dangerous.

2020 is also a crisis year with a large part of the world economy in stagnation and part in a recession against the background of the coronavirus. The same happened to the economies of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Two factors contributed to the escalation of the crisis: clashes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border (and not directly in Karabakh and its disputed territories) that lasted four days. This was followed by large public demonstrations in Baku; The population demanded that the Karabakh problem be resolved by any means.

On September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan began to restore state control over Karabakh. From the very first day of hostilities, Azerbaijan began to use Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones, which are used to detect and destroy complex targets. The drone is highly accurate, easy to operate, and very difficult to detect. TB2 has been produced since 2014 and is concentrated in large quantities in the Turkish Army. After the Azerbaijanis were able to acquire them and acquire technological knowledge, they achieved obvious dominance in the sky, which led to the so-called It helped break through the Line of Contact and occupy several areas south and north of Karabakh.

Meanwhile, Armenia found itself captive to its own victory. If Armenia were to annex the territory, then it would be subject to international sanctions and foreign support would be completely diverted in favor of Azerbaijan. Victorious Armenia was forced to follow the rules of the game of Russia and the Kremlin. If the Kremlin were willing to warn Azerbaijan, then the status quo could have lasted even longer, but it would have cost Armenia dearly to hang foreign political interests on the minds of Russia's political elite. Another problem they had was overconfidence. They did not allow Azerbaijan to either dare to launch a full-scale operation or, if it dared, to succeed. Accordingly, the so-called. The "Independent Republic of Artsakh" naturally found itself in a legal, political and military fog.

### Security Context of Georgia:

Like other articles of our publication focus on the political outcomes of Azerbaijani-Armenian clashes, I will try to answer the question: "How Nagorno-Karabakh War will affect Georgian national security?"

One thing is absolutely clear - Turkish influence has noticeably grown in Southern Caucasus.

Is it good? Hard to say because in this case official Ankara is represented in our region as the state actor with extremely self-oriented geopolitical interests. We can't say that the grown presence of Turkey has automatically brought more NATO to South Caucasus since Erdoğan's views mostly radically differ from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization rhetoric. However, the dynamics of modern International relations illustrate how quickly dimensions and circumstances may change in world politics. It means that in the future, a grown Turkish presence in the neighborhood of Georgia might become more NATO in the region. But this hypothesis fully depends on the political processes in Turkey.

Does the fortification of Ankara's regional status mean the weakening of the Kremlin positions? Yes and no.

Yes - because Russian influence over Azerbaijan has been noticeably diminished (Nagorno-Karabakh conflict dispute is more or less resolved and Moscow has relatively fewer instruments to influence Baku's actions) + another heavyweight state actor/rival - Turkey - has entered the South Caucasus region which is quite negative news for Russia.

No - because now Moscow possesses firmly consolidated positions in Armenia (despite negative attitudes of the vast majority of Armenian society due to extremely passive participation of Russia in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) and increased military contingent in the hostility zone.

But the outcomes are not only negative for official Tbilisi. The current status of the South Caucasus affairs shows that this region has only one state actor with pro-Western aspirations and options - Georgia (maybe Armenia has pro-Western aspirations but not options). This dimension provides Tbilisi with more opportunities to become a Western bridgehead, attract more investments, and benefit from intensified relations.

Another issue is the transit function of Georgia. Many experts claim that the potential termination of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will lead to the loss of Georgia's economic artery role. However, I do not agree with this opinion:

1. It requires a quite long time to re-establish Azerbaijani-Armenian relations (on a constructive level);
2. Azerbaijan will not build a gas, oil, or railway pipeline through Nakhichevan via Syunik, as these are very important economic dividends, and if you make it through the territory of a hostile state it means that you are holding its main economic arteries hostage. Imports of Turkish products in Azerbaijan reached 1.65 billion in 2019. A significant part of them was transported by land or air corridor of Georgia. If this is reality changes and the corridor diversifies, it will reduce the geopolitical weight of Georgia, but mostly insignificantly and will

not pose a threat to the existing gas or oil pipelines, which are one of the main energy arteries for the EU;

3. As The Foreign Policy Council Senior Fellow Giorgi Koberidze mentioned: “Georgia remained the only country that has an unchanging and unwavering pro-Western and independent foreign policy from Kremlin. What Russia has been able to do in Armenia and Azerbaijan, it failed to do in Georgia – despite the war in 2008, the Kremlin has not been able to remove this important Black Sea country from the Euro-Atlantic course.”

And at the end, I would like to quote Prof. Ghia Nodia who noted that: “Neither the war nor the conditions for its end have directly affected us. Both the ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in Georgia have supported their comrades separately, but they have not created problems with each other. Nothing could be argued. Nothing has happened that would have seriously damaged Georgia’s relations with any of the countries. Both of them still need good relations with Georgia, and in each case this interest is mutual.”

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*The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi, the Foreign Policy Council or the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center.*

## **American Military Presence in Georgia: Reality or Wishful Thinking**

*“We amplify our own strength, extend our presence around the globe, and magnify our impact while sharing global responsibilities with willing partners.”*

*President-Elect Joe Biden, 2020*

### **Introduction**

The very end of the decade was far from the best year that the Caucasus region and Georgia have witnessed before. The devastating effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's economic-social welfare, political turbulence, and division, waving, and uncertain international climate, and the great depression is the few that one put in the bucket of 2020. But in the high peak, the second war of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), ending with the victory of Azerbaijan, empowered Turkey and Russia in the region was the most alarming and warning momentum for Georgian policy thinkers and community.

The war triggered and steered the debate about the future of Georgia's national security as this conflict unleashed many things from Pandora Box. Namely, the issue of using force to solve territorial disputes, ignoring the existing diplomatic/negotiation platforms, and promoting the unseen level of militarism and nationalism in the region. The war has shaken the thinking in different groups in Georgia that war-mongering is on the horizon and the international community will not allow it to happen.

The basic question that this article is attempting to answer is why Georgia seeks to have the American Military Presence and whether this ambition is something achievable.

### **Throwback in International Relations Theories**

To recap, the second NK war triumphed the Realism theory and confined all competing schools. The essence and significance of the power and strength are still at the core of driving foreign policy at least in this part of the world (Caucasus region). To remind ourselves, what countries that share Georgia's characteristics in terms of power capabilities and size of terrain; population, and resources do in this realm and how it can better plan its foreign and security policy, we should go back and see the options of maneuver of the small states in this strand of international relations. To survive and secure sustainable safety in a hostile environment, the country might:

1. Have enough power, strength, and ability to deter and balance the potential hostile party that the latter would abstain from attacking or hindering the security of the said country.
2. Decide to stick to the hostile party and become the client state; this option is based on the goodwill of the encounter, that by fulfilling its policy desires, the small state will be granted a certain degree of independence and freedom.
3. Seek and join the alliances and partnerships to maximize the deterrence power in being in the pack.

For Georgia, the first one is the everyday homework, however less achievable in short-medium terms. Balancing the power in the region alone against Russia is inconceivable. The second option is out of the agenda and is in the recycle bin. Georgia fought its freedom from Russia for ages and being the puppet state is not an option at all. The third one seems to be a very rational and natural choice Georgia has today.

Georgian motivation behind the struggle to build up the security dome is to achieve the Deterrence by Denial. In practice, it means to dissuade an enemy by persuading it that the goal of its actions cannot be achieved. According to David Lonsdale, in the immediate aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, limited numbers of US forces were deployed to Saudi Arabia. The deployment of these forces had the ultimate objective of defending the Saudi kingdom from an Iraqi invasion. They would also act as the first component of a more substantial force, which had the larger goal of ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait. However, in the early stages of the deployment, the forces would have been insufficient to repel any substantial Iraqi aggression against Saudi.

Using this formula in analysis easily unveils why Tbilisi relentlessly tries to join the military alliance of NATO. It explains, why the country fought and fights in every mission under the NATO flag on the globe, as the sign of greater commitment to being an asset to international security and safety. It is politically clear, that being in the pack should be beneficial for everyone as each member should be a contributor as opposed to merely consuming the security provided by the effort of others.

However, when we talk about NATO, it is important to realistically understand the peculiarity and difficulty of the decision-making process within the Alliance (especially under the circumstance of unanimous policymaking). Georgia now faces the reality of dealing with enthusiastic and skeptical allies. It enjoys high support from a particular group of countries but struggles to convince others to include it as part of the Alliance. Georgia is viewed as a strategically important partner by all three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and the Visegrad Group (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia). Since Georgia embarked on an active process of reform in the early 2000s, aiming to consolidate democracy and become a constituent part of

Euro-Atlantic institutions, relations with it has become a key priority for each of the other country's respective foreign policy agendas. As for the US, it remains a key ally of Georgia on its path towards NATO membership. In 2008, it was under the leadership of the US, and member states that Georgia got a promise in Bucharest that one day it would join the Alliance. Yet, skeptics, due to the unanimous decision-making procedure, have the upper hand, and consequently, Georgia's chances for accession soon, at best, are quite low. That does not automatically deny Georgia the abovementioned third option, though. It can still seek reliable partners to deter its key opponent. Indeed, in uncertain times like this, the country must work hard to diversify its security options, most importantly, by stretching bilateral ties with relevant Western partners. In this quest, the US comes first.

### **The United States Foreign Policy in Crosscutting Agenda**

As the main driver of the post-Cold War international order, American isolationism belongs to history. Even political thinkers like Donald Trump could not reverse the US global leadership to isolationism. The new administration of Biden is greatly expected to put the US traditional foreign policy objectives back on track. In his op-ed for Foreign Affairs, Joe Biden discusses in detail why America Must Lead Again. Among others, he pays special attention to countering Russia. As he stated, *"The Kremlin fears a strong NATO, the most effective political-military alliance in modern history. To counter Russian aggression, we must keep the alliance's military capabilities sharp while also expanding its capacity to take on nontraditional threats, such as weaponized corruption, disinformation, and cybertheft. We must impose real costs on Russia for its violations of international norms"*.

The relationship between the US and Russia has seldom been harmonious. But, since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and its military involvement in Eastern Ukraine, it has reached the lowest point. Reset policies initiated during the Obama administration have reached little success, and Donald Trump was also unable to radically change the trend. The blatant violation of international norms and order, the annexation of Crimea and continuation of Georgia's occupation, meddling in the elections of Western countries, and overt assassination attempts on European soil have rendered restoration of a proper relationship impossible.

Whatever the true nature of the current rivalry, it is evident that countries like Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova are at the forefront of confrontation, and if Western states are truly keen to check Russia's military adventurism and its untamable appetite, they should demonstrate their firm resolve by supporting these states.

Indeed, the partnership is already quite strong with Georgia constantly receiving tangible Western support. On its part, Georgia has demonstrated both commitment and

earnest willingness to join the Western security club. Yet, the country is still short of real security guarantees. That could be fixed by stationing a US military base in Georgia.

## Overview of US military presence

The US has an enormous military presence around the globe. According to the Base Structure Report released by the US Department of Defense in 2018 (No further report has been released yet), the US military is based in 625 foreign sites. That includes 45 countries, among which, a vast number of military installations are situated in Germany, Japan, and South Korea. Some other sources, though, provide even higher numbers. According to David Vine, a prominent scholar in the field, by early 2020, the US controlled around 750 'base sites' outside the 50 US States. By all calculations, the US vastly outnumbers both its allies and rivals with its military presence abroad. Russia, for example, has around two dozen foreign military bases, spanning mostly over post-Soviet space and Syria, while China, despite its burgeoning ambitions, has only a single significant foreign military base so far (not counting the artificial islands in the South China Sea), in Djibouti.

For our analysis, though, more important is the effect of US military installments rather than its sheer size. Many allies and partner countries see the presence of the US military as of tremendous value for their security. American boots on the ground can be decisive in both successfully countering acts of military aggression and in deterring them. The latter is what many have in mind when seeking such a presence on their land.

The US has effectively deterred aggression in many instances. According to the Rand Corporation research conducted in 2020, there is a shred of ample evidence testifying to the deterrent effects of American heavy ground forces and air defense capabilities. Further, in a few instances, the US has also guaranteed the security of its allies/partners and prevented full-scale wars by rapid military deployment during crisis times. 'The United States can attempt to re-establish deterrence during the international crisis by surging forces toward the contested area. The historical record suggests that very few crises escalate when the United States deploys forces to the crisis region'.

Successful deterrence against aggressive adversaries, indeed, requires more than the presence of the foreign military. Indeed, deterrence is a very complex process, entailing not only military but also psychological components. Still, as historical evidence suggests, the US military can play a decisive role in guarantying security for its allies and partners.

## US-Georgia Security Partnership and Dynamic

We can objectively say that the United States is the strategic and key player in building the security and defense capability of Georgia. The US remains steadfast in its support of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In 2016, the new milestone was reached when the parties signed the memorandum of partnership in the defense and security field. The importance of this agreement was highlighted by the statement of the US Secretary John Kerry that the cooperation will enhance the partnership in border, maritime, and airspace securities. Since 2009, the United States engaged with Georgia at a senior level through the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission, which Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo last hosted in June 2019. Since 2009, U.S. Marines trained and deployed Georgian soldiers in support of NATO's Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan. Since 2015, Georgia has received over \$11 million in International Military Education and Training funding. The United States has \$238.6 million in active government-to-government sales cases with Georgia under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system. The Georgian Coast Guard received four former U.S. Coast Guard vessels, including two 82-foot Point-class and two 110-foot Island-class patrol boats, under the Excess Defense Articles program. In February 2017, the United States and Georgia launched the three-year bilateral Georgia Defense Readiness Program (GDRP). GDRP endeavors to improve Georgia's self-sustainable institutional capacity to generate, train, and sustain forces to defend Georgia's territorial integrity and deter Russia.

These are only a few figures that prove the closeness and high interest of the US-Georgia military and security establishment. One should also mention that Georgia hosts annual significant military exercises including the U.S.-led Noble Partner and Agile Spirit. Approximately 3,300 soldiers from various parts of the world, including 1,500 U.S. service members, participated in the exercise Agile Spirit 2019, co-led by Georgian Defense Forces and U.S. Army Europe.

To conclude, there is no great question or dilemma about the feasibility of having the US military presence in Georgia. It will not be the first and unique case in the post-soviet space. The question is about having a political goal and recourse to reach this objective. What Georgia needs now, is quadruple efforts in Washington, with various bi-partisan stakeholders and political centers. With a clear strategy, patience, and determination this can be achieved.

**Sandro Megrelishvili and Giorgi Gogvadze**

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## **The NATO/US Potential Military Presence in Georgia – Stabilization or Deepen Uncertainty**

In this article, I will review the need for Georgia's close involvement in the NATO field of operations and the need for a qualitative expansion of US military-political support for Georgia and its democratic foundations. To this end, the relevant argument seeks to substantiate the vital importance of significant strengthening US-Georgian military-political ties and Georgia's NATO integration possibilities.

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In the context of Georgia-NATO relations, at the level of observers and experts, internally, from time to time, alternative proposals are sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly expressed to accelerate Georgia's NATO integration, which will not depend on Georgia's actual control over the occupied territories. Such potential of the integration process may acquire even more prominent possibilities on the path of Georgia-NATO relations in the future. Even a new report prepared by a group of experts (appointed by the NATO Secretary General) - "NATO 2030: Together for a New Era" - states that NATO should seek to expand and strengthen its partnership with Ukraine and Georgia. Naturally, these processes are accompanied by many challenges, dangers, risks and obstacles, political actors, and agents of influence opposing Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

For a full and speedy implementation of the integration process, a model for Georgia's NATO integration might be considered, according to which official Tbilisi becomes the NATO member but Article 5 (collective defense) does not apply to the occupied territories until conflict and the Russian occupation are resolved peacefully. Such a precedent existed when West Germany became a member of NATO and 25 years later East Germany joined it.

