



**NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**Department of International Relations**

**TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN SOUTH CAUCASUS**  
**(2000-2012)**

**ÇAĞRI KOÇAK**

**MASTER THESIS**

**Nicosia**

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## ABSTRACT

In every period of the history, Caucasus has always been important for many countries especially which have expected to take control over the region. Beside its geopolitical importance, geostrategical position, ethnical diversities, richness of religious structures and rich energy sources are the other important points. Because of these reasons, wars and power struggles over the region have never ended.

With the collapse of Soviet Union, three new countries have been founded. And these new countries were recognized by Turkey in 1991 without any expectation. It has been important to establish close relations with these new regional countries in order to affect them and create hegemony over the region. There are also other important countries which have been trying to take control over the region for a long time such as Russia, USA, China and Iran. But, Turkey's position and sharing common history with some of these countries have been important in establishing close relations especially with Azerbaijan and Georgia rather than Armenia.

When looking at the Turkish foreign policy and bilateral relations between 1991 and 2000, we cannot talk about close relations built on strong basis. Before the 2000s, Turkey was aware of the importance, but could not produce effective policies and establish close relations the regional countries because of many political reasons. But after 2000, Turkey's foreign policy principles have changed sharply and very close and beneficial relations with the regional countries have been established.

**Keywords:** South Caucasus, Turkey, Soviet Union, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkish Foreign Policy, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nakhchivan

## ÖZET

Kafkaslar, tarihin her döneminde, sadece bölge ülkeleri için değil, bölgede egemenlik kurmak isteyen birçok devlet için de çok önemli bir yere sahip olmuştur. Bölgenin jeopolitik konumunun yanında jeostratejik pozisyonu, etnik çeşitliliği, dini yapıların ve enerji kaynaklarının çokluğu bu önemin nedenlerindedir. Bu nedenle bölgede savaşlar ve güç mücadeleleri hiç son bulmamıştır.

Sovyetler Birliğinin dağılmasından sonra üç yeni devlet kurulmuştur. Ve 1991 yılında, Türkiye bu üç yeni devleti hiçbir politik karşılık beklemeden tanımıştır. Bu yeni devletleri etkilemek ve bölge üzerinde egemenlik kurabilmek için yakın ilişkiler kurmanın önemli olduğu bilinmektedir. Ayrıca uzun zamandan beri bölgeyi kontrol altına almak isteyen Rusya, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Çin ve İran gibi ülkeler de bulunmaktadır. Fakat Türkiye'nin pozisyonu ve bazı bölge ülkeleri ile ortak tarihi paylaşması, Ermenistan'dan ziyade Azerbaycan ve Gürcistan ile yakın ilişkiler kurmasına yardımcı olmuştur.

1991 ve 2000 yılları arası Türk dış politikasına ve ikili ilişkilere baktığımızda, sağlam temeller üzerine kurulmuş yakın ilişkilerden bahsedemeyiz. 2000 öncesinde Türkiye bu önemin farkında idi, fakat bazı politik nedenlerden dolayı bölgede pek etkili olamadı. Ama 2000 sonrasında Türk dış politikası prensipleri keskin bir şekilde değişmiş ve Türkiye bölge ülkeleri ile yakın ve verimli ilişkiler kurmaya başlamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Güney Kafkasya, Türkiye, Sovyetler Birliği, Azerbaycan, Ermenistan, Gürcistan, Türk Dış Politikası, Dağlık Karabağ, Abhazya, Güney Osetya, Nahçıvan

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## **ABBREVIATIONS USED**

B.C	Before Christ
BLACKSEAFOR	Black Sea Naval Force
BTC	Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan
BTE	Baku-Tblisi-Erzurum
BTK	Baku-Tblisi-Kars
EU	European Union
IEA	International Energy Agency
JDP	Justice and Development Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OBSEC	Organization of Black Sea Cooperation
OSCE	Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
TARC	Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission
TUSKON	Turkish Confederation of Bussinessmen and Industrialists
UN	United Nations
UNAOC	United Nations Alliance of Civilization
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this study, Turkish governments foreign policy and relations with regional countries after 2000 and conflicts in South Caucasus are tried to be explained. The aim of this thesis is to analyze and show the perspective of Turkey in South Caucasus between 2000-2012.

The aim of this study is to analyse geopolitical and geostrategical importance of South Caucasus related with historical background in order to;

- 1) Figure out the importance of South Caucasus region which directly effect policies of many countries,
- 2) Find out accurate policies for Turkish governments in order to influence the region,
- 3) Figure out the bilateral relations of Turkey with the regional countries,
- 4) Analyse the conflict areas with the historical backgrounds and Turkey's policies towards these conflicts.

Subjects have been analysed with their historical backgrounds. With giving many examples from history and current events, they have been compared with the past. Events have been analysed in a chronological order under certain titles with an objective view and literature review have been made from many sources such as internet news, articles and books.

This study is important because, searching out Turkish governments bilateral relations with the regional countries and attitudes towards regional issues in the first quarter of 21<sup>th</sup> century will help us to understand the changes in the Turkish foreign policy in the region. We try to show the priorities and expectations of Turkey in the region and it's position on the regional problems and separatist movements.

South Caucasus have always been important for Turkey for many reasons. Energy supplies, economic capacity and political importance are some of these reasons. Another important reason is the location of the region for Turkey, which have always been a door for searching Turkic Republics in Middle Asia. Because of these reasons, Turkish governments have always been trying to increase their power by emphasizing the relations with Caucasus and Middle Asia which can be clearly seen especially after 2000.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey has become neighbor with Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. This new status has brought Turkey many opportunities. But some political failures, Turkish politicians could not use this advantage very well in the first years of Soviet collapse. In the early beginning of the new century, Turkey's new government, JDP administration, has changed the foreign policy and gave importance on establishing more friendly relations with regional countries with respecting their territorial integrity and borders firstly.

In the first chapter, geographical location of South Caucasus and a brief history of the region, Turkish foreign policy between 1991-2000 are explained with

some examples from the history. The concepts of geopolitics and geostrategy made by many scholars are explained before expressing the importance of the region.

In the second chapter, the change in Turkish foreign policy after 2000 and bilateral relations with the region countries are analysed under two topics, which one is about political and military relations and other one is economic relations. Bilateral developments, agreements and problems are handled in these parts.

In the third chapter, regional problems and conflicts and also Turkey's approaches towards these conflicts and separatist movements are explained with a historical background of these problems.

In the last part, achieved conclusion is handled. Also in this part, results are analysed and responsibilities of Turkey are explained in order to create more successful policies in the region.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

# **GEPOLITIC AND GEOSTRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE REGION**

### **1.1 Location of South Caucasus, Geopolitic and Geostrategic Importance of the Region**

Caucasus is a region between Black Sea and Caspian Sea, covering 440.000 km<sup>2</sup> area starting from Russia's Southwest looking to Europe and containing the territories of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. There is Caucasus Mountain in the North and Aras River and Kars Plateau in the South.

The Caucasus Mountain divides the region into two parts called North and South Caucasia. North Caucasus is neighbour with Caspian Sea in the east, Black Sea and Azak Sea in the west and with Meriç River in the North. The area covered from the spilling point of Samur River to Caspian Sea through the spilling point of Ingus River to Black Sea is in the southwestern of the region.

Trans-Caucasus or the South Caucasus starts from the Caucasus Mountain Peaks through the Little Caucasus Mountains South foots and contains the borders of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. South Caucasia's area is for about 186.000 km<sup>2</sup>. And, in this two parts of the region, there are many different ethnic groups living. Because of the sharp and high mountains, these ethnic groups are forced to live seperated. Although these are many different and seperated ethnic groups, they have

been always in contact due to their common backgrounds and culture, they have always been in sharing same values (Çelik, 2012, 4).

Caucasus word was first used by Antique Greek author Aiskhylos in Before Christ (B.C) 409. It' s believed that this word was learned from the Greek colonies living in the seaside in Black Sea. After Greeks, this word was transferred to Roman's and also used in Turkish-Islamic works as Alburz Mountain. After Renaissance, with the use in humanitarians works, the region is accepted as Caucasus/Caucasia/Caucasie (Ayan, 2010, 22).



Source: <http://www.turkishny.com/local-news/6-local-news/47377>

When we look at the history, we can obviously see that Caucaus have always been a struggle region for many different ethnic groups and countries. Until 8th B.C, the first group that had located in Azerbaijan was Saka Turks which came from Middle East. After them, the region was under control of Byzantine Empire. Until Mongolian invasion in 13<sup>th</sup> B.C, the region was under contol of Seljuks Turks. And after this date, the region was occupied by many different groups and countries such as Ottoman Empire, Iran and Russia. In 16<sup>th</sup> century the region has changed hand

between Ottoman Empire and Iran. Russia had a hegemony first in 1720's with occupying Caspian Sea's North sides and Baku (Şen, 2008, 7). South Caucasia has been a conflict region between Russia, Ottoman Empire and Iran in 18th and 19th century. These countries tried to take control on the region. Especially after the lost of 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War, Ottoman hegemony has finished and England-Russain conflict started. The reason for this conflict was about the road to India. With the hegemony of Soviet Union on the region, the politics were about to asimilate the popuation and make them "Soviets". Although these politics, the ethnic structure could not be changed but created ethnic conflicts. Abkhas-Georgian and Chechen-Ingush conflicts are examples for this duration (Memmedov, 2009, 8).

Before looking the geopolitic and geostrategic importance of the region, it is important to make the definition of geopolitics.

Until 20<sup>th</sup> century, geopolitic concept was not known very clearly but used by every country in making foreign policies in every period of history. Especially in 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was examined more scientifically (İşcan, 2004, 49).

Every region on the world have some benefits which differ from others. And especially the ones which contain many needs of humans have always been in the target of powerful countries. Some of them can be strategically important in position and some of them can be rich with its energy supplies and many other. Becuase of this reason, in every period of the history, these kind of areas become struggle and conflict zones. In the last period of 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, with rising colonization movements, geopolicy became very important. In literature,



this concept was first used by Swedish Rudolf Kjellen (1864-1922). He stated that a countries geographical position creates its foriegn policy and this is accepted as geopolitics. But scientifically, this concept was used by German Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904). According to him, one country must create its own defence policy and defence strategy according to its geographical position. State, geography and policy are the three important and necessary concepts that are very important for defining geopolitics (İşcan, 2004, 53).

In 18th and 19th century, there have been some important scholars that have made definitions for geopolicy and geostrategy which were also effected from each other. These are;

It is claimed that their definitions were completely related with their own countries geographical position and foreign policies (Sevgi, 1988, 218). It is important to analyze them to understand geopolitics and geostrategy better.

According to German scholar Frederich Ratzel “state is an organism made up from one cell. State will desire to widen and develop. And the widening policy of the state will be through weak and primitive countries by invading them (İşcan, 2004, 54). This was published in his work “Political Geography” in 1897 (Yılmaz, 2009, 72). And he adds that in this small world there is only one place for powerful country. This is an important statement for understanding the colonization policies of the powerful countries especially in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. This vision was first accepted by Germany and then by many European countries. After this period Europe had faced with 1<sup>st</sup> World war (İşcan, 2004, 55).

