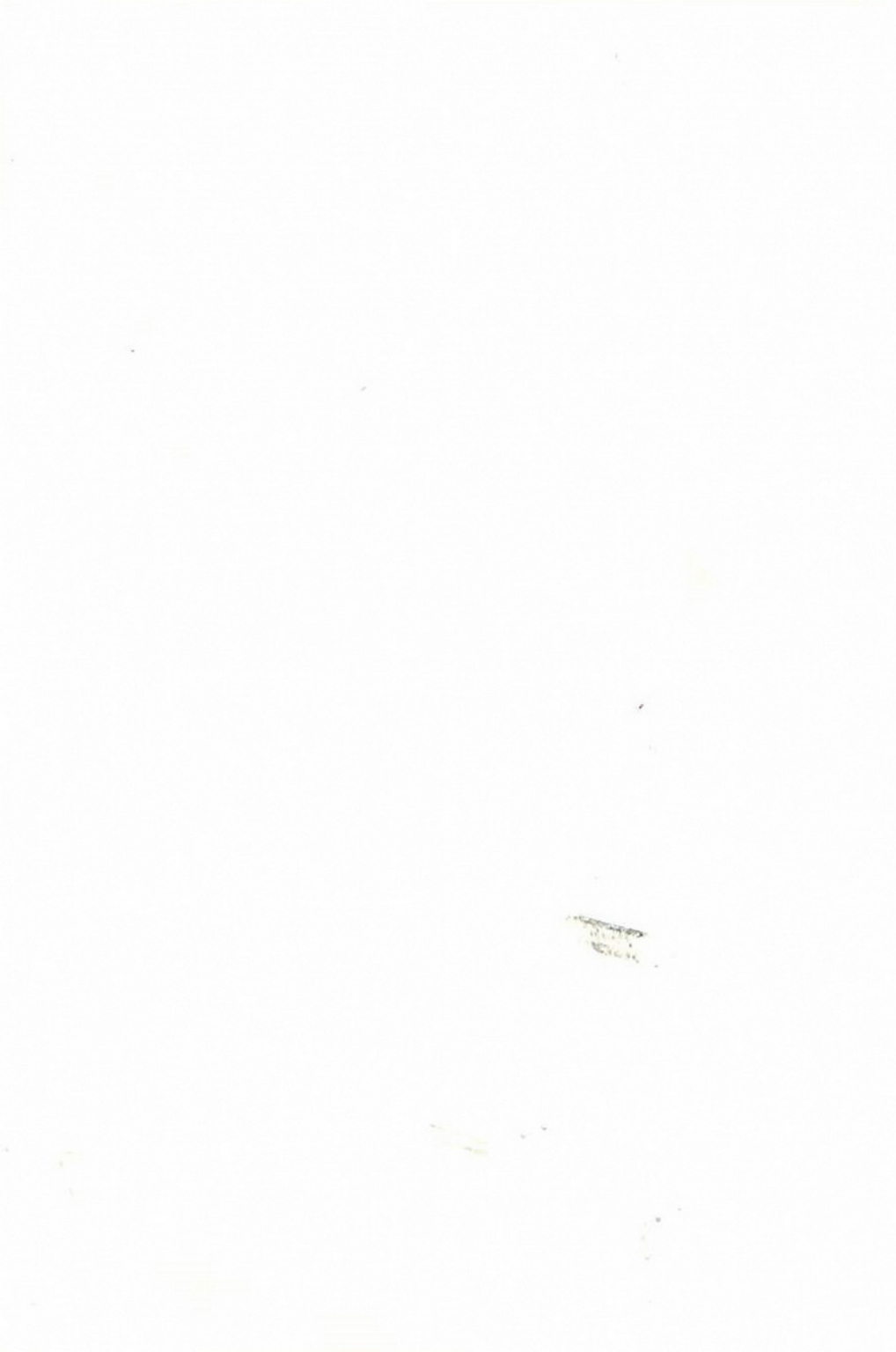


Nikolay Hovhannisyan

**THE**

**FOREIGN POLICY**





NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE

REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

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*THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA IN THE  
TRANSCAUCASIAN-MIDDLE  
EASTERN GEOPOLITICAL REGION*

YEREVAN 1998

ՂՏՀ 327 (479.25)

ԳՄԴ 66.4 (2Հ)

Հ 854

*This book is recommended for publication by the Scientific Council of the Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS Armenia*

The book is devoted to the study of a new geopolitical situation in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern region and the main principles of foreign policy of the young Republic of Armenia in 1990s.

The elucidation of the bilateral relations of Armenia with Russia, Turkey, Iran, Arab countries, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Israel occupies a central place.

The author also examines the impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem on the region's geopolitical situation and the Armenian-Azeri and Armenian-Turkish interstate relations.

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This Publication was made possible by  
Armen and Bersabe Jerejian Foundation Inc.  
USA

## PREFACE

The Armenians are one of the ancient civilized peoples of the world. Their history and fate have always been closely connected with the history and fate of the peoples of the Middle East and Transcaucasia, such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Jews, Persians, Greeks, Georgians, Caucasian Albanians, Arabs, etc. Some of these peoples, like the Assyrians, Babylonians, Albanians, Hittites, etc., have disappeared from the scene of history. The others, as the Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Georgians, Jews, still continue their historical path along with the Armenians.

Armenia has been an important part of the Middle East for more than 3000 years. Armenia is usually called a Biblical land, which is connected with the fact that in the Holy Bible Armenia is mentioned as a vital area during the world flood. In the First Book of Moses called Genesis, Chapter 8, Holy Bible, is written: "4. Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

5. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

6. So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made".<sup>1</sup> And once more Armenia is mentioned in the Holy Bible as the Araratian kingdom.

Armenia, sometimes is also called the cradle of civilization. To this problem is devoted the study of the English scholar David Lang "Armenia: Cradle of Civilization".<sup>2</sup> The background for this definition, according to the

English researcher, serves the great contribution made by the Armenians in the world culture and development of the world civilization.

Throughout its history, policy, economy and culture Armenia has been connected on the one hand with Transcaucasia, and on the other with the Middle East. The Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern region is the ethnic and geopolitical area of Armenia.

The Armenians, as different Armenian and non-Armenian sources, including the cuneiform, confirm, are the indigenous people of Armenia. This was witnessed at least from the III millennium B.C.

The language of the Armenians is the Indo-European Armenian. The Armenians are Christians. Christianity was officially declared state religion in Armenia in 301 A.D. In the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern arena, the Armenian statehood was organized many centuries ago. And it is not surprising that Armenia was mentioned among the other six countries depicted on the starlike Babylonian map, dating back to the 5th century B.C.

Armenia has always played an important role in the political, economic and cultural life of the region. It is a political factor, which has had its impact on the political situation and balance of forces in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern arena. Armenia played a most important role in international relations during the Artashid dynasty (189 B.C. - 1 A.D.), especially in the period of the reign of king Tigran the Great (95-55 B.C.). He had created a unified powerful state and attached to its empire Cappadocia, Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Syria, Palestine, Judea, etc. His realm extended from the Caspian Sea across the Middle East to the Mediterranean Sea and the borders of Egypt. After

defeating the Persian king, he proclaimed himself King of Kings and challenged the powerful Roman Empire. In fact, for a short period in the 1st century B.C. Armenia was the most powerful state in Transcaucasia and the Middle East.

Armenia as a state preserved its important role in international relations also during the periods of the Arshacid (I-V centuries, A.D.) and Bagratid (IX-XI centuries, A.D.) dynasties. Unique was the role of Cilician Armenia (XI-XIV centuries), especially at the time of the Crusaders. That is why the neighbors of Armenia - Persia, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, Georgia, the Arab Khalifate and further the Ottoman Empire had to take seriously into consideration the significance of the Armenian factor in their policy and international relations in the ancient period and Middle Ages.

In the late Middle Ages Armenia was occupied by Persia and the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of the XIX century Eastern Armenia was attached to the Russian Empire, while Western Armenia remained under the domination of the Ottoman Turks. But even during this unfavorable period, Armenia continued to play a certain role as a political factor. This circumstance was fixed in the Berlin Congress (1878), where the great powers - Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany and others had recognized the Armenian Question as the subject of international diplomacy. From that time on the Armenian Question became part of the Eastern Question.

Armenia lost its significance as a political factor during and after the First World War, due to two events.

Firstly, the genocide of Armenians in Western Armenia, implemented by the Young Turks in 1915-1916, who thus realized the program of Sultan

Abdul Hamid II to the effect that the best solution to the Armenian Question was the extermination of all Armenians. About 1,5 million people were massacred during the genocide. Consequently Western Armenia was devastated. There is no Armenian population now on that territory.

Secondly, after the Bolshevik coup d'etat in October, 1917, and the fall of the Russian Empire, in Eastern Armenia, which was part of the Russian Empire, an independent state, the Republic of Armenia was proclaimed on May 28, 1918. It covered about 55,000.00 sq.km. Thus, after five centuries the Armenian statehood was restored. The RA or the First Republic got the possibility to play its role in international relations, especially in the Middle Eastern region. But this process was artificially interrupted. On November 29, 1920, the XI Red Army entered Armenia and Soviet Power was established there. In 1922, the Armenian Soviet Republic was incorporated into the USSR. The second republic - ASSR, was deprived of the right to carry out its own independent foreign policy. That right was given only to the central government of the USSR.

Thus for about 70 years Armenia disappeared from the international life and the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern region as an independent power and political factor.

The situation changed after the collapse of the USSR and the formation of independent states on the basis of the ex-Soviet republics. Armenia was one of the most active participants of the liberation movement and greatly contributed to the process of dissolution of the USSR.

On September 21, 1991, after a referendum, the Republic of Armenia, the third Armenian Republic was proclaimed.

Armenia again appeared on the political scene and became a member of the international community.

## REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

The territory of the Republic of Armenia (RA) is about 29,743 km<sup>2</sup> which forms only 10% of historic Armenia. The population of RA is 3,253,500. Of that total population 97% are Armenians and the remaining 3% consists of ethnic minorities: Russians, Assyrians, Yazidis, Greeks, Ukrainians, Kurds, Jews, Georgians, etc. More than 5 million Armenians live outside of Armenia in the USA, Russia, France, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Israel, Georgia, Greece, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Egypt, Kuwait, etc.

The capital of RA is Yerevan with 1,248,000 inhabitants. Armenia borders on Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Georgia and thus is an integral part of two regions: Transcaucasia and Middle East. This circumstance impacts seriously on the formation of the foreign policy of RA.

After gaining independence, one of the most crucial problems existing before the young Republic was to define the main direction and principles of its foreign policy. This task was not an easy one. During the 70 years of its existence RA in Armenia first underwent for the RA was deprived of the right of forming of its foreign policy and could not exercise its right. Republic Republic of Armenia anything similar in the sphere of foreign

## **Chapter One**

# **THE FOREIGN POLICY DOCTRINE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

The territory of the Republic of Armenia (RA) is about 30000sq.km., which forms only 10% of Historic Armenia.<sup>3</sup> The population of RA is 3,753.500. Of that total population 97% are Armenians and the remaining 3% consists of ethnic minorities - Russians, Assyrians, Yezidis, Greeks, Ukrainians, Kurds, Jews, Georgians, etc.<sup>4</sup> More than 5 million Armenians live outside of Armenia, in the USA, Russia, France, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Israel, Georgia, Greece, Canada, Argentine, Uruguay, Brazil, Egypt, Kuwait, etc.

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After gaining independence, one of the most crucial problems arousing before the young Republic, was to define the main directions and principles of its foreign policy. This task was not an easy one. During the 70 years of its existence Soviet Armenia, the predecessor of the RA, was deprived of the right of pursuing of its foreign policy and could not transfer to the Third Republic, Republic of Armenia anything worthy in this sphere. In addition

the new leadership had no experience in this field and there were not sufficient professional diplomats in Armenia.

So the government of RA had to start from zero.

On the other hand, the problems of foreign policy were very closely interconnected with the problem of national security of RA.

The main doctrine of foreign policy of the RA was worked out step by step, a period of about two years.

By the definition of the first President of the RA Levon Ter-Petrosyan, "the foreign policy of Armenia is based on two important principles.

Firstly, the security of the state and people, not excluding the other factors, depends upon the normalization of relations with all our neighbors, the resolution of the existing confrontation by means of peaceful negotiations and development of regional economic cooperation, which has to lead us to the establishment of collective security system in the region".<sup>5</sup>

It is not difficult to note that this first principle consists of a blanch of problems, the most important of which is the establishment of good and peaceful relations with the immediate neighbors of Armenia - Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and by that to ensure the national security of Armenia.

The leadership of Armenia keeps this task in the center of its attention and pursues this aim as the most important in its foreign policy. The President underlined this idea very strongly in an interview to "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", Moscow, saying, that "the most reliable guarantee to a secure existence of Armenia is not the economic or military power, but the establishment of normal relations with all neighbors.

This principle is laid on the basis of our foreign policy doctrine".<sup>6</sup>

It is well known that there are two ways to guarantee national security. The first way is to create national military forces or a strong national defense army. Armenia, indeed, has achieved significant successes in this field. During recent years a well-equipped and well-trained national army has been built in Armenia and it is said that this army is the strongest in the Transcaucasian region.

But the Armenian government understands that these forces are not comparable with those of Turkey or Iran and any exaggeration in this question would have very dangerous consequences for Armenia and the region.

The second way to guarantee national security is political, which means the decision of the problem of national security by political methods, creating a favorable political atmosphere and conditions in the region. And this idea is dominating in the above mentioned first principle of foreign policy of Armenia.