There are concerns and opinions among some Georgian citizens and various socio-political actors that Georgia's integration into NATO in such form (that NATO recognizes Georgia's territorial integrity, but temporarily suspends the "one for all" point over the occupied territories and thus Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region will remain out of de facto control) will minimize the future chances of restoring territorial integrity, and in fact, will signify their eventual "loss". Such views and attitudes are quite widespread even in those parts of society which generally supports and advocates for NATO integration.

Below are the main arguments upon which I will try to dissolve the vision paradigm that is one of the main reasons for these concerns and negative attitudes toward such a model of NATO integration:

1. Georgia's greater and faster integration into NATO's military-security field, even without (at this moment, temporarily) the occupied territories, is among the long-term opportunities the most optimal opportunity to resolve conflicts in the occupied territories.
2. Experience full of recent historical-political and military conflicts and its analysis show that: with the current status quo and resources, Georgia is completely powerless to fundamentally change the situation for the better concerning the occupied territories.
3. Due to the current geopolitical situation and the aggressive-expansive military-political strategy of the Kremlin in recent years, the risks of further violation of Georgia's territorial integrity and loss of control over even more territories is high ("creeping occupation": consistent, targeted gradual arrest of local Georgian civilians, the capture of Georgian villages and the ongoing expansion of the occupation zone, etc.). There are also growing threats corresponding to the development and implementation of strategies aimed at provoking another fundamental and large-scale military-political provocation to further undermine, disrupt and occupy Georgia's territorial integrity, further weakening Georgia's statehood and hampering its aspirations and progress towards the Euro-Atlantic area.

For the above-mentioned high-probability risks, Georgia's military-political infrastructure and resources alone are clearly not a deterrent to Russia's aggressive interventionist policies. Therefore, the acceleration of the NATO integration process and maximum involvement of Georgia in its military-political space is vital.

- To protect the territory and sovereignty of Georgia, even within the borders outside the occupation zones, and to provide the necessary military-political support, which will be an important and accountable deterrent to Russia's occupation and aggressive military-political steps.
- The protection and strengthening of Georgia within its de facto controlled territory will be a significant step forward to make much bolder, stronger, more thoughtful, long-term development strategies on the path of economic-political and military development. This, in turn, is a necessary precondition for the stable democratic, economic development of the country and its successful euro-integration process.
- Stronger protected, developed, prepared, provides Georgia with greater chances of solving the problems of the occupied territories through mutual involvement and peaceful means.

It is necessary to understand that Russia continues its aggressive occupation policy, while in the already occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia it is slowly trying to implement annexation policy and their maximum integration into the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, Georgia is losing more and more political leverage in these processes.

The notion that Russia will relinquish control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and stop occupation once Georgia rejects NATO aspirations is completely unfounded. The irrelevance of this thesis is confirmed by every stage and stretch of Russian-Georgian relations for almost two and a half centuries. When Georgia stayed face to face with Russia (without an ally), the Kremlin always violated those agreements. What political discourse Russia has had towards Georgia over the last 15 years, it has always done the same historically. Consequently, any mandate of “trust” in Russia has been exhausted.

It is also a misconception that expanding support of NATO and the United States could provoke Russia. The analysis of recent years clearly shows the opposite: More the West reduced its military-political support resources in Eastern Europe, more aggressively Russia became, the more it faltered on the path to expanding support and partnership in Eastern Europe, the more Moscow used it as its own -to spread aggressive-imperial policies (2008 war and occupation, invasion of Donbas, the annexation of Crimea, etc.)

With strong military-political integration into NATO and maximum mobilization of resources and mutual efforts to achieve this, Georgia “signs” the minimization of the above-mentioned threats and the future creation of a much heavier and stronger political-economic, military-infrastructure “background” in the face of the challenges facing the occupied territories.

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The deployment of US military bases will help Georgia achieve the same goals and objectives that I have mentioned above. It will carry out a deterrent function against Russia's aggressive occupation policy, which will prevent Moscow's destructive, violent move and consolidate its influence in the Caucasus region and Georgia. It will provide Georgia with a relatively safe, less military-confrontational and military-occupational-risk environment for sustainable economic development and the implementation of key structural reforms in the political, social, or military spheres, which in turn is a necessary precondition for further strengthening and expansion of the Euro-Atlantic democratic economic-political values and institutions in the region. This is especially important in the light of the growing geo-economic and political field in the region in recent years, full of unpredictable, hostile, and dangerous challenges to democracy. Especially if we take into account the recent geopolitical changes -the Russian army,

in addition to Georgia and Armenia, is already stationed in the Karabakh region and is actually expanding and strengthening the geopolitical-military loop.

At such times, the strong, courageous, and qualitatively significant military-political support and assistance of NATO, the West and the United States become vital to the region. Because this is a region that is the only East-West corridor between Eurasia and Europe that does not pass through Russia or Iran, (On those political actors who aggressively hinder the expansion of the Euro-Atlantic democratic economic and political values in the region) but passes through Azerbaijan and Georgia. Therefore the South Caucasus is a critical East-West Corridor for power lines, telecommunications pipelines, air traffic, and potential rail lines. As a result, the growing comprehensive military-political assistance of NATO and the United States and the expansion and strengthening of the partnership with Georgia are vital to ensure the sustainable development of the region's vulnerable democratic socio-political and economic institutions. For the region to be able to fulfill the function of the above-mentioned important trade-economic and political corridor, in which economic and political processes will take place in a democratic, peaceful, free, secure, and stable environment.

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Naturally, it is difficult to talk about exactly when and at what pace it is possible to implement the processes of intensive expansion of the above-mentioned integration and military-political partnership. However, the purpose of the article was to demonstrate the urgent need to start these processes as soon as possible and to develop appropriate long-term strategic approaches for its practical implementation in the US and NATO. This is vital for Georgia-For a vulnerable democracy in the face of Russian aggression, which seeks to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic ideological-institutional and economic area, wants to make its economic-political contribution to it and thus strengthen own state-economic-democratic, independence, and national sovereignty as well as for the Euro-Atlantic area, for the future economic-political stability and strength of which the protection and development of democratic institutions and economic structures in the Caucasus region are extremely important.

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*The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi, the Foreign Policy Council or the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center.*

## Second Nagorno-Karabakh War and the Return of Great Power Competition to South Caucasus

Though Russia has long been the guarantor of order in the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan's recent military success in and around Nagorno-Karabakh has presented Moscow with a major challenge. Its approach of maintaining the post-1994 status quo between the two South Caucasus rivals was no longer sustainable. A new reality, reflecting a new balance of power, has emerged.

This moment has been a long time coming. Azerbaijan has raced far ahead in the regional arms race, managing to purchase high-tech weaponry from Turkey and Israel, all the while successfully quashing any attempts by Nagorno-Karabakh to gain international recognition. Russia has, of course, been selling arms to Azerbaijan as well, but its leverage over authorities in Baku had been in decline.

The 2016 four-day "April War" over Nagorno-Karabakh can in retrospect be seen as Azerbaijan testing out what it already judged to be its growing military superiority. Though the conflict did not lead to any major territorial adjustments, Armenia clearly saw itself on the losing side, with the then-president Serzh Sargsyan firing several top generals in its aftermath. Russia managed to play its traditional role of arbiter with a ceasefire negotiated in Moscow.

In the 2020 war, the territorial gains realized by Azerbaijan are a concrete manifestation of the growing military imbalance that was already apparent four years ago. Faced with a territorial *fait accompli* – with the reclamation of most of seven surrounding territories – Russia felt forced to openly legitimate Azerbaijan's gains rather than appear even more powerless.

Such a move, in the long run, would come with costs to Russia's clout in Armenia. As a full member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Armenia can expect Russian aid should its territorial integrity come under direct threat. But given that Nagorno-Karabakh is not even officially recognized by the Armenians themselves, Russia was not treaty-bound to intervene. Regardless, given that unhappiness with Russia was already rising after the April War, one could expect such feelings deepen especially as Russia is seen tacitly blessing Azerbaijan's victories.

Some speculate that the reason for Russian reticence was Moscow's antipathy towards Armenia's reformist Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who came to power in 2018 following the so-called Velvet Revolution and has since tried to foster deeper ties

with the West than his predecessors. The Armenians, trapped between Azerbaijan and Turkey, have no potential alternative patrons. The Russians, therefore, banked on a stinging defeat hurting Pashinyan much more than it would their own standing in the country.

A potential fall of the densely-populated core of Nagorno-Karabakh, however, was a red line for Russia. Such a defeat, sending waves of refugees to Armenia proper, could do real and lasting damage to Russia's reputation there. And by allowing Azerbaijan to reconquer all its claimed territories, Russia would lose one of its main sources of leverage in the region – over both countries. It's perhaps with preventing such an outcome in mind that Russia proposed putting Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zone.

As power balances shifted in the South Caucasus, some in Moscow might hold out hope that a victorious Baku would be grateful to its northern neighbor for supporting it. Moscow also may believe that it can manage to keep Armenia dependent while simultaneously strengthening ties with Azerbaijan through talks on potentially increasing ties with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the CSTO.

This scenario, however, is being checked by Turkey's bold policy in the region. Turkey's active support of Azerbaijan cuts at the very essence of Russia's role as regional arbiter. Anything that would otherwise have been seen as generosity by Moscow is now likely to be regarded as a concession to the Azeris. Russia has clearly signaled its preference that the Minsk Group format should be kept in place – a move that would keep Turkey out. Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has, on the contrary, demanded a seat for Turkey at the table. The result is a mixture – no official involvement, but Ankara is lurking in every geopolitical calculus. Ankara is pursuing a clear geopolitical agenda of anchoring its influence at the Caspian Sea at a time when Azerbaijan has become a major gas supplier, even surpassing Russia's position. Ankara also announced that it would not hesitate to send soldiers and provide military support for Azerbaijan in case such a request is made by the Azerbaijani government.

Surely Russia will remain a powerful player in the region, but it will probably no longer be the decisive one. In a way, this signals a declining Russian influence in the South Caucasus. Ever since the Russians helped to stop the Armenia-Azerbaijan war in 1994, the Kremlin has been instrumental in maintaining an uneasy status quo. The cultivation of good relations with both sides has been the backbone of Moscow's policy. Even when the balancing game did not work, as in 2016, it was still Moscow that compelled the two warring states to agree to a durable cease-fire after just 4 days of fighting.

Overall, however, the above trends underline Russia's changing position in the South Caucasus. It can no longer pursue its traditional balance of power policy, but it should

also be careful not to antagonize Azerbaijan – the process which could invite greater Turkish influence in the region, solidify the South Caucasus energy and transport corridor well beyond the Russian ability to intervene.

## Second Karabakh War Results

As the details of the Karabakh deal are being fleshed out, the stipulation on the new corridor through Armenian territory has caused great debate. Beyond the signatories of the deal, Iran and Georgia are particularly worried as any meaningful change to the connectivity patterns in the South Caucasus could harm their transit capabilities. The 2020 Karabakh war ended with major Russian diplomatic success enshrined in the November tripartite agreement between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia was signed. The surrounding seven regions were to be returned to Baku, while Russian peacekeepers would guarantee the security of the truncated Nagorno-Karabakh. Though the exact role is yet to be confirmed, based on the rhetoric from Ankara and Baku, some sort of direct Turkish military involvement on Azeri soil is likely to materialize.

More importantly, however, Turkey gained a land corridor to Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhchivan. The stipulation in the document reads: "Armenia guarantees the security of transport links ... for unimpeded movement of citizens, vehicles, and cargo in both directions" between mainland Azerbaijan and the exclave of Nakhchivan, which are separated by Armenian territory. Moreover, "Transport control is exercised by the Border Service of the Federal Security Service of Russia. By agreement of the parties, the construction of new transport communications connecting the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Azerbaijan's western regions will be provided."

The stipulation is a breakthrough for Turkey as it would allow the country to anchor its influence on the Caspian Sea and perhaps, in the longer term, look even further towards its Central Asia kinsmen.

This would create a major dilemma for Iran and Russia, as Tehran and Moscow have historically perceived the Caspian Sea as a condominium between themselves (plus the littoral states since the end of the Soviet Union). Potential Turkish involvement could disrupt this equilibrium and especially Iran's standing. However, this is highly hypothetical. After all, it would need years if not decades for this scenario to be realized and even then Turkish influence could not be as large as Chinese or Russian – two major forces in the region.

What bothers Iran is a potentially major shift in the region's transportation routes. For decades Azerbaijan has been dependent on Iran for transiting energy and other supplies to Nakhchivan. The new Karabakh deal could change it. Armenia will now

guarantee the opening up of a corridor through its territory to allow Azerbaijan to transport goods directly to Nakhichevan. Quite naturally, this limits Tehran's leverage over Baku.

However, Javad Hedayati, who heads transit operations in the Iranian transportation ministry, announced that Iran is likely to stay a favorable route for trade despite the planned opening of the new corridor. "Likely, this corridor will merely accommodate local traffic between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan," said Hedayati. Ankara has long been working on using the Nakhchivan corridor for geopolitical purposes. This is proved by the quickness with which the Turkish government announced the plans to build a railway to Nakhchivan following the November agreement. This comes on top of an earlier announcement of a gas pipeline construction to the exclave and underlines the seriousness behind the Turkish intention, at least regarding the section from the Turkish territory to the exclave itself.

Much, however, remains unclear about the new corridor on the Armenia territory itself. First of all, will the road be used by the Turks and Azerbaijanis only? Considering the level of mistrust in Ankara and Baku towards Moscow, whose forces will be controlling this corridor, it is highly unlikely that Azerbaijan and Turkey will be willing to commit large financial resources to rebuild links on the Armenian land. After all, will the corridor be the Armenian territory, or will it fall under the tripartite administrative regime? These are arguably the defining questions that remain unanswered. One could also imagine constant incidents along the corridor as Armenia will remain unhappy with the stipulation. Transit fees could soften Yerevan's position, but why should Russia be interested in the operation of the corridor? If the corridor is operational, these troublesome questions will have to be managed between the two sides sharing no trust in the other. These dilemmas were well summed up in the words of the Iranian official Hedayati. He stressed that Armenia could prevent Turkey's access to the corridor for the transfer of freight or passengers through Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan and further to countries to the east of the Caspian Sea.

## Georgia's Position

One country which is particularly worried about the potential development of the new corridor - is Georgia. Various pipelines, roads, and a major railway transit the country from Azerbaijan on to Turkey. This has been a backbone of Georgia's regional importance since the end of the Soviet Union and indeed served as a major attraction for larger players such as Europe and the US.

Quite naturally many in Tbilisi have begun to think whether this enviable position could be challenged. The consensus though is that in the short and medium-term no



reshuffling in the region's connectivity patterns is likely to take place. Even with the above-mentioned uncertainties around the new corridor resolved, many still believe that Baku and Ankara would not trade the already built and functioning railway and pipeline infrastructure, which runs through Georgia, for the Nakhchivan alternative. Perhaps the corridor will serve for ensuring local connections, perhaps limited trade (though highly unlikely).