Another important German Scholar Rudolf Kjellen was the first man using the word geopolitics. He first used this concept in his book “The State as a Living Form” published in 1916. Kjellen believed that states existence is related with states power (İşcan, 2004, 56). He was effected from Ratzel’ opinions and supported his opinions strongly. His vision about geopolitics is more complex from Ratzel’s. He saw state as a living organism and even a human being, equating human organs with state organs and made some comparisions between them ( Sevgi, 1988, 219).

German Scholar Karl Haushofer defined geopolitics as an art trying to find answers to the relations and connections between political life style, effected from natural conditions and historical developments, and it’s living place. He had seen the location area of the State as the most important power element. His opinions effected Hitler’s policy in 2<sup>nd</sup> World War (İşcan, 2004, 57).

Halford J. Mackinder, an English Scholar, is accepted as one of the founders of geopolitics and geostrategy. In his work, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, he had written very important points of geography and international relations from many different points. He believed that colonization through oversea period had finished. Because any political struggle which also effected many countries all over the world, shortly faced with counter reactions. According to him, there is only one big land on the world. He called this land as “World Island”, the center of this island as “Heartland”. But he had used “Pivot-Area” word much more than “Heartland” in his first works. “Heartland” is known as the area containing the borders of old Soviet Union. This area is very important for many reasons such as containing many countries with many neighbors and mostly because of owning many natural energy

sources. The countries that are rotating this “Heartland” are called “Inner Crescent”. Also Mackinder called United States of America (USA), England, Japan and land countries are called as “Insular Crescent and Lands of Outer” (Scott and Alcenat, 2008, 2-4).

Admiral Alfred T. Mahan had analyzed English Naval Forces history and according to these analyzes, written “The Influence of Sea Power Upon History” published in 1890, and created a new theory based upon naval forces importance. He stated that who ever ruled the seas will rule the whole world. This opinion became important after the industrial revolution in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Economic relations and new raw material searchings made sea ways important (Yılmaz, 2009, 80).

Nicholas Spykman is an USA scholar who had effected from opinions of Mahan and Mackinder and tried to explain from a different view. According to Spkyman, Rimland is more important then Heartland. This rimland includes European coast countries, Middle East, India, South East Asia and China. He stated that Heartland do not contains enough energy supplies and transportation is hard from this area. He also added that, who ever controls rimland, he will control Heartland, and who ever controls Heartland, he will control the whole world. Because of this reason, rimland places are in an important position in world policy and other countries such as USA, England, Japan and other land countries in Asia must be in cooperation with rimland countries in order to establish hegemony on Heartland countries (Sevgi, 1988, 219).

In his work called “Geography and Foreign Policy”, published in 1938, he tried to explain the importance of size, world location and regional location on countries foreign policies. He believed that the most important factor in creation foreign policy is the countries world and regional location. And he also added that size of a country makes him powerful if he is also technologically and politically succesful. But in his work he had given some examples from small countries. He had written that although the most powerful countries are bigger countries in size, there are some other small countries which had been very succesful in history. He believed that this success of the small countries are because of their power of navy units.

When looking back to the importance of Caucasus through these theories, the region has been always in the center of the world politics. The geostrategic importance of the region is because of it’s bridge duty between Middle East to Russia, Asia to Black Sea and then from Anatolia to Europe. By Caucasus, transportation is easy through Europe and Asia. The region is also an intersection point for many countries (Efe, 2011, 433). It is on a strategic point which controls the Persian Gulf and also completely a peculiar rich petrol reserve which increases it’s strategical importance (Şen, 2008, 10). Other important reasons are; Georgia’s location in South Caucasia especially after war with Russia, Azerbaijan’s economic potential and owning high sources of natural riches, and Armenia-Russia relations in many dimensions (Memmedov, 2009, 18).

According to Halford Mackinder, who ever ruled the “pivot” would command the heartland, who ever ruled the heartland would command the world island,

Europe, Russia and into Asia and who ever controlled the world island would rule the world. And according to this theory, South Caucasus countries are in the Heartland. This Heartland is always in the center of the world politics and power struggles, says Mackinder (İşcan, 2004, 60). We can see in every period of the history that powerful countries always transform their own foreign policies in order to be dominant in this region according to the current conjuncture.

The geopolitical importance of South Caucasus has been continuing to rise, especially after Cold War, because of three reasons. The first one is about its strategic importance, which it's an entrance door through Middle Asia and North Caucasia from Europe. The second one is its importance for Central Asia, transporting directly through Europe, and the last one, owning a high reserve of petrol and natural gas (Memmedov, 2009, 19). According to International Energy Agency (IEA), energy reserves of Middle East and South Caucasia is for about 15 and 40 billion barrel (Şen, 2008, 11). Especially Western countries try to decrease their dependence on Russia for energy sources and create new relations with region countries. They also try to get benefit from the political gap after the cold war and create hegemony on the region.

The tension, instability and conflicts in the zone will not affect only the countries in the region but also other countries that have relations with these. The relations are mostly founded on increasing demand for energy in the world. Because of this reason many countries, especially Western ones, believe that stability must be hold in the region and tension must be down in order to transport the Caspian oil and

gas through Europe safely. The Caspian Sea contains for about 3-4 percent of oil and 4-6 percent of natural gas of world reserves (Efe, 2011, 435).

## **1.2 Turkey's Foreign Policy towards the Region between 1991-2000**

After the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, there had been many countries founded especially with the support of Western countries. Many countries regional and international policies have been forced to change along with these newly founded countries. This change can be clearly seen in Turkey's foreign policy towards the region too. Main components of Turkey's Caucasus policy for these new countries are independence, political and economical stability, being close to western values and adopting peaceful living conditions.

After the foundations of these new countries, independence and territorial integrity of these countries have been the most important political principles of Turkey since 1991. With the collapse of Soviet Union, Turkey's geographical position and historical background especially with the South Caucasus countries had been seen as an important opportunity for many western allied countries. Turkey have been seen an important bridge country for affecting the regional countries with western values. A direct influence over the region would lead to new crises. Because of this reason, Turkey would be more efficient in influencing the region. Such an important role for Turkey was accepted easily. On this new political ground, countries independence was accepted by Turkey except Armenia. Then, political and economical relations have been established.

The role given to Turkey by western powers was mostly about constructing the bridge through Central Asia. So that western powers could easily reach and create hegemony over the region and the energy sources. Also Turkish governments tried to be careful on this period in order to not get contrary with western ones. Another important principle was to affect regional countries about being member of Western Organisations. Turkey could be an important model for them in order to accept these invitations. Some supplies for affecting the regional countries not only brought benefits for them but also for Turkey. Most important role for Turkey was to create a safe energy corridor through Europe. Baku-Tblisi- Ceyhan (BTC) project is only the one of them. In the foundation process of this pipeline, it was important not to take the counter reaction of Iran and Russia (Çelikpala, 2010, 100).

After collapse of Soviet Union, ethnic crises had emerged in the newly independent countries. Many of these crises were supported by Russia in order to not lose the hegemony on these countries. This support was not only diplomatically but also military support was obvious. Especially the support of Russia to South Ossetians was clear. It had started in the past and continuing today. The situation in 2008 war between Russia and Georgia can be an important example. The military support of Russia to Ossetians had been high and created big crises in the region. In such an occasion, Turkey had to be very careful in producing policies. In every conflict in the region, except Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Turkey had stayed distant to problems. These conflicts have been seen as inner problems and must be solved by own. But Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was different. Turkey believed that Armenia had occupied Azerbaijan's land and this could not be accepted. Because of this

view, Turkey have always supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity on international stage and terminated relations with Armenia. Turkey, due to this territorial occupation of Armenia, still keeps its borders closed with Armenia since 1993. The most important reason for being far from other conflicts was mainly because of Turkey's Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) problem. Especially in 1993-1994, the actions of PKK were very high. Turkey's statements and actions about inner problems of South Caucasus countries would also give those countries counter action about Turkey's inner problems. Because of this reason, Turkey was aware but distant to these problems (Çelikpala, 2010, 111).

At the beginning of the collapse of Soviet Union and with the change of the role of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), it was considered that Turkey's strategical importance would decrease. But this situation had affected Turkey in a positive way. Turkish politicians believed that this was a good chance in order to create a powerful Turkey in the region of these newly founded countries. Turkey could be a good model for them. And with this vision, Turkey tried to be more active in these regional problems (Kasım, 2009, 38).

Another importance of the region was because of its economic potential. The collapse of Soviet Union also created a suitable area for trade. Turkey was aware of this potential and offered Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation in 1990. And after this step, in 1992, Declaration of Black Sea Economic Cooperation was signed in Istanbul by the regional countries. This agreement also created a peaceful area for many countries which had problems with each other. Main aim of this



organization is to increase the trade volume and solve the economic problems in the region. This organization opinion created negative thoughts about Turkey in Western countries. They thought that Turkey was trying to find alternative organizations against West. But this opinion was wrong. These steps were also trying to integrate this region with western (Kasım, 2009, 39).

Political change in Turkish foreign policy was not from the rough. Turkey's approach to the region included the utmost care. Conjunctural change and cooperation in the region was the important reason for this approach. Although, these changes in Turkish foreign policy after the collapse of Soviet Union, relations achieved success especially after 2000's. Turkey's opinion and knowledge about the region was limited. The main reason of this limitation was because of the weak relations with the countries under the hegemony of Soviet Union. So that, Turkey was very far from their problems and the ties with this region were not very close. Another problem was the Iran and Russia in the region, which were also trying to take control over the region or not to lose the hegemony. They were an obstacle in front of Turkey on creating hegemony on the region. Especially Russia was the most important obstacle in front of the new policies of Turkey. Russia had many advantages when compared with Turkey. Russia was more powerful on military, technology, economy and policy especially on the regional issues and didn't want the regional countries got affected from Western countries. Another important country Iran also didn't want Turkey to affect the region. Because Iran thought that Turkey could be a bridge to carry western values and norms to its neighbors. And another and important reason was the continuing ethnical problems in these countries.

Turkey was not very professional on interfering on ethnical conflicts (Kasım, 2009, 40-44). Because of these reasons, Turkey could not create very successful policies in the early years of 1990.

Turkey was aware of its potential in the region. Turkish President Süleyman Demirel stated in his one speech that Turkey is now in the middle of this new foundation area and should perform the requirements of it. He also stated that Turkey had new responsibilities. These responsibilities were about constructing a bridge between regional countries. And the most important responsibility of Turkey was being active in these relations (Aydın, 2013, 375).

Although the relations between 1991 and 1993 were mainly constructed on politician's mutual emotions, relations after 1993 were more constructed on realities. Turkish diplomats had made many visits through these new independent countries. These visits were also supported by USA diplomats in order to create western hegemony over the region. In this period, Turkey had promised these countries support in many areas such as policy, education and health.