The leadership of Armenia stresses upon the problem of national security proceeding from the fact that the Armenians are very sensitive in this question, as it is connected with their hard and tragic history, with the genocide of 1915-1923, the lost of Western Armenia, the massacres in Sumgait, Baku and Kirovabad, etc. The Armenians cannot forget about it and will not forgive any Armenian government if it put the problem of national security of their country not in the first place.

The second main principle of the foreign policy of the RA, formulated by the President, is the conception of not uniting to any political or military block: "Armenia in the world competition cannot become a part of opposition

blocks".<sup>7</sup>

These two principles are the two pillars of the foreign policy doctrine of the RA.

In 1991-1992, the recognition process of the independence of Armenia by the countries of the world, including Russia, France, the USA, Germany, Great Britain, China, India, Canada, Japan, Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Georgia, Jordan and others, was over.

The first state, which recognized the RA was Georgia and it happened on July 27, 1991. Turkey was the first Middle Eastern country to declare about its recognition of independent Armenia (December 12, 1991).<sup>8</sup>

The first state, which established diplomatic relations with Armenia was Lithuania (November 21, 1991), and the first Middle Eastern country to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia was Iran, on February 9, 1992.<sup>9</sup>

The recognition of the independence of Armenia and the establishment of diplomatic relations strengthened the international position of Armenia and opened the doors before it to become a member of the world community enjoying full rights. In this sense the admission of the RA, on March 2, 1992, to the United Nations Organization,<sup>10</sup> was of great significance.

Raffi Hovhannisyan, then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RA, in his speech on that occasion at the UN General Assembly, declared that Armenia honored and was eager to act in accordance with the Charter and the principles of the UN. He underlined that "the policy of the Republic of Armenia cannot be directed against any people, any country. We completely support the principle of territorial integrity and nonviolence. We also declare that for us the principle of the right to the free self-determination is of greatest

significance".<sup>11</sup>

Armenia became a member of other international organizations as well, such as the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, etc. It is taking part in the NATO's program "Partnership for Peace".

The government of the RA on the base of the foreign policy doctrine, modern international situation and balance of forces has defined the priorities in the foreign policy of Armenia. As it was mentioned by the Deputy Foreign Minister of the RA Vardan Oscanian, who became the Minister of Foreign Affairs in April, 1998, the priorities of the Armenian foreign policy are:

- a) Establishment of friendly relations with all its neighbors. And if Armenia has succeeded in resolving this problem, concerning Georgia and Iran, there is no progress so far in the relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Moreover, the government of Armenia, as it is mentioned in that document, considers that a military danger to Armenia is possible only from Turkey.
- b) Preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia.
- c) Guarantees of security of Nagorno-Karabakh and its population.
- d) An active participation of Armenia in the process for the formation of a new European security system.<sup>12</sup>

The foreign policy doctrine of the RA was not changed principally after the resignation of Levon Ter-Petrosyan on February 3, 1998, and election of Robert Kocharyan as new President of Armenia on March 30, 1998, though some corrections took place. He declared in his inauguration speech that "we will establish dynamic and mutually beneficial relations with our neighbors, and

those states traditionally pursuing strategic interests in the region. We will also intensify our participation in the structures of international cooperation. The Republic of Armenia will remain committed to signed international agreements. Our state will have its own role in regional and world economy and policy".<sup>13</sup>

Minister of Foreign Affairs Vardan Oskanyan, proceeding from this statement, outlined concretely the main tasks of the RA foreign policy in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern geopolitical region. According to this the RA foreign policy in the region must be based on six focal points:

Firstly, The strengthening of human rights and democracy in the region.

Secondly, Uniform and equal economic development in the region. It is necessary to activate the RA economic policy in the region, to participate in such initiatives, as Silk Road, replacement of pipelines, in the TRASECA program which begins in Europe and ends in Central Asia, to construct a superhighway from Poti (Georgia) to Meghri (Armenia), etc.

Thirdly, Strengthening and optimizing regional organizations (CIS, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, etc.).

Forthly, Contributing to the removal of the mentality of the Cold War. Armenia is conducting a policy of "positive equilibrium" by providing equal opportunity to all countries from both former cold-war camps, wishing to engage themselves in the region and in Armenia.

Fifthly, Engaging Turkey more positively in regional matters. It is time to raise the Armenian-Turkish relations on a new level and they must become a two-way street. This new policy requires that the RA's actions and reactions be commensurate with Turkey's actions and attitudes. The

intention of the RA leadership is not to confront Turkey, but to engage it.

Sixthly, The peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict. Armenia does not accept any preconditions and will not accept a step-by-step approach: that is, returning the occupied territories before coming to a final understanding Karabakh's final status. Karabakh cannot be part of Azerbaijan. Armenia call on everyone to sit around the table and look for a way to find a status that will satisfy Armenia, Karabakh and Azerbaijan. That will probably be an agreement, having at its core the principles of a horizontal relationship.<sup>14</sup>

This is in brief the substance of the doctrine and main principles of the RA foreign policy.

## **Chapter Two**

### **THE RUSSIAN POLICY IN THE REGION AND THE ARMENIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS**

The Russian attitude toward Transcaucasia i.e. relations with Armenia, as well as with Georgia and Azerbaijan, is a new field in regional relations. This phenomenon came to reality during the last years, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Before that we could not speak about the special Russian-Transcaucasian relations because Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were not independent states and they were part of one and the same state - the USSR.

The situation changed radically after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the above mentioned, as well as other ex-Soviet republics, became independent states. Consequently, new regional centers or new centers of regional relations were formed, such as Russia and the Baltic states, Russia and the Slavic (Ukraine and Belarus) states, Russia and Central Asia, Russia and Transcaucasia, etc. They were called "nearby foreign countries" or "near abroad".

The relations between Russia and Transcaucasia have passed three main phases.

The first phase includes the period from the second half of 1988 to the end of 1991, i.e. dissolution of the USSR. The characteristic feature of this phase is the political divorce of Russia and the Transcaucasian republics - Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, in a civilized manner, on the basis of

political independence, and the formation of specific regional relations.

Russia officially recognized the independence of Armenia on December 12, 1991, and on April 3, 1992 diplomatic relations were established between the two countries.

The second phase of the Russian-Transcaucasian relations started from December, 1991, after the decision of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus on the liquidation of the USSR as a subject of international law and the Declaration on the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This action had a direct impact on the political status of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and the Russian-Transcaucasian relations.

Being thoroughly involved in complicated internal struggles and turmoil, Russia in this period could not pay an adequate attention to Transcaucasia and was passive in its actions in the region. Russia had not any certain doctrine on its attitude towards Transcaucasia and there was an impression that Russia had lost interest towards the three Transcaucasian republics and was going to leave the region.

There may be there is some truth in such evaluation of the Russian policy in Transcaucasia. But even if it is true, Russia, nevertheless, never forgot the importance of the Transcaucasian region and tried to find new forms to attach Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to its policy or to preserve them in the sphere of its policy. And for the fulfillment of this purpose Russia used the CIS as an instrument. It pressed strongly, specially on Georgia and Azerbaijan, who occupied openly hostile positions towards the CIS, to become members of that new structure. In the end they yielded.

The first Transcaucasian republic which joined the CIS, was Armenia

and it happened in April, 1992. It was the reflection of a new attitude, adopted by the Armenian government at the beginning of 1992, which was connected with some factors. We mean the following circumstances.

After the declaration of independence of Armenia the new, non-experienced leaders, who entered the governmental palaces of the republic directly from the streets and squares, immediately changed the traditional pro-Russian orientation. They, in fact, occupied an unfavorable attitude towards Russia. But this was characteristic not only for Armenia. The new forces who came to power in other ex-Soviet republics occupied similar positions. This phenomenon was connected, in some sense, with the identification of Russia with the former Soviet Union. They tried to keep a distance from Russia as far as it was possible and the new Armenian leaders were not an exception.

They did not doubt that Russia had lost its interest towards Transcaucasia and that it was going to leave the region. This conception became for a time one of the basic principles of the RA foreign policy, which obliged the new Armenian leaders to find out new directions for their foreign policy.

Soon the so-called theory of "exception of the third power" appeared on the scene. According to this theory Armenia and Turkey could come to an understanding and improve their relations if they excluded Russia from their relations. Some adepts of this conception went so far that they tried to assert that the Armenian-Turkish relations were normal until the appearance of the Russian Empire in the Middle East, when the Armenians connected their fate, and first of all their liberation from the Ottoman yoke, with Russia. This circumstance, according to the logic of the authors of the above mentioned

theory, spoiled the Armenian-Turkish "friendly" relations.

The new leaders of Armenia were critical. They even accused Russia for the Russian-Turkish Treaty, signed in Moscow, on March 16, 1921. They evaluated that treaty as an anti-Armenian bargain between Bolshevik Russia and Kemalist Turkey. One of the results of the Moscow Treaty was the concession by Russia of a large portion of Armenian territory, the Kars District, over 25 thousand km<sup>2</sup> to Turkey.

Russia was also strongly criticized for the cession of ancient Armenian territories - Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan in 1921-1923.

So the Armenians condemned Soviet Russia for dividing their territories between two Turkic republics - Turkey and Azerbaijan. That was the price which Bolshevik Russia paid Kemalist Turkey to prevent its rapprochement with Great Britain and France. It was done at the cost of Armenian, not Russian national interests.

But the theory of the "exclusion of the third power" could not, and did not, work. The overwhelming majority of the Armenian people rejected that theory and protested against it, considering that it would represent a great danger to the national security of Armenia. It is worth noting that this theory was put forward at a time when the Armenian people passed through the Sumgait nightmare, when the Armenians of Karabakh were fighting against the Azeri army for survival, and when Turkey completely supported Azerbaijan and openly threatened Armenia. This theory could not be acceptable for the Armenians.

On the one hand the Armenian leadership began to understand that further change for the worse of the relations with Russia and the preservation

of tension between the two countries is not in the interests of Armenia. The geopolitical situation of Armenia differs principally from that of Azerbaijan, as well as, of Georgia. In this situation to continue to distance Armenia from Russia and to remain vis-a-vis with Turkey, who does not conceal its hostility towards us could mean great danger to the national security of Armenia. That is why at the beginning of 1992 the Armenian government adopted a new policy towards Russia. It decided to normalize its relations with Russia and to cooperate with that state in the political, economic and, if it necessary, military fields. The first expression of this new policy was to join CIS and its structures, including the Mutual Security Pact. And this was done on the base of preservation of independence and sovereignty of Armenia.

At the same time it had to be underlined that this change in the foreign policy of Armenia did not mean that Armenia had occupied a hostile or unfriendly position towards Turkey. Armenia until now is eager to improve its relations with Turkey on the principle of good relations with all its neighbors.

After Armenia, Azerbaijan became a member of CIS, on September 24, 1993, and Georgia, on October 23, 1993.

Thus Russia achieved one of its main goals, i.e. to include all Transcaucasian republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States, where the leading role belongs to Russia.

So we can resume that the characteristic feature of the Russian-Transcaucasian relations in the second phase was the final political separation of these states and further strengthening of their independence.

In this phase, some contradictions between Russia on the one hand and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia on the other, were defined. But at the

same time, again in the second phase, the first symptoms of the future directions of the Russian policy in Transcaucasia and the first tendencies towards their integration were quite visible.

From 1993 began the third and the most decisive phase in the Russian-Transcaucasian relations. The Russian leadership started to carry out a new policy in Transcaucasia. It was connected with a general change in the Russian foreign policy. We mean the following circumstances.

Firstly, Russia could not reconcile anymore with the status of non-great power and wanted to restore its political significance and leading role in the world. And for this purpose the Russian leadership decided to carry out a new and more active global and regional policy.

Secondly, Russia was disappointed in the West and understood that Europe and the whole West were not willing to open their doors before Russia. And the Russian government once again turned its face to the ex-Soviet republics, including the three Transcaucasian ones, trying to strengthen with them its political, economic and military contacts, regarding them one of the ways to raise the political weight of Russia in the world.

Thirdly, the Russian government, after a bitter experience, understood that the internal peace in Russia, including the Caucasus, significantly depended upon the situation in the near abroad, mainly Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

This conception was clearly expressed by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Andrey Kozirev. He stated that one of Russia's main task was "to maintain its prestige" and "there is a danger of losing geopolitical positions that took centuries to gain". Speaking on Transcaucasia, Kozirev

announced: "This region is the zone of our vital interests. If Russia loses its positions there, other forces could take our place, and that will be inevitably leading to destabilization in North Caucasus".<sup>15</sup>

So, the first time the Russian government admitted that Transcaucasia was in its zone of vital interests, that there were some states who would like to occupy Russia's place in the region, and that the ethno-political clashes in Transcaucasia (Nagorno-Karabakh, South Osetia and Abkhazia) and Northern Caucasus (Chechniya, Ingushetiya, North Osetia, Daghestan, etc.), were mutually impacting on each other. Further events confirmed that this approach was right. And though there were some pauses or zigzags in pursuing this policy, which were the reflection of contradictions between different power clans in the Russian top leadership, nevertheless, Russia did not give up its principles and continued to consider Transcaucasia as its vital zone for its geopolitical interests.

Since the beginning of 1997, the problems of Russian policy in the Caucasus became the subject of serious discussions in the government, State Duma and other governmental structures. The Russian National Security Council under the chairmanship of President Boris Yeltzin, devoted a special meeting to that problem in August, 1997. The president of RF strongly criticized the governmental organs for unsatisfactory policy in the Caucasus. He required from the government to increase its attention to that strategically important region, underlining, that the USA was already trying to occupy Russia's place there.