After all, Georgia has been officially engaged in the trilateral partnership with Turkey and Azerbaijan for nearly a decade. The endurance of the format has been tested by changes of governments and region-wide geopolitical transformations over the last decade. Each country of the three needs others. Turkey wants a more stable Georgia with deeper economic and energy relations, while Azerbaijan needs Turkey's backing. Georgia, under pressure from Russia and, given that it is located between its two fellow members of the cooperation, dependent on transit, in turn, needs both Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Georgia also sees its position as straddling between two large regions – Europe and Central Asia. The 826-kilometer Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway unveiled in 2017 enables the delivery of cargo between China and Europe with a haulage duration of approximately two weeks. Up to eight million tons of cargo may be carried via the railway by 2025. Abandoning this transit corridor would undermine the efficacy of the South Caucasus transportation and energy corridor. This makes the extent of the Nakhchivan corridor quite limited. Perhaps, what the region is likely to see is the growing interconnectedness of the exclave with the Turkish territory. The emergence of a major corridor through the Nakhchivan is likely to happen if, at minimum, a meaningful improvement of Turkey-Armenia relations takes place.

### **Long-term perspective**

As the war ended, it is now possible to reflect on Russian aims in the South Caucasus. Thought by many as a victory for Moscow in its being able to station its peacekeepers, and in the truncated Karabakh, an alternative view might be presented.

First are the medium-term problems Moscow will be facing. The issue of the displaced Azerbaijani people returning to the recovered regions around Karabakh will be a tough process to navigate. Another challenge will be the safety along the division line between the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides, which now runs between Shusha and Stepanakert, Karabakh's capital. The proximity of both sides will put tremendous pressure on the Russian peacekeepers. Incidents of a varying degree could jeopardize the entire mission.

Though hailed by Yerevan as a guarantor of peace, the five-year term of the Russian peacekeeping mission is an uncomfortable reality for the Karabakh Armenians. As the stipulation states, both Armenia and Azerbaijan have a right to stop the extension of the agreement. Undoubtedly, Russia will work hard to make sure neither Baku nor Yerevan want to have the Russian peacekeepers head back home. It is also clear that Armenia, due to its poor military results, is unlikely to be a side to support a Russian departure.

Baku, on the contrary, could pedal this scenario. Though thankful for Moscow's reticent position during the war, resentment in Baku towards the Russian military presence, which will be unwilling to leave Karabakh, may emerge. This happened in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, and Azerbaijan is likely to be no different.

A long-term challenge, NATO member Turkey's emergence as a direct military player in the South Caucasus after 100 years, is a significant development that will influence Russia's calculus. Azerbaijan allied itself with Turkey and was victorious, a move made possible through Azerbaijan's decade-long military build-up and Turkey's continuous logistical support and training. Now, Turkey is considering sending its troops to Azerbaijan. Before the war, this would have been impossible. A great power competition is back in the South Caucasus.

Although there remain multiple questions on its successful operation, Turkey also gained a corridor to the Caspian Sea which could allow it to anchor its influence in the resource-rich region and, in the longer term, even look further, towards its Central Asia kinsmen. This creates a major dilemma for Russia and Iran, both of whom historically viewed the Caspian Sea as a condominium between themselves. They also aspired to project their influence over Azerbaijan, which is set to serve as a transit country for the North-South transport corridor stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Baltic Sea. There is also a great power status reality check. Russia's decision to use the peacekeepers' card is, in a way, an escalation of those options which were traditionally at the hands of Russian politicians. As a dominant power, Russia ideally should have navigated the differences between Armenia and Azerbaijan without involving itself directly. Acting as a power that dissuades from a war based on its prestige is what a great power position is all about. The Russian decision, however, could signal if not an immediate decline, then a limit of options. After all, Russia has been pushing for a peacekeeping mission for years, but it is symptomatic that this option was realized amid Turkey's growing influence and Azerbaijan's military preponderance.

For Russia, the Turkish military presence in Azerbaijan is a NATO military presence in its backyard. In fact, the West's reticence or rather inability to influence the conflict could be substantiated by the relegation of its position to Turkey. Ankara could be a major Western agent in the Caspian region. After all, does the EU and Turkey's connectivity and South Caucasus energy corridor vision not dovetail? In the age of the

Biden presidency and some signals on the possible rapprochement between Turkey and the West, the South Caucasus is the region where both actors' aims coincide.

Another long-term trend exemplified by the war is about undercutting democratic ideals and achievements made by the region's states. Take Armenia, its young democracy with high hopes especially after the 2018 revolution will have now be more dependent on Russia. For the sake of argument, here it is not whether the democratic model is better or not, but rather underlining the fact of incompatibility between an aspiring democracy and a large non-democracy such as Russia. Armenian leadership will now have to make extensive concessions to Moscow, which in many cases will involve backtracking in democratic values. Building a fair political system cannot go hand in hand with the Russian model.

The Karabakh war also signals regress in Western peacemaking standards. The western approach of conflict resolution based on parity rather than geopolitical interests has been trumped by a Russian alternative. Moscow is not looking towards a definitive resolution of the conflict (at least this is a tradition Moscow has been pursuing in other territorial conflicts), but rather towards its protraction, but under its close watch, to increase its geopolitical influence. From a Russian perspective, the country will continue to influence Armenia and Azerbaijan even to a much larger level than it had been.

The war also indicated the death of Armenia's attempts for multi-vector foreign policy. The attempt was already under immense pressure. Continuous failures were present all along the road, but the biggest manifest has been an over-reliance on Russia. Before 2020, there has been a gradual erosion of Armenia's multi-axial foreign policy efforts. 2016 fighting showed the limits. Armenian politicians tried to build ties with other regional powers afterward, but the Russian influence remained incremental. The growing reduction of symmetry of alliance culminated in the 2020 war with Azerbaijan when the limits of Yerevan's maneuvering abilities were underlined. But what is more crucial the war also has essentially killed any remnants of multi-axial policy efforts. From now on Armenia's dependence on Russia would pronounce with no viable geopolitical alternatives.

The end of foreign policy diversification leads to a wider question. The three South Caucasus states are divided by larger regional powers that signal to increased fracturing of the region. The return of Turkey and the growth of the Russian military might also mean the resurrection of great power competition where military power, infrastructure projects as well as economic might are all translated into an actual geopolitical influence harming the region's accessibility and limiting the hopes for a long-term conflict resolution.

The time when the West viewed the South Caucasus as a monolithic entity is now gone. A diversified foreign policy should be applied to allow to adapt to changing

circumstances on the ground. Policy toward the region's each state should be different and the West should become more geopolitical in its approach. Turkey's recent suggestion on creating a six-nation pact involving the South Caucasus states plus Russia, Turkey, and Iran, is a good indication of Western political regress from the region. The geopolitical vacuum is never left empty.

Thus the second Karabakh war reflects deep structural changes that were building up in the region over the past decade. Russia's position changes so do Turkey's role. Armenia loses its meager change of foreign policy rebalancing, while Azerbaijan is victorious, though will still be troubled by the presence of the Russian troops on its land.

**Emil Avdaliani**

*The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi, the Foreign Policy Council or the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center.*

## **The Future Role of Turkey in the South Caucasus Region in the Context of Ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh**

Turkey always has had its own interests in the South Caucasus for centuries, as the interests of other major powers, Russia and Iran, were crossed here, and rivalry with them meant expressing its own strength in the region.

Since Bolshevik Russia annexed the three South Caucasus republics in 1921, and consequently Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia became part of the Soviet Union, Turkey's interests in the region have shifted to the long term.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, for Turkey appeared wide opportunities to pursue its own interests in the South Caucasus again, in political, economic, cultural, and many other terms. Turkey has started active cooperation with two South Caucasus countries – Azerbaijan and Georgia, which made the very first steps of state institutions. Cooperation with Armenia was doomed from the very beginning due to well-known historical events.

The first event which demanded Turkish active involvement in the region was the appearance of pro-Turkish President of Azerbaijan, Abulfaz Elchibey, who was distinguished by a radically pro-Turkish position. However, Ankara's attempts were not so effective due to certain reasons. With the advent of the Elchibey authorities, Turkey was granted the most favorable treatment in Azerbaijan, and Turkish business received serious benefits. However, Turkey was not ready for such a geopolitical gift. As a result, by the mid-90s, pro-Turkish sentiments in Azerbaijan began to decline, and Russia, after Azerbaijan's defeat in the first Karabakh war, managed to seriously strengthen itself in this country, which, for obvious reasons, is Turkey's natural ally in the region. Real military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey begins already in the post-war period. In 1994, Azerbaijan joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program, and in 1996 Turkey signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the Military-Technical and Military-Educational Spheres with Azerbaijan, which provided training for the officers of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces at military universities in Turkey. Several sources attribute the signing of secret protocols on military cooperation to the same period.

In the South Caucasus Region the most difficult case for Turkey's bilateral relations Armenia. There are many reasons why those two countries have difficulties of coexistence in the region. One of them is a well-known historical past and the events of

1915, which Ankara does not still recognize as genocide. The problem between the two countries is also the border issue and as well as the ongoing conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

A new stage of Turkey's interest in the region begins in the 90s of the XX century when the Contract of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline was signed by the Presidents of 3 countries in 1999. For the first time, the idea of the project was expressed by the President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, during the visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin to Baku in 1993. It took Aliyev more than six years to put this project into practice. But it was this project that radically changed the geopolitical map of the region. On October 29, 1999, the Ankara Declaration was signed expressing support for the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and regulating the transportation of Caspian energy resources along this route. Since the signing of the contract of the century and the agreement on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia (Signed on the OSCE Summit in Istanbul on November 17, 1999), contradictions of force majeure (?) have arisen between Moscow and Tbilisi, which have led to the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation in the region, especially towards Georgia. The aforementioned Project negatively affected also on the relations between Russia and Azerbaijan. On the other hand, Ankara itself did not want to be perceived in Moscow as a competitor in the region. Turkey treasures its relations with Russia, with which it was connected by many projects from the Blue Stream (a gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey along the Black Sea bottom) to investments in the growing Russian economy and exports to Russia.

The August war 2008 between Russia and Georgia turned the balance of power in the region. Russia has shown that to maintain control in the South Caucasus, it was ready to use any means to achieve its goals in the Region. During the August war, the Kremlin checked Turkey's reaction by dropping two bombs on a military base in the district of Khelvachauri (Adjara), when Erdogan's plane was on its way to Moscow. There was no official reaction, but the territory of Adjara was no longer bombed and Russian troops did not appear since then there.

Immediately, after the August war, President Erdoğan started heading the Turkish government on a platform of stability and cooperation in the Caucasus. The key point of this platform was the item on improving relations with Armenia. What happened next was called "football diplomacy" when the players of the two countries met in a friendly match. The most interesting moment in this story is the almost forgotten proposal of former Foreign Minister of Turkey, Ali Babacan on an alternative route of the Nabucco gas pipeline through the territory of Armenia since Georgia has some problems after The August War. His successor Former Minister Ahmet Davutoglu wanted to produce an idea - zero problems with neighbors.

Azerbaijan's reaction was extremely painful. Baku not only reminded of the existence of the Karabakh conflict but also refused to sign a new agreement on gas supplies. The contradictions that arose so unexpectedly between Ankara and Baku showed that the Azerbaijani side had much more leverages over Turkey than could be expected. As a result, a reformatting of the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations took place, Turkey has revised the prospects for developing its relations with Armenia. In comparison to the signing of the Armenian-Turkish protocols in October 2011, Azerbaijan and Turkey signed 15 agreements, thereby laying the foundations for future cooperation to turn Turkey into an energy hub. In consequence, in terms of zeroing problems with neighbors, the happy end did not work out. The following events, such were: The Arab Spring, the Libyan and Syrian crises, the emergence of political subjectivity among the Kurds, three million migrants and a gas field in the Mediterranean had revealed many challenges and problems with almost all its neighbors except Georgia.

The second decade of the XXI century was quite challenging for Turkey. On the one hand, the growth of the economy, the implementation of large infrastructure projects, and the creation of new sectors of the economy have made Turkey a regional leader. But everything has its price, including success. Large countries might have large problems, and as soon as Turkey got large, it got large problems.

When the second Karabakh war has been waged Turkey has established a full-fledged strategic partnership with Azerbaijan. Unlike the beginning of the nineties of the XX century, when there were more emotions and white noise in relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan than a practical component, this time these relations were the result of many years of painstaking work. Turkey's assistance in the second Karabakh war is only the final stage of a multi-year plan to start a new stage of Turkey's political presence in the region. The basis of this presence is the economy. It is not just about Turkish investments in energy, construction, and trade between Georgia and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is also actively investing in the Turkish economy. Here we can give an example of the construction of the STAR petrochemical complex, the cost of which is estimated at more than 2 billion USD, as well as the construction of a container terminal on the Aegean coast, which will naturally be tied to the expansion of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. In 2020, the Azerbaijani energy company SOCAR ousted Gazprom, becoming the leader in gas supplies to Turkey. The integration of the economic systems of Turkey and Azerbaijan has been practically launched. And of course, regional projects - the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, and especially the South Caucasus gas pipeline with a continuation to the TANAP Trans Anatolian gas pipeline and the TAP South European gas pipeline.

As of time Russia viewed all of these projects as competing and hostile, however, the situation has changed. The annexation of Crimea and the hybrid war in the Donbass have led to the fact that the main routes for transporting Russian gas to Europe were under the control of a country with which the Russian Federation is in a de facto state of war. Moreover, interference in elections in some European countries and the United States led to sanctions that postponed the construction of Nord Stream 2, indefinitely. In this situation, Turkey turned out to be the only partner of Russia, capable of at least partially solving the problems that Moscow has been creating for itself all these years.

Cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan in the military sphere is also impressive. The level of military cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan is evidenced by the fact that back in April 2019, as a possible response to the US reaction to Turkey's purchase of S-400 complexes, the issue of placing the mentioned complexes in Azerbaijan was considered to avoid sanctions. Hasan Selim Özertem, Director of the Center for Security and Energy Studies of the Organization for International Strategic Studies USAK, assesses the period preceding the outbreak of hostilities: "The outbreak of hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia in July 2020 changed the nature of the Karabakh conflict. The clashes began in Tovuz, an area outside the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Unlike the 2016 four-day war, at some point, tensions temporarily eased even without a ceasefire.

During this interim period, Armenia and Azerbaijan continued to flex their muscles by staging military exercises. On July 17, 2020, Armenia and Russia announced joint exercises as part of the Caucasus-2020 exercise. They were followed by joint military exercises of Turkey and Azerbaijan. On the Turkish side, they were attended by elite units, drones, attack helicopters, and fighter jets F-16s. The exercise turned out to be very significant: it demonstrated Turkey's readiness to support its ally in the South Caucasus in the face of any threat. When fighting resumed on September 27, Turkish officials strongly supported Azerbaijan. "

A lot has been written about the role of the Turkish drones "Bayraktar" and other unmanned aerial vehicles. They played one of the most important roles in causing damage to the Armenian armed forces. An equally important role in the war was played by the special unit of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense "Yashma", the unit of the "Three Elements" (a brigade of navy seals, Special Forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Security and Foreign Intelligence Service (operated behind enemy lines). All these units were trained by Turkish military specialists. All these years, Azerbaijan bought mainly Russian weapons, but the Turkish side was engaged in the training of the personnel of the army and other power structures.

Throughout the entire period of hostilities in Karabakh, Turkey provided Azerbaijan



with both military-technical and powerful political support at all levels. In the Turkish media, news from the Karabakh front was the news number one. Also, an informational background was created, in which every resident of Turkey felt his involvement in this war. The victory of Azerbaijan in the Karabakh war brought also a significant bonus to the President of Turkey Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his party (AKP), which significantly strengthened their positions inside the country, receiving large support of their population (Note: In the last elections AKP ceded positions in the three main cities of Turkey, such are: Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir).