But, Turkey could not be successful at the beginning because of some obstacles and economical reasons. Turkish politician's unefficiency in the regional issues can also be added on this failure. After 2000, the situation has changed sharply.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH REGIONAL COUNTRIES**

#### **2.1. Turkish Foreign Policy towards South Caucasus after 2000**

After the cold war era, Turkey could not adapt the new system very efficiently because of some insufficiencies. Additionally to these reasons, other main reason is that Turkey's adherence to the status quo of the Cold War period. But in every period of the history, Turkey's Caucasus policy has been established on country independence, territorial integrity and peaceful relations. On the international stage, Turkey has always stated that independence of these countries must be recognized and saved. Although these kinds of statements we cannot say that Turkey had an active role in Caucasus until 2000.

After 2000, Turkish diplomats understood that change in foreign policy is necessary. With to the end of Cold War, the wave of globalization, 9/11 events, rising international terrorism and energy needs forces this change in the foreign policy (Aras and Akpınar, 2011, 22). And related with this necessity, new concepts and parameters have emerged. Some of them have been used in many countries around the world for a long time. These parameters are multilateral diplomacy, proactive foreign policy, zero problems with neighbors, transferring from "model" or "bridge country" through "central country", using soft power more than hard power,

economy centered foreign policy and the last one is security-liberty balance in policies (Güder and Mercan, 2012, 59).

When we look at the multilateral diplomacy parameter, before the collapse of Soviet Union there were two poles in the world and countries had to be one side, from USA or Soviet Union. But after with the collapse of Soviet Union, USA became the superpower of the world. In the beginning of 21th century, with the rising globalization policies and events, new powerful countries have emerged. And these new powerful countries tried to create policies which could be beneficial for them on the international stage.

Turkey, which was from the western block before the collapse of Soviet Union, could not adapt and produce policies easily till 2000's. With the new countries emerging after the collapse of Soviet Union, Turkey changed its face through these countries. These countries were easy and ready to establish relations due to the common historical, cultural and social past. These countries were directly or indirectly affected from the Turks. All of them had relations in the past. And this created a new platform for Turkey over these countries, especially Caucasain and Middle East countries. Turkey's hope was to be in more cooperation with both sides. This was the most effective reason of this new foreign policy strategy. And this created new friendships and relations with many countries on many continents. South Caucasus countries Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia were some of them.

We can say that the progres of relations have fastened and important oppurtunities have emerged with the end of cold war. While we were criticizing

Turkish foreign policy before 2000, we can not say nothing have happened during this period. Some important agreements were signed with the regional countries, such as Economic Cooperation Organization (OSCE) in 1985 and The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) in 1992 (Güder and Mercan, 2012, 62).

Pro-active foreign policy is another important parameter Turkish foreign policy like many other countries. Related with this policy, Turkish politicians stated that Turkish government must have foreign policy towards any problematic area. This parameter was firstly used by İsmail Cem in the beginnings of 2000's and have been used by other politicians. As stated by Davutoğlu, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, as "... we want Turkey to have a policy wherever there is a global problem" (Davutoğlu, 2011).

Turkish politicians accept pro-active foreign policy as being a mediator between the countries which have problem. We can see this approachment exactly in the policies of Turkey towards the problems between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Especially after 2000, Turkish government increased its diplomatic efforts in negotiations between these two countries in order to solve this problem. Some other examples can be given as Arab-Israel, Syria-Israel, Iran-West and Bosnia-Serbia conflicts (Yeşiltaş and Balcı, 2011, 11).

The third parameter is zero problem policy with neighbors. It is based on 6 main facts. These are "Equal security for everybody, economic integration, living together in respect of different cultures, political cooperation on the highest level, regional consciousness on the highest level and the last one is being in cooperation

for stability and development” (Zentürk, 2010, 24). This has been seen as the most important and popular parameter in Turkish foreign policy after 2000. Before 1991, Turkey had faced many problems with neighbors. Greece, Bulgaria, Syria and Iraq problems can be given as examples. Because of these critical problems, Turkey had always struggled on the international platforms lonely and used its energy for these kinds of problems.

But after 2000, living in peace with neighbors became very important strategy of Turkey. And in every statement of Turkish politicians, soft and peaceful statements about these can be seen. Turkey’s Armenia expansion is an important example for this parameter. Statements made by Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan are calm and helpful for constructing friendly relations between two countries. But when building up close relations with Armenia, on the other side, this rapprochement caused damage in the relations and cooperation with Azerbaijan. Because of this reason, some believe that this zero problem policy cannot be accepted as an effective policy for every situation, especially performing on countries those who are in war. (Tisdall, 2010).

The main aim of this strategy is to increase Turkey’s efficiency both in global and regional problems. It’s believed by the government that when struggling with problems and neighbors, many of the energy, potential and sources are consumed for these problems. Because of this reason, it has been an important principle and policy for Turkish government. But when we look at the diplomatic process today, we cannot say that this strategy could have reached success. Problems with Greece,

Syria, especially after Arab Spring, and problems with Iraq and Armenia are still continuing. Although this strategy is not accepted as successful in the beginnings of 2000's, it is believed that it will be effective and successful in the long term of Turkish diplomacy. It is also important and necessary for Turkey who entitles himself as a central country (Güder and Mercan, 2012, 63).

Another important parameter is transforming from model or bridge country through central country. The analyses ignore that Turkey not also strengthen ties with west but also with Middle East and Caucasus (Aras and Akpınar, 2011, 24). According to Davutoğlu; "Turkey is in the center of all continents and this gives Turkey a powerful center country image. This situation gives the task Turkey to deal with the development in the region. This is a necessity for being a center country". Although there are many powerful countries in the region, Turkey has an important role for western countries against Russia and Iran. Turkish government is aware of this necessity and is trying to take an important role in the region to solve the problems as a mediator (Güder and Mercan, 2012, 64). Western countries, especially USA see Turkey as a buffer zone in the region. And also Russia and Iran believe and accept Turkey's importance for transporting their opinion through other countries in Europe and USA. Because of this reason, we can say that both side see Turkey as mediator and try to make Turkey by side (İşeri and Dilek, 2011, 18). Turkey's policy towards Caucasus and especially about South is related with the potential of the region. Turkey wants stability, peace and security in the region in order to take progress in economically and politically. Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) play an active role in this strategy. %44, 44 of TİKA's

developmental aid is dedicated to the region. Especially, developments in health, education and academic collaboration are targeted. There are also some other organizations which are in the same target. On the other hand, Turkish Businessman and Industrialist Confederation (TUSKON) and Foreign Economic Relations Council (DEİK) are other important organizations for establishing relations in many fields. In December 2010, TUSKON organized its second assembly with approximately 1700 businessman, 1200 from Turkey and 500 from 12 Eurasian countries (Aras and Akpınar, 2011, 25).

Soft Power principle became also important after 2000 in Turkey's international relations and foreign policies. It shows us that foreign policy is based on diplomacy, culture, dialog and cooperation in both politically and economically rather than using hard power (Yeşiltaş and Balcı, 2011, 14). This concept was first put in the literature by Joseph S. Nye in 1990 and developed by him again and put in International Relations literature in 2004. According to Nye; soft power is not lonely adequate. It must be blended and supported with military and economic power (Nye, 2004). Rising the number of international channels of TRT (National Channel), founding Yunus Emre Institutes which make cultural organizations, student exchange programs and direct flights of Turkish Airlines through many cities of this region countries are some of the examples for soft power (Güder and Mercan, 2012, 65).

After Cold War, the relations between countries are mostly shaped with economy. Because of this reason, economy centered foreign policy became



important in world. Turkey also saw the regions potential and shaped its own strategy and policy according to this economy parameter. A lot of visits organized to these countries created many opportunities for businessman. Presidents and Prime Ministers made their visits to foreign countries with businessmen in order to increase economic relations with them. We can see this kind of visits through Azerbaijan too. Additionally to historical background, there is a highly potential economic relation between two countries. According to Turkish foreign policy, countries which make trade with each other won't fight with each other. For this reason, Turkey has given more importance to this principle. And Turkey wants to be a role model for this economic friendship in the region especially about energy trade (Güder and Mercan, 2012, 66). And the energy potential of the region is well-known by all the countries. Turkish governments aim is to be a bridge between this rich land and Europe (Aras and Akpınar, 2011, 25).

The last parameter is security and liberty balance. In the world, this concept emerged with the attacks in 9/11. With the change of threats, many countries like USA have changed their policy to renounce some freedoms for security. Turkey has not faced with this dilemma directly but it has been seen in many countries especially affected from the Arab Spring. After the leaders in Arabic countries had killed many people for their countries existance, Turkish government have criticized them. In Caucasus, such a problem hasn't been emerged till today. And neither of the countries of the region wants these kinds of events which will directly affect the stability and progress of the region (Güder and Mercan, 2012, 66).

## **2.2 Relations with Azerbaijan**

### **2.2.1 Political and Military Relations**

Turkey and Azerbaijan are called as brother countries in all history and they have lived under the same roof for a long time. But they have separated from each other when founding governments. Until 1991, before gaining independence from Soviet Union, the relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan were not very close. But these two societies never forgot each other (Şen, 2008, 20).

During Azerbaijan's struggle for independence, Turkey had made very important assistance and help. These efforts were welcomed by Azerbaijan government. And Turkey was also the first country to recognize Azerbaijan as an independent country on 18 October 1991. This was also very important point in the acceleration of close relations (Aslanlı, 2012, 177). Azerbaijan's and Georgia's territorial integrity and political stability are very important for Turkey. In the foreign policy of Turkey, this subject has always been in the first line (Babajew, 2007, 56).

According to this territorial integrity and stability, Turkey has always supported Azerbaijan also in military issues. These issues are not only about the development of Azerbaijan military but also about the regional integrity, stability and security. There are approximately 100 protocols and agreements signed between two countries are generally about military equipment, training and economic support for Azerbaijan Military<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.1news.com.tr/yazarlar/20101105100313440.html>, [11.10. 2010]

In the membership process of NATO, Turkish Military commanders are training Azerbaijan Military Academy students. Turkey also accepts Azeri students in Turkish Military education schools in order to teach them NATO and Turkish military system. Turkish government supported and modernized Azerbaijan Military School according to NATO standards till 2001 (Askerzade, 2009, 5). Turkish government has also given 3 million dollar as remittance to Azerbaijan Military for modernization in 2001 (İyikan and Akyol, 2011, 12).

In 2005, Turkish General Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt visited Azerbaijan. He visited military schools and made some inspections. He also made a meeting with Azerbaijan Secretary of Defence Sefer Abiyev. Both of them stated that they are very happy for the close relations and military solidarity is the most important thing in mutual relations<sup>2</sup>.