The problems of Russian policy in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia were discussed in an interview of the Adviser to the Russian President Emil

Payin with the "Turan" agency in September, 1997. He stated that "Russia's role in the Caucasian, near-Caspian and Caspian - Black Sea regions is not decreasing, but successively increasing".<sup>16</sup> One of the reasons for this, according to the Adviser, is "the strengthening of consolidation of positions in the Russian leadership".<sup>17</sup> If some years ago, E. Payin stressed, the different branches of Russia's governing circles had different approaches to the interests of Russia in the Caucasus, now, on the contrary, the Russian state structures were acting in harmony. The Adviser of the Russian President stated on the question of relations between Russia and the Transcaucasian countries: "Neither the USA, nor any other state can replace Russia for the Transcaucasian countries".<sup>18</sup>

The State Duma of the Russian Federation adopted a similar position. Former Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, the coordinator of the group of deputies of State Duma for contacts with the National Assembly of Armenia and one of the influential members of the State Duma Nikolay Rizhkov in an interview with the chief editor of the Armenian weekly "Urartu", examining main goals of the Russian policy in Transcaucasia, underlined that "now Russia is going nowhere from this region. To speak in the language of western geopolitics, this is the zone of our historical interests.

We are watching very attentively the actions of Turkey not only on the southern borders of Russia, but also in the regions, which traditionally are in the sphere of Russian interests in the Black Sea basin, Transcaucasia and Central Asia".<sup>19</sup>

Armenia, naturally, cannot ignore these circumstances and has to take them into consideration in its foreign policy in the Transcaucasian-Middle

Eastern geopolitical space.

So, resuming, we have to ascertain that Russian interests in Transcaucasia, from a geopolitical point of view, have three aspects, which very closely affect the geopolitical interests of Armenia.

Firstly, the Russian government understands that the situation in Transcaucasia directly impacts on the situation in Southern Russia, i.e. in the Caucasus. The Northern Caucasus is a zone of ethnic clashes and turmoil (Chechniya, Ingushiya, North Osetia, Daghestan, etc.). So for Russia it is very important that the foreign policy of Armenia, as well as that of Georgia and Azerbaijan would not be in contradiction with the Russian interests. Good and friendly relations with Transcaucasia will strengthen the rear of Russia in the South, which is very important for Russia.

And we have to underline that a harmony between the interests of Russia and Armenia was established in this matter. Armenia is not a jumping-off place against Russia.

Secondly, on declaring Transcaucasia within the sphere of its strategic and vital interests, Russia is against the establishment of domination or strengthening of influence by any other country, be it the USA, Iran or specially, Turkey. This Russian approach is not in contradiction with the interests of the national security of Armenia.

Thirdly, Russia's interests extend over the Middle East. In realization of Russia's Middle Eastern policy, Transcaucasia is a necessary link. It can be a bridge uniting Russia with the Middle Eastern countries. But it can also play the role of an obstacle, dividing them.

The Russia's aspirations to reach the Middle East through Armenia do

not contradict to the state interests of Armenia. Armenia can use the link for its own interests and to strengthen its position in the Middle East. Armenia can be a mediator between Russia and the Middle Eastern countries. Armenia's traditional ties with them, the knowledge of habits and culture of the region's indigenous peoples and of the socio-economic situation in those countries, the presence of the Armenian communities in Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and other countries, who are playing a significant role in the political, economic and cultural life of those states, are an invaluable capital, which raises the importance of Armenia in the Middle Eastern regional system. It serves for the rapprochement and establishment of close strategic, political and economic cooperation between Armenia and Russia in the Middle Eastern region.

All these factors are essential background for the Armenian-Russian strategic cooperation, which is endorsed in over 100 treaties and agreements, embracing practically all spheres of political, socio-economic, cultural and military relations, signed between the two states.

Among them it is necessary to single out the Armenian-Russian cooperation in the military field. According to Armenian-Russian treaties concluded in 1993-1994, Armenia, has granted Russia the right to have two military bases, which are located along the Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Iranian borders. Thus, the state borders of Armenia are defended by the joint armed forces of Armenia and Russia.<sup>20</sup>

The peak in Armenian-Russian relations was achieved by the "Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance", concluded on August 29, 1997. It is a

very important Treaty which can change the geopolitical situation in Transcaucasia and the Middle East. By this Treaty "The High Contracting Parties shall jointly take all measures at their disposal to obviate a threat to peace or a breach of the peace, or to oppose acts of aggression directed against them by any State or group of States, and shall render each other the necessary assistance, including military assistance, in exercise of the right of collective self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations."<sup>21</sup> This is the first of such a Treaty concluded by Russia with any other country.

Through this Treaty Armenia and Russia became strategic partners. Moreover, they became, according to the Russian mass-media and political commentators, allies.<sup>22</sup>

The Treaty raises Armenia's national security to higher level, guarantees and strengthens the position of RA in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern geopolitical system.

On the other hand, this Treaty serves the strategic interests of Russia in the region. It is not a secret that the Caspian oil has stimulated the diplomatic activities of the USA, several European countries, Turkey and Iran in Transcaucasia. Some of these states aim to force out Russia from Transcaucasia and consequently from the Middle East, and to force the leaders of the Transcaucasian republics to distance themselves from Moscow. The Russian-Armenian "Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" is an obstacle on the way to the realization of these plans and gives a possibility to Russia to preserve its position and influence in Transcaucasia and the Middle East. And that, in its turn helps to preserve

the balance of forces in the region and does not allow other countries to impose their monopolistic domination on Transcaucasia and the Middle East.

In conclusion we have to state that the relations between Armenia and Russia have strategic importance and play a significant role in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern geopolitical system.

### **Chapter Three**

## **THE ARMENIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS**

Turkey is one of the most powerful and key states in the Middle East, a member of NATO, a country with great military potentials, a large territory and over 60 million population. Its role is very important, sometimes decisive, in the Middle Eastern arena and regional relations.

Turkey is the most influential neighbor of Armenia and its position is very important for the national security of Armenia. On the other hand the role and place of Armenia in the Middle Eastern geopolitical system and regional relations to a great extent, depends on the character of its relations with Turkey.

After becoming an independent state, RA faced the problem of Armenian-Turkish relations. Would they be friendly or hostile? We had to remember that between the two states there existed a historical load, i.e. the memory of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire, the loss of Western Armenia, which is still under Turkish domination, and other questions. Would the Armenian government ignore all this and turn a new page or, proceeding from past history, it would occupy an unfriendly attitude towards Turkey?

We have already mentioned that the new Armenian leaders were eager to improve Armenian-Turkish relations and to build them on the principle of good-neighborly relations. They were rather optimistic in the establishment of friendly relations with Turkey. For this purpose they were even ready to reorient the Armenian foreign policy and to distance themselves from Russia. And some of those Armenian leaders were even convinced that Turkey in

response would warmly greet Armenia. It should be noted, that the beginning was hopeful and promising. Turkey recognized on December 16, 1991, the independence of Armenia.<sup>23</sup> The first contacts between the leaders of the two states were established and bilateral steps for rapprochement were undertaken. The Ambassador of Turkey to Moscow Volkan Vural in April 1991 made his first visit to Yerevan. His aim was to discuss on behalf of the Turkish government all questions, which could improve the relations between Turkey and Armenia. Among the serious steps in the normalization of bilateral relations was the draft of good-neighborly relations. Both sides expressed their willingness to reach an agreement on direct cross border trade, to open a highway between Armenia and Turkey,<sup>24</sup> etc. It is worthy also to note that "both sides recognized the need to overcome psychological barriers between the two peoples that stemmed from the massacre of Armenians in Eastern Turkey during World War I".<sup>25</sup>

It is significant that up to 1991 the Armenian leaders were ready to ask Turkey for its "good offices to mediate between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the Karabakh dispute".<sup>26</sup>

So the perspectives of the Armenian-Turkish relations were quite hopeful.

But these good perspectives did not have their further development. On the contrary, everything was cancelled and then the Armenian-Turkish relations became sometimes very strained.

What were the reasons?

The first reason, in our opinion, was the demand made by Turkey.

When after the recognition of RA's independence the time came to

establish diplomatic relations between the two countries, the Turkish side suddenly put three preconditions before Armenia. In a work, published by the US Congressional Research Service, Carol Migdalovitz, an American researcher, wrote on this issue: "Turkey's relations with Armenia are complex. Landlocked Armenia needs links with Turkey. Turkey set Armenia's explicit abandonment of territorial designs on Turkey, of allegations of Turkey's culpability for the 1915 "genocide" of Armenians, and a Karabakh solution as preconditions to diplomatic ties".<sup>27</sup>

So the first Turkish precondition was the demand made to the Armenian government to declare that it had no territorial claims ( i.e. Western Armenia.) to Turkey. Turkey required that the RA recognized the Moscow (March 16, 1921) Treaty on Armenian-Turkish borders, signed between Soviet Russia and Turkey. According to the clauses of that treaty, not only the whole of Western Armenia was left under Turkish domination but, also the Kars district (25,000km<sup>2</sup>), which formed part of Eastern Armenia, was given to Turkey. Now Turkey demanded from Armenia to be loyal to the conditions of Moscow, as well as Kars (October 13, 1921) treaties. As Graham Fuller stated, "in the spring of 1992, Turkey stipulated that it would not proceed to formalize diplomatic relations with Armenia until Armenia provides formal written recognition of existing borders".<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that the government of the Third Republic of Armenia never officially made any territorial claim to Turkey, and not did it set preconditions on diplomatic relations with Turkey.

The second Turkish precondition concerned the genocide of Armenians in 1915. Again the Armenian leadership did not require from Turkey to recognize the genocide, implemented by the Young Turks in 1915 or apologize

to the Armenian people, as it had been done by Germany toward the Jewish people in connection with the Holocaust. Under these conditions to speak about Armenia's abandonment of allegations to hold Turkey culpable by for the genocide of Armenians is nonsense.

The third precondition was about the Karabakh problem. Turkey accused Armenia of aggression against Azerbaijan and demanded to stop its support to the Nagorno-Karabakh people in its struggle for survival and self-determination.

Armenia has never been an aggressor. It is well known that the Azeris began the war in Karabakh in 1991. Armenia is just trying to guarantee the security of the Armenian people in NKR.

So all Turkish demands and preconditions were groundless and unacceptable for Armenia as humiliating for its national dignity. The government of the RA rejected the Turkish pretensions. President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who in June 1992 signed the Turkey-inspired Black Sea Economic Cooperation agreement, called Turkey "for bilateral relations without preconditions".<sup>29</sup> The position of the Armenian government to this issue has not change.

Thus diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey were not established.

The second reason of Armenian-Turkish strained relations is the Turkish attitude toward the Azerbaijan - Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which reflects negatively on the Armenian-Turkish relations.

Turkey has ethnic sympathies for Azerbaijan and "do support Azerbaijan's efforts".<sup>30</sup> Turkish-Azeri relations began tightening since the spring of 1992,

when the Azerbaijani Popular Front overthrew the President of Azerbaijan Ayaz Moutalibov and took the power. In June 1992 its leader Elchibey was elected the Azerbaijani President. He did not make any secret that his political ideal was Turkey, whom he usually called the elder brother of Azerbaijan, with whom he connected the political fate and future of his country. In the opinion of Graham Fuller the "nationalist president of Azerbaijan, Ebulfaz Elchibey, pursues an openly pan-Turkist policy. He champions close ties with Turkey and the adoption of the Latin alphabet for Azerbaijani Turkish. Elchibey is provocatively scornful of the "regime of mullahs" in Iran and predicts the breakup of Iran and the union of the two independent Azerbaijanians".<sup>31</sup>

Turkey in its turn permanently stressed its special brotherly relations with Azerbaijan, underlining that the political fate of that country concerned Turkey very much.

Elchibey's Azerbaijan was a great success for Turkey. It became Turkey's main ally in Transcaucasia.

This is why in the Armenian-Azeri dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh Turkey sided with Azerbaijan against Armenia. In this question Turkish official and public opinion occupied the same anti-Armenian position. And as the American researcher G.Fuller confirms, "Turkish public opinion overwhelmingly pressed Ankara to speak out firmly against Armenian actions".<sup>32</sup>

And Ankara supported and continues to support unconditionally the Azeri approach to the solution of the Karabakh conflict and exercises pressure on Armenia to accept the Azeri model, based on the restoration of sovereignty

of Azerbaijan over NKR, which, naturally, is not acceptable for Armenia and NKR. Since 1992 Turkey has undertaken concrete steps to strengthen the Azeri army. Among them is worth mentioning about an agreement on supplying Azerbaijan with military training. In 1993, during the war in Karabakh, about 160 Turkish military officers were aiding the Azeri army. The Turkish government extended a \$30 million credit to Azerbaijan to finance purchase of Turkish arms.<sup>33</sup>

Armenian-Turkish relations changed to the worse specially in 1992-1994, when the NKR defense army defeated the Azeri army, liberated the Nagorno-Karabakh and transferred the war to the territory of Azerbaijan. Turkey openly threatened Armenia and concentrated its divisions on the Armenian state borders. "The Turkish army units near the border were placed in a state of vigilance".<sup>34</sup> The danger of Turkish military intervention hanged over Armenia. In this complicated situation Armenia was backed by Russia. The Commander-in-chief of the Russian Military Forces Marshal Shaposhnikov seriously warned Turkey that any hostile military action against Armenia could mean the beginning of the Third World War. The US also pressured on Turkey not to take any military action against Armenia.

And Turkey had to retire. It decided to give up the idea of intervention, but kept its military forces, which were reinforced in 1993, on the Armenian borders and continued to press on Armenia. The late Turkish President Turgut Ozal occupied a very hard position toward Armenia. Indirectly reminding the Armenians about the genocide of 1915, he stated that "Armenia has not learned its lesson from the experience in Anatolia and the punishment inflicted".<sup>35</sup> After the Azeris were defeated in Kelbajar in 1993, Turgut Ozal

urged Turkey to "bear its teeth to Armenia".<sup>36</sup>

In addition, Turkey in the spring of 1993, suspended aid and foreign transit through its airspace and territory to Armenia. The doors were closed before the western shipments of humanitarian aid.<sup>37</sup>

A similar action was taken by Azerbaijan.