Turkey's support for Azerbaijan also had an important foreign policy aspect. In this conflict, Turkey has once again declared itself as an important regional power in relations with both Russia and the European Union. Turkey is actively involved in regional politics at a new level with the onset of the Syrian crisis. In essence, the war in Syria left Erdogan no choice, the threat to ethnically close Turkomans and, more importantly, the serious threat from the Kurdish combatants in Syria, who was a direct continuation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, forced Turkey to intervene, including by military means. Unlike Syria, there was no direct military threat to Turkey in Libya, but there was a threat to economic interests. The appearance of Turkish military bases in Africa (Somalia and Sudan) and, which is especially important, in Qatar also belongs to the second half of the tenth years. With the Karabakh war, the Turkish military officially formalizes its presence in the southern Caucasus. Erdoğan announced the updated plan of the "Peace and Accord in the Caucasus" platform, announced back in 2008. The plan provides for the joint responsibility of Turkey and Russia for maintaining peace and stability in the region, opening all transport communications and borders, including the border between Turkey and Armenia. However, here the Turkish President rigidly linked this issue with the recognition by Armenia of the existing status quo, and also spoke for the resignation of the current government of Armenia.

Thus, Turkey ensured military control over the security of its regional projects (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars, and South Caucasus Gas Corridor). Both Moscow and European capitals, primarily Paris, were shown that Ankara has no restrictions on the promotion and protection of its interests anywhere, including in the post-Soviet space. As a result, Ankara has created political preconditions for further promoting its interests both in Azerbaijan and in other countries of the post-Soviet space. In addition to traditional cooperation with Georgia and with the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia, the format of cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine is especially interesting. This format became especially active after the visit of Ukrainian President Zelensky to Ankara in October 2020, just during the active phase of the Karabakh conflict, and was confirmed at the recent Ukraine-Turkey meeting in the Quadriga format (Foreign Ministers + Defense Ministers). This is primarily about military-technical cooperation.

In conclusion, Turkey has traditionally played the role of regional power - successfully balancing East and West, and at the same time, has stayed an important member of NATO and a key ally for the West. Nevertheless, the last decade has demonstrated shifts in Turkish foreign and security policy, which became more obvious after 2016. Turkish position in Karabakh fits its logic and the outcome demonstrates some success in this path.

However, it is still unclear if Turkey has learned lessons from its mistakes in the case of Egypt and the early stage in Syria. Finally, does it have enough political, economic, and military power to act as an independent actor in the wider region?

This yet remains to be seen.

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*The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi, the Foreign Policy Council or the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center.*

## The War over the Nagorno-Karabakh and Its Geostrategic Implications

There are many transformations in developing and understanding of true nature of Military Strategy and new realities have delivered fresh trends in analyzing, planning, performing, and reviewing combat operations in the contemporary period of time. The transformation in Military Strategic Thoughts and Geostrategy is affiliated with a new conception of the Fourth Generation Warfare, exactly adopted at the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries. According to some academic conceptualizations – Fourth Generation Warfare is defined as military conflicts that involve the following elements:

- High technology (military drones, precise munition, armored fighting vehicles, rocket projections, non-contact combat strategy, etc.);
- Terrorism as tactics;
- A non-national or transitional base;
- A direct attack on the enemy's culture;
- Highly sophisticated psychological warfare, especially through manipulation of the media;
- Delivery of a high-intensity, short-duration attack and creating a sense of vulnerability, debilitation, and abasement in the enemy.

In addition to that as a part of Fourth Generation Warfare, a non-combat tactical element is being considered – Drug smuggling case as Actor-Centered one. There is quite a new approach to what are to be formulating in waging a war and what kind of criteria for the Fourth Generation Warfare are to be considering. How far the Military Strategy has been shifting since the classical period of its origination since the 18th century till the 21st century. In that regard, it is interesting to stress that the Fourth Generation Warfare includes elements of Asymmetric Warfare doctrine that is very plausible for waging wars in the 21st century. According to some academic sources, there are many different definitions of the doctrine, but one of them: Asymmetric Warfare – is the war between belligerents whose relative military power differs significantly from or whose strategy or tactics differ significantly. This is in contrast to symmetric warfare, where two powers have similar military power and resources and rely on a strategy that is similar overall, differing only in details and execution. The popularity of the new war theory in strategic studies, labeled as “hybrid war” is being determined by the importance of globalization effect on global security and contemporary international relations system. Here is to be considered a hybrid war phenomenon. Having considered several assumptions, it is possible to identify a definition of

the hybrid war - hybrid war is primarily based on the ability to target distant objects and processes through non-traditional military means, particularly those critical to state and military functions. It is important to admit that hybrid war is waging mainly between state and non-state opponents (including terrorists, like “Taliban”, DAESH, etc.) that is fully corresponded to realms of the fourth war generation. Herewith is being interested to present the author’s view on the identification of hybrid war. Hybrid War Concept – method of waging combat operations by coercive power elements with non-military means and with insurgency tactical components pursuing the goal of destroying and demoralizing excessive enemy forces and subverting their will for further resistance. Hence, hybrid war is an indispensable component of the Fourth War generation concept aiming at destructed enemies’ political will and culture for continuous further resistance. In this respective manner, the combination of the modern warfare strategy could be identified as the following: High Technology + Short Duration + Flexibility + Mobile Forces + Deception. Hence, it became important to identify what does mean term and jargon “Geostrategy”. There are two definitions of the term “Geostrategy” and both indicate how politics is connected with military art and strategy. Here are the definitions:

- Geostrategy - geopolitical analyses in aegis of military scrutiny of processes;
- Geostrategy - the traditional balance of power jargon that defined global geopolitical configuration in light of military parameters.

The geostrategic analysis could be realized in conjunction with concrete instruments and tools and hence is possible to augment in ways of concrete implications –those indicators and independent variables qualifying geopolitical analysis with military review exact environment of the area and creatures of the process or event taking place in that one. In this context is possible to elaborate on the following implications for truly realizing the consequences and specifics of the Nagorno-Karabakh recent war and how the one reflects on the geopolitical configuration at any level. Herewith there are concluded the following geostrategic implications:

- Historic prerequisites of the Nagorno-Karabakh war;
- Politico-military environment and its provision;
- New threat and risk perceptions and consequences;
- Military doctrinal features of key geostrategic actors (in the case of the Russian Federation).

### **Historic prerequisites of the Nagorno-Karabakh War – 2014 Scenario**

The Nagorno-Karabakh war inspiration roots were derived from the exact duration period, namely since 2014. “De-frozen” process regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh started all of sudden when the situation deteriorated in Nagorno-Karabakh in midst of July of 2014 when positional combat clashes took place between the Armenian and Azerbaijani Armed Forces along with state borderlines. The most drastic events

occurred on the night of August 2 to August 3 when both sides, at first times, during the confrontation phase that started in September of 2013 intensively used heavy armaments starting with massive launch artillery systems (minimum calibre of 120 mm) ended up with frontline strike jets. The confrontation stage reached its ultimate level and it was supposed to be started the inter-state war between Armenia and Azerbaijan with the involvement of regional powers, like the Russian Federation and Turkey. It is interesting fact stress that in case of further deterioration situation over Nagorno-Karabakh that includes occupied territories around of the break-away region (about 7 internal regions of Azerbaijan), the combat actions from both sides – Azerbaijani regular Armed Forces and Territorial Defense Forces of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic are to be converted into a full-scale war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In 2010 accord to the renewed Military Doctrine of Armenia in case if combat actions became intense and regular, the Armenian National Armed Forces would be taking part in the warfare interactions as a full-pledge side and will be supporting fully local Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian para-military formations (the Nagorno-Karabakh local Armed Forces count with 15 thousand servicemen, plus local reserve combat potential in about 50 thousand reservists, 40 entities of combat tanks, like T-72 and T-55, 70 armored vehicles BTR-60 and BTR-70 and 50 BMP-2/3 entities, massive launch artillery system GRAD and SMERCH – 2- entities, 10 combat helicopters, mainly MI-8 and MI-24 entities and Air Defense systems, including ZSU-23 “Shilka”, TOR-1M and G-19 Anti-Aircraft Guns, around up to 30 entities). What is important – the combat capability ratio between Armenia and Azerbaijan reaches up score 1:4 in favor of the Azerbaijani side. It means that Armenia has taken responsibility at a national level to provide complete defense protection with its ethnic compatriots in the break-away region and directly confront Azerbaijan. It means that in case of a probable full-scale war scenario, the official Yerevan authority is ready to declare the Nagorno-Karabakh as its territory and annexed the region similar to the Crimean case done by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The first military conflict scenario in Nagorno-Karabakh was going as the conflict between Azerbaijan state and secessionist Armenian enclave and the conflict did not go beyond the regional frames. At that time, the conflict re-inspiration had to be overgrowing into a more catastrophic scale and spill over into other regional areas. The conflict was engraved into parameters to full-scale Local War scenario when several regional countries were engaging in combat operations with all available means.

By that time (1994) if the conflict into Nagorno-Karabakh was supposed to be re-escalated again, in the South Caucasus emerges coalition confrontation scenario where on one way, two regional states aside into one coalition – Armenia + Russia against Azerbaijan + Turkey. Iran's position was still unclear however backed to the previous conflict case in 1992-1994 in Nagorno-Karabakh, official Tehran could have opted for the Armenia and Russia coalition. As for, Georgia, the country due to its geopolitics

would not be sided to any coalitions and is to be neutral and moderate the conflict resolution deal. Coalitional warfare perceives because of considering the configuration of actors in conjunction with geopolitical and international legal aspects. Notable, Armenia and Russia are members of the military alliance – Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and both of them are obliged to provide common defense and protect each other side in case of foreign aggression per bilateral interstate agreement packages. In addition to that the Russian Armed Forces contingent – 102nd military base with 5 thousand servicemen and reinforced of various heavy armament and 388th Air Squadron deployed (reinforced with fighter jets of 4th + generation MIG-29/ MIG-31 two wings) at Yerevan airport along with the special representation of the FSB officer staff in Armenia could be considered as the most plausible argument for arguing on Russian support to Armenia in case of a full-scale war against Azerbaijan, at least to block Turkey from direct support to Azerbaijan. On other hand, Turkey and Azerbaijan arranged a common defense pact agreement on mutual defense and assistance in case of aggression from a third party (actually Armenia) in 2010. This is a pure case of creating a regional alliance against another similar alliance. Moreover, Turkey and Azerbaijan were cooperating very close in the field of special services coordination and running joint projects in the military-industrial complex and production of joint combat armaments. The combination of geostrategic balance at the regional level is very fragile and having considered the fact that negotiations between Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan Serzh Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev ended up with no results in Sochi with the mediation of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on August 9 of 2014, the war game scenario development in the nearest future was very high. Both sides were ready to demonstrate their willingness in launching massive combat operations to pursue their survival national interests at any merits. At that time, confrontation modality between parties in aegis of the military dimension was seemed to be described as Low-Intensity Conflict. There were some indications and motivations why Armenia and Azerbaijan could have run into war against each other and what were key features of that confrontation development:

- Historic roots of the conflict inspiration, including Soviet legacy tragic episodes in 1923-27 and in 1988-1990 period of times, between two states over Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; Ethnic rivalry and political disarray in geopolitical relations between the states;
- Global shifts in the contemporary world order and global confrontation between international geopolitical powers (EU/USA versus Russia/China) that makes it possible to re-frozen those international conflict zones evolved since 1990. Misbalancing of power distribution at global levels leads toward the emergence of more fierce conflicts never perceived before, like Crisis in Ukraine, Israel-Palestine renewed confrontation, emergence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Russia-USA new Cold War scenario, etc.;

- In both countries the existence of an authoritarian type of administration and non-liberal democracies provisions at the political national systems. A theory upon which democratic states less prone to wage wars seems to be true;
- Decline possibility of running prominent geo-economic projects (like suspension of realization “NABUCCO” pipeline) and torpedoing stimulation of economic and business environment at the regional *level in South Caucasus make more real to inflame political conflicts in the area.*

All the above-mentioned perspectives were not indicators that the processes over Nagorno- Karabakh would have been developing namely in that way or have the consequences of confrontation scenario. However, the recent political landscape in the South Caucasus is indicating conspiracy modality from all parties having concrete interests toward the conflict zone that could endanger the security environment in the area stemming from the period of time, exactly since 2014.

### **Politico-Military Environment and Its Provision**

The Nagorno-Karabakh local war ended up on 10 November 2020 has illuminated an interesting new geostrategic environment at regional and global levels. The war shifted geopolitical realities and caused the emergence of new military-political alliances with concrete actors' involvement. The post-war configuration provoked boosting up and broken out the existence of several alliances, mainly informal. In this regard, there is envisaged to foster the following politico-military alliances, like this:

- **“Trilateral Alliance” with involvement Pakistan-Turkey-Azerbaijan:** the Caucasus and Central Asia states are becoming new alliances coordinating their efforts and military cooperation in the war period. The bilateral strategic partnership in military policy between Baku and Ankara was officially declared in 2010 when a relevant agreement on strategic partnership and cooperation was signed up in Turkey between two presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan. According to Article 2 of the agreement just based on the principle of collective defense and Article 3 of the agreement stipulated launching the joint partnership in promoting military-industrial capabilities. Namely due to the legal parity the “trilateral” alliance demonstrated rigidness and boldness positions and the factors are became vital in the operational-tactical victory of Azerbaijani Armed Forces over the enemy in the local war over the Nagorno-Karabakh. This is a case of minor regional powers alliance compounding two vital from international security perspective regions – the Caucasus and Central Asia. Given their rather limited capabilities, minor powers may have a strong interest in alliance commitments not only to enhance their military security but also to obtain a variety of nonmilitary benefits, such as increased trade or support for domestic

political regimes. One of the problems with alliance bonds is, however, that allied support often requires minor powers to make significant autonomy concessions, allowing allies, most notably major-power allies, to gain influence over their minor-power alliance partners. The Turkish military has presumably taken part in the combat operations via managing and controlling those drones exploited by the Azerbaijan Armed Forces during the war, including Turkish origin drone “Bayraktar TB2” (exactly these drones, around 6 entities were delivered to Azerbaijan from Turkey on 16-17 July 2020). Sometimes ago, the Turkish military companies “ASELSAN” and “Turkish Aerospace Industries” signed up a contract with \$240 million for delivering special avionic techniques to Azerbaijan for modernization its AirPower capabilities consisting of the strike and transport helicopters MI-24, MI-35M, MI-8, and MI-17 as well as combat aircrafts SU-25 and MiG-29. Moreover, on 20 July 2016, the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev signed up a special decree on handing over military camp “Gizil Shirak” and airbase “Nasosnaya” to Turkish strategic partner for further deployment of the military bases in the country (presumable in nearest future a similar military base could be opened in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic). Regarding the military-strategic partnership between Azerbaijan and Pakistan – several dozen of the Azerbaijani officers were trained and equipped in Pakistan and Islamabad officially delivered to Baku five entities of training aircraft “Super Mushek” and in addition to that two countries also have formed special memorandum on sharing intelligence and operational pieces of information and coordination in defense policy planning and providing military assistance from Pakistan to Azerbaijan. The alliance is pursuing also other geostrategic missions to foster Islamic community defense capabilities and also promoting joint energy security interests, mainly its links with the TAP project where Azerbaijan can also join as an energy supplier together with Turkmenistan. Pakistan military intelligence – Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) had once got involved in the regional affairs during the two military Chechen campaign and even Pakistani military intelligence regional station even deployed and being active in Pankisi Gorge in Georgia in 200-2003. Moreover, in that period, many Pakistani citizens were engaged in combat activities on the Chechen rebel side as mercenaries and there are some rumors about Pakistani warriors’ engagement in the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh;

- **“Trilateral Alliance” with involvement Ukraine-Turkey-Azerbaijan:** the informal “GUAM” similar alliance has also developed mainly on 16 October 2020 when the President of Ukraine paid an official visit in Baku and aegis of bilateral negotiations signed up several very important agreements, including on military-strategic partnership, with his Azerbaijani colleague Ilham Aliyev. The agreements included one important document, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the promotion of strategic cooperation field of military industry



and namely on development and production of special radio equipment for missile systems, for navy and land forces, and armored vehicles. A month before, on 14 September 2020, the President of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky signed up decree#392/2020 on adaptation new National Security Strategy. In the document, Ukraine recognized Azerbaijan as strategically (including as a key military partner) in promoting regional security and pursuing the national interest of Ukraine. It is real momentum for identification of the ally partnership case as a prerequisite of setting up a military regional alliance where Turkey is to be considered as a centre and “military hub” of the alliance as on the other side Turkey and Ukraine are also considering themselves as key allies. Turkey promotes strategic partnerships with Ukraine in the military-industrial sphere and as a key and decisive partner for promoting the so-called “non-recognition policy” toward Crimea status. As for Turkey-Azerbaijan’s strategic allied partnership it was mentioned and identified above.