Especially after the opening of BTC in 2006, the security issues in the region have come to an important point. Because of this importance, Turkish General Commander of Gendarmerie Forces, Işık Koşaner, made a visit to Baku and had a meeting with Sefer Abiyev. They were aware of the importance of project for the region and talked about being ready for the unexpected security issues. After a moment, Turkish Second General Staff Ergin Saygun made a visit to Baku and also he had a meeting with Secretary of Defence. The subject was again the security of

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.mynet.com/haber/dunya/orgeneral-buyukanit-azerbaycanda-152601-1>, [07.08.2005]

the energy transportation line. They agreed on having closer relations in order to be active in the region (Askerzade, 2009, 6).

When we look at the period in the last 23 years, we can classify relations in three parts. The first part, beginning of the relations, is based on ideological and emotional relation and the second part is closer relations between leaders rather than whole community (Aslanlı, 2012, 178). Turkish President Süleyman Demirel and Azerbaijan President Haydar Aliyev's close friendship can be an example for this kind of relation (Şen, 2008, 23). And in the last part, which is especially after 2000's, we can talk about a complete professional relation between two countries supported with many projects such as BTC, Baku-Tblisi-Erzurum (BTE) and Baku-Tblisi-Kars (BTK). In every period of the history, political leaders of both countries stated that Turkey and Azerbaijan are brothers and the most important strategic partners of each other (Aslanlı, 2012, 178). For example, in August 2001, Azerbaijan had a crisis with Iran in Caspian Sea. Iran navy forces removed Azerbaijan ships from the area and then sent some jet planes to Azerbaijan airspace. After this crisis, Turkey had sent some of his planes to Azerbaijan and gave a message both to Iran and Azerbaijan.

Turkey's good relation with Azerbaijan continued after Haydar Aliyev with his son İlham Aliyev. As stated before, in addition to historical and emotional background, the rise of the need for energy supplies, desire of constructing strong military and economic independence make closer both countries (Aras and Akpınar, 2011, 28). Furthermore, Azerbaijan's importance come from its strategic positioning

in the region. This country is like a door through Middle Asia which has rich energy sources (Babajew, 2007, 57).

Azerbaijan took an important step and made some expansions through North Cyprus. This step made relations stronger in 2006. Because, in this period, Turkey had need some support on international stage about North Cyprus issue. There is an important statement of Haydar Aliyev about the issue before 2004. He stated that, if Turkish Cypriots say “Yes” and Greek Cypriots say “No”, then Azerbaijan will be in promise for recognizing North Cyprus as an independent state (Turhan, 2009, 176). But Azerbaijan government hasn’t recognized North Cyprus yet.

In 2007, Turkey and Azerbaijan had some problems related with Turkey’s relations with Armenia. Armenia has a strong lobby in many countries over the world and especially in USA senate and France. After statements made by diplomats of these countries, which had accepted Turkey as a criminal country in so-called genocide events in 1915, Turkey wanted Azerbaijan to show reaction against these countries diplomatically. But Azerbaijan was not close to this reaction and this gave damage to the bilateral relations. After a meeting in İstanbul in 2007, President Gül declared that Turkey will not open the border gates until Armenia pours out from Azerbaijan land. After a moment from this statement, USA House of Representatives has accepted the so-called genocide scheme and a reaction to this, Azerbaijan condemned this accept (İşyar, 2012, 245).

Especially after 2008, with the rapprochement process of Turkey and Armenia, Azerbaijan relations of Turkey have taken damage. Azerbaijan diplomats believed

that Turkey must not be in a close relation until Armenian military pours out from their land in Nagorno-Karabakh. They also added that these kinds of attitudes will create diplomatic crises between Turkey and Azerbaijan and give damage to a complete history.

The first friendly step was taken by Armenian President Serj Sarkisyan. He invited President Gül to Armenia-Turkey football match. President Gül accepted this invitation and went to Erivan on 6 September 2008. Another important process between two countries was about the protocols which were signed in Zurich on 10 October 2009. These protocols were about establishing close and diplomatic relations between two countries. Azerbaijan had given a very strong reaction to this protocol and stated that there shouldn't be a relation between Turkey and Armenia until Karabakh problem is solved. These events made a crisis between Turkey and Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan President İlham Aliyev didn't join the meeting of United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC) in İstanbul (İşyar, 2012, 247). He also stated that the natural gas salary must be checked again according to trade agreements. After this statement, the meeting between Turkish and Azerbaijan professionals ended with opposing for Turkey. Before this crisis, Turkey was paying for about 720 million dollar for the natural gas per annual. But after the new agreement Turkey was going to pay for about 1.8 billion dollars (Asker, 2010, 24). Another important crisis was because of Turkish flags which were in Turkish soldier cemeteries. After Turkey didn't give permission for Azerbaijan flags in Turkey and Armenia football match, Azerbaijan took down the Turkish flags in cemeteries. This diplomatic crisis was solved with the two leader bilateral meetings. It can be clearly

understood from here that close relations with Armenia brought sadness for both Turkey and Azerbaijan<sup>3</sup>. It can be also added that, Azerbaijan developed relations with Israel, which Turkey had many diplomatic problems in that years. This was not well accepted by Turkish government and told to Azerbaijan diplomats. In these days, Azerbaijan had increased relations not diplomatically but also economically and military. With this attempt, Azerbaijan had shown Turkey that they don't need Turkey for support. After these events, on 16-17 August 2010, President Gül went to Azerbaijan and signed an important agreement which was about Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support in order to increase cooperation and take Azeri support again and give a message them that Turkey will not be in close relation with Armenia unless Armenia abandons Azerbaijan lands (İşyar, 2012, 249).

First meeting of this agreement was made in İzmir, 25 October 2011, and the second one in Gebele, 11 September 2012. In these two meetings, there have been many agreements signed and these meetings have brought up closer relations between two countries in many dimensions<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cnnturk.com/2009/dunya/10/27/azerbaycan.ile.bayrak.krizi.sona.erd/549485.0/>, [27.10.2009]

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-azerbaycan-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa>, [2011]

### **2.2.2 Economic Relations**

As stated before, the most important projects between two countries are Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, Baku-Tblisi-Erzurum natural gas and Baku-Tblisi-Kars railroad projects.

The BTC pipeline is about 1800 km long, and its history is quite long (Aras and Akpınar, 2011, 31). The first opinion was made in 17 April- 2 May by Süleyman Demirel to Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan that Turkey can be a perfect way of transportation for this oil through other countries. After this date, on 9 March 1993, a framework document on the construction of this pipeline was signed in Ankara with a ceremony by Turkish President Süleyman Demirel, Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin and Azerbaijan's Petroleum Minister Sabit Bağiroğlu. On 29 October 1998, the presidents of Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed the Ankara Declaration, which accepted to build more than one pipeline and supporting the main line BTC. The construction phase of the project began officially on 18 September 2002. Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, Azerbaijan President Haydar Aliyev and Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze lay down the foundation stone of the pipeline. On 25 May, 2005, the pipeline started pumping oil. And on 13 July 2006, the formal opening ceremony of the pipeline was done.

As we can understand from the dates, the period of the project is quite long. But today, it became very important not only for the three countries but also for all of the region countries and also for Europe. The daily capacity of BTC is 1 million barrels and annual capacity is about 50 million tons (Aras and Akpınar, 2011, 33).



Another important project between Turkey and Azerbaijan is Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline. It is accepted as the second energy corridor of East and West. It started to pump gas completely on 3 July 2007. Turkey takes the natural gas from this pipeline which is taken from Shah Sea, the field of Caspian Sea near to Azerbaijan. There is an agreement between two countries for buying 6.6 billion cubic meters of natural gas for 15 years.

Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad project is the other important and strategic project between Turkey and Azerbaijan. In 2012 President Aliyev stated that this project is very important for three countries and there is no other example like this in the world. He also added that the relations between three country is in high stage and this three country can has shown this willpower in this project like before in BTC and BTE projects. Turkish President Gül told that this will not only tie this three country but also many countries in the region through China and Mongolia<sup>5</sup>.

Not only Turkey has investments in Azerbaijan but also Azerbaijan has some in Turkey especially in energy sector. For example, the Star refinery is one of the biggest projects. On 25 October 2011, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Azerbaijan President İlham Aliyev laid down the foundation of this big project together. This was an important project because it was the biggest foundation of our country which was established on a single area and most comprehensive localization project. 10 million tons of petrol was going to be processed and this was an important number for the region and for Turkey exactly.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tcdd.gov.tr/home/detail/?id=1660>, [09/04/2012]

On 16-17 August 2010, Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Azerbaijan and signed The Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support with Azerbaijan. After that, on 15-16 September 2010, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and Azerbaijan President Aliyev agreed on founding High level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) and on 25 October 2011 they made the first meeting (Aslanlı, 2011, 179). In this meeting they have also signed two agreements which were about the selling gas from Shah Sea-2 in 2017 to Turkey and for transit of gas from Shah Sea-2 through Turkey between 2017 and 2042. These two agreements were very important not only for Turkey but also for Europe (Aras and Akpınar, 2011, 251).

When we look at the statistics of trade between two countries, we can say that we the relations come closer, trade also increases. In 2000, Turkey's export to Azerbaijan is for about 230 million dollar. And import from Azerbaijan is about 95 million dollar. Until 2008, trade between two countries had increased. But after 2008, with Turkey's expansion to Armenia decreased the volume of trade. With the normalization process of two countries, trade number started to increase but not very fast. There is always a fear in tradesmen. When we come to 2013, we can see that trade is for about 5 billion dollar and it is estimated to be 10 billion dollars in 2020<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup><http://www.baku.emb.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=170179>, [19.12.2012]

## **2.3 New Alliance of Turkey: Georgia**

### **2.3.1 Political Rapprochement and Military Relations**

Turkey and Georgia relations are in a good condition. Turkey is supporting Georgia's independence, territorial integrity and inner stability. This is the main politic aim of the new government of Turkey especially after 2002. It is important for Turkey because of many reasons. A Georgia having problems inside will not bring Turkey benefit. On the contrary, this will negatively affect Turkey's economy and stability. We saw this in the conflict between Georgia and Russia in 2008. This conflict not only affected Georgia but also Turkey faced difficulties. Turkey's Caucasus and Central Asia policies took damage. Turkey follows the process in Georgia for the whole region. And the relations between two countries are mostly effected and established against attitude of Russia.

Because of Turkey's policies about energy and the energy transportation, Georgia is accepted as a strategic country (Alsirt, 2009, 89). An independent Georgia, having friendly attitudes towards Turkey, would be better for Turkey then being close with other less friendly countries known from the history such as Iran, Armenia and Syria in the region. This close relation is also supported by other powerful and effective countries on world stage. They see Turkey as a model country for Georgia and want to separate Georgia from Russian hegemony. Some attitudes are made for this separation. For example, the membership progress in NATO of Georgia and the support of Turkey is one of the important evidence for this subject (Karagiannis, 2004, 22).

When looking from the Georgian side, it is clear to say that Georgia is in a hope to be integrated with west and Turkey as a model and bridge country for them which is a neighbor of Europe, member of NATO and in negotiations with European Union (EU). Georgia is also the only bridge between Turkey and another important partner Azerbaijan.