So Turkey and Azerbaijan imposed a blockade on Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, which continues up this day.

During these dramatic years Armenia kept calmness and even tried to come to an understanding with its neighbor in order to prevent the further worsening of relations between them. The Armenian government did not renounce from its policy of establishment of good-neighborly relations with Turkey.

President Levon Ter-Petrosyan in his press-conference, held on September 26, 1997, reviewing the Armenian-Turkish relations from the point of view of the impact of the Turkish-Azeri relations on it, stated that Turkey "had set for itself a trap and could not exit from it because it connected the improvement of relations with Armenia with the improvement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, particularly with the regulation of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem".<sup>38</sup> Levon Ter-Petrosyan mentioned that the Armenian side tried many times to convince the Turkish side that they had to separate the question of the regulation and normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations from the regulation of the Armenian-Azeri relations.<sup>39</sup>

Obviously, the problem of the Caspian oil and the possible route of the pipeline is very important for Turkey. Turkey wants to lay the pipeline from Baku to Jeyhan, to the Turkish port on the Mediterranean. Azerbaijan uses

this circumstance skillfully to press on Turkey, requiring not to open the borders and not to develop economic, commercial and industrial relations with Armenia, i.e. not to lift the blockade of the RA. At the end of September 1997, during the visit to Baku of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, the leaders of Azerbaijan openly told him that in case of any improvement of relations with Armenia, Turkey would lose its chance for the Baku-Jeihan pipeline.<sup>40</sup> And the President of Azerbaijan Heidar Aliev stated that "the key to the Armenian-Turkish borders is in the pocket of Azerbaijan".<sup>41</sup>

There is also one more factor which influences negatively on the geopolitical situation in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern region in general, and Armenian-Turkish relations in particular. The specialists call this factor the rebirth of "pan-Turkism" or "neo-pan-Turkism".

This new phenomenon is well studied by scholars, especially by American researchers, as G.Fuller, C.Migdalowitz and others. This new geopolitical orientation of the Turkish foreign policy became a special subject of study also in the RAND Corporation, Institute of Peace of the USA, etc.

According to the opinion of scholars the emergence of neo-pan-Turkism is connected with the demise of the USSR and the formation of five independent Muslim and Turkic republics in Transcaucasia and Central Asia (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekstan, Turkmenstan and Kyrgyzstan), on one hand, and reevaluation of the Ataturkist principles and traditions toward the other Turkic world, on the other hand.

The USA RAND Corporation prepared five Reports on Turkey's future geopolitical orientation for the US government. One of these reports was prepared for the United States Air Force and United States Army by the

above mentioned American researcher G.Fuller. Taking into consideration the importance of that Report, based on a broad and reliable information, we think it would be useful to elucidate some aspects of it.

The author ascertains the fact that in 1990s Turkey started to depart itself from the Kemalist legacy of caution toward the external Turks. And with the lessening of such kind of Atatürkist values, as statism, isolationism, avoidance of Islamic and pan-Turkic principles, increased the importance of "such factors as nationalist / pan-Turkist and Islamic ideologies" and the role of "Islamic groups and sentiments that introduce an "Islamic factor" into Turkish foreign policy, nationalist / neo-pan-Turkist impulses that increase Turkish interests in the Turkic world".<sup>42</sup> And one of the main consequences of reformulation of the Turkish foreign policy is that "Turkey is already moving more aggressively than any other state to establish a foothold in Central Asia", Turkey is considering itself "the unofficial "center" of the Turkic world" and, last, but not the least, "Demirel has already proposed a possible creation of a Union of Turkish states".<sup>43</sup>

One of the main principles of the new geopolitical orientation of Turkey, according to this Report, is the Turkish leaders ambitions about the future role of the Turks. "It is now commonly repeated in Turkey, - we read in Fuller's Report, - that the 21st century will be the "century of Turks", a phrase repeated by the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev during his visit to Turkey in September 1991".<sup>44</sup> And at last about one other confirmation, made in the Report: "Virtually overnight, Turkey's influence and involvement now extends in a nearly unbroken belt from the Turks of the Balkans to the Turks of western China and eastern Siberia".<sup>45</sup>

The reorientation of the Turkish foreign policy on the principles of neo-pan-Turkism will change the geopolitical situation and balance of forces in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern regional space.

It is not difficult to understand the danger of pan-Turkism to many countries, and first of all, to Russia, Iran, Armenia, the Arab countries, etc.

Turkish domination in the five Turkic republics of Transcaucasia and Central Asia would be a heavy blow to Russian interests in those two strategically important regions. The success of pan-Turkism will stimulate separatism among the Turkic peoples of Russia in North Caucasus, Tatarstan, Bashkiria, Yakutia and other provinces.

Iran also will suffer from the consequences of a pan-Turkistic policy. It will strengthen the influence and significance of Turkey in these two regions, which are very vital for Iran and its security.

Pan-Turkism threatens Iran's state integrity. Iran has many Turkic peoples - Azeris, Qashgais and Turkmen, who can be used by the pan-Turkists against the interests of Iran. In Azerbaijan there are some forces dreaming about the annexation of the Iranian Azerbaijan and the creation of "Greater Azerbaijan". "Indeed, nationalist elements in Turkey do support Azerbaijan's efforts to increase a sense of Turkishness among the Iranian Azeris and to seek a union with them, and generally support pan-Turkist policies designed to bring Turkey and the two Azerbaijan closer together".<sup>46</sup>

The pan-Turkistic policy and the increase of Turkey's role in Central Asia inevitably will affect China, taking into consideration, that in China there exists a large Chinese Turkic population, that "seeks separation from China".<sup>47</sup>

And last, but not least, pan-Turkism introduces a deadly danger to

Armenia. The Armenians are ethnically non-Turkic people and are considered to be one of the barriers against the Turkish expansion toward Central Asia. The golden dream of pan-Turkists of all generations was to either liquidate the "Armenian wall", standing on the way of Turkish expansion to the Turkic world or to transform it into an "Armenian corridor", through which it would be possible to reach to Central Asia, West China and East Siberia. C.Migdalovitz states that "Turkey seeks to expand ties to Central Asia, but does not border it. A modus vivendi with Armenia would provide Turkey with a bridge to the area".<sup>48</sup> But what kind of modus vivendi, that is the question?

It is clear, that the Turkish expansion, pan-Turkism and a Turkic belt from the Balkans to China and Siberia, is a great threat to all non-Turkic peoples and countries, located on that vast territory. The common danger will stimulate the rapprochement of Russia, Armenia, Iran and other countries, to guarantee their national security and territorial integrity.

At the same time, Armenia and Turkey, despite the above mentioned circumstances, continue some formal or informal contacts.

They use, in particular, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation conferences and meetings. In the framework of this organization, which unites 11 states, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Rumania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine, meet representatives of Armenia and Turkey, the Presidents, Prime Ministers, Speakers of Parliaments, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, etc. They discuss complex of political, economic, cultural and other problems.

At the end of April 1997, the President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan met in Istanbul with the President of Turkey Sulleiman Demirel. In his speech

at the business council of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, on April 29 1997, Levon Ter-Petrosyan stated that "the member-countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation differ both in the levels of economic development and approaches to the economic process regulations. The member-countries also have different views on regional problems, the solution to which require from the leaders of the countries of the region determined decisions and resolute political will. It is, however, for that same purpose that we founded our organization in order to create, with collective efforts and in the spirit of common vision on the future of our nations, a real basis for the region's economic integration that will lead our societies to an equally common understanding of indivisibility of their political fates".<sup>49</sup>

Turkey, under the pressure of the USA Congress and world public opinion opened its air space for civil aircraft and humanitarian aid to Armenia.

Very active are the Turkish businessmen who criticized the policy of their government toward Armenia in the question of blockade. They established "Turkey-Armenia Committee of Businessmen", which requires to open the borders with Armenia, to stimulate economic-industrial ties between the two countries, which would be very beneficial specially for the Turkish provinces - Erzerum, Kars, Igdir etc. The chairman of that Committee Kacan Soyak announced: "We have to overcome enmity between our two countries we have to overcome by trade and we have to change the past of the last 80 years".<sup>50</sup>

But for a breakthrough in Armenian-Turkish relations decisive actions are necessary to be taken by both sides. Armenia is ready to pass its part of the road toward a rapprochement with Turkey. This readiness of Armenia

was expressed once more by Levon Ter-Petrosyan in his September 26, 1997 press-conference, when he declared that we are ready without any precondition to begin serious trade and economic relations with Turkey, open our borders, place our roads at Turkish disposal for transit trade.

The Armenian-Turkish high level contacts are continuing also after the resignation of Levon Ter-Petrosyan. At the end of May, 1998, in Yalta, Ukraine, a meeting between the new President of the RA Robert Kocharyan and the President of Turkey Suleiman Demirel took place in framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Conference. The leaders of two States had discussed the possibilities and ways of improvement and development of the political and economic relations between Armenia and Turkey.

Some aspects of new approach to the relations with Turkey were revealed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia V. Oscanyan in his lecture at the American University of Armenia, May 21, 1998. Mentioning that the RA's relations with Turkey must be on a new level, he at the same time stressed, that Turkey has subjected Armenia to blockade and has refused to have relations with Armenia. Armenia, on the contrary, attempted to cooperate with Turkey, always with the hope of normalizing relations, but this approach has not produced positive results. Taking into consideration these circumstances, the RA's new policy, as stated the Foreign Minister, requires that our actions and reactions be commensurate with Turkey's actions and attitudes.

During his lecture, the Foreign Minister paid attention at another new moment in the Armenian-Turkish relations, which was put forward by the Armenian government recently. It is the RA's policy in genocide recognition.

The Armenian Foreign Minister stated in this occasion: "We have included this issue in our foreign policy agenda and have stated that this subject must be included in conversations with Turkey. Again, the purpose is not to set pre-conditions or confront Turkey. This is simply intended to lead to the removal of this barrier to our relations. As much as we say that we are able to set the Genocide aside (not forget it, but put it aside) as we have done over the last six years, still, it has weighed so heavily on our (and their) psychology, that it constitutes a serious obstacle to normalizing relations. If it is an obstacle, we must work towards removing this obstacle. The inclusion of genocide recognition on our foreign policy agenda must be viewed from this perspective."<sup>51</sup>

Despite these moments, the intention of the RA remains not to confront Turkey, but to engage it.

The improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations would open new horizons for economic and cultural cooperation between Armenia and Turkey.

It would have positive consequences for the geopolitical situation in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern strategic region.

## Chapter Four

### ARMENIA AND IRAN

Iran is a Middle Eastern leading state and its policy influences largely the geopolitical situation and balance of forces in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern region. The Iranian factor impacts decisively on the formation of the political atmosphere and on the character of international and interregional relations in a part of the world, which has considerable strategic importance.

Iran has an important place in the Middle Eastern policy of Armenia and it embraces the political, economic, strategic, scientific and cultural aspects of bilateral interstate relations.

Iran was one of the first Middle Eastern countries which recognized the independence of Armenia (December 25, 1991). The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Raffi Hovhannisyan and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ali Aqbar Velayeti signed on February 9, 1992, a Declaration on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states. They "for the strengthening of political, trade, economic, scientific and cultural contacts, for the creation of conditions to develop and strengthen the friendly relations between the two neighboring peoples, came to an agreement to establish diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Islamic Republic of Iran".<sup>52</sup> The Iranian Embassy was opened in Yerevan, and the Armenian Embassy- in Teheran.

At the same time the two Ministers discussed the principles and aims of their bilateral relations and on February 9, 1992, signed a Declaration on it.

The Declaration, which consists of 27 clauses, forceses the development of economic relations between RA and IRI, cooperation in different branches, such as the heavy and light industry, oil, chemistry, communications, customs, banking and insurance systems and the organization of industrial exhibitions. Armenia agreed to allow the IRI to use the territory of Armenia for transit to the Black sea ports, etc.<sup>53</sup>

An important event became the visit President Levon Ter-Petrosyan to Iran on May 6-8, 1992, and his negotiations with President of Iran Ali Aqbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and other leaders of Iran. They signed a very important document, the Common Statement on Cooperation, Friendship and Good-Neighborly Relations. The Sides decided to develop their relations on the principles of equality, friendship and good-neighborly relations, proceeding from the principles of honoring each others sovereignty, territorial integrity, etc.<sup>54</sup>

The two Presidents declared that the "Two states consider their common borders to be borders of peace".<sup>55</sup>

The majority of the economic projects are implemented successfully and Iran occupies the first place in Armenia's foreign trade.

So from the start the foundation of Armenian-Iranian relations was laid on firm and reliable grounds. This can be explained by different reasons, which speak about the coincidences of their positions in many strategically important spheres.

The Armenian-Iranian friendly relations have good historical background. There are no territorial or ethnic problems or quarrels between them, as in the case of Turkey. On the contrary, the past works for the rapprochement of

RA and IRI.

The significance of Iran for Armenia has increased since the period, when Turkey and Azerbaijan imposed a blockade on Armenia and NKR. And if we take into consideration the fact that after the Georgian-Abkhazian confrontation the Georgian railway, which connected Armenia and Georgia with Russia, was cut and both countries cannot communicate with Russia by railway, then the importance of the Iranian corridor for the survival of Armenia becomes even clearer. The Iranian "window" remains the only way for communication not only with Iran, but also with Arab and other countries.