At least these two facts were a true consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh wargame as well as the more rising strategic partnership between Russia and Turkey that has been starting since 2017 in Syria. “The Syrian” experience was successfully implanted into the Caucasus reality and a joint patrolling agreement signed up between Defense Ministries of two states on 11 November 2020 is a vivid case of the reality. In addition to that, the next politico-military consequences of the war were declaration and proposition by the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Baku whilst attending a joint military parade with the involvement of 2500 militaries of both countries in commemoration of victory in Nagorno-Karabakh of Azerbaijan. He rolled out of setting new regional security modality with the formula: “3+3” with the involvement of three local actors (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia) and three regional hegemons (Turkey, Russia, and Iran). This imperative modality imposed by the Turkish side is, at the time being, promotes more on strategic stance its national interests. Russia fully accepted the initiative via President Putin’s consent whilst sharing his position during the phone call dialogue with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan but Georgia’s official government declined the one. Hence, the Nagorno-Karabakh war namely increased Turkish-Russian strategic alliance not only in MENA but also in the aegis of the Black Sea region.

### **New Threat and Risk Perceptions and Consequences**

In that context is important to review Migration conjunction in aegis of the military conflicts at the regional level. The Caucasus region case where latently developed more than 40 ethnopolitical conflicts and two already re-frozen conflicts, one regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh zone is a vivid illustration of creating an “instability arch” nearby to the EU neighborhood. The Caucasus region is increasingly becoming

a priority on the international agenda. In fact, a regional approach is emerging as actors understand those common problems that need to be addressed jointly. Nevertheless, cooperation efforts are hampered by several factors, such as uneven economic and political development within and among countries, nationalist forces, and longstanding animosities between regional players. In this context, it is imperative to foster sound policies aimed at strengthening dialogue and cooperation to contain and ultimately resolve conflicts with peaceful means. However, there is little policy-oriented research on the challenges and opportunities for cooperation in the Caucasus region. The purpose of this speech is to assess the impact of terrorism and its dangers, as an asymmetric military threat, towards the Caucasus region – in November of 2017, occurred so-called “Ahmed Chataev voyage” to Georgia and a massive anti-terrorist operation in the downtown of Tbilisi was a clear illustration of so-called “Black Transit” case-study. The work also describes the significance of international terrorism and its general definitions. Besides, the result and findings are based on theoretical studies and assumptions and the result of the analysis of the “Case Study” of the Caucasus region. The case study examines how the Caucasus region influences the spread of terrorism and what threats it poses for this region. Furthermore, the aspects of what makes the region important in the international arena are analyzed and the existent and potential security issues are examined, as well as the strategic importance of the region for the EU and NATO is analyzed even from the academic framework – “Securitization” theory. The theory is based on security studies’ conceptual background and the background spectrum includes the Copenhagen School and Critical security studies as the type. Having considered the modality it is perceived so-called “Asymmetric Military Threats” deteriorated situation in the region. In that case is to underpin that one of the main types of the Migration – notable, “combat migration” could be treated as a case of Asymmetric Military Threat. The threat is perceived in conjunction with the war scenario that erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh territory where according to some media sources both sides getting involved in support of themselves various types of mercenaries from Syria and Iraq (for instance, according to “The Economist”, the evidence is mounting that Turkey has sent hundreds of Syrian mercenaries to fight in Azerbaijan).

The real war over Nagorno-Karabakh, which began on 27th September 2020, has been less telegenic. Hundreds of people, most of them soldiers, are already believed dead. The fighting is the worst since 1994 when ethnic Armenian forces seized Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding Azerbaijani districts after a conflict that saw tens of thousands killed and a million people displaced. Regarding the conflict or more precisely, war further escalation is possible to perceive development and occurrence of the following Migration types at the regional level, having considered among above-mentioned classification:

- Illegal Migration;

- Combat Migration;
- Social Migration

Reviewing the factors is necessary, at least in the frame of the conference identify and create new criteria and international legal framework for this new typology of Migration and set up a legal background on how to confront them due to the 21st era globalization provisions. Moreover, jihadist mercenaries are to be the key implication for the further destabilizing situation in the region. The numbers of the mercenaries could be counted about 2000 or 3000 ones involved in combat operations and delivering them from Turkish Gaziantep to Nagorno-Karabakh that was mentioned by the President of France Emmanuel Macron at the EU Summit in October 2020.

### **Military Doctrinal Features of Key Geostrategic Actors (On Case of the Russia Federation)**

The post-Nagorno-Karabakh war period is vital considering regional hegemony actors' military conceptual and strategic planning indications to predict how they could affect regional security in the nearest future. Currently, the regional hegemons are Iran, Russia, and Turkey and therefore their military concept, doctrine, and strategy analysis are critical to review and scrutiny for understanding and further motivation of engagement. Initially becomes omnipotent to considering what were the geostrategic missions and tasks for Russia for intervening in the Nagorno-Karabakh war scenario and enforced peace over the parties. Really the Russian Armed Forces are performing in Nagorno-Karabakh so-called "peace enforcement" combat operation and these tasks before engagement were the following:

1. Having considering geostrategic principle "military prevention" diminish further attrition of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan inside in depth in Nagorno-Karabakh n ceased combat activities near city Shisha (military method – operation "peace enforcement"); Disarmament, disband and liquidation mercenaries and jihadists who emerged in Nagorno-Karabakh when the war started. By the way, namely Russia and France leadership proclaimed about existence in the area those mercenaries taken from Syria;
2. Reinforce Russia's military influence in the South Caucasus and taking up a monopoly in aegis of the geostrategic rim: the Black Sea-the Caucasus- the MENA;
3. Suspend military expansion of Turkey in the South Caucasus via military involvement and create favorable to Moscow balance of power.

Since 1 December 2014 in Moscow, it has been starting to operate a new strategic operational center for managing the Armed Forces – National Center for Operations. The Center was built in 333 days and is ready to work for 24 hours regime. The Center was paid an official visit by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin who was chairing the session of the National Security Council held in the new building of the one. Whilst meeting with high-level military officials at the Center HQ he has outlined and presented new defense priorities for 2015-2020 periods of time as well as

revealed novelties endorsed into the Military Doctrine of Russia in conjunction with the ongoing new Cold War against the USA and its European allies. It makes clear that the balance of Russian military policy in the Post-Soviet space is mixed.

In his speech was mentioned and identified two main threats from a military perspective: deployment of NATO military infrastructures and installations close to the Russian borders and its enlargement to the East and development of the Anti-Ballistic Defense capabilities in aegis of the USA national program. The Crimean Special Operation was declared as the most “successful story” and considered a preemptive measure to cast the above-mentioned threats. Following statements by the Head of the Center – Lt. General Mikhail Mizintsev in 2014 the Russian Armed Forces have obtained 4 thousand new types of armament and 4 entities of the submarines that have reinforced steadily national military capabilities. In accordance with Defense Minister Army General Sergey Shoigus’ words, the national arsenal of the Armed Forces has been increased by 7% with new weaponry systems. Shoigu vows that the Ministry of Defense will fully begin to utilize the home-made technologies for defense industry might. The Russian political leadership set forth concrete geostrategic missions to the Armed Forces Command to readiness to be engaged into two low and medium intensity conflicts simultaneously and reiterated to get reversed to preemptive nuclear strike principle operated by the Soviet military leadership in Cold War period. The General Staff has submitted to the supreme commander-in-chief a list of measures, which he has approved. In 2019-2020, we need to develop the ground-based version of the sea-launched Kalibr system with the long-range cruise missile, which has proven its worth in Syria,” the defense minister said.

Herewith important to stress that in December of 2014 new nuclear submarine named “Vladimir Monomakh” (“Borei” class) joined the Naval Forces armed with 16 ballistic “sea-to-land” cruise missiles “BULAVA-M” from Severodvisnk sea-port. Namely from the submarine successfully was launched as an experimental version of the “BULAVA-M” from the Barents Sea to the Kamchatka peninsula. After the project, in 2015 it will be starting to build another nuclear submarine named “Knyaz Suvorov” (“Borei” class) with the same ballistic cruise missiles on board. The new arms race was running since 2010 had already brought its benefits as the arms sale of the national weapon systems increased up to 20% and reached the level of \$402 billion from where about 30% was aimed for national defense purposes. The defense expenses have increased by 30% and in 2015 the national defense budget is figured in \$90 billion without consideration of several federal level special programs for Research and Development and Armament Technologies. That is why President Putin’s speech delivered at the Center HQ was very important and considerable from modernization and updating principles of the national military strategy. Having considered the features, it became interesting to declare new priorities of Russia’s military strategy that implies the following:

- By 2021 completely transfer on modern armament all nuclear land-based forces and modernize strategic nuclear airlift capabilities with the introduction of fifth-generation Air Force jets A-50 and tactical-operation jets SU-37 and MiG-35;
- Completion of creation of new strategic command HQ – Air-Space Forces ready to operate at global levels against any foes;
- Increase and reinforce Russia's military presence at strategic geopolitical areas, notable in the Arctic zone (in that regard, the Ministry of Defense plans to deploy in the area operational Air Defense system "PANTSIR-C") and in the Caspian-Caucasus region with the Black Sea maritime area. Namely, for that purpose, it is envisaged to set up a new regional Army Command HQ – 48th Army HQ in Derbent and the creation of special Navy grouping in the Caspian Sea area. Moreover, for purposes of the operational-strategic regional Command "South" 30 entities of combat helicopters Mi-28M "Night Hunter" have been modernized and updated:
- Development and modernize all capabilities of the national nuclear "Triads" (Air-Land-Sea);
- Russia will continue the practice to launch and run in massive scope drills and trains and "sudden inspection" modalities to reinforce Armed Forces readiness level;
- In the modern version of the Military, Doctrine draft emerged a new definition of "territorial defense" in sake for total mobilization purposes. The missions are dispatched to Governors and local regional authorities. It means that Russia is seeking to militarize its society and nation but for what purpose – it is a puzzle.

All these factors are indicating that Russia will be reinforcing its pressure toward Georgia and by doing so, military aggressive measures are to be foreseen in the nearest future.

## Summary

The war scenario really enumerated the interesting development of geopolitical processes dominated by the concrete geostrategic implications. With these cases, new warfare activities and combat operation planning have transformed into more dynamic, technologically innovative, and with modern strategic culture principles. Based on the principles, the war was waged in the Nagorno-Karabakh between the Azerbaijani Armed Forces and the Armenian separatist Defense Territorial Army with the direct support of the Armenian Armed Forces. Namely, the war demonstrated also new forms of coalition warfare that had been predominated at the regional level in the aegis of the Caucasus region. Turkey-Azerbaijan coalition against

Armenia-Russia was a case where such coalition warfare had been demonstrated with the domination of the first one. Certainly, Russia was irked with Azerbaijan winning of the wargame and with the illumination of the Russian-made weaponry system imperfection, mainly anti-defense system. The war was conducted in form of the fourth war generation (4GW) and this occurred even for the first time with full-scale dimension at the global level and it was configured most dynamically with blitzkrieg maneuverable war strategy from Azerbaijani Army and caused more than 2780 lives. In the time of the war scenario in Nagorno-Karabakh were used strike, reconnaissance and “kamikaze” drones: “Bayraktar TB2”, “Alpagu”, “Orbiter” and “Sky-Striker”, rocket projections “Polonez” and operative-tactical missile complex “ISKANDER-M”.

The war could spark a new spin of challenges and risk of asymmetric content, notable with the introduction of jihadist mercenaries from the MENA and the increasing of illegal migration. This so-called “asymmetric military threat” could endanger regional security modality in the Caucasus area and impose a great challenge to the European and Euro-Atlantic security provisions. Moreover, the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war holds important lessons for European defense. The European security and defense perspective could be considering new military technology adaptation to current military operation planning and execution. The Europeans should look carefully at the military lessons of this conflict, and not dismiss it as a minor war between poor countries. Since the cold war, most European armies have phased out gun-based self-propelled air-defense systems. Man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) like the “Stinger” and “Igla” – the primary short-range air-defense systems in Europe – have little chance of acquiring such small targets as loitering munitions or small drones invisible to the operator. This is important to take adequate lessons learned from the war experience to increase the capability potential of the European community and more relevant, the NATO alliance member states (like Poland, Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, etc.) and its strategic partners (Georgia and Ukraine). The geostrategic importance of the war is also a detrimental case for military studies development in the Post-Soviet space, including academic research and institutional curriculum promotion.

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*The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi, the Foreign Policy Council or the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center.*

## **What Georgia Expects from NATO and the European Union: Realities and Future Prospects**

### **Georgia's Relations with NATO and EU: The Summary of the Status Quo**

Georgia's strong commitment to European and Euro-Atlantic integration has been the cornerstone of its political life for the last two decades. As Georgian analysts have rightfully observed, it is rooted not so much in the calculation of Georgia's security options, but in its very identity as understood by its elites and supported by the wider public. It also provides an important value-based backbone of its otherwise extremely polarized, often chaotic, and unpredictable political arena.

If one looks at Georgia's fundamental foreign-policy choices based on the logic of cost-benefit analysis, arguably, so far it did not reap much benefit from such political orientation (which is not to say that pursuing any alternative policy would have been more advantageous). Georgians have a good reason to be disappointed: the processes of both European and Euro-Atlantic integration look stalled. A compromise solution of April 2008 Bucharest summit, which denied Georgia a much-coveted Membership Action Plan (MAP) but gave it a vague promise of membership when Georgia is "ready" (without defining specific criteria for "readiness") became a formula of persistent uncertainty: Georgia looks doomed to stay in the category of an "aspirant" nation indefinitely. With regards to the EU, after the Association Agreement came into force in 2016, which implied the two most obvious benefits: the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), as well as a visa-free regime with Schengen-zone countries, there is no further comparably important steps insight. From the Georgian perspective, general recognition of Georgia's European vocation, which implies at least a vague and unspecified promise of membership, would be the logical next step. However, it looks unlikely that the EU is prepared to make such a step, as quite a few member-states are extremely reluctant to endorse any step suggesting prospects for greater enlargement of the EU.