From this point of view, politic and military relations became closer after with the new presidency of Shevardnadze and relations continued in many dimensions. Turkey and Georgia have called each other as “strategic partner” especially after 1998 and Azerbaijan was also added to these two countries later (Alsirt, 2009, 90).

When we look at the relations between Turkey and Georgia, there have been always important visits on diplomatic stages. In 2000, Turkish President Süleyman Demirel claimed in a visiting at Tblisi that, for a regional security, “Caucasus Stability Pact” must be established. It was believed that, this pact would decrease the efficiency of Russia and bring peace to the region (Demirağ, 2005, 130-133).

An important project was executed between two countries in the beginning of 2000. The protocol signed about the modernization of Marneuli Military Airport was very important for both countries in rapprochement. This was Turkish Air Forces first construction building in another country and for about 1 billion 279 thousand dollars had spent for this construction. Also with some new constructions in the airport and with some new modernizations, the airport was modernized with NATO standards and until 2004, for about 2.5 million dollars had spent for this modernization. In the

opening of this airport, Okruashvili, Georgian Secretary of Defence, stated that Georgia has always close relations with Turkey and they always find Turkey with them whenever they need. He also added that in modernization of Georgian Air Force, Turkey had many help and they see these help brotherly<sup>7</sup>. In 2002, the diplomatic and military relation continued and Tbilisi administration gave permission to Turkish Air Force in using Marneuli Airport unrequited. Another important process between two countries was about Vaziani Military Base modernization in 2002. Turkey gave for about 1 million dollars for this modernization. Turkey also gave 2 UH-1H helicopter and 3 navy vehicle to Georgian Army (Demirağ, 2005, 135-138).

Continuing from military relations, another important project between the countries which had coast to Black Sea was put in practice. This project was called as Black Sea Naval Force (BLACKSEAFOR). First opinion for this kind of an organization was made by Turkey in 1998 in Varna/Bulgaria at the conference of Navy Admirals of the countries which had coast to Black Sea (Alsirt, 2009, 92).

The aim of this project was to continue stability and peace in Black Sea, increase regional integrity and neighborhood policies and create a big armada which would work for stability in Black Sea. And the first signals about “Purpose Letters” were signed by consular of the countries on 28 June 2000 in Ankara. The foundation agreement was signed on 2 April 2001 in İstanbul by Foreign Ministers of countries which had coast to Black Sea. Turkey, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.haber7.com/dunya/haber/69056-gurcistanda-ilk-askeri-havaalani>, [25.12.2004]

Georgia are the member countries. This agreement was very important because for the first time in the history, the countries came together and founded a group which would move together in operations at Black Sea (Alsirt, 2009, 92).

The main task of this group was declared as moving together against Search and Rescue Operations, Humanitarian Assistance, Mine Counter Measures, Environmental Protection Operations, Goodwill visits, and other tasks<sup>8</sup>.

President Shevardnadze visited the Turkey's new President Ahmet Necdet Sezer on January 2001 and stated that they believe Turkey's attitude and support against Georgia's independence and territorial integrity. Turkish President Sezer stated that Turkey's negotiator role and active policy will continue in the region for stability (Karagiannis, 2004, 24). In a returning visit of Sezer, on 8 November 2001, Turkish President also stated that this pact is very important and must be established in a short time. Although these opinions, Russia is completely against for this kind of a pact which will decrease his power in the region. Adding to this power loss, Turkey and many other countries from Europe and USA will try to be effective in the region and in the unconcluded problems. This could not be accepted easily when looking from the Russian side. And the foundation of this pact have always been delayed (Demirağ, 2005, 135-136).

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.dzkk.tsk.tr/denizweb/blackseafor/english/agreement/agreement.php>, [16.04.2014]

Although there are close relations, we cannot say that there are no problems between two countries. Adding to Abkhazia and South Ossetia problems, there are some other important problems that could not be solved yet.

For example, after Rose Revolution in 2003, Saakashvili government tried to reimpose his authority on the country and intervened a crisis in Adjara. After this intervention in 2004, Saakashvili tried to make Muslims in the region as Christians and added cross to Adjara flag (Alsirt, 2009, 32).

Another important problem is about Akhaltsikhe Turks. Akhaltsikhe Turks accept themselves as Anatolian Turks and their mothertongue is very similar to Turkish. On 16 March 1921, with Moscow Agreement, Akhaltsikhe was given to Russia and then connected to Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. After this statue change, there had been much pressure on these Turks. People who couldn't lean against the pressure of Stalin administration had migrated from their hometowns first through Central Asia and then to other countries especially through west (Coene, 2010, 28-35). And many of them had migrated to Turkey because of the common history and similarity of social beliefs. But, with the collapse of Soviet Union, they had delivered their will about returning their hometowns. Turkish governments have always supported this opinion of these Turks and tried to be a negotiator between Georgia and Akhaltsikhe Turks. Although Saakashvili promised to give support about the return of Akhaltsikhe Turks to their hometowns in 2004, this subject is a continuing problem between two countries (Seferov and Akış, 2009, 402).

Especially after the change of government in 2003, Turkey tried to be outside from the process. In that time Turkey had many other problems such as terrorism, EU negotiation process and economic problems. As we stated before, Turkey's foreign policy was about peace and stability in the region and then in world. Because of this principle, Turkey didn't want to be a side in this chaos in Georgia but supported stability in the country. The ethnic conflicts in the region, stated before as as Adjara problem, sometimes created small sized problems between two countries. But Turkey's all statements were about the support against territorial integrity of Georgia although Adjara administration called help from Turkey.

Saakashvili visited Turkey on 22 May 2004, and stated that the relations tight relations with Turkey in many dimensions such as energy, military and policy will continue in the new period of his administration. After a few months later Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Tblisi on August 2004. These mutual visiting decreased serenity and Turkey followed more active policy in Georgia. For example; Turkey always stated that the most important principle in foreign policy is to be friendly in relations and respect to territorial integrity. Because of these principles, Turkey was not very active in old policies and was not a side. But from the statements of Erdoğan, we can understand that Turkey wants to be more active in problems and try to be a negotiator. Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that there are many Abkhazian in Turkey more than in Abkhazia. And problems must be solved with negotiations, not with wars (Demirağ, 2005, 138-140).



Looking at the important projects, we can say that common use of Batumi Airport is important for both countries and citizens of them. The negotiations started in 2005 and agreement was signed in 2006, when Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer visited Georgia. According to this agreement, Turkish citizens could use Batumi Airport as a domestic line in transportation. With this agreement, people living in that region could easily transport and don't need to travel 250 km for the nearest airport in Turkey (Alsirt, 2009, 116).

The new administration of Saakashvili had fastened the process and negotiations for being a member of NATO and always wanted support from his neighbor Turkey. Turkey always supported this membership process of Georgia with statements made by all governments. Georgia believes that in order to create stability in the region and Black Sea, his appointment must be accepted by NATO. But in Bucharest meeting, 4 April 2008, Georgia and Ukraine were not accepted to MAP (Membership Action Plan). This made a big shock in Georgian Government. Some of the powerful countries such as Germany, France and Italy didn't accept this opinion. The biggest reason for Georgia not being accepted is that there are some conflicts and problems those cannot be solved yet. For example, South Ossetia and Adjara are some of these problems (Oğan, 2008, 2). Another important factor is the fear from Russia. Europe's energy need is obtained mainly from Russia and the countries next to it.

8 August 2008 was an important date for region. Georgian war vehicles crossed South Ossetian borders. This made a crisis on international stage and started

a war between Russia and Georgia after Russian army interfered. Turkey was seen as a supporting country to Georgians by Russian media and there is news about Turkey's political and armament support to Georgians had been published. First, on 13 August 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan went to Moscow and one day later he passed to Tblisi. He stated that Georgia's territorial integrity and fully independence is very important for Turkey. He added that Turkey is with Georgia sharing their unhappiness and ready to make any support they need about humanitarian assistance (Can, 2012, 38).

In the last years of Saakashvili administration and the new President Margvelashvili, after 2013, the close relations continued with diplomatic visits and some agreements made by two countries. For example; the Trabzon Declaration, which is signed by Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia is for more cooperation in many areas on 8 June 2012. Also the new President of Georgia, Margvelashvili made his first diplomatic visit to Turkey in 2012. Turkish President Abdullah Gül declared that he is pleased for this visit and stated the importance of both countries for each other. He said that, Georgia is an opening door for Turkey through East and Turkey is an important country which ties Georgia to West and many other organizations that Georgia wants to join<sup>9</sup>. Another example is Batumi Airport, which is used common. Adding more, there is no visa until 90 days, and new projects are planned for border gates and trades. With the protocol signed on 31 May 2011, the volunteers of both countries can pass the border without showing passport, only showing an identity

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<sup>9</sup><http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/88304/gurcistan-turkiyenin-doguya-acilan-kapisi-turkiye-de-gurcistani-batiya-baglayan-ulkedir.html>, [20.01.2014]

card<sup>10</sup>. Relation in defence industry is strongly continuing. Especially after the Russian-Georgian war, Georgia has increased the military defence budget. And parallel to this situation, they are buying some military equipment from their neighbor Turkey. For example, in 2010, Turkey sold 72 armored vehicles to Georgia<sup>11</sup>. Also, still some of Georgian military personel is trained in Turkish military schools.

### **2.3.2 Economic Relations**

Economic relations between Turkey and Georgia are based upon on the agreements which are “Trade and Economic Cooperation”, “Bilateral Protection and Protection of Investments” and “International Road Transport”.

After the opening of Sarp Border Gate between two countries in 1988, the economic relations have fastened and increased sharply. And in a short time after from the independence of Georgia, Turkey became one of the most important partners of Georgia with Russia and USA. First official relations started in 1991 with energy cooperation, with the agreement of electricity transfer from Turkey through Georgia (Alsirt, 2009, 104).

In the first years of diplomatic relations which were about 1992’s, trade between two country was 17.8 million dollars, increased in 1997 with mutual visits of diplomats to 240 million dollars and statistics according to the first two months of

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<sup>10</sup><http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-gurcistan-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa>, [2011]

<sup>11</sup><http://www.siyahgribeyaz.com/2010/08/taktik-tekerlekli-zrhl-arac-iyasas.html>, [2010]

2014, it is for about 210 million dollars. Another statistics is about transportation through foreign countries. For about 1 million Turkish people have transported to Georgia in 2013, and which is about %15 of all the transportation<sup>12</sup>.

Especially after 2002, with the new established Turkish government, trade between two countries accelerated fastly. When coming to 2007, which was before Russian-Georgian conflict, trade between two countries was in a highest level. Countries declared themselves as “strategic partners”. The war between Russia and Georgia couldn’t also affect the trade between Turkey and Georgia very effectively. It was for about 1.5 billion dollar in those years. Georgia is very important for Turkey. Because Turkey’s position in Georgia’s foreign trade is for about %16.5 of all. And there are many contractors in Georgia from Turkey and they do for about 1 billion dollar cost constructions<sup>13</sup>.