Through it Armenia receives necessary goods, food, medicine, raw and other materials. In its turn, Armenia can export its goods to Iran and through it to other countries. So it is quite clear that the Iranian way has a strategic significance for Armenia and it is for the interests of the RA to preserve this way and even to widen it.

Due to this unique situation, Iran has gained the Armenian market for its goods and capital. Besides that, Iran understands that Armenia is the shortest way to Russia and Western Europe. Consequently, we can confirm that both sides have common strategic geopolitical and economic interests.

Through the prism of Armenian-Iranian relations, it is worth while examining the realistic and objective position of Iran towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Iran was one of the firsts, who tried seriously to be a mediator in that conflict. It was connected not only with the Iranian desire to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict, but also with the increasing significance of the Armenian factor.

Iran was the main mediator from February to May 1992. On taking part

in the peace processes, Iran aspired to prevent Turkey and the USA from strengthening their influence in the region. As for Russia, Iran is cautious, though it does not want to see Transcaucasia under the Russian domination too.<sup>56</sup> Besides that it was very essential for Iran to contain stability near its northern borders. "Iran fears its Azeri's ties to ethnic kin in Azerbaijan and developments in the north that might provoke Iranian Azeris".<sup>57</sup>

Iran had worked out a plan for the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which was presented to Armenia, NKR and Azerbaijan at the end of March, 1992. All the three parties agreed to the Iranian peace initiative. It included the following conditions: a cease-fire, exchange of hostages, end of blockade and "negotiations to find a political solution between Armenia and Azerbaijan with the participation of Nagorno-Karabakh representatives".<sup>58</sup>

At the same time Iran called the United Nations to send international peace-keeping forces to the zone of conflict. According to the Iranian peace-plan a peace conference had to be convened for a complete decision of the problem.<sup>59</sup>

But Azerbaijan announced that he was against the participation of any Nagorno-Karabakh representative in any peace conference, which brought the Iranian initiation to a deadlock and, after all, it failed.

There was another cause for the failure of the Iranian peace plan. As American researchers M.Halperin and D.Scheffer, mentioned "The CSCE (Committee for Security and Cooperation in Europe - N.H.) launched an eleven - nation conference in 1992 to mediate the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh. The participant's hidden agenda may have been to exclude Iran from influencing the outcome

of the dispute".<sup>60</sup>

In this group of eleven states the leading role belongs to the USA, Germany, Italy, Turkey, etc.

Though Iran's plan was failed and it was excluded from participating in the peace process and solution of conflict, nevertheless, Iran continues to follow the development of events. In a meeting with the diplomats accredited in Teheran, the former President Rafsanjani talking about the regional conflicts in Palestine, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir, as well as about the problems in Sudan, Zaire and Somali, stated that "Iran strives for the solution of these conflicts peacefully and in humanitarian way, and wants to become the center of stability in the region".<sup>61</sup>

There is also another aspect in the Armenian-Iranian relations. We have already mentioned about the unfriendly position of Azerbaijan towards Iran, especially during Elchibey's Presidency and later on, after the establishment of close strategic relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey, the plans of Baku to unite Iranian Azerbaijan with Northern Azerbaijan and the neo-pan-Turkism. The Azeri aspirations and pan-Turkism itself represent serious danger to Iran, to its territorial integrity and positions not only in Transcaucasia, but also in the Middle East and Central Asia, i.e. in the vast territory which after the collapse of the USSR became an arena of rivalry between Turkey and Iran.

The creation of the Turkic belt from the Balkans to the West China and East Siberia may encircle Iran from the North, North-West and North-East and thus would cut Iran from Armenia and through it from Russia and Western Europe. Iran, naturally, will not allow the realization of this Azeri-Turkish

plans. So it undertakes different steps to prevent the establishment of Turkish domination in Transcaucasia and Central Asia and the emergence of Turkey as regional superpower. It also strives to secure its national interests and strong geopolitical positions in that vast region. For the realization of this policy Iran needs allies. And Armenia, according to the Iranian vision, is one of the probable candidates, who can play that role, because the above mentioned projects may change the geopolitical situation in the Middle East, Transcaucasia and Central Asia not in favor of either Iran or Armenia.

So economic and geopolitical factors dictate Armenia and Iran to cooperate in different spheres, to preserve, develop and widen their friendly relations, which were established between the two neighbor states during recent years.

Expressing the opinion of Iranian leaders, in an article devoted to the sixth anniversary of the independence of the RA, the Iranian semi-official organ "Iran News" stated : "Armenia has established friendly relations particularly with Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran... Armenia gives great importance to the role of Iran in the region, and the friendly contacts between Yerevan and Teheran firmly continue to widen since the independence of Armenia".<sup>62</sup>

The change of leadership in Armenia caused some anxiety in Iran, which is quite natural. Iran, as a neighborly country, cannot be indifferent toward the RA foreign policy and toward the future of the Armeian-Iranian interstate relations.

The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. S.Kamal Kharrazi in his address to the participants of a conference on Central Asia and

Caucasus, discussing "The Role of Regional Powers in Conflict Resolution and Economic Development", Tehran, April 27-30, 1998, stated: "We watch very closely after the events in Armenia".

But soon the Armenian leadership clarified the situation, stating that Iran is very important partner and occupies an distinguished place in Armenian foreign policy. Armenia intends not only to preserve the present high level of the Iranian-Armenian relations, but also to strengthen and develop cooperation between two countries, specially in the fields of economy, finance, communications, science, culture, etc.

The Armenian-Iranian cooperation has great perspectives and it is beneficial for both countries, for the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern geopolitical region.

## **Chapter Five**

# **ARMENIA AND THE COUNTRIES OF THE ARAB EAST**

The importance of the Arab countries in world policy and economy is well known. They play a very significant role in the Middle Eastern strategic-geopolitical system.

As we have mentioned, historically and geographically Armenia is one of the essential part of the Middle East and this region together with Transcaucasia is the geopolitical and economic space of the RA. Moreover, the Middle East is much closer to Armenia than any other region. That is why, throughout the centuries there have been different close ties between Armenia and the Arab world.

The Arab East is a wide field of political and economic activity for Armenia, due to which Armenia is involved in the Middle Eastern regional system more completely. It opens before Armenia enormous possibilities for economic and political activity, and for strengthening its position in the region.

These circumstances together with the two main principles of Armenia's foreign policy doctrine (to establish friendly, good-neighborly relations and not to join any of the confronting blocks) are taken as a basis for the policy of RA toward the Arab countries.

There is one important aspect too. It is the Armenian-Arab historical heritage, which is favorable for the establishment of friendly relations between the RA and the Arab states. We mean the following circumstances.

At the end of the XIX century the Arab and Armenian political thought

came to the conclusion that the national interests of the Arabs and the Armenians coincided.<sup>63</sup> Both nations, at that time, were under Ottoman tyranny. The liberation from that tyranny and self-determination was a common task for both peoples. This common case aroused friendly feelings among them and they in fact became natural allies.

Exclusively decisive was the attitude of the Arab people toward the Armenian genocide, perpetrated by the Ottoman powers during the First World War. The Arabs, both the people and the national leaders, accused that genocide and helped the Armenian refugees. Due to this humane attitude hundreds of thousands of Armenians were rescued and survived.

This circumstance has left a deep trace in the historical memory of the Armenians and they will never forget it.

After the First World War there were formed Armenian communities in many Arab countries, including Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, afterwards Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, etc. They play, sometimes a significant role in the political, economic and cultural life of those countries. Their activity, contribution to the development of the economy and culture of those countries, creates a favorable atmosphere in the Arab world for Armenia, which stimulates rapprochement between the RA and the Arab countries. The Armenian communities are fulfilling the functions of a bridge between them.

The Arab countries were among the first to recognize the independence of Armenia and to establish diplomatic relations. In December 1991, the independence of the RA was formally recognized by Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco and further on by other countries.<sup>64</sup>

Egypt, Syria and Lebanon opened Embassies in Yerevan and the Embassies of the RA were likewise opened in Cairo, Damascus and Beirut.

The establishment of diplomatic relations with the majority of the Arab states promotes the RA to become an essential part of the Middle Eastern regional strategic system and facilitates the fulfillment of its tasks and aims in this regional system.

Armenia desires to develop friendly political and economic relations with all the Arab countries. But their quantity is over 20, while the possibilities of Armenia are limited. So in its Arabian policy there are some priorities.

It first of all concerns Egypt, which is the most powerful and influential Arab country, which plays a leading role in the Arab world, in different Arab organizations and inter-Arab cooperation. The RA is interested in developing large scale relations with Egypt. And, indeed, there were established friendly relations between them, which embrace the economy, trade, finance, culture, science mutual visits of state, economic, cultural and other delegations, visits of the leaders of the two countries. From this point of view were very important the visit of President Levon Ter-Petrosyan to Egypt on May 26-28, 1992 and his negotiations with the President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak.<sup>65</sup> They confirmed their willingness to develop bilateral relations in different spheres, and to cooperate in the international arena. They discussed also the main problems of the region.

During this state visit an agreement on economic and scientific cooperation between Armenia and Egypt was signed. It pursues two main aims: a) to develop friendly ties between the two countries and b) to stimulate cooperation between them in economic and scientific-technical fields.<sup>66</sup>

And this Agreement is working successfully. After the visit of the President of RA there has been an active dialogue between Armenian and Egyptian entrepreneurs, mutual visits of ministers of the two countries. Armenia takes part in the Cairo International Industrial Exhibition. The Armenian-Egyptian Business Promotion Center was established in Yerevan.<sup>67</sup>

So we can note the high level of relations between Armenia and Egypt. These relations are friendly and their further development would only contribute to their becoming one of the most important factors in the Middle Eastern regional geopolitical system.

In Armenia's policy toward Arab countries Syria, the second influential Arab state, occupies a significant place. Contacts on different levels between the two countries are rather active.

For the development of friendly Armenian-Syrian relations, of great importance was the visit of Levon Ter-Petrosyan to Damascus and his negotiations with the Syrian President Hafez al-Asad at the end of April, 1992. Hafez al-Asad expressed his satisfaction of the existing relations between Armenia and Syria. The two Presidents confirmed their will to stimulate and widen the political, regional, economic, cultural ties between Armenia and Syria.<sup>68</sup>

The two countries signed different agreements, among them Agreements on Consular, Cultural, Trade cooperation.<sup>69</sup>

Syria played a significant role in the economic relations with Armenia before the economic blockade on Armenia by Turkey. This blockade closed the road which passed through Turkish territory between Syria and Armenia. But despite this circumstance Syrian-Armenian contacts, and first of all

political ones, were not weakened.

As it is well known, Syrian-Turkish relations are strained because of the Euphrates river waters, the Kurdish question, as well as the problem of former Alexandrette sanjak (Iskenderun), a Syrian territory, which in 1938-1939 was separated from Syria and given to Turkey by France and England.

Syria and all the other Arab countries are alarmed by the neo-pan-Turkism and the Turkish efforts to dominate over the Transcaucasian-Central Asian large area. The increase of the Turkish influence can bring a change in the balance of forces in the region and in the existing status quo. This represents a threat to the interests of Syria and other Arab countries.

The Arab leaders hope that the friendly relations with Armenia and the latter's inclusion in the Middle Eastern regional geopolitical system will be a contribution to the prevention of undesirable strategic changes in the region.

This circumstance rises the significance of Armenia for the Arab countries.

Armenia is also significant for the Arab countries as an important cross-road, a transit route, linking them with the northern regions and CIS countries.

A new expression of the friendly Armenian-Arabian political contacts was the visit of the Foreign Minister of Armenia A. Arzoumanian to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt during the second half of March, 1997. He met and negotiated with the President of Syria Hafez al-Asad, Prime Minister Mahmud Zouabi and Foreign Minister Faruk Shara. During meetings issues concerning the creation of inter-governmental Syrian-Armenian committee were discussed, as was an agreement on the Armenian participation in projecting and building a subway in Damascus.

In Lebanon the Armenian Foreign Minister had meetings with the

President of Lebanon Ilias Harawi, as well as Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri and Minister of Foreign Affairs Fares Buez. They discussed the issues of cooperation in economic and banking fields and cooperation between private sectors of both countries.

On March 15-16, the Armenian delegation at the head of the Minister of Foreign Affairs met in Jordan with the Jordanian Prime Minister Kabariti, Foreign Minister Kamal Naser and the Royal Chief of Secretary Aun Khasauna. The sides discussed the perspectives of development of the relations between the RA and the Jordanian Hashimite Kingdom and agreed to create the legal field for stimulating the co-operation. The Foreign Ministers signed Protocols on holding consultations between Armenian and Jordanian Foreign Ministries and on intentions between Armenian and Jordanian Governments.

The last point of the visit of the Armenian delegation was the Arab Republic of Egypt. In Cairo the Armenian Foreign Minister, on March 17-20, 1997, met with the President of Egypt Hosni Mubaraq, Chairman of Parliament Fathi Surari and Foreign Minister Amr Musa. During several meetings the sides discussed the questions concerning the cooperation in the fields of science, culture, education and trade and the establishment of an Arabian bank in Armenia.<sup>70</sup>

Very important was, by its political consequences, the meeting of the Armenian Foreign Minister, on March 19, 1997, with General Secretary of the Arab League Ismat Abdel Magid and with the ambassadors of 22 Arab states, accredited in the Arab League. He delivered a speech at the Arab League and it was the first time that such a possibility was given to the

foreign Minister of a non-member country.

The Foreign Minister of Armenia outlined the Armenian approach to the solution of the Karabakh problem, "stressing the non-religious nature of the conflict".<sup>71</sup>

Ismat Abdel Magid, the General Secretary of the Arab League, in his answer, declared on behalf of the 22 member countries, that "there was a clear understanding among the member-countries of the League on the non-religious nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict".<sup>72</sup> In his opinion the Karabakh issue "is a national political conflict".<sup>73</sup>

The clarification of their positions on the Karabakh issue and the acceptance by the 22 Arab countries of the fact that the confrontation is of a non-religious nature, impacts positively on the development of friendly relations between them and Armenia.