This is not to look for any culprits for this disappointing lack of developments. It is easy to criticize Georgian political elites for having, or spreading to its public, unrealistic expectations with regards to Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration. One can also mention a fact that the Georgian political elite and society keeps failing to consolidate its democratic institutions, as exemplified by the disastrous outcome of the October - November, 2020 parliamentary elections: following the opposition

decision to boycott Parliament, for the first time in its history Georgia will have effectively single-party legislature. On the other hand, there are grounds to believe that the obvious reluctance of western powers to meet Georgia's aspirations are dictated not by Georgia's lack of "readiness" (even if there are grounds to say that Georgia is not fully ready), but on geopolitical calculations, namely, on its fear of creating further problems in relations with Russia.

The latest trends are not in favor of the fulfillment of Georgia's pro-western aspirations either. On the Western side, the rise of Euroscepticism and growing divisions within EU, as well as broadening chasm in transatlantic relations, rising China gradually turning into the dominant geopolitical and economic concern both in the US and EU, has undermined the confidence of the collective "West" and lessens its appetite for playing a more active role in eastern Europe.

On the other hand, Georgia with its pro-European and pro-Atlantic positions becomes increasingly isolated in its neighborhood. Since approximately 2000s, Russia turned resentment of the West, and fighting its influence, into its national religion; holding back western influence in its neighborhood became its especially vital policy priority, and it demonstrated its resolve to do whatever it takes to achieve its goals by military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine in 2008 and 2014. Under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership, Turkey gradually metamorphosed from an enthusiastic pursuer of European integration, a firm NATO ally, and a promising case of democracy in a Muslim-majority country, into an increasingly autocratic country whose geopolitical agenda is often counter to western interests and values. As Azerbaijan became more and more autocratic, it also lost much of its pro-western enthusiasm of the 1990s. Armenia's 2018 Velvet Revolution propelled to power relatively pro-Western forces lead by current prime-minister Nikol Pashinyan; however, the results of the Second Karabakh war of October-November 2020 strengthened Russia's influence in both Azerbaijan and Armenia and made Pashinyan's position in power much shakier. In general, the war underscored the predominance of Russian and Turkish power in the region at the expense of the decline of western influence.

However, so far these developments did not dent Georgia's resolve to engage in policies of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. As numerous polls show, a strong majority of the Georgian public remains firmly committed to it. This allows me to base this paper on an assumption that Georgia's pro-western policies will continue. While it is impossible to predict what direction EU and NATO policies towards the region will take, we cannot exclude a possibility that Georgia being by far the most pro-western country in a region which is increasingly unfriendly to the West, its value for the western actors may increase. On the other hand, even if the level of EU and NATO commitment to the region stays approximately the same, it will continue to wield important influence on Georgia's politics, and Georgian political elites will still highly value their cooperation with the West.



Based on these assumptions, it makes sense to revisit the issue: What it is that Georgia expects from its western partners, and how realistic these expectations may be?

My starting point is that there are four main things that Georgia from the cooperation with West: these I call recognition, security, democracy, and economic development. As the last point is beyond my area of expertise, I will briefly review the issue under the first three headings.

## **Recognition**

As mentioned above, the pro-western direction of Georgia's foreign policy is often considered based on its national identity as understood by its political elites, rather than on the rational calculation of costs and benefits coming from different foreign policy options. The core of this understanding is based on the perception of Georgia as an essentially European nation. This self-perception has started to develop from the second half of the 19th century: the same group of Tergdaleulebi under Ilia Chavchavadze's leadership who stand at the origin of Georgia's modern nationalism also laid ground to developing a concept of Georgia as a European nation. However, the most important turning point was Georgia's 1918-21 short-lived First Republic: it was at this time that the vision of Georgia as a European nation in contrast to a more 'Asiatic' Russia gained currency among Georgian elites. When in the late 1980s, in the twilight of the Soviet rule in Georgia, the Georgian nationalism re-emerged in the public sphere, Georgia's 'western' or European vocation was taken for granted. In due time, it was expressed in a bid to join NATO, and in prioritizing policies of European Integration.

A social scientist may criticize this reasoning as "essentialist": being "European" is not an objectively defined property of any nation, and in a Georgian case, the claim to the European identity may look problematic. Careful empirical research shows that both members of the elite, and especially the general public are not fully confident that they actually are Europeans, and do not have a clear-cut understanding of what being a "European" means. But exactly if we follow a constructivist approach as opposed to an "essentialist" one, we have to say that the meaning of "European identity" depends on what people make of it; this meaning is uncertain and sometimes controversial even in the countries of the European Union, so one should not be surprised that in Georgia, a commitment to the "European choice" coexists with a rather vague understanding of what being a European means. The very fact that the discourse of Georgia as a European nation has become firmly embedded in the Georgian discourse for a lengthy period and has evolved into a dominant principle around which its policies are organized are now a hard fact of life to reckon with.

For Georgians, "Europeanness" is partly an aspirational identity. For the most part, the idea of being a "European" is identified with values of democracy, individual liberty,

and rule of law as professed by those nations whose European identity nobody questions. Georgians usually consider themselves to be more European than their neighbors, as proven by their history as well as more recent record, but also not living up to standards of “real”, “recognized” Europeans like the French, German, Dutch, etc. Therefore, if one asks a Georgian a question “Is Georgia Europe?” or “Are you a European”, a respondent will probably be confused: for Georgians, such questions hardly allow for a simple “yes” or “no” answer, and with a good reason. Nevertheless, apparently, most Georgians agree that for their country, the European/western model of development is the most, if not the only acceptable one. Georgians may be confused whether they really “are” Europeans (do not quite a few EU nations feel the same?), but they are much more likely to agree that they want their country to become more European and that certain features of Georgian history and culture justify their claim of belonging to the European civilization.

But as all students of identity know, this concept includes two dimensions: what I think I am, and what others think I am. To be sure, Georgians need to figure out more clearly, what they really mean when (and if) they call themselves “European” or “western”; but it is not less important that they gain recognition as such by those whose Europeanness or Westernness is beyond doubt, that is by the EU and NATO.

This is why the accession to the Council of Europe in 1999 was a big deal for Georgia – this was so because Georgians understood it as an act of recognition of their European identity. It was during the ceremony of accession that then chairman of the Georgian parliament, Zurab Zhvania, pronounced his famous phrase: “I am Georgian, therefore I am European”. At that time, most Georgians did not know the difference between the Council of Europe and the European Union (quite a few probably still don’t). But knowledgeable people were well aware that the membership of the CoE only implied symbolic recognition: It was only the membership of the EU and/or NATO that would make Georgia a true member of the western family of nations.

This is hardly a place to recapitulate a sad story of how the Georgians (in the last years, together with the Ukrainians and the Moldovans) try to tease out of the EU some kind of recognition of Georgia’s European identity, and continuously fail to do so. Admittedly, there are some marginal successes: The preamble to the Association Agreement between EU and Georgia formally recognizes Georgia as an “Eastern European country”, which is an obvious compromise between calling it simply “European” and avoiding the issue altogether. From the EU perspective, this is obviously a strictly political matter, because recognizing Georgia as a European nation would imply opening a door for its possible membership, even in some very distant future, and there is no consensus on this issue within the EU. While well-informed Georgians understand that, for them, this is also an identity issue: full recognition of their European vocation by the West would be an important step towards the completion of their problematic European identity.

However, ultimately such recognition is not only contingent on calculations made by European politicians. It depends much more on the actual development of Georgia and its political system. 2003 “Rose Revolution” and its aftermath convinced much more Europeans that Georgians may be one of their own: it was after this that the EU changed its initial decision and included Georgia first in the European Neighborhood Policy and, later, created the European Partnership. Peaceful electoral change of power in 2012 further strengthened the impression that Georgia was on the path of becoming a more European country. On the other hand, a series of setbacks in democracy in the last year that culminated in the outcome of 2020 elections with its single-party parliament will contribute to doubts whether Georgia is indeed a European country (and it does not matter who is to blame for this outcome more, the government or the opposition).

## Security

Traditionally, small states depend for their security on larger powers. In its medieval past, Georgia negotiated its path to survival by playing regional powers, like the Ottoman Empire and Iran, against each other.

Admittedly, as of today, Georgia’s security (as well as that of quite a few small states) largely depends on the support of western powers. However, the very nature of this dependence is rather different from earlier models of great power competition. After WWII, and even more so following the end of the Cold War, western powers tried to establish a lasting world order that is based on values, institutions, and rules; it came to be called “liberal international order”. As it often happens, this concept and project came under closer scrutiny as it is seen endangered, if not obsolete; however, while it has never been universally and fully successful at any point in history, it has qualitatively changed the world of international relations in many ways.

The idea of the liberal international order is about the liberal western powers led by the United States taking advantage of their military, political and economic superiority and prestige (the latter was later called “soft power”) to build international institutions and embed norms that would be rightly considered more just, but also provide for a more stable global order. In the wake of WWI, the first attempt of creating such order, under the aegis of the League of Nations, failed spectacularly. However, it was at this time the US president Woodrow Wilson, who may be called the founding father of liberal internationalism, also introduced the concept of national self-determination as a desired international norm. While it was much criticized by many politicians and analysts, it did gradually establish a new principle that smaller and weaker nations were entitled to their sovereign statehood and that the community of the most powerful nations (later called “the international community”) had both a moral obligation and vested political interest in guarding an international order that provided guarantees

of security for such small nations. It was not a coincidence that the peace imposed by WWI victors led to the disintegration of multinational empires in Europe and the emergence of the new Europe of nation-states. In the long run, it also undermined the legitimacy of European overseas empires and laid the ground for their eventual collapse.

Despite the failure of the League of Nations, western architects of the post-WWII global order tried a similar approach of “making the world safer for democracy”, but did this on a more comprehensive scale: in addition to the United Nations, a relatively toothless successor to the League of Nations, they inaugurated a network of other international institutions that were supposed to ensure the prevalence of the vision of the world shared by western liberal democracies. NATO and the European Union were the most important among them. This development was especially important for the fate of the small states: the western US-led liberal order was the first attempt of creating institutional guarantees for their security.

As said, the project of liberal international order was always problematic and never became truly global. However, as much as western powers maintained their pre-eminence in the world, they could effectively enforce its principles at least in part. Moreover, the West was much more successful in guarding these principles within its own geographical and civilizational area. This implies that being a recognized part of the western geopolitical area (being a member of NATO and/or EU is the best expression of such belonging) makes a small state much more secure than being out of it.

This means that Georgia's pro-western orientation, in addition to a policy based on its identity perception, is also a fully rational choice based on its crucial security interests. As the experience of relations with Russia shows, the principles of the liberal international order are rather unacceptable to it: its real (and increasingly undisguised) ambition is to return to the 19th-century type “concert of nations” arrangement. In the Russian vision of the world, the sovereignty of a small nation is an empty word: small nations can only be satellites of great powers. It considers Georgia a satellite of the West that should become a satellite of Russia. This reinforces Georgia's view that being part of the western-led liberal order is the most realistic option for guarding its sovereignty.

What is the most likely scenario for Georgia in this regard? On the one hand, one could understand this as a question about the prospect of membership either in the EU or NATO. If the question is put in this way, then there is no much ground for optimism: at this point, existing trends do not allow to hope for any sizeable progress on the way to either EU or NATO accession.

However, for a country in Georgia's situation, an all-or-nothing approach would be misleading. Being a full member of the western community of nations any time soon

would be great progress, but the lack of such a realistic prospect is not a ground for changing strategy. Georgia should and can make the most of the existing formats of cooperation with both international bodies. While Georgia's security situation is indeed precarious, the last thirty years has probably been the most successful period in its history for many centuries; this is due to the fact the West still puts its weight behind norms of liberal international order, even in an often inconsistent and imperfect way.

Hence, in the coming years, one should watch for two indicators. One is the capacity of the Georgian government and civil society to put to effective use the existing formats of cooperation Georgia has with both EU and NATO. The second is the capacity of the EU and NATO itself to stay influential actors in the world and the eastern European region. Georgia has a strong vested interest in resilience showed by both organizations.

## **Democracy**

It is widely believed that for formerly Communist countries, European and Euro-Atlantic integration had been an important incentive for democratization. To be sure, this was not the only or the principal reason for them to become democracies. Formerly Communist countries that eventually joined the EU and NATO took important steps towards embedding respective norms and institutions in their political systems long before they received an offer of membership in these organizations. Arguably, the causal link first worked in an opposite direction: it was their fairly successful initial transitions, as well as enthusiastic support of central and eastern European societies for values of liberal democracy that, among other things, convinced leaders of western democracies that these countries deserved becoming fully-fledged members of these prestigious clubs. This is also implied in the principle of democratic conditionality included in the 1993 Copenhagen criteria: to be considered for membership in the EU, a country should first be considered democratic. However, when it comes to the consolidation of democracy, many scholars as well as politicians and activists agree that in the course of the accession process, the EU has proven a very effective democratizer.

Can these expectations be extended to Georgia? As it was never offered a membership perspective by the EU, and the prospect of NATO membership is extremely vague, western leverage with regards to this country may not be as strong as it used to be in the case of accession countries. On the other hand, Georgia's attempts at democratic transition had never been as successful as they were in countries of Central Eastern Europe before the beginning of accession negotiations. Despite several apparent democratic "breakthroughs" and strong enthusiasm for democratic causes

that the Georgian public has occasionally demonstrated, throughout the whole period of its independence, Georgia continues to muddle through in a “gray zone” between democracy and autocracy, usually defined in the literature as a condition of “hybrid regime”.

Despite this, there is a near consensus among pro-democracy actors in Georgia that the West can and should play a central role in Georgia's democratic development (again, a distinction between US and European actors, as well as between the roles of NATO and EU is not considered too important here). Moreover, in the recent period, western involvement has become unusually salient, as, against the backdrop of increased polarization between the government and the opposition, the international democratic community serves as the chief facilitator of dialogue between the parties. Sometimes, as in the fall/winter/spring of 2019/20, such western mediation proved fairly successful as the parties managed to achieve an agreement on an extremely divisive issue of electoral legislation. After the opposition refused to recognize the results of parliamentary elections, it were foreign ambassadors who facilitated the dialogue process. This time, no agreement was reached, but it is still notable that both parties accepted that the western mediation as performed by ambassadors of leading democracies provided the best available hope for returning the process to normal.

This suggests that for uncertain, hybrid cases like the Georgian one, the role of external actors may be even more crucial than for more successful countries. Despite the general commitment to the idea of liberal democracy, Georgia's democratic institutions such as parliament, political parties, civil society, have proven insufficiently robust to impose accountability on different branches of government that are usually dominated by a single party created around a powerful leader. However, due to the high prestige of western institutions, all major political players accept some advice and guidance from them, even though not always without reservations. The western influence was never powerful enough to ensure full consolidation of Georgia's democratic institutions (it's debatable whether external forces can achieve that much – democracy can only be a locally owned product), but in crucial moments it has had an important corrective role by helping to keep Georgia's often chaotic political processes within a broadly democratic and constitutional framework.

This implies a tacit assumption that close cooperation with western actors that in a best-case scenario may culminate in Georgia's membership in EU and NATO, will also considerably increase the chances of Georgia escaping the vicious cycles of “hybrid regime” and achieving consolidation of its democratic institutions.

This is also a risky approach for both parties, meaning the western democratic community and the Georgian political elites. As western actors get more involved in internal Georgian political controversies, even as mediators, they may be blamed for

inevitable failures as well, and become the object of attacks even from mainstream players. On the other hand, overreliance on western actors may prove unrealistic as well. External players may play a positive role in democratization processes, but essential limitations to their role should be recognized.