Relations in Black Sea between two countries are also important for economy. For example; Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation created a trade area for countries who are member of this organization.

Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation opinion was first created by Turkey in 1990. Until that day there were no established organizations in Black Sea. With studies of some departments, on 25 June 1992, summit agreement which would legally found the organization was signed. Turkey, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bulgaria, Greece, Armenia, Russia, Romania, Ukraine, Albania and Georgia are the

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<sup>12</sup>[http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt\\_id=1046](http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046).

<sup>13</sup><http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-gurcistan-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa>, [2011]

founder countries. Poland, Israel, Egypt, Italy, Austria, Slovakia and Tunisia are observer countries.

The aim of this organization is to create peace, stability and harmony in Black Sea with providing trade area for the countries who are member. This organization not only includes the countries which have coast to Black Sea. It also includes Caucasus and Balkan countries. And adding with observers, we can say that for about 350 million people are in this organization and annually over 300 billion dollar trade is done between these countries. It's another importance is that the energy transportation from Caucasus and the region through Europe is done from this road<sup>14</sup>. Because of these reasons, cooperation and stability in Black Sea is very important.

Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan petrol pipeline is another important and strategic project which ties countries together. From Turkish perspective, after the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia and many problems in the region, the only way of reaching through Azerbaijan and transferring the oil through Europe is on the way from Georgia. Because of this reason, Ankara is very careful in Georgia policy (Karagiannis, 2004, 24).

From Georgian's perspective, BTC project is also very important in decreasing Russian pressure on them. Failure of this project and using the Baku-Supsa pipeline will give the chance to Russia for establishing a pressure on Georgia again for ensuring the security of the pipeline (Karagiannis, 2004, 25).

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<sup>14</sup><http://www.bsec-organization.org/Information/Pages/bsec.aspx>, [2014]

Georgian government gives importance to this kind of organizations in order to get far from Russian hegemony and establish bilateral relations with other countries independently. Especially Russian-Georgian crisis can be a good example for this situation. Sometimes Russia can make trouble for Georgia with decreasing the limit of energy in order to create pressure and hegemony on them. In these kinds of problems, Turkish government has always supported Georgia. For example, in 2000, when Russia made embargo on Georgia, Turkey helped Georgia and gave them fuel-oil unrequited (Alsirt, 2009, 109).

Another important and strategic project between two countries is Baku-Tblisi-Kars Railroad project. This project will directly tie Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan. This railroad is about 124 km and 92 km is in Turkey and 32 km is passing in Georgia. On 20 November 2007, Turkish President Abdullah Gül made a visit to Georgia and after one day later from the visit, Gül, Saakashvili and Aliyev laid the foundation of the project together in Georgia. Until today, %85 of the project has finished and it is estimated to be finish in the second half of 2014. With the opening of railroad, in the first year approximately 1 million people and 6.5 million ton bulk will be transported. This project costs for about 500 million dollar and Turkey has paid 295 million dollar of the whole project<sup>15</sup>.

Although these close and efficient relations, it cannot be said that it is enough for two country. There are some important reasons for this deficiency. One of them is

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<sup>15</sup><http://www.haberler.com/baku-tiflis-kars-demiryolu-projesi-nde-son-durum-5606253-haberi/>, [30.01.2014]

the transportation system between two countries. Transportation is the most important factor for trade between countries. And when this factor is not well constructed, trade will not be very abundant. We can also add incomplete Kars-Tblisi railway to this reason. It is estimated to be finished in 2015. Another important reason is inadequate relations in banking sector. Fees and taxes are important factors when making trade with a country. So some developments must be done in order to make businessman investment. One other reason is the ethnic conflict and instability in the country (Alsirt, 2009, 113). Georgia gives importance to joining organizations in order to decrease the rate of these kinds of conflicts and create a stable area which will both bring benefit to Georgia and other countries in the region. And as stated before, Turkish government is a supporter of Georgia in these membership processes.

## **2.4 Difficult Relations with Armenia**

### **2.4.1 Political and Military Relations**

Armenia is one of the most problematic countries for Turkey when looking to other neighbors. The problems depend mostly on the events in 1915. Armenia claimed that many Armenians were killed in the deportation. And this has been always a struggle and problem between two countries for a century which could not be solved.

Related with its foreign policy, Turkey had recognized Armenia's independence on 16 December 1991 and was one of the first countries that recognized Armenia's independence. However Turkey's friendly attitude, Armenia

didn't recognize the treaty Kars, signed in 1921, which was about the border between two countries and they had shown East of Turkey as West of Armenia.

In the first years of independence of Armenia, Turkish government didn't want to cut the relations with this new independent country although it's unfriendly attitudes. Furthermore, in 1992, Turkey had invited and established OBSCE with this country and other members. But after the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijan lands, Turkey strictly cut relations with this country and closed the borders which were important for a country which was new founded. With this attempt, Armenia had hard days and completely dependent on Russia (Vidlickova, 2012, 7).

After 2000, some important attempts had done. For example, in 2001, Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) was established. There were 6 from Turkey and 4 members from Armenia. This commission's duty was to find solutions and bring new ideas for the problems between two countries. And in the meetings the problem about Nagorno-Karabakh and so-called genocide claims were not going to be stated (Ural and Çaykiran, 2011, 118-121). This Commission wanted a study from International Center for Transitional Justice about the events in 1915. This Center had written a report and stated that nobody or no country can demand a desire, politically or economically, from the 1915 events. This made a crisis between Turkey and Armenia relations had cut off bilaterally and after this report the duty of TARC had finished in 2004 (Aktan, 2003, 22-25).



Another important attempt made by Turkish Council of Ministers was opening the archives of Turkey for search in 2002. Although this important attempt of Turkey, Armenia didn't accept this kind opinion and this rapprochement attempt became also unsuccessful (Vidlickova, 2012, 8).

After the change of government in Turkey, foreign policy has also changed. "Zero problems with neighbors" principle has taken the center in international relations of Turkey. With this change, Erdoğan and his government also tries to strengthen the relations with Armenia for a long time. Concrete steps were taken in 2004. Turkey invited Armenia President Robert Koçaryan to NATO meeting on 28-29 June 2004 to İstanbul but Koçaryan rejected this invitation and showed that Armenia is not very desirable for close relations again (Kodaman, 2013, 117-119).

In 2005, Turkish National Assembly published a declaration and stated that Turkey's desire is to create a friendly ground for Turkey-Armenia relations and find solutions for the problems for both nations who have lived on the same territories for long times in the history. And by Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, many attempts have been made about founding a commission for searching historical realities by historians. But Armenia has always refused these demands (Kodaman, 2013, 119).

After 2007, Turkey's desire to be in a good relation with Armenia has accelerated. Restoration of Ahdamar Church in Van is one of the examples for this progress (Göksel, 2010, 16). Although these friendly attitudes, assassination of an Armenian Journalist Hrant Dink by a Turk in İstanbul created another crisis between two country.

Year 2008 was a milestone for the unfriendly relations until that day. In September 2008, Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Armenia for the match between Armenia and Turkey which was about 2010 World Cup Qualifications (Nichol, 2014, 33). Gül was the first Turkish leader to visit Erivan. This attempt was accepted as turning point for both sides and called as “Soccer Diplomacy”. This diplomatic change created other opportunities for more cooperation between two countries. After a while, Turkish and Armenian officials came together in Switzerland. With all these progress, both sides signed “Protocol on Establishment of Diplomatic Relations” and “Protocol on Development of Relations” in 10 October 2009. With these protocols it was expected to increase bilateral relations and normalize the process (Giragosian, 2009, 3).

When looking at the first protocol, which is about to the establishment of diplomatic relations, bring some predictions for both sides about accepting the border between two countries. And this is an application that Armenia has not accepted until today. Another important prediction is about that both countries would not make policy against each other which will disturb other one. This is directly about Armenia’s policy about 1915 events. And also another important topic is about terrorist acts and given support to terrorist acts. With this protocol, both countries accepted that they will not support terrorist groups and make cooperation against these kinds of activities when seen on both borders (Phillips, 2012, 27).

The main target of the other protocol is to develop bilateral relations with the regard of mutual respect, opening border and open support on solving problems in

the region by international law rules. This is nearly related with Turkey's policy towards Nagorno-Karabakh problem between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We can understand from here that Turkey wants this problem to be solved by international law then war. Also, another important topic of this protocol is about the study of historians in the archives about 1915 events. Turkey's demand for this study is one of the main policies of the government in relations with Armenia<sup>16</sup>.

Although these protocols signed between two countries, Turkish executives have always stated that, until the Nagorno-Karabakh problem is solved with Azerbaijan, the relations cannot be normal with Armenia. Because Azerbaijan has an important place in Turkish foreign policy and because of common history, they are accepted as "brothers". In order to be legal of these two protocols, they must be approved by two parliaments. But Armenia Diaspora was completely against these protocols. Related with these kinds of attitudes, Turkish parliament had never taken these protocols an agenda. And the normalization process had been frozen (Tanrisever, 2011, 12).

With developing relations between Turkey and Armenia, Baku had developed relations with Israel in this period. This was not well accepted by Turkish government which they had many problems with Israel on international stage (Esen, 2013, 2).

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<sup>16</sup><http://www.mfa.gov.tr/protocol-on-development-of-relations-between-the-republic-of-turkey-and-the-republic-of-armenia.en.mfa>, [2011]

When looking at this process, this acceleration is not only the will of two countries. Some other factors on international arena made Turkey and Armenia closer. For example, Barack Obama's victory in the elections and his visit to Turkey and speech in Turkish National Assembly, Russian-Georgian war, and increasing energy needs and economical reasons are some of them (Kodaman, 2013, 119). Especially USA is supporting the close relations between two countries because Armenia's relations with Russia.

Another important and unexpected statement was made by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 24 April 2014. He stated that Turkish and Armenian people who share similar customs and manners must be able to talk each other about the past and accept their faults. They must be in negotiation and Turkey is ready for this process with all its historical sources. He also wished rest in peace who had lost their lives in the early 20th century and conveyed condolences to their children<sup>17</sup>.

#### **2.4.2 Weakness of Economic Relations**

After Armenia's unfriendly attitudes against Azerbaijan and conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkish government has closed the border and applied embargo through Armenia. Closing the border didn't only affect Armenia but also Turkey's eastern cities and people who are living and making trade over there. This embargo made Armenia to be dependent on Russia (Sireaka, 2013, 22). This situation is not

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<sup>17</sup><http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/165992/pm-erdogan-stresses-39-shared-pain-39-in-statement-on-armenian-issue.html>. [24.04.2014]

very acceptable by USA and other countries in Europe. Because they want Russia not to be very strong in the region and establish his hegemony like before.