On its part Armenia supports the peace process in the Middle East and the peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the UN decisions.

The good and friendly relations, established between the RA and the Arab states, are mutually beneficial. They strengthen their position in the Middle Eastern region and serve for the stability and preservation of the existing balance of forces.

## **Chapter Six**

### **ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJANI RELATIONS.**

#### **THE PROBLEM OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH**

Armenian-Azeri relations belong to the most dangerous field in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern policy of Armenia. They are permanently strained, sometimes even openly hostile. Their state borders are not a line of peace, but a zone of mutual artillery bombardments, which happen very often to date.

Moreover, Azerbaijan accuses Armenia of aggression, stating that Armenia implements aggression through the military forces of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The main reason of unregulated Armenian-Azeri relations is the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. We feel obliged to elucidate some aspects of that problem.

Karabakh or Artzakh according to the Armenian tradition, has always been an integral part of Armenia. Since times immemorial its native population has always been Armenians. And from the point of view of their ethnicity, language, religion (Christianity), cultural heritage, etc., there is not any difference between them and the Armenians of all the other parts of Armenia.

In the late Middle Ages, (XVII-XVIII centuries), when Transcaucasia and the Middle East became an arena of bloodshed between the Persian and the Ottoman Empires, the central and western parts of Armenia fell under Ottoman domination, while the eastern part came under Persian domination.

In 1813, after the Russian-Persian war and the conclusion of Goulistan

Treaty, Karabakh became the part of the Russian Empire. The other provinces of Eastern Armenia, Yerevan and Nakhichevan, were included in the Russian Empire after the Russian-Persian second war, 1826-1828, and by the Turkmenchai Treaty. So at the beginning of the XIX century the whole of Eastern Armenia, with Karabakh, Yerevan and Nakhichevan provinces, appeared within the Russian Empire.

This situation was in force until the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917.

In 1918 Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence. Azerbaijan as a state appeared for the first time in history in 1918. Immediately after that Azerbaijan proclaimed its territorial claims to Armenia, and Karabakh became one of the objects of dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, though historically, ethnically and geographically Azerbaijan had no right. "Nagorno-Karabakh (Mountainous Karabakh) and the larger surrounding lowlands have been part of the Armenian homeland for more than two millennia. Azerbaijan claimed the region for the first time when it emerged as an independent state in 1918".<sup>74</sup> The Karabakh Armenians who constituted over 95% of the population, rejected all Azeri claims and wanted to be united with the Motherland - Armenia. A group of American researchers who have made special studies on this issue, confirm that "local population of this area opted clearly for Armenia".<sup>75</sup>

When Soviet power was established in April 1920 in Azerbaijan and then in November in Armenia, a hope was born among the Armenians that the territorial dispute would be solved fairly and Karabakh would be united with Armenia.

And, indeed, at the beginning it seemed that events would develop by this way.

On December 1, 1920, the Revolutionary Committee of Azerbaijan had stated that "Now the border disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan are declared resolved. Mountainous Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan are considered part of the Soviet Republic of Armenia".<sup>76</sup>

But soon the Azeri leadership's position changed radically. It announced that it could not agree with the attachment of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. The question was examined in the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party, which in its plenary session on July 4, 1921, decided to attach Mountainous Karabakh to Soviet Armenia. But on the following day, on July 5, 1921, it reviewed the issue and decided that "Mountainous Karabakh should be left within the boundaries of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, while declaring it an autonomous region with Shushi as its administrative center".<sup>77</sup> And in July 1923, the incorporation of Karabakh into Azerbaijan as Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (District) - NKAO was finalized.

The decision of the Caucasian Bureau was unconstitutional, because no party organ, be it central, regional or local, moreover, the party organ of a third state (at that time Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the other Soviet republics were not yet united into one state - the USSR) had any legal right to take decisions on state borders. This right according to international practice is only within the jurisdiction of supreme legislative power of any state. Only that body is competent to take decision on territorial issues on the basis of mutual agreement. In Karabakh's case this principle was brutally

violated.

Researchers, who have specially studied this problem, are unanimous in that the Caucasian Bureau changed its decision under pressure from Stalin. And they try to explain the reasons of his behavior. American politologist P.Goble states that "Stalin intentionally planted in each republic one or more minorities which would have to depend on Moscow for protection... Moscow drew borders in this region (Transcaucasia - N.H.) so that there would be significant Armenian and Azerbaijan minorities in each other's states and then used these minorities as its henchmen".<sup>78</sup> In the opinion of Carol Migdalovitz "Stalin reversed the decision (Caucasian Bureau on Karabakh - N.H.) to please Turkey".<sup>79</sup>

Also very interesting are the opinions expressed by N.Fraser and his American colleagues. They wrote that "Although the reasons for this change in jurisdiction are not perfectly clear, developments in Soviet-Turkish relations possibly played a certain role, for Kemalist Turkey was one of Soviet Russia's first and closest allies. Allocating Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan may have been a concession to the new Turkish state, which the Soviet leadership hoped, would play an important role in leading the anticolonial, revolutionary struggle in Asia".<sup>80</sup>

The Armenians never reconciled with the "solution" of the Karabakh issue, imposed on them by the Caucasian Bureau.

Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan was in a condition of a colony. From 1930 to the 1980s "the autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh had been highly restricted, and deteriorating socio-economic conditions combined with Azerbaijani's insensitive cultural policy which discriminated against

Armenians and favored Azerbaijanis in the NKAO".<sup>61</sup>

In addition, the demographic situation was also changed in favor of the Azerbaijanis. The percentage of the Armenians in NKAO permanently decreased, while that of the Azerbaijanis increased. Consequently "the Armenians assume that Azerbaijan intends to oust them from Karabakh the way they believe it did from Nakhichevan in the 1920s".<sup>62</sup>

And the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh searched for ways to rid themselves of the Azeri domination and to attain freedom. They saw a chance for the implementation of their dreams in the policy of perestroika (reconstruction), proclaimed by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

On February 20, 1988, the 20th Extraordinary Session of the Soviet of People's of NKAO adopted a Resolution, requesting the Supreme Soviets of Azerbaijan and Armenia "to transfer the Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabakh from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR".<sup>63</sup>

The first Azeri reaction to this request was the massacre of Armenians in the Azeri city of Sumgait (not far from Baku) during February 26-28, 1988. The Report of the Mission of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) stated, that "The first serious mass killing of Armenians took place in Sumgait, north of Baku, during the last days of February 1988.

From that time on, a mass exodus of Armenians from Azerbaijan began".<sup>64</sup>

The Sumgait pogroms were followed by similar anti-Armenian actions in Baku, Ganja and other towns and villages of Azerbaijan.

The Sumgait massacre shocked the whole world. In July, 1988, the European Parliament endorsed the following Special Resolution: "Considering that historically Mountainous Karabakh was part of Armenia, that presently

more than 80% of the population is Armenian, that this Region was gratuitously annexed by Azerbaijan in 1923 and that in February 1988 Armenians were massacred in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait,

Considering the deterioration of the political situation causing massacres of Armenians in Sumgait and brutalities in Baku thus creating a dangerous situation for Armenians in Azerbaijan,

Condemns the brutalities and pressures against Armenian demonstrators in Azerbaijan".<sup>65</sup>

On June 13, 1988, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan had rejected the Karabakh request as unacceptable. The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and M. Gorbachev completely supported the Azeri position.

As for Armenia, its Supreme Soviet decreed on June 15, 1988 "to give its consent to the inclusion of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous region in the Armenian SSR".<sup>66</sup>

After the massacres in Sumgait, Baku, Ganja and other parts of Azerbaijan, the whole Armenian population fled or was deported from Azerbaijan and about 350 thousand of them found a shelter in Armenia. Many refugees were stationed in Russia, Central Asia, some of them in the USA, European and Middle Eastern countries.

All these brutalities, bloodshed and massacres could not wreck the will of the Karabakh Armenians and they continued their struggle for liberation and self-determination. They did not want to stay anymore under the Azeri domination.

In order to punish the Karabakh Armenians the Azeri government

launched in 1991 an offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh. It imposed a war on the Armenians and for it the responsibility lies on the Azeri side.

The Azeri military units with the support of the Soviet Army units, which at that time were still located in Azerbaijan, undertook massive attacks against the towns and villages of NK. The Armenians appeared in a critical situation. During the military campaign in 1991-1992, the Azerbaijani army occupied 2000km<sup>2</sup> of the 4,4km<sup>2</sup> of NK territory,<sup>87</sup> putting the future existence of NK under question.

During this period some important events happened. In August 1991 an unsuccessful attempt of coup d'etat was undertaken in Moscow. It hastened the collapse of the USSR. On August 30, 1991, Azerbaijan declared its independence.

This created a new political situation and put NK before a dilemma: either to secede with Azerbaijan from the USSR or to remain within the Soviet Union, according to the USSR Law of April 30, 1990 "On the rule of solution of questions relating to union republic going out from the USSR". The 3rd Article of that Law stated that in case of a union republic came out of the Soviet Union, the autonomous republics, oblasts and okrougs has the right by a referendum to "decide independently the question of their further remaining either within the Union of SSR or coming out with the union republics, as well as the question of its state status".<sup>88</sup>

On the basis of this Law, the joint Session of the Soviets of Peoples Deputies of NKAO and the Shahumian district proclaimed on September 2, 1991, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) and decided to secede from Azerbaijan and to remain within the USSR, leaving the solution of its status

to a referendum.

In response, Azerbaijan on November 26, 1991, announced the Karabakh parliamentary actions illegal, nullified the NK autonomous status and declared direct rule. The CSCE Mission qualified this decision "to be unconstitutional".<sup>89</sup>

In this extremely complicated situation, a referendum on its status, on December 10, 1991, was held in NK. The referendum was held when the USSR had already ceased its existence. 85% of the population took part in the referendum and 95% of the participants voted in favor of the independence of NKR. On December 28, 1991, the first Parliament of NKR was elected, which on January 6, 1992, formally declared the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.<sup>90</sup>

After that the NKR government could mobilize all forces, create a regular army and change radically the military situation in favor of its own. After heavy battles this well trained army defeated the Azeri army and liberated most of the occupied territories of the NKR. And as Azerbaijan rejected all cease-fire attempts, the war continued and the NKR armed forces set up control over seven Azerbaijani regions, which became a zone of security for NKR.

After the defeat in the battlefield Azerbaijan appeared in a desperate situation and was obliged to accept the cease-fire suggestion, monitored by Russia and other countries.

The cease-fire Agreement was signed on May 12, 1994, by Azerbaijan, Armenia and NKR.

Thus failed completely Azerbaijan's efforts to preserve NK within its boundaries and under its jurisdiction, to liquidate NKR or compel its Armenian

people to leave their ancient historical territories.

During the conflict Azerbaijani leaders attempted to represent the conflict not as a confrontation between Azerbaijan and NKR, but as one between Azerbaijan and Armenia and thus to involve Armenia directly in the war. As was mentioned, they considered Armenia an aggressor, who with the help of NKR army had occupied Azerbaijani territories.

These accusations are groundless. Otherwise the great powers, the UN Security Council could make this question a subject of discussion and use sanctions against Armenia. As it is known, that did not. On the contrary, the USA Congress and Administration, in accordance with the clauses of Freedom Act 907, implemented some economic sanctions against Azerbaijan for its blockade of Armenia and NKR, while Armenia and NKR received humanitarian help from the USA and other countries.

By stating this, we do not want to say, that Armenia is indifferent to the fate of NKR and does not show help to him. It would be unnatural. Armenia and Karabakh, their peoples are two parts of one and the same country, historic Armenia, and the same people - Armenians. But the help of Armenia to NKR is first of all political support, a desire to create favorable international conditions for the political solution of the conflict on the basis of justice. It is economic and material help, which was widened after the opening of the Lachin humanitarian corridor between Armenia and NKR in 1992. It is also a moral support to a people, who struggles for its liberation and for its right to self-determination.

After the cease-fire the Karabakh conflict entered a new stage of development. At this stage, the most important thing is the definition of the

principles, ways and methods of the Karabakh problem solution.

From the start of the conflict Azerbaijan did not recognize the right of the Nagorno-Karabakh to self-determination and insisted on the preservation of its territorial integrity. After the proclamation of NKR (September, 1991), Azerbaijan annulled the status of Nagorno-Karabakh as an autonomous oblast (November, 1991). The defeat of Azerbaijan in the Karabakh war and the loss of some territories (1992-1994) did not change the Azerbaijani position. It rejected the right of NKR to unite to another state or to form a new state.

Now the Azerbaijani official demands are formulated as follows:

- The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is not negotiable and Azerbaijan rejects the secession of NKR and its declaration as independent state;
- The full withdrawal of the Karabakh army from all occupied territories;
- The denounce of December 1, 1989, decision on the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia;
- The disarming and dissolution of the Karabakh army;
- Full submission of the Karabakh people to the laws and jurisdiction of Azerbaijan.

Only after these demands are met Azerbaijan will be willing to discuss the future status of NKR promising to give NKR „large scale autonomy“. But Azerbaijani officials avoid concretely to define what kind of autonomy they may grant Karabakh, whether it would be cultural, administrative or some other form. It is sooner something like a cultural autonomy, which, naturally, cannot satisfy the Armenians of NKR. Azerbaijan also denies any idea of reconstruction of Azerbaijan as a federal state.

The leadership of NKR puts the question of its status as its first priority.