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*The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi, the Foreign Policy Council or the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center.*

## **Азербайджан и российский «миротворческий» контингент в Карабахе. Вызовы и риски для победителя в войне**

В ночь на 10 ноября 2020 года было подписано совместное Заявление Президента Азербайджанской Республики, Премьер-министра Республики Армения и Президента Российской Федерации. Его подписанием была закончена «Вторая Карабахская война», длившаяся 44 дня. Закончена она была безусловной военной победой Азербайджана. Однако присутствие российского «миротворческого» контингента в части Карабаха свидетельствует о том, что противостояние незавершено, а переведено в принципиально новую для этого конфликта фазу. «Миротворческий» рычаг Кремля (пребывание российского контингента зафиксировано на бумаге сроком на пять лет) формирует новую систему вызовов и рисков - как для победителя, так и для проигравшего.

При оценке новых вызовов и рисков для Азербайджана, правильным будет опираться на ряд исходных данных, а именно:

1. С 2007 года логика кремлевского менеджмента Карабаха вращалась вокруг так называемых «мадридских принципов», которые к 2014 году трансформировались в известный, неоднократно модернизированный «план Лаврова». Максимально упрощено суть подхода состояла в следующем: на начальном этапе из состава непризнанной «НКР» Азербайджану возвращались 5 или 7 оккупированных районов вокруг собственно Карабаха, которые не входили в состав бывшей НКАО (т.н. «зона безопасности»). Далее следовал переходный период. Конечным же этапом должно было стать определение статуса Нагорного Карабаха, в идеале - путём юридически обязывающего референдума армянского и азербайджанского населения региона. В разные годы подход не устраивал то Баку, то Ереван. Азербайджан продавливал вариант территориальной целостности с максимальной автономией Карабаха, Ереван де-факто жил по принципу - либо прежний статус-кто с непризнанной самой Арменией «НКР», либо война. Москву такое подвешенное состояние, в принципе, удовлетворяло, так же как по большому счёту и МГ ОБСЕ. С другой стороны, в случае запуска «плана Лаврова», у Кремля неизменным оставалось ключевое требование - «миротворцы» на новой линии разграничения в т.н. переходный период (в парадигме Москвы читай: навсегда). Непремено под российским контролем, единолично или под эгидой ОДКБ - не принципиально. Де-факто же речь шла о новой российской военной базе, причем на территории Азербайджана - где бы ни проходила новая линия разграничения.



2. С апреля 2020 года Москва начала жестко продавливать «план Лаврова». Выглядело так, что именно тогда России резко понадобился свой «миротворческий» контингент на новой линии разграничения, а в предложениях очередной версии «плана Лаврова» якобы не было пункта о юридически обязательном волеизъявлении. Для любой власти в Ереване такой подход был неприемлем, так как выглядел как «территории в обмен на обещания». В логике Кремля Баку тогда уже был не против такого варианта.
3. До подписания трехстороннего Заявления не кто иной, как Азербайджан публично категорически отбрасывал саму идею российских «миротворцев» в Карабахе (читай, на своей территории). Речь идет как о периоде 30 лет конфликта, так и о 44 днях последних боёв за Карабах. Обстановка на фронте способствовала, а само упоминание варианта развязки с российскими «миротворцами» не на государственной границе с Арменией, но в Карабахе (на самом деле этот вариант читался и выглядел как наиболее вероятным) – в азербайджанской экспертной среде считалось чуть ли не призывом к «сдаче национальных интересов». Понятно, что свои условия диктовали законы информационной войны, в которой Азербайджан, как и на поле боя, уверенно побеждал.
4. Если всё-таки аккуратно допустить, что на самом деле российские «миротворцы» в Карабахе официальным Баку изначально виделись наименьшим злом, а переход этой красной линии – как необходимый компромисс с Кремлем, Азербайджан, конечно, благодаря своему солдату выжал из сложившейся ситуации максимум. Азербайджан получил под контроль 7 районов вокруг бывшей НКАО («зона безопасности»), из которых 4 были отвоеваны, ещё 3 (Кельбаджарский, Агдамский, Лачинский) хоть и не без эксцессов были переданы согласно подписанному трехстороннему Заявлению. Также Азербайджан отвоевал территории собственно Карабаха (бывшей НКАО), а именно г.Шуша (ключевой населенный пункт Карабаха и в военном, и сакрально-культурном плане), район Гадрута, а также ряд сёл Ходжавендского и Ходжалинского районов.
5. Азербайджан на поле боя фактически снял с повестки дня такие понятия как «поэтапный» или «пакетный» план урегулирования. В логике Баку понятия «статуса Карабаха» в границах бывшей НКАО не существует. Де-факто новая линия разграничения (этого понятия Баку также старается всячески избегать) проходит по границам, которые никогда официально не фигурировали в переговорном процессе. Под российским «протекторатом» находятся около 3000 квадратных километров, включая столицу Карабаха Ханкенди (Степанакерт). Исходя из логики многолетнего переговорного процесса, Россия достигла своих целей по размещению «миротворческого» контингента на территории Азербайджана на невыгодных для себя условиях. Это связано, прежде всего, с фиксацией и легитимизацией военного присутствия Турции в Азербайджане – разрушена многолетняя монополия России на «модерацию» карабахского конфликта.

Таким образом, Азербайджан в максимально выгодных для себя условиях на поле боя всё-таки был вынужден смириться с присутствием российского военного контингента на своей территории. Применённые рычаги торга/давления со стороны Кремля по отношению к Баку собственно и формируют новую систему вызовов и рисков для Азербайджана.

Сегодня часто проводятся параллели между новой реальностью в Карабахе и опытом российского «миротворчества» в молдавском Приднестровье, а также в Цхинвальском регионе Грузии. «Цхинвализация» Карабаха порой подается как свершившийся факт со всеми вытекающими хорошо известными вызовами и рисками. Однако в случае с Карабахом, если уж и проводить параллели, то мы имеем дело с вариантом «сириизации» конфликта из-за военного присутствия в регионе Турции как «предохранителя» для Азербайджана. На сегодня в Карабахе формат урегулирования в виде МГ ОБСЕ сужен и фактически заменен двусторонним российско-турецким форматом. Отсутствие Турции в совместном Заявлении от 10 ноября 2020 г. не должно никого обманывать. При этом на сегодня турецко-российский формат выглядит если не более надежным, то более понятным в сравнении с альтернативным Астанинским форматом по Сирии. Роднит их то, что и там, и здесь Москва и Анкара строят свои отношения на шатком принципе «сотрудничества и конкуренции».

Также в отличие от оккупированных территорий Грузии (Абхазия и так называемая Южная Осетия) Кремль своим военным присутствием в Карабахе будет создавать новую систему «гибридного влияния» на два объекта атак – Азербайджан и Армению, пребывающих между собой в жесткой конфронтации. При этом в международном восприятии Баку «мандат» российским «миротворцам» на своей территории выдал добровольно и в максимально комфортных для себя условиях. В то же время, в случае конфронтационного сценария вокруг российских «миротворцев» у Баку будет минимизирован маневр по апеллированию к мировому сообществу – фактически он будет ограничен только Турцией. Азербайджану не привыкать к «глубоко озабоченному» подходу Запада к своим проблемам. Однако одно дело противостоять Армении, другое дело – России. Турецкая поддержка Азербайджана выглядит на сегодня убедительно. В то же время, привязка окончательного решения вопроса Карабаха к состоянию российско-турецкого сотрудничества в среднесрочной перспективе не выглядит самодостаточной. (При этом у меня нет каких-либо сожалений по поводу почившей в бозе МГ ОБСЕ, которая много лет де-факто служила комфортной крышей Кремлю для монопольного менеджмента и арбитража конфликта, никоим образом не приближая его решение).

Выше я не случайно закавычил слово «мандат», когда речь шла о российском военном контингенте. Подписанное трехстороннее заявление содержит ряд пунктов с неоднозначным и неопределенным толкованием. Поэтому для Баку сейчас ближайшая базовая задача – сформировать и согласовать этот самый мандат с конкретно прописанными функциями «миротворцев» и, главное, системой контроля по его соблюдению и реагированию на превышения полномочий.

Уже активно ведётся вовлечение в этот процесс Турции, однако четкая система сдержек и противовесов пока не сформирована. Так, согласно озвученным планам создание турецко-российского мониторингового центра контроля прекращения огня планируется создать в освобожденном Агдаме. Вокруг турецкого присутствия в Карабахе или рядом идёт активная информационная война. Москва устами министра иностранных дел С.Лаврова продолжает настаивать, что турецкое присутствие на линии разграничения не предусмотрено. В Анкаре на этот счёт другая точка зрения. Баку пока придерживается позиции, что Азербайджан в состоянии самостоятельно контролировать непосредственно линию разграничения (максимально избегая такой формулировки). В этой связи размещение совместного мониторингового центра в Агдаме с одной стороны – демонстративный и максимально выверенный с турецкой стороны шаг (освобожденный Агдам находится в 25 км от Ханкенди), в то же время присутствие там россиян само по себе расширяет ареал российского военного присутствия в Азербайджане. Формат контроля со стороны Турции (в т.ч. использование беспилотных авиационных комплексов) – в стадии рассмотрения.

Мог ли Азербайджан избежать российского военного присутствия на своей территории? Тем более, что обстановка на фронте была под полным контролем азербайджанских вооруженных сил, а Турция выступала надежным предохранителем от российского прямого вмешательства на стороне Армении и перерастания войны за территорию бывшей «НКР». Вряд ли, так как судя по всему российские «миротворцы» стали элементом определенных договоренностей. Не важно на какой фазе – до старта военной кампании, или же в ходе боевых действий Баку получил из Кремля «предложение, от которого не смог отказаться». Без сомнений, российская военная интервенция стала консенсусным решением между Москвой и Анкарой, Москвой и Баку, Баку и Анкарой. От того насколько эти переговорные линии пересекаются во многом зависит последующий баланс и в Карабахе, и в регионе Южного Кавказа в целом. Президент Азербайджана взял на себя ряд обязательств и намерен их выполнять. Ильхам Алиев максимально максимально подчеркивает конструктивную роль России и лично Путина в урегулировании конфликта в пользу Азербайджана.

Россия в данный момент активно занята созданием полноценной военной базы в Ханкенди (Степанакерте), как бы в Азербайджане ни пытались уходить от таких формулировок. Помимо оговоренного военного контингента в 1960 человек (количество военнослужащих на самом деле проконтролировать проблематично) на территорию Карабаха под российским протекторатом активно пребывают медики, сотрудники МЧС РФ, а также сопровождающие различных гуманитарных грузов. Россия значительно вкладывается в Карабах финансово, однако это происходит дозированно – строго под функционирование военной базы. Под это дело запущен процесс возвращения армянских беженцев в Ханкенди (Степанакерт). Конечно, с точки зрения логистики эта военная база находится в гораздо худших условиях, чем военные контингенты в Цхинвали, Сухуми или Гудауте. В случае обострения Азербайджан в состоянии быстро

перерезать Лачинский коридор, а Россия логистически будет скована по наращиванию группировки. Однако такой довод звучит неубедительно, так как в случае масштабной конфронтации у Москвы остаётся широкий спектр ассиметричного ответа Азербайджану. Это и общая граница с Азербайджаном, и российская Каспийская флотилия (с крылатыми ракетами семейства «Калибр» морского базирования), и система «гибридных влияний» внутри Азербайджана, которую Москва много лет системно выстраивала. Используя подобные рычаги давления, Россия смогла остановить азербайджанское наступление в апреле 2016 года, не исключено, что и в 2020 году определенный шантаж присутствовал для продавливания своего «миротворческого» формата.

Ильхам Алиев где-то с конца 2019 запустил реформатирование системы власти, которое можно охарактеризовать как «революция элит сверху». И дело не только в том, что начали уходить кадры ещё Гейдара Алиева (многим из них стоило уйти просто по возрастному цензу) - такая реконструкция не могла не натолкнуться на интересы кремлевского лобби в Баку. Победа в войне за Карабах предельно усиливает позиции Ильхама Алиева в Азербайджане, для населения он стал настоящим национальным лидером. Это с одной стороны развязывает руки для любых телодвижений в ходе внутриэлитной борьбы. В то же время, Россия в своей логике сохраняет на это влияние, в т.ч. через военное присутствие в Азербайджане. В этой связи показательным является уход со сцены в начале октября 2020 г. начальника Генерального штаба ВС Азербайджана Наджмеддина Садыкова (На официальном сайте МО АР о нём убрано упоминание). Официальный Баку это никак не комментирует, но в СМИ гуляет разная информация, в т.ч. и о его аресте, а также о том, Н.Садыков являлся главным представителем российской агентуры в военном блоке Азербайджана. НГШ не присутствовал на параде победы в Баку 10 декабря. Недавно по официальной информации был уволен начальник Главного управления внутренней безопасности Минобороны АР Рамиль Аскеров, который по сообщениям СМИ приходится племянником Н.Садыкову. К слухам и домыслам можно относиться по-разному, но совпадение этих событий по месту и времени говорит само за себя. Не исключено, что перед стартом и в ходе военной кампании в Баку была проведена существенная чистка российской «пятой колонны».

Безусловно, Азербайджан будет пытаться использовать российских «миротворцев» в своих интересах. Из наиболее сильных доводов Баку, оправдывающих российское «временное» военное присутствие, является то, что удалось избежать обвинений в «новом геноциде армян». Это бы касалось и Азербайджана и Турции, если бы азербайджанская армия взяла с боями Ханкенди (Степанакерт), даже притом что уже в конце октября - начале ноября отмечался массовый отток населения из Карабаха в Армению. Но на этом плюсы заканчиваются. Россия сейчас планомерно организует возвращение беженцев, в Степанакерт, для обеспечения нормального функционирования военной базы. Процесс идет не безболезненно для Москвы, есть случаи, когда люди увидев разрушенный быт, мигрируют из Степанакерта в Армению по второму разу. Баку искренен в своих желаниях раздать азербайджанские паспорта армянам Карабаха, однако в восприятии армян это невозможно по определению – нарратив, который будет всячески подогреваться

подогреваться Россией и российским военным присутствием. В то же Кремль уже запустил информационное зондирование темы раздачи российских паспортов армянам Карабаха. Посыл – достаточно четкий и недвусмысленный, пускай на текущий момент это Кремлю и не выгодно, так как люди могут просто разъехаться. Однако со временем нельзя исключать запуска операции «паспортизация» со всеми вытекающими вызовами и рисками в виде внезапно возникшей необходимости для Москвы «защищать своих граждан». Это на самом деле обоюдоострый инструмент давления для Баку и для Еревана. Сейчас «президент НКР» Араик Арутюнян продолжает вести свои «государственные дела» напрямую с Москвой через командующего российским контингентом Рустама Мурадова без оглядки на Ереван и тем более на Баку.

За прошедший период чуть более месяца функционирования российского «миротворческого», уже можно обозначить текущие вызовы и риски, на которые Баку будет вынужден реагировать:

- размытые трактовки трехстороннего Заявления не обеспечили вывода и разоружения в полной мере армянских вооруженных формирований с территории Карабаха, находящейся под протекторатом России;
- двусмысленное толкование (навязываемое армянской стороной) понятий вооруженные силы Армении и «Армия обороны Арцаха» сохраняют для Кремля перспективу увеличения своего военного потенциала за счёт местных «прокси»; контроль за указанными процессами пока у АР ограничен, что обуславливает необходимость оборудования новой линии разграничения, особенно в районе г. Шуша;
- Россия будет пытаться модерировать в свою пользу ситуативные армяно-азербайджанские столкновения на новой линии разграничения, а также на территориях отошедших Азербайджану (недавние обострения вокруг сел в районе Гадрута и Шуши – явный тому пример); решение вопросов в ручном режиме способствует расширению ареала российского военного присутствия в Азербайджане;
- АР пока не создал до конца действенный механизм контроля над перемещением личного состава и техники российского «миротворческого» контингента;
- Российская Федерация развертыванием и функционированием «миротворческого» контингента существенно улучшила свои возможности по ведению радиоэлектронной и агентурной разведки против Азербайджана.