Although the border is closed with Armenia, we can see that there is trade according to economic states. Two countries are members of Black Sea Economic Cooperation and they continue their organization duties and meetings. For example; Turkish Secretary of Foreign Policy Ahmet Davutoğlu made a visit to Erivan in 2013 He stated that Turkish government wants to increase cooperation and relation with Armenia. Georgia is a bridge for two countries and their trade. Armenia also knows that Turkish border is very important for them. Because their energy and raw stuff need is very high. And with close of Georgian border adding to Turkish one, they got into a big problem. Their persistence in protocols about opening the border is because of this reason.

Turkey and Armenia has trade although this closed border. According to economical statistics, in 1993 trade was about 4.5 million dollar; in 1997 it was about 30 million dollar. Especially after 2000, with the new Turkish government and rapprochement between two county, we can see that trade volume has come in a higher level. In 2008, it is about 200 million dollar and when we look at the first quarter of 2014 we can see that trade volume between two country is 500 million dollar<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup>[http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt\\_id=1046](http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046), [2014]

The closed border brings also some heavy loads for Armenia. When trade is done over Georgia, the transportation cost increases and profit decreases for about %10. And also the transportation of goods delays approximately 2 days. It is estimated that if the border is opened, transportation costs will decrease for about %30-50 and profit will increase with this regard<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup><http://www.tabdc.org/wp-content/uploads/TR-Rapor1.pdf>, [2013]

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **TURKEY'S PERSPECTIVE IN REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND PROBLEMS**

#### **4.1 NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT**

Karabakh region, which is in the southeast of Caucasus Mountains, is for about 4392 km<sup>2</sup>. Region is between Kura, Aras Rivers and Lake Sevan, Armenia in the west, Iran in the south and from north to south about 120 km, east to west about 35-60 km. Region is covered with mountains and lowlands. Because of the regions north sides covered with high mountains, it is called as Nagorno-Karabakh (Gökçe, 2011, 1149).

Roots of this conflict go to 1800s with the starting of Russian hegemony on the region (Pashayeva, 2009, 66). With the desire of Russia to capture all the Caucasus, they had made cooperation especially with Armenians. They had put the Armenians to the regions which they have captured especially from Azerbaijan. According to sources, for about 1 million people were put in Karabakh, Ganja and Nakhchivan. With the immigration policy of Russian government, ethnic structure of Caucasus had taken damage. Russia also had supported the Armenian gangs which had damaged the Azerbaijan cities and killed many people. These events continued in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first events which were very bloody and heavy were in 1905-1906. It is believed that the main reasons of this conflict are the support of Russia and assimilation policies of them towards Muslims (Yılmaz, 2013, 90).

Although Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous region but connected to Azerbaijan, %70 of the population was Armenian. Population of Nagorno-Karabakh was about 192.000 in those years (Yılmaz, 2013, 87-89). The main reason of this conflict after their independence was because of the policies of Soviet Union. With liberal reforms called Perestroika and Glasnost, the relations had become hard to solve and conflicts had started (Şiriyev, 2011, 98-99). Although Nagorno-Karabakh was a “wide regional autonomy” connected to Azerbaijan in the administration of Stalin, Armenians always tried to attach it back to Armenia in 1945, 1963 and 1977 with official offers made to Russia (Mkrtchyan, 2007, 5).

According to Armenian thesis; Armenians are more populated in Karabakh and they must have a choice to determine their own destiny. According to Azerbaijan thesis; when looking to history and international law, this region is their own land which had been assimilated by Russians in the history (Yılmaz, 2010, 90).

After the collapse of Soviet Union, some small conflict had occurred in the region (Svensson, 2009, 9). But after 1992, these small conflicts changed into war. Especially on 25-26 February 1992, Armenians, with the support of Russian military in that area, attacked Azerbaijan’s Khojaly rayon and killed many people. This massacre had taken many reactions from many foreign country and international organization (Aslanlı, 2013, 183-184). Armenians had killed more than 600 Azerbaijan people and for about 1250 people had been wounded (Gökçe, 2011, 1152). After Khojaly massacre, there had been many articles written by international



media against Armenian government because of this barbarous attitude (Kasım, 2009, 39-40).

In the administration of Muttalibov, Azerbaijan always wanted support from the Western Unions and organizations for solving this problem. The first attempt was made by United Nations (UN) and Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) came together in 1992. They sent an investigation committee to Karabakh. Also in 1992, OSCE accepted to make a conference in Minsk in order to find a solution to Karabakh problem on 24 March 1992 Helsinki Peak. Although these attempts, the Armenian occupation had continued and these attempts couldn't be successful (Yılmaz, 2010, 80-82).

After the administration of Muttalibov, Elchibey had taken the administration of Azerbaijan. Karabakh problem again had taken the first place of Azerbaijan foreign policy like before. Elchibey administration was also near to West administrations and they had tried to solve this problem with western organizations and unions. He had wanted help from OSCE and stated that Azerbaijan will never accept dividing the territory of Karabakh and always give warranty for Armenians to show respect their culture and other beliefs in the region. And these two facts were accepted in Helsinki Peak. Although the support of OSCE and UN Security Council, Armenia had continued unfriendly attempts and killed many Azerbaijan people. It can be clearly understood that Elchibey administration could not be successful in solving this historical problem (Yılmaz, 2013, 83).

The conflicts had continued until 1994. Haydar Aliyev had taken the administration of Azerbaijan after Elchibey and made an agreement with Armenia. On 9 May 1994, Secretary of Defense of both countries signed an agreement about ceasefire in Karabakh. Although this agreement had stopped the war, Azerbaijan had lost %20 of its territory until that date (Gökçe, 2011, 1153). In 3 December 1996, OSCE countries had made a meeting in Lisbon and accepted the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and giving the highest level of autonomous for Nagorno-Karabakh. This declaration was accepted by all the member countries except Armenia (Şiriyev, 2011, 99). In 1997, the Minsk Group fastened their studies for solving the problem and offered 3 solution ways. These were;

1. Package deal (17 July 1997)
2. Step by Step deal (2 December 1997)
3. Common State deal ( November 1998)

Package deal, which was offered in 1997, was accepting that Karabakh will be autonomous but connected to Azerbaijan. They could also prepare their own organic law. This deal also accepted that Armenians would withdraw from Azerbaijan lands except Karabakh and Karabakh would be a free trade economic area. Although there were some missing points for both countries, Armenia didn't accept this solution and the problem could not be solved (Demirtepe, 2011, 49-50).

According to Step by Step deal, the problems in the region would be solved in two steps. In the first step, it was planned to stop the conflict. And in the second step, the status of Nagorno-Karabakh was going to be connected to Azerbaijan. And there

was an important point in this plan. If one of the sides doesn't obey the plan, then there will be some sanctions for that country. This was also accepted by Azerbaijan and refused by Armenia (Şiriyev, 2011, 99-100).

Another plan was founding a Common State. According to this plan, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan would found a common state. This state would accept Armenian as native language (Yılmaz, 2013, 89-90). This new Common State could create its own law and could veto Azerbaijan assembly decisions. Because these facts indirectly gave Karabakh independence, Azerbaijan didn't accept this plan (Şiriyev, 2011, 100).

After Haydar Aliyev, his son İlham Aliyev has taken the administration. He has also put the Karabakh problem in the center of Azerbaijan foreign policy. But, he didn't start the solution from the beginning, but continued from the point where his father had left. He has given importance to solve the problem without using army. He has also given importance inserting other countries and organizations in the problem. We can say that he has been successful in this policy. Another important policy of Aliyev is to establish friendly relations with other regional countries and western organizations and unions, such as close relations with NATO.

After 2004, relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia became closer. This period was accepted as "Prague Process". According to this process, Azerbaijan and Armenia was going to solve the problems with discussion without any third countries mediation. There had been some meetings between presidents of both countries especially in 2006 (Şiriyev, 2011, 104).

In 2005, before the meeting of Foreign Policy Ministers in Prague, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe declared that Armenia is accepted as attacker in Karabakh problem and Karabakh is a separatist regime. This was the first international legal document (Gökçe, 2011, 1146).

At the same time, Madrid principles, which were declared on 29 November 2007, are very important for the process and developments for both countries. According to this principles, the area around Karabakh must be empty, the corridor, which ties Armenia to Karabakh, must be opened and war victims must return to their hometowns (Şiriyev, 2011, 100-101).

After the war between Russia and Georgia, the diplomats of conflict sides came together in Moscow and signed Moscow Declaration in 2008, with the support of Russian President Medvedev. This was the first agreement signed by Presidents of both countries since 1994. With this declaration, sides accepted that solution should be found with peaceful diplomatic relations. Additional to this agreement, there have been many bilateral meetings made in the administration of Medvedev between 2008 and 2012 (Fuller, 2013, 6).

Until 2011, there had been many meetings, especially with the support of Russia. In 2011, the most important development was the meeting of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia in Kazan, the capital city of Tatarstan. Also the support of OSCE Minsk Group countries had shown that there could be a peaceful agreement after this attempt. But this meeting also couldn't reach a sign peace agreement

(Aslanlı, 2013, 180). And we can say that there had never been an important attempt like this again after 2011.

Despite the growth of unfriendly statements of many people from both sides, especially Armenian's believe that their society has preserved a vast effort on building constructive dialogues and friendly relations about the issue. And they also believe that the problem can be solved by negotiations rather than using military (Abashov and Khachatrian, 2006, 4-5).

Turkish government attitude in this process is also important for solution. Turkish governments have always been together in solving these problems and supporting Azerbaijan's territorial integrity on every international stage. After the intensive conflicts in Karabakh, Turkish government closed the border with Armenia and hasn't opened it yet, although pressure from many foreign countries and organizations.

This conflict also has shown Turkish government attitude towards regional problems. Turkey was not going to be directly from one side and go into war. And also the problem was going to be carried on international stage. Turkish government has also faced with many problems especially when supporting countries which are Turk or Islamic origin. Because of this reason, Turkish governments have been a little bit far from Abkhaz problem (Aydın, 2013, 384).

Especially after the new government in Turkey after 2002, Turkey has changed its foreign policy. This change was in order to create more powerful Turkey

in the region having zero problems with neighbors. And related to this policy, Turkish side has fastened the solution process with Armenia, although not well seen by Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan stated that Turkey's close relation with Armenia have made Azerbaijan people very sad. And after the close relation, Azerbaijan went to some sanctions against Turkey such as reorganizing the salary of natural gas, establishing close relations with Israel and coming closer to Russia. This problem was solved with the declarations of Presidents and critical diplomats. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan expressed that Turkey-Armenia relations could not be close unless there is a complete agreement on Nagorno-Karabakh issue between Azerbaijan and Armenia (Welt, 2013). Both sides, Turkey's and Azerbaijan's, common opinion was "One Nation, Two Countries" and "Strategic Partner". These expressions and beliefs lowered the tension.

#### **4.2 NAKHCHIVAN PROBLEM**

Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic is in the southeast part of the Caucasus region with covering 5363 km<sup>2</sup>. It is neighbor with Armenia in the north and northeast (224 km), Turkey in the northwest (11 km) and with Iran in the west and southwest (163 km). Natural border with Turkey and Iran is the Aras River, which is very important for the region because of its water capacity (Şimşek, 2010, 114-115). Its population is for about 557.000 and there are 6 rayons (Şen, 2008, 24).