The proclamation of NKR was made according to Soviet law, adopted by the decree of the USSR President, on April 3, 1990, and was carried out on the basis of a referendum and other democratic methods, which are recognized by the world community. So the existence of NKR is completely lawful. NKR rejects the restoration of the old status quo and spreading of the Azerbaijani jurisdiction over NKR. Its leadership considers that they have won in the battlefield and the Azerbaijani military forces have been defeated. This circumstance has to be taken into consideration, because there is not any example in world history when the victorious side is put under the domination of a country, who is defeated.

The NKR aspires to establish relations with Azerbaijan only on the principles of complete equality. These relations can be horizontal, but never vertical.

By its act of proclamation of independence the NKR now has given up the idea of unification with Armenia. The leaders of NKR consider this an expression of great compromise on their part.

NKR rejects the idea of disarming and the dissolution of the NKR defense army. As for the withdrawal of the NKR military forces from the occupied territories, which are referred by NKR as a zone of security, the leadership has repeatedly announced that the solutions to these problems have to be connected with the final decision of the status of NKR.

NKR is willing to preserve the cease-fire agreement and to reach its main goals by means of political and peaceful ways, through close cooperation with international organizations, including the, OSCE, its Minsk

group, the United Nations, the CIS, etc.

The leadership of Armenia puts in the first place the question of security of the Armenians in NKR, which it hopes to achieve by the deployment of international peacekeeping forces.

And the withdrawal of the Karabakh defense forces from the captured territories has to be linked with the solution of safety existence of the Armenians of NKR.

Armenia would require the full demilitarization of liberated territories within the zone of security, and the establishment of a permanent land bridge between Armenia and NKR.

Adherence to such an agreement could be guaranteed by the United Nations, OSCE and possibly CIS.

Armenia does not require or insist on a unification with Nagorno-Karabakh. The official position of Armenia on the NKR status issue is the acceptance of any decision which could be reached between Azerbaijan and the NKR.

Armenia is against a resolution of the conflict by military way. But in case of a new war initiated by Azerbaijan, Armenia will not leave NKR and its Armenian population alone.

The Karabakh problem is under the authority of OSCE and its Minsk group. On December 1, 1996, this problem was examined in the plenary session of OSCE in Lisbon. On the table of discussion was a project, which completely expressed the Azeri position. The project was based on the principle of non-violation of the Azerbaijani territorial integrity and on the solution of Karabakh problem within Azerbaijan, as its integral part. At the same time the project "promised" some autonomy and guarantee for the

Karabakh Armenians.

So, this project fully ignored the results of the war, and tried to restore completely the Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh, i.e. to restore the old status quo.

All these were not acceptable for NKR and Armenia. President Levon Ter-Petrosyan stated at the Lisbon summit that the facts of the genocide of Armenians in Sumgait, Ganja and Baku in 1988-1990 proved that Azerbaijan was not capable of preventing the genocide of Armenians on its territory and guaranteeing the secure existence of the Armenian people there. And the Armenian delegation at the Lisbon summit used its right of veto and the above mentioned project was rejected.

Soon after that, the three co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk group-the USA, Russia and France, introduced a proposal for the Karabakh's conflict settlement, named "Step by step solution". This plan called for many phases. The first phase called for the withdraw of all troops from all occupied territories, the second phase sought to return of refugees to their prior places of residence. The other phases included solution of the Lachin and Shushi problems, deployment of peacekeeping forces and lifting of blockade.

As for the status of the NKR, it was "postponed until the first phase is finalized."<sup>91</sup>

This solution is based on the principle of preservation of the Azerbaijani's territorial integrity. regarding the NKR an integral part of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan accepted this option of settlement of the NKR conflict, because it satisfied all its demands.

The NKR rejected completely the step by step solution. It is not acceptable

for the NKR a conception, which regards the NKR an integral part of Azerbaijan, within its territorial borders and under its jurisdiction. In the opinion of the NKR leadership, after satisfying the Azeri's all demands in first phase, before the solution of the problem of the NKR status, they would lose all leverage to put a pressure on Azerbaijan in the question of the status. For the NKR the problem of its status is in the first place.

The Minsk group proposals provoked very serious political crisis in Armenia. President Levon Ter-Petrosyan stood (either voluntarily or under the exterior pressure), for the Step by step solution. "Why not to try to settle the conflict step by step?"-asked he. He used for an argument the impossibility of the maintenance of the status quo. In a press conference held on September 26, 1997, he said: "Now first of all, about the maintenance of the status quo. How do you think it is possible? I have already spoken about difficulties Armenia is facing currently: the blockade and the concerns of international community. Do you think it will endure this situation for 20 or 30 years? Impossible. It will find means to put political and economic pressure on us so that we may lose all we have gained during these years. It happened in Bosnia. Serbs lost everything. I don't think that the maintenance of the status quo is a real option. We may persist for a year or two but the international community will become exasperated and lose its patience."<sup>93</sup>

But the majority of Armenians, in Armenia, Karabakh and Diaspora, did not share the President's position and did not support him. Moreover, they were against his attitude. And the first President Levon Ter-Petrosyan resigned, on February 3, 1998.

The political crisis in Armenia and the President's resignation had its

internal reasons. But at the same time that crisis was also the crisis of the policy of the OSCE Minsk group. Its policy is oriented on the satisfaction first of all the Azeri's demands and ignored the new situation, formed in the Transcaucasia after ten years of confrontation, wars, victories of the Karabakh Armenians and the proclamation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. To "forget" all these and to try to restore the old status quo is not realistic and is not way out of the conflict. In some sense Levon Ter-Petrosyan was cornered by non-realistic and bias policy of the OSCE Minsk group.

As was mentioned, on March 30, 1998, Robert Kocharyan was elected a new President of the RA. Some foreign statesmen, mass media, etc., immediately announced that the hard-liners came to power in the RA, and that the danger of a new war increased. All these speculations are groundless.

Robert Kocharyan firmly stands on the principles of peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict on the basis of negotiations and mutual compromises. There is not any statesmen or policymaker in Armenia, supporting an idea of settlement of the Karabakh problem by the military way. Armenia does not need in a war. The war would not give Armenia anything besides new bloodshed, victims, damage of its cities and villages. And Robert Kocharyan realizes this circumstance very well.

But if Azerbaijan starts again a new war, then Armenia and NKR will defend their territory from aggression.

But some changes took place in the Armenia's policy in the Karabakh question. The new leadership rejects the step by step model for solution of the Karabakh problem. Instead of it R. Kocharyan suggested to return to the package solution, according to which the questions of withdraw of troops

from some occupied territories, returning of refugees and status of the NKR have to be resolved in one package and simultaneously.

At the same time Armenia is against any preconditions in the question of the NKR's status. As it was mentioned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RA Vardan Oskanyan, the Armenian new leadership means under "preconditions" the principles of Lisbon Declaration, regarding the NKR part of Azerbaijan and within its jurisdiction. The Armenia's new leaders reject any direct subordination of the NKR to Azerbaijan and are in favor of horizontal but not vertical ties between Azerbaijan and the NKR.

There is also another change in the policy of the RA. President R.Kocharyan considered necessary to change the format of negotiations. They until now were going between Azerbaijan and Armenia, though the conflict is between Azerbaijan and the NKR. According to his opinion the negotiations now have to be carried out directly between Azerbaijan and the NKR.

It is also obvious that Azerbaijan has to be more flexible and realistic, more ready for compromises, taking into account the new situation and political-military realities.

There are some problems between Armenia and Azerbaijan, regarding the Caspian oil. Azerbaijan plays largely the oil card to attract the Western powers and first of all, the USA to its side. The American oil companies have great shares in the Caspian oil, and that is why they, in respond, have started to defend the Azeri position in the Karabakh conflict, pressing Armenia and NKR to accept the Azerbaijani model. Similar position has been occupied by some other NATO member states, who are also interested in the Caspian

oil.

This circumstance makes Transcaucasia a complicated knot of interests of different countries, including not only Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also Russia, the USA, Iran, Turkey, France, Great Britain and others.

The Caspian oil problem has another aspect too. We mean the construction of a new pipeline. There are different options for the transportation of the Caspian oil: through Georgia to the Black sea and northern Turkey, through Grozni to the Russian port of Novorosiysk, etc. But all the participants accept that the shortest and cheapest way is the installation of the pipeline from Azerbaijan to the Turkish port Jeyhan on the Mediterranean through Armenia, though it has one inconvenience, i.e. it has to pass through the territory of NKR. And the Azeri government with the support of western oil companies and governments, who are standing behind them, understand that this project will be impossible to realize until a solution to the Karabakh problem is found.

So this fact is used by them as a new argument to pressure on Armenia and NKR.

Armenia has tried to persuade the Azeri side and the oil companies to separate these two questions from each other and resolve them as independent questions. But they have so far rejected this proposal.

Nevertheless, the construction of new a pipeline through Armenia is still on the agenda.

The conclusion of the Russian-Armenian Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance became a new source of Azeri-Armenian tension. The Azeri reaction was completely negative to this treaty. In Baku

the policymakers tried to represent it as a treaty directed against Azerbaijan. The main point for their anxiety is the clause of the Armenian-Russian Treaty about the mutual assistance in case of war or a threat of war.

Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Boris Yeltzin have several times announced that this treaty is not directed against a third side. The Armenian President in an interview with the Moscow weekly "Novyoe Vremya", noting that the Azeri reaction is in fact an interference in the internal affairs of Armenia and Russia, stated that the conclusion of the "Treaty is the sovereign right of Armenia and sovereign right of Russia.

If Azerbaijan is not going to unleash an aggression against Armenia, then it is incomprehensible why it is in such a state of nervousness. After all we have written directly: the treaty will act in case of a threat of aggression".<sup>94</sup>

In order to soothe the Azeri leader, Yeltsin sent his Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov to Baku. During the negotiations with President Aliiev he tried to ensure that the Armenian-Russian treaty has no anti-Azerbaijani direction. Moreover, he suggested that they should sign a similar treaty with Azerbaijan, but the Azeri leadership rejected that idea<sup>95</sup> and continues to criticize the Armenian-Russian Treaty and strategic character of their relations.

The strained Armenian-Azeri relations impact negatively on the political situation in the region and are one of the obstacles on the way economic integration of the countries of Transcaucasia.

## Chapter Seven

### ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

Armenian-Georgian relations are based on traditionally friendly feelings towards each other and on understanding of mutual strategic interests.

Armenian-Georgian relations embrace practically all spheres of state, political, economic and cultural life, and develop at the basis of different treaties, concluded between the two neighboring states.

The first serious treaty, signed on December 13, 1991, between Georgia and Armenia, was the Agreement on economic, scientific-technical and cultural cooperation.<sup>96</sup> Further development of events and strategic interests made it necessary to conclude a new political document, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Security, which was signed on May 19, 1993. It has played a positive role in the Armenian-Georgian cooperation and in harmonizing their positions on different global and regional problems.

The importance of the Armenian-Georgian friendly cooperation is obvious for Armenia, taking into consideration its the strained relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. It strengthens Armenia's position in the region. On the other hand good Armenian-Georgian relations can serve as an obstacle to the further worsening of political situation in Transcaucasia and can stimulate the stability in the region.

After the blockade of Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Georgian route became one of the main arterial roads, connecting Armenia with Russia and European countries. The significance of this road was until the disruption of the Abkhazian railway as a result of the Georgian-Abkhazian war.

The strategic importance of Armenia for Georgia is connected with the desire of the Georgian leaders to integrate Transcaucasia and to build a "Peaceful Caucasian house". But this is not possible to realize without Armenia or acting against Armenia.

Besides that Armenia is one of the roads connecting Georgia with Iran and through it with some countries of the Arab East.

It is not a secret, that some Georgian leaders share ambitious dreams of making Georgia the political center of Transcaucasia. But it is impossible to reach that goal without Armenia, though we have to mention that Armenia is against the creation of any center in the region. It pursues the policy of friendly relations with neighboring countries, including Georgia, on the basis of equality, without division of the region into a center and a periphery.

For Armenian-Georgian relations permanent contacts between the state leaders, including their Presidents are characteristic. And each meeting decides some problem and paves the way for a further rapprochement.

From this point of view the visit of Levon Ter-Petrosyan to Georgia in 1996 was very effective and fruitful. The Georgian President Edward Shevardnadze qualified that visit as historical.

One of the main results of that visit was the open discussion of the question of Djavakhq (Djavakheti) region. This region of Georgia borders on Armenia and its population consists of Armenians.

There was a suspicion in Georgia that the Armenians of that region were pursuing separatist policy. Some Georgian mass-media sources had expressed the opinion that it was inspired by Armenia, and Djavakhq could become a new Karabakh in Georgia.

The visit of the Armenian President to the region, his meetings with the local Armenian population and frank talks with Edward Shevardnadze and other Georgian leaders, clarified the situation. Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Edward Shevardnadze declared that Armenia and Georgia had no territorial claims to each other and they supported the principle of territorial integrity and non-violation of the borders of the two states.