С приближением истечения 5-летнего срока пребывания «миротворческого» контингента в Карабахе Россия сделает всё возможное для сохранения своего военного присутствия в Азербайджане. Таким образом, Азербайджан пускай и максимально в благоприятных условиях пополнил «клуб стран», ожидающих тектонических изменений в России и Кремле для окончательного решения вопроса восстановления своей территориальной целостности.

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*The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi, the Foreign Policy Council or the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center.*

## **Российский «миротворческий» контингент в Карабахе. Новые вызовы и новая реальность для Армении**

Новая реальность, в которой монополия России на менеджмент Карабахского конфликта жестко нарушена Турцией, сама по себе является угрозой и вызовом для Армении. Военное поражение на фронте ожидаемо привело к глубочайшему внутривнутриполитическому кризису в стране, который вряд ли разрешится в ближайшее время безотносительно (не)ухода Никола Пашиняна с должности премьер-министра.

Резкое «миротворческое» вмешательство Кремля именно на грани разгрома армянской группировки в Карабахе осложнило ситуацию, в том числе, и тем, что армянское общество в состоянии глубокой социальной фрустрации разрывается между двумя полюсами восприятия – *«Россия предала»* и *«Россия всё-таки спасла»*. Надо подчеркнуть, что за последние два десятилетия системного выстраивания политико-экономической вассальной зависимости Армении от России Кремль впервые сталкивается с подобным для себя вызовом на «армянском фронте». И можно не сомневаться – Москва свою политику по отношению к своему *«главному союзнику в регионе»* будет строить вокруг формирования у него чувства/комплекса обречённости и соответственно ещё большей зависимости от *«единственно возможного спасителя»*. *«Армения обречена без России»* и *«Реванш возможен только с Россией»* будут главными нарративами, спускаемыми и навязываемыми Кремлем всем армянским политическим игрокам, претендующим на его благосклонность и, соответственно, в логике Кремля - на победу и политическое выживание при власти.

... После 27 сентября 2020 года часто приходится слышать о том, что «Москва наказала неугодного Пашиняна» или о том, что она жаждет его ухода. На мой взгляд, это, мягко говоря, упрощенный подход, несмотря на то что, безусловно, в логике и восприятии Москвы армянская революция 2018 года была «цветной» и к тому же бескровной, - а это само по себе угроза для правящего режима в Кремле. Но вернемся ненадолго в апрель-май 2018 года. Никол Пашинян, опираясь на беспрецедентную поддержку общества, закрепиться у власти смог, в том числе, благодаря тому, что обеспечил себе соответствующее лобби в Кремле в критический момент революционных протестов. Нелишним будет напомнить, что тогда на армянском политическом поле боролись не две (как многие почему-то считают), а три большие силы, так или иначе завязанные на Россию. Так как на тот момент президент Серж Саргсян, решив никуда не уходить и стать премьером (хотя продавливая конституционную реформу, обещал этого не делать), возмутил не только армянское общество, но и московскую линию Газпрома, делавшую ставку на своего ставленника и на тот момент премьера Армении Карена Карапетяна. На определённом этапе протестов условные «газпромовцы» видели в Н. Пашиняне даже ситуативного союзника в борьбе

против Сержа Саргсяна. А Серж Саргсян, решив не вымазывать руки в крови, «неожиданно» легко ушёл в отставку, чем подыграл и открыл путь к победе Николу Пашиняну. Судя по всему, в Кремле решили – если на процессы нельзя или не выгодно влиять, их нужно возглавить.

В ходе правления Н.Пашиняна не было никакой ревизии внешней политики Армении, не было никаких «разворотов от России», намёков на выход из ОДКБ или ЕАЭС. Важно также понимать, что на момент начала «Второй карабахской войны» известные и часто муссируемые претензии Кремля к Пашиняну были удовлетворены. Второй президент Армении и личный друг В.Путина Роберт Кочарян смог выйти из тюрьмы. Судебный процесс не закончен, но ещё до старта боевых действий было ясно, что опять посадить его не удастся (сегодня это вообще снято с повестки дня). Более того, Никол Пашинян не смог до конца дожать Конституционный суд, где в том или ином виде люди старой команды сохранили своё влияние. Параллельно были сняты противоречия с российским ОАО «РЖД» (хозяином железной дороги Армении, которая, что интересно - до сих пор носит название «Южно-Кавказская железная дорога»). Плюс был решен вопрос с коррупционным скандалом вокруг «Газпром-Армения» и так далее. При желании можно вспомнить, отправку под давлением Москвы в Сирию гуманитарной миссии Минобороны Армении, от чего несколько раз отказывался в свое время Серж Саргсян и что неоднозначно было воспринято некоторыми сторонниками Никола Пашиняна.

За два с половиной года правления команда армянского премьера в своей постреволуционной логике перешла два главных «Рубикона». Первый удачно - получив конституциональное большинство в парламенте, второй – не совсем, так как на внеочередных выборах президента непризнанной «НКР» получила компромиссную фигуру в лице Араика Арутюняна. Причём компромиссную не столько с «карабахским кланом» (прошу простить мне эту прижившуюся формулировку), сколько с Кремлём. В логике этих предвыборных гонок Н.Пашинян не мог проявлять слабость на «карабахском фронте», в своей риторике не давая шансов оппозиции, разгонявшей лозунг «Никол хочет сдать Карабах». Отсюда и недалёковидные в плане урегулирования карабахского конфликта месседжи Н.Пашиняна «Карабах – это Армения и точка», как и инициатива о возвращении «НКР» за стол переговоров в рамках МГ ОБСЕ, что в Баку было воспринято как унижение.

Вопрос Карабаха как был предметом глубокого внутрикремлевского противостояния, так им и оставался во время 44 дней войны. Никуда это противостояние не подевалось и сейчас. Можно рассуждать о нежелании Москвы терять Азербайджан, о необходимости считаться с амбициями Анкары, желании здесь и сейчас получить четвертую военную базу на Южном Кавказе, но именно для Армении, и без того лишенной геополитического маневра в состоянии глубокого социального кризиса нынешнее «подвешенное состояние» является экзистенциальной угрозой. Так как оно устраивает Москву, считающую в своей логике, что Ереван и так никуда не денется. Армянам в общей массе сложно осознать, что Россия, резко введя миротворцев в Карабах, на самом деле не



придумала ничего нового. Это типичная тактика «деэскалация через эскалацию», единственно в этот раз примененная в отношении своего «главного союзника» в самой что ни на есть изощренной и циничной форме и в максимально неблагоприятных для себя условиях.

Подходы в Кремле к Армении как к своей «губернии» во многом определяют нынешний армянский политический ландшафт. На фоне глубокого политического кризиса сформировался оппозиционный блок из 17 партий, где узнаваемыми являются «Процветающая Армения» Гагика Царукяна (только она одна из 17-ти представлена в парламенте), Республиканская партия Армении (РПА) Кочаряна/Саргсяна, а также АРФ «Дашнакцутюн» (обе потерпели сокрушительное поражение на парламентских выборах в декабре 2018 года). Остальные партии вряд ли в полном составе в состоянии перечислись даже политически активные граждане Армении. Разве что в этом списке присутствует и новый политический проект «Родина» экс-директора СГБ Армении Артура Ванецяна, уволенного в своё время Николом Пашиняном. По разным оценкам, ещё до «44-дневной войны» Артур Ванецян в Москве рассматривался альтернативой Н.Пашиняну. Его называли самой пророссийской фигурой даже по армянским меркам. Но до войны жёстко на него ставить было бессмысленно в силу низкого рейтинга и, по разным оценкам армянских экспертов, несоответствующих лидерских качеств. Вряд ли его рейтинг особо вырос и сейчас. В условном «блоке 17» на самом деле и близко нет единства, о чем хотя бы свидетельствует конфликт между Микаелем Минасяном (зять Сержа Саргсяна) и тем же Артуром Ванецяном.

Указанные 17 партий создали «Движение по спасению Родины», предложив Вазгена Манукяна (министр обороны Армении /1992-93 гг./) в качестве кандидата в премьер-министры на переходный период. Логика лидеров этого движения читается несложно. Им принципиально не нужны выборы, но принципиально важно убрать Пашиняна с поста премьера. Им по большому счету нужен политический реванш, для которого в их логике сейчас самое «подходящее» время. Движение собирает достаточно многочисленные митинги, однако количества протестующих пока недостаточно для ухода Н.Пашиняна (нынешние протесты – ни по масштабам, ни по географии и близко не приближаются к событиям апреля 2018 года). Оппозиция помимо требования ухода «предателя Никола» и обещаний максимального сближения с Россией, по сути, не предлагает какой-то повестки выхода из кризиса. Обвинения в адрес Н.Пашиняна в начале войны, развале армии и подписании капитуляции в ночь на 10 ноября звучат не справедливо (особенно про армию, и особенно от представителей РПА, которые были при власти 20 лет). Обещания взять реванш, отыграв при помощи России нынешний расклад в Карабахе, звучат вообще цинично и подло, так этого никто делать не собирается, но лозунг – удобный. Переходный период без выборов оппозиции нужен для подготовки досрочных выборов, но уже по своим правилам, в результате которых к власти придёт не особо токсичная фигура – согласованная с Москвой и с опорой на финансовый, медийный и прочие ресурсы Р.Кочаряна. Ведется системная работа по развалу правящей партии «Мой шаг», которая пока в общей массе сохраняет большинство и верность премьеру.

За уход в отставку Н.Пашиняна выступают президент Армен Саркисян и оба армянских католикоса.

Н.Пашинян, безусловно, по результатам 44-дневной войны понесёт политическую ответственность. Скорее всего, в виде досрочного ухода с поста премьера - претензии к нему можно перечислять долго. Ключевой вопрос - как этот уход будет оформлен. Пока силовой блок Армении не посыпался, начальник Генерального штаба Армении Оник Гаспарян фактически поддержал Никола Пашиняна. Новый министр обороны Армении Вагаршак Арутюнян назначен явно не без согласования с Москвой. В.Путин в своей недавней валдайской речи сделал ряд реверансов Пашиняну, дав понять, что Москва спокойно относится к происходящему в Армении, не видя для себя угрожающих сценариев.

Оптимальным вариантом для Армении видится объявление Н.Пашиняном досрочных парламентских выборов, но не за месяц до их проведения, а с адекватным сроком на их подготовку (например, 6+ месяцев). Адекватный срок нужен также для раскрутки альтернативных политических проектов вне рамок нынешнего «черно-белого кино» (в т.ч., как вариант, для реформирования правящего блока «Мой шаг» - с Пашиняном, который и на сегодня по разным оценкам имеет поддержку около 30% населения, или без него). Не говоря уже о необходимости решения текущих вопросов по обмену пленными, телами погибших, проведения похорон и так далее, когда ввергать страну в ещё больший политический хаос попросту безответственно. В противном случае как резкий уход (или тем более свержение) Н.Пашиняна, так и его цепляние до последнего за власть могут привести страну к непрогнозируемым и очень грустным последствиям.

«Миротворческий» протекторат Кремля над частью Карабаха пока создаёт тупиковую картину восприятия в Армении – от инстинктивных надежд на реванш до крайности в виде «лучше армяне останутся в Карабахе под Россией, чем уедут оттуда навсегда». Получение азербайджанского гражданства для проживания, например, в Степанакерте, который станет Ханкенди, сейчас исключается карабахскими армянами и не воспринимается как рабочий вариант в Ереване. На таком фоне даже самые аккуратные заявления о нормализации отношений с Турцией и Азербайджаном в Армении пока воспринимаются в штыки. Но в то же время, очевидно, что без открытия границ с той же Турцией экономическое возрождение Армении вряд ли возможно. Политик или партия, которые не собираются врать людям и предлагать адекватные решения, обязаны озвучивать непопулярные вещи, рискуя при этом остаться вне будущего парламента. Предложения о нормализации отношений с Азербайджаном при полном восстановлении его территориальной целостности в армянских реалиях пока а) выглядят как утопия, б) будут тот час же купированы Москвой.

«Миротворческое» присутствие России в Карабахе, по сути, отсекает Ереван от влияния на процессы в этой части региона. Поездка, например, министра обороны Армении Вагаршака Арутюняна в Степанакерт (Ханкенди) теперь находится под физическим

контролем России. По ряду признаков упомянутый выше «президент» Араик Арутюнян ведет свою политику – строго в пророссийском русле, но вне какого-либо влияния со стороны Еревана. Здесь отметим его самоличный отказ от встречи с МГ ОБСЕ по приезду в Ереван. Причиной было названо отсутствие российского сопредседателя, при этом А.Арутюнян встретился с командующим «миротворческим» контингентом Рустамом Мурадовым в аэропорту Еревана при возвращении пленных. Обратим внимание и на его ведение переговоров с командованием «миротворческого» контингента, а также заигрывание с «миротворцами» карабахских политиков разного уровня маргинальности. Безусловно, это раздражает Баку, но если такое положение дел будет сохраняться, то это будет некий аналог «ДНР» не только для Азербайджана, но и для Армении. Возможная раздача российских паспортов армянам в Карабахе – это обоюдоострая угроза и для Баку, и для Еревана. Для Баку – потому что когда-то их могут приехать «защищать», для Еревана – потому что эти люди могут попросту выехать оттуда в Россию (а останется только обслуживающий персонал военной базы).

Кремль в своей логике протекторатом над частью Карабаха создал «предохранитель» для Армении от признания или воссоединения с Карабахом вне кремлёвского сценария. Вариант же когда Москва сама подготовит формат признания или аннексии в свою пользу также не стоит сбрасывать со счетов, – каким бы он фантастическим сейчас ни выглядел. В РФ, кстати, давно подготовлена и «историческая», и политологическая концепция об «уникальности народа Арцаха». Найдутся и «исторические» документы, когда именно Карабах (без Армении) просился в состав России. А подготовить соответствующее обращение от местного населения Москве не составит труда. Угроза ли это для Армении – вопрос не такой уж и риторический.

Присутствие «российских» миротворцев в Карабахе на практике запустило некий аналог «сириизации» карабахского конфликта, когда его менеджмент и урегулирование замыкаются на «конкурирующее сотрудничество» между Турцией и Россией. Такой формат подводит жирную черту под многолетней работой Минской группы ОБСЕ, откуда Москва, по сути, уже вышла. Предложение Анкары создать платформу сотрудничества в формате 3+3 (Турция, Россия, Иран – Азербайджан, Армения, Грузия) можно рассматривать как развитие такого формата. Навскидку выглядит как окно возможностей для Еревана, реализация которого, правда, зависит от признания территориальной целостности Азербайджана. Любое правительство в Армении, которое захочет развивать альтернативные платформы урегулирования – реанимацию МГ ОБСЕ, продвигать инициативы по признанию Карабаха, опираясь на решения французского или бельгийского парламента, но вне интересов Кремля – будет, так или иначе, наткнуться на российский «миротворческий» контингент.

Перспектива дальнейшего охлаждения отношений между Анкарой и Вашингтоном может привести к ещё большему российско-турецкому сближению. Нормализация отношений между Анкарой и Вашингтоном усиливает позиции Турции на Южном Кавказе и ряде перекрестных регионов. Надеяться на перспективу полномасштабной войны между Россией и Турцией (а такие меседжи звучат) либо же всех со всеми, включая Иран – это не про перспективу для Армении, но про утопию, так как армяне в этом случае рискуют попросту чьими-то «прокси»...

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