A new demonstration of Armenian-Georgian friendly relations was the official visit of Edward Shevardnadze to Armenia on May 2-3, 1997. Levon Ter-Petrosyan stated on this occasion that Shevardnadze's visit was an important event which would strengthen the warm relations existing between the two countries. He underlined once more that "there is not any political and national problem between Armenia and Georgia".<sup>97</sup>

Edward Shevardnadze, in his turn, evaluated highly the level of Armenian-Georgian relations and confirmed the close cooperation between them. Shevardnadze stressed also the necessity of economic integration of Armenia and Georgia.<sup>98</sup>

During this visit a number of agreements were signed covering bilateral cooperation in areas like banking, education, international automobile communication, juridical, environmental and consular affairs and so on.<sup>99</sup> Both sides expressed their satisfaction with their cooperation to resolve the social, economic, cultural, educational problems of the Armenian people in Djavakhq.<sup>100</sup>

Long before Shevardnadze's visit there was some anxiety among certain Armenian circles, connected with the Georgian-Azeri cooperation and rapprochement, including the field of military cooperation. There was an

opinion that the strategic alliance between Georgia and Azerbaijan is directed against Armenian interests. On the other side, in Georgia some forces attempted to contrast the interests of Armenia with the regional interests.<sup>101</sup>

After the visit of Shevardnadze and his negotiations with the President of Armenia all these misunderstandings were overcome. Both sides understood very well that those tendencies represent a great danger to the historical friendship of the two nations and are in contradiction with the basic national interests of both Armenia and Georgia. Shevardnadze ensured his Armenian colleagues that the rapprochement of Georgia with Azerbaijan was not directed against Armenia and it is not in contradiction with the interests of Armenia. Confirming that "we have special interests with Azerbaijan", Shevardnadze at the same time qualified the Armenian-Georgian relations also as strategic.<sup>102</sup>

During Shevardnadze's negotiations with Levon Ter-Petrosyan the problems of Caucasian region were discussed, including his idea of building a Caucasian home of peace. In a joint Communiqué the Sides declared that the "gained high level of mutual relations between the two countries makes possible the further development of profound partnership in all strategic directions, and first of all the building of a peaceful, stable Caucasus and the endurance of conditions for the region's rebirth and prosperity".<sup>103</sup>

On April 29, 1998, the first meeting of Robert Kocharyan with Edward Shevardnadze took place in Moscow. Both presidents reaffirmed their willingness for further development of friendly relations between Armenia and Georgia in political, economic, cultural and regional fields.

The Armenian and Georgian leaders give an important significance to

the problems of development of infrastructural communications, having strategic significance, and connecting Europe with the Middle East and Central Asia. Both sides admitted that the creation of the European strategic corridor will impact on the geopolitical situation in our region and facilitate the economic cooperation between the European, Transcaucasian, Central Asian and the Middle Eastern countries.

In this connection it was mentioned that no country will be excluded or isolated from this process, from participation in Euroasian strategic communication.

The Armenian and Georgian leaders, confirming that there were concluded many treaties between Georgia and Armenia on different and essential issues, admitted that most of them practically are not working. The realization of those agreements was regarded by them as one of the main tasks of the Armenian and Georgian governments.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **ARMENIA AND ISRAEL**

Armenian-Jewish ties back to ancient times. The contacts between the two peoples covered political, economic and cultural spheres. These contacts became more intensive in the I century B.C., when the Armenian kingdom under king Tigran the Great (95-55 B.C.) became the most powerful state in the Middle East. In 80s B.C. Tigran the Great had occupied the kingdoms of Adiabene, Korduik and Atrpatakan. Then in 84-83 B.C. he incorporated into his kingdom, which in fact was an empire, Mesopotamia, Syria and Phoenicia.<sup>104</sup> Supposedly, in a short period Judaea also was within the sphere of the Armenian kingdom. As Appianus witnesses, the Middle East till the borders of Egypt, was under the domination of Tigran the Great.<sup>105</sup> Victor Azarya, a scholar at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, also confirms that "by 70 B.C. Tigran's empire extended from the Caspian to the Mediterranean and from Caucasus to Palestine".<sup>106</sup>

When he founded his second capital Tigranakert, he resettled there thousands of Jews, skillful masters and craftsmen who took part in the building of that city.

There were many Armenian settlements in Palestine from the ancient times. Among them the most significant was the Armenian community in Jerusalem. V. Azarya, who devoted a special study on the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem, stated that the presence of Armenians in the Old City was always impressive. "The Armenian presence in the Old City is strongly felt impressive. One could trace back to the fourth or fifth century A.D., - notes

he, - the continuous existence of an Armenian presence in Jerusalem".<sup>107</sup>

The Old City is divided into four sections, and the Armenian Quarter is one of them. The other three are Jewish, Muslim and Christian Quarters.<sup>108</sup>

The position of the Armenian community in Jerusalem was always prominent throughout the centuries. It is worth mentioning about the significant role and position of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Jerusalem. As mentions V.Azarya, "The Armenian church is also prominent in its control over Christian Holy Places in the Jerusalem area. It has sole jurisdiction over the St. James Cathedral and the houses of Annas and Caiaphas".<sup>109</sup> But the most important is the fact that "in terms of overall control of Christian Holy Places the Armenian Church is ranked the third, after the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches, and ahead of many larger Christian churches, such as the Russian Orthodox and the various Protestant churches".<sup>110</sup>

Jerusalem was always one of the distinguished centers of the Armenian culture. Its schools, rich library, collection of old Armenian manuscripts, make Jerusalem an attractive center for many generations of Armenians.

The Armenian Community of Jerusalem and Monastrey plays the role of bridge between the Armenians and the Jews.

After the genocide of Armenians in the First World War thousands of Armenian refugees appeared in Palestine, including Jerusalem.

The first half of the XX century was tragic for both Armenians and Jews. In 1915 the Young Turks perpetrated the genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman empire. The victims of that crime became over 1,5 million Armenians. The pupils of the Young Turks, the nazi Germans, at the end of

1930s and during the Second World War implemented the Holocaust of the Jewish people, when about 6 million Jews were annihilated. So these two ancient nations became the first victims of the policy of genocide.

In May, 1948, a Jewish independent state, Israel was established. The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic was a part of the USSR and it was impossible to establish direct contacts between Armenia and Israel. Nevertheless, there were some contacts between non-governmental organizations, cultural societies, artists, scientists, etc. of the two countries. The Armenians do not forget that Israel was among the first, who extended its support to Armenia during the tragic days of the awful earthquake in December 1988, when Israeli airplanes were landing in Yerevan airport for humanitarian support.

A new chapter was opened in the Armenian-Jewish relations when in September, 1991, the independent Republic of Armenia emerged on the political scene.

On December 25, 1991, Israel recognized the independence of Armenia,<sup>11</sup> and diplomatic relations between them were established on April 22, 1992, during the visit of Israeli Ambassador to Russia Ariye Levi. The first Israeli Ambassador to Yerevan was appointed Barukh Ben Neria with a residence in Tbilisi. He visited Yerevan and met with the leaders of the RA, thus putting a background for Armenian-Israeli interstate relations. On June 25, 1996, Lily Hahamy was appointed the Israeli Ambassador to Armenia. But her residence still remains in Tbilisi.

As for Armenia, it has not appointed its diplomatic representative to Israel yet. In April, 1996, Israeli citizen Tsolag Momjian was appointed as

a Honorary Consul in Jerusalem and on September 16 of the same year his powers were recognized by the President of Israel.

Though slowly Armenian-Israeli relations are developing in different fields.

During 1993-1994, different delegations of Israeli Foreign, Agriculture and Health Ministries visited Armenia. Their aim was to get acquainted with the situation in Armenia and to define the spheres of cooperation with their Armenian partners.

For the same purpose the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture and Finance of the RA, the President of the Bank of Armenia and the Mayor of Yerevan visited Israel.

Consequently, on December 12, 1994, a Protocol on consultations between the Foreign Affairs Ministries of RA and Israel and another one between the two governments on cooperation in the fields of culture, science and education were signed. On the same day a Protocol on Intentions between the governments of RA and Israel was also signed.

It is worth mentioning that in the framework of the "MASHAV" project some twenty Armenian specialists took part in courses of agriculture, health and science, organized by Israel.

These Protocols are only the first steps and in case of good will they can initiate a lot of projects and give dynamics to the development of mutual cooperation in socio-economic spheres.

But practically there is little progress in the development of Armenian-Israeli economic cooperation. Minister of Economy and Trade of Israel Nathan Shcharanski, in an interview with the correspondent of the Armenian newspaper "Respublica Armenia", stated the following: "As for Armenia, we

would be very glad to have your country as a serious business partner, but when I inquired specially at our Department of Foreign Trade, I was told that up today there has not been any address, any suggestion from Armenia to us. Though, I repeat, we would be very interested".<sup>112</sup>

An expression of kind feelings toward the people of Israel was the participation of the President of Armenia in the funeral ceremonies of assassinated Prime-Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin on November 6, 1995.

The government of Armenia is ready to develop and deepen different kinds of contacts with Israel. In June 1997, during the celebration of the 49th Independence Day of Israel, about this was informed the Israeli Ambassador. On this occasion an exhibition called "Jerusalem Mountains Round About" was opened in Yerevan. It was the first significant cultural measurement since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Israel.

It is obvious that Armenian-Israeli relations are passive and they need additional efforts to give them dynamics.

In its relations with the countries of Transcaucasia and the Middle East Israel gives much more attention to Turkey and Azerbaijan. Relations with these countries have a priority for Israel. It seems that political and military rapprochement between Israel and Turkey, and the widening of political and economic contacts with Azerbaijan, their strategic interests, diminish the necessity for Israel to develop, a larger scale, its relations with Armenia.

The close relations of Israel with Turkey and Azerbaijan, who are blockading Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic for over five years, provoke anxiety and caution in Armenia toward Israel and its priorities in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern region.

On the other hand, Armenia has good relations with Iran and the Arab countries, while the relations of Israel with Iran are hostile and those with Arab countries are strained.

Now the Armenian society is worried about the possible Israeli-Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance.

As a counter-step, the formation of an alliance between Russia-Armenia-Iran-Syria would worry the Israeli society.

This problem became so actual in Armenia that President Levon Ter-Petrosyan in his press-conference, on September 26, 1997, considered it necessary to determine the position of Armenia to it. Answering a journalist's question about "what would be the impact of the Israeli-Turkish military cooperation on the whole region (Middle East, Persian Gulf, Transcaucasia) in general, and on Armenia, in particular", the President stated: "I think that all agreements, which are directed to the deepening of confrontation with different countries of the region, will impact, more or less, on Armenia too. If the Israeli-Turkish military cooperation is directed against the Arab countries, then it, naturally, will deepen more the tension in the Middle East and will make the situation of Armenia vaguer, because besides being a Caucasian, we are much more a Middle Eastern country".<sup>113</sup>

A tendency towards a new regional division, will, no doubt, turn into a new source of tension and even confrontation in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern area.

But the interests of the region require cooperation of all states on the basis of equality and good neighborly relations.

Between Armenia and Israel there is not any problem, which would

separate them. On the contrary, their high scientific potential, their need to peace as a vital precondition for their rebirth and prosperity, and a mutual memory of being the first victims of the genocide in XX century are essential factors, making the development of friendly interstate relations and cooperation between Armenia and Israel in the fields of economy, finance, trade, culture and science not only possible, but imperative.

As for the good relations of Israel with Azerbaijan and Turkey, and those of Armenia with Iran and some Arab countries, we would like to make two comments.

Firstly, every state has its own national interests and it is its sovereign right to define the priorities of its foreign policy.

Secondly, the Armenia's good relations with Iran and some Arab countries are not directed against Israel.

And the Israeli good relation with Azerbaijan and military cooperation with Turkey, are not directed against Armenia, as had declared or assured many times the Israeli policymakers.

We consider that the Armenian-Israeli relations have good perspectives. And judging by the statements of the Armenian and Israeli diplomats, the leaders of both countries realize the necessity to raise the Armenian-Israeli interstate relations on a new, more high level, and are ready to undertake suitable actions. It would give new weight to Israel and Armenia in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern geopolitical system.

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## CONCLUSION

The collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War period created a new global and regional situation. It is easy to trace this phenomenon in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern region. After gaining independence the three Transcaucasian republics comprise important parts of the political, economic and geopolitical structures of the region.

The close political contacts of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with the countries of the Middle East facilitate the formation of a Greater Middle East. And today it is practically not easy to separate the geopolitical problems of Transcaucasia from those of the Middle East and Central Asia.

The importance of Armenia, as it seems to us, is increasing in the Transcaucasian-Middle Eastern region. It is connected with its significant role in the relations with Russia, Iran and Georgia.

Armenia is an important partner for Russia in Transcaucasia, for its contacts with Iran and through it with some Arab countries. It is, in the meantime, a barrier to the Turkish expansion in Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

Armenia serves as a bridge for Georgia to Iran and the Persian Gulf. Besides that Armenia is important for Georgia for keeping the balance in Transcaucasia and for its relations with Azerbaijan.

For Iran Armenia is a necessary corridor to Russia, Black Sea and Western Europe. Iran strives through close relations with Armenia to promote its presence in Transcaucasia and strengthen its position in the Middle East in competition with Turkey for influence in the Middle East.

Despite the lack of diplomatic normal relations, Armenia is also important for Turkey. Turkey cannot have strong positions in Transcaucasia, occupying anti-Armenian attitude. It cannot penetrate to Central Asia ignoring Armenia.

Azerbaijan also needs normal relations with Armenia, to facilitate the stabilization of its position in Transcaucasia and to promote its economic development.

At last, it is impossible to reach long-lasting stability in the Middle Eastern-Transcaucasian region without Armenia or against the national interests of Armenia.

So Armenia is a peculiar crossroad of geopolitical interests for different states of the above mentioned region.

In recent years the United States are more and more manifesting their interests in Transcaucasia. If before, the USA was acting in the region mainly through Turkey, now it is acting directly, without any mediator. The USA government declared the Transcaucasia as vital for its national interests. In this case it is in the USA national interests to maintain good relations not only with Azerbaijan, connected with considerations of the Caspian oil and Azerbaijan's refusal to allow the location of Russian bases on its territory, but also with Armenia.

Only by taking into account the interests of all the states in the region, and carrying out a policy based on the principles of equality and refusal from using double standards, is it possible to change the Middle Eastern-Transcaucasian geopolitical arena from a region of conflicts into a zone of peace and cooperation.

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