Nakhchivan's has always been important for many countries in history. Importance of Nakhchivan is because of its geopolitical and geostrategic position.

Addition to being close to Middle East and Asia, it is very near to energy supplies which has always been the most important reason for wars and conflicts.

Nakhchivan territories had changed many owners in history. Until 19<sup>th</sup> century there had been many struggles for capturing this area. After the war between Russia and Iran in 1826-1828, Russia had captured the Nakhchivan Khanate. Iran had signed Turkmenchay Treaty with Russia after this war. With this victory, Nakhchivan Khanate had collapsed and it became a state of Russia. In order to increase the population against Turks in the state, Russia had brought 70 thousand Armenian from Iran in those years (Şen, 2008, 25). In 1828-1829, Ottoman Empire was defeated against Russia and accepted the joinment of Nakhchivan Khanate to Russia with Edirne Treaty (Şimşek, 2010, 118).

After the capture of Nakhchivan and Erivan Khanates by Russia, with the opinion of Nicholas 1 of Russia, both of the states were connected for making an Armenian city. In 1886, the whole population of the Nakhchivan state was 7.433. 4.512 (%60.7) of this population was Muslim and 2376 (%31.9) of it was Armenian. Turk population has always been high in Nakhchivan (Şen, 2008, 26).

Nakhchivan became an autonomous republic in internal affairs but connected to Azerbaijan in foreign policy with the Russian Revolution in 1917. After this autonomous, the area which is connecting Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan, Zengezur, was given to Armenia (Şen, 2008, 26-27). Turkey and Russia signed “Moscow Agreement” in 16 March 1921. This agreement was the legal sign of new Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. And after “Kars Agreement” on 13 October

1921, this statute was also accepted by Armenia, which connected Nakhchivan directly to Azerbaijan. A third country could never interfere in this statute and relations of the country (Arslan, 1998, 184). Another important topic was about the border with Turkey and Armenia. Also with this agreement the border has been identified (Mustafayev, 2012, 287). The position and statute of Nakhchivan is very important for Turkey. This geography is seen as the “connection door” for Turkish Nations especially, in Middle Asia and Caucasus.

After the independence of Azerbaijan, in 1995, state statute was given to Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic under hegemony of Azerbaijan. Nakhchivan also accepted Azerbaijan national flag as their national flag. Another important development that Azerbaijan provided for Nakhchivan, was recognizing the new organic law in 29 December 1998 (Şimşek, 2010, 113).

Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan have always been important for Turkey. Especially in 1990s, with the increasing attacks of Armenia, Turkish government has supported these countries very much. After the elections in Nakhchivan and selection of Haydar Aliyev as president, they tried to be in more cooperation with Turkey. In those years also “Hope Bridge” was constructed between Turkey and Nakhchivan. After this opening, Turkish diplomats and businessmen have increased the visits. Also a common protocol was signed between two countries. This protocol includes support in many areas such as economy, policy, energy and many others.



### 4.3 ABKHAZIA PROBLEM

Abkhazia is in the east shore of Black Sea having 240 km coast to sea. Its capital city is Sukhumi, which is also a harbor city. Abkhazia covers an area about 8600 km<sup>2</sup> at the northeast of Georgia, neighbor with Russia (Alsirt, 2009, 20). They are one of the oldest nations of Caucasus (Şen, 2008, 31). Their history goes back to 14<sup>th</sup> century (Cutler, 2004, 114).

Majority of Abkhazia is Christian and remainings are Muslims. And the percentage of Christians is about %90. And their mother tongue is Abkhaz language (Şen, 2008, 32). They play an important role in the development of Caucasus region (Markedonov, 2013, 17-18).

The population of Abkhazia is for about 243.000 people according to 2011 census<sup>20</sup>. There are 91 different ethnic groups living in Abkhazia. Most populated are Abkhazians of whom are for about 122, 069 (%50.71), Russians; 22,077 (%9.71), and Georgians; 43,166 (%17.93) and Armenians are for about 41,864 (%17.39). According to statistics, leavings the republic between 1989 and 2011 has increased from 93,267 to 122,069 (Markedonov, 2013, 19). The main reason for this increase is the wars and conflicts in the region.

When we look at the old history of Abkhazia, we can see that the country was under hegemony of Ottoman Empire in 16<sup>th</sup> century and many of the people became Muslim in those days (Alsirt, 2009, 21-22). With the regression period of Ottoman

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<sup>20</sup><http://www.abhazyam.com/haber/1627/abhazyam-nufusu-242826-kisi.html>, [27.05.2011]

Empire, Russia had increased the pressure on Abkhazia and occupied capital city Sukhumi in 1810 and declared that Abkhazia is under their control (Cutler, 2004, 115-116).

After 1866 Lykhny uprising and Russian-Ottoman War in 1877-1878, the structure of the population in the region clearly changed. Many Abkhaz were exiled from Caucasus through Ottoman Empire (Markedonov, 2013, 21-22). Georgians, which were brought from Georgia, settled down on these lands which were abandoned by Abkhaz people (Alsirt, 2009, 23).

Following the collapse of Russian Empire, Abkhazia had won its independence and tried to join with North Caucasus nations and succeeded on 11 May 1918. People's Council of Abkhazia accepted to join Mountainous Republic of North Caucasus. At that moment, Georgia used the advantage of disorder in Russia and occupied Abkhazia (Şen, 2008, 33-34). On March 1919, Council wanted to be an Autonomous Region connected to Georgia and their offer was accepted by Georgian Assembly. According to Constitution of Georgia in 1921, three parts of the lands, which are Abkhazia (Sukhumi), Muslim Georgia (Batumi) and Zagatala (Zakatalskaya area) were accepted as "inseparable parts of Georgian Republic" and granted as "autonomous governments in local affairs" (Markedonov, 2013, 21-22).

On 31 March 1921, Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic was founded with the agreement signed with Georgia. In 1922, Trans-Caucasus Soviet Socialist Federal Republic was founded and Abkhazia took "Union Republic" status. But with the administration of Stalin, in 1931 status of Abkhazia had changed and it became an

“Autonomous Republic” connected to Georgia (Eissler, 2013, 130). On those days, especially with the strict policies of Stalin, Abkhaz people were under pressure and discrimination. For example, the change of Abkhaz alphabet with the one which is coherent to Georgian schedule in 1937-1938 and accepting Georgian as a school language in 1945-1946 are some of them (Markedonov, 2013, 23).

After these developments, Abkhazians had tried to quit of this Georgian hegemony and made some public demonstrations in 1957, 1964, 1967 and 1978. Although Russian and Georgian governments had given many rights to Abkhaz people such as broadcasting in Abkhazian, establishing Abkhaz television and university, economic support and trade area, Abkhazians had never renounced from their independence demands (Şen, 2008, 33).

The most important movement made by Abkhazians was the demand of quit from Georgian hegemony and becoming a republic which is a member of Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1978. This demand created a crisis between Georgia and Abkhazia. With the support of wrong policies of Soviets, it became an ethnic conflict and intestine war (Alsirt, 2009, 25).

On 25 August 1990, Abkhaz members of Supreme Council declared Abkhazia's independence and stated that Abkhazia is Community Republic like as in 1921. But this declaration was not recognized by Georgian government. Although Georgia's rejection, Abkhazia had chosen Vladislav Ardzinba as president and he had started working in administration. On 23 July 1992, Abkhaz Parliament stated that they abolished the 1978 Constitution which accepted the connection to Georgia.

And after a while, they declared that the new constitution was the one which was accepted in 1925, which stated that Abkhazia is independent in the borders of USSR (Şen, 2008, 34-35).

After these statements, Georgia sent forces to Abkhaz lands and tried to create pressure on humans on 14 August 1992. In those days, Russia had recognized that Crimea was not connected to Russia but Ukraine. And with this recognition, Russia had lost the advantage on creating military bases in Black Sea region. Because of this necessity, Russia supported Abkhazian army (Dervişoğlu, 2014, 17). And this ethnic conflict developed into an armed conflict between two sides (Markedonov, 2013, 25). With the support of many other ethnics from North Caucasus, Abkhazia had taken advantage against Georgia and had controlled especially the east part of Georgia. Especially the support of Chechens were very important for Abkhazia (Abushov, 2009, 6). With this occupation, Georgia had started talks with Russia in order to take support while giving permission to constructing military bases. After this development, Abkhazian forces abandoned Georgian territory (Şen, 2008, 35-36).

This armed conflict brought some advantages for Abkhazian side. One of these advantages is that, they had seen the allies both in the republic and outside. Especially, support of The Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus was very important and effective. Another important advantage is that, this conflict could create a legal ground for Abkhaz secession (Markedonov, 2013, 26-27).

After this conflict, with the support of Russia, both sides came together in Sochi on 27 July 1993 and signed ceasefire agreement. With this agreement, Georgian forces would abandon the Abkhaz territories and Abkhazia would be independent in local affairs. Also Russia would be the warranty country for this agreement (Şen, 2008, 37). After the agreement, Georgian military's attitude towards abandoning the territories slowly restarted the conflict.

United Nations had intervened to the problem and agreed about sending an observer committee in Abkhazia and warned both sides about obeying the 27 July agreement. But the conflict had continued and in 1994, with the new agreement, both sides accepted the Russian army which would be accommodated in the buffer zone. With this development, Georgia was obliged to join Commonwealth of Independent States (Dervişoğlu, 2014, 19-20).

The armed conflict had very heavy lost and consequences for both sides. 4,000 Georgians and 3,000 Abkhazians were killed. When we look at the economic losses of the conflict, we can say that it is about 10.7 billion dollars (Markedonov, 2013, 28).

With the attempts of Shevarnadze in Russia, president of Georgia, Russia closed Abkhazian border in 1994. And after this event, Abkhazian Parliament accepted the new constitution and declared that Abkhazia Republic is founded. But this declaration was not recognized by Georgia, Russia and United Nations (Alsirt, 2009, 26).

On 14 August 1997, both sides declared that they won't use army in order to find solution and try to solve the problems by peaceful methods. Turkish governments have always been very constructive in this problem but always supported the territorial integrity of Georgia. Because there are many people from Georgia and Abkhazia in Turkey, Turkish government attitude towards this problem is very important (Alsirt, 2009, 26).

After the administration of Saakashvili, Georgia has turned its face to west and tried to take control of the autonomous regions and republics with the support of USA. For example, after a while taking the seat, Saakashvili ended the administration in Adjara which was supporting Russian government and made some expressions which would increase the tension in the region such as they would be ready to take Abkhazia again in 2-3 years (Alsirt, 2009, 26).

When looking at the period of war between Russia and Georgia, we can clearly say that Abkhazia had supported Russia. Before the war, Russian government declared that they will recognize the two autonomous republics, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, if Georgia continues close relations with NATO and use force against these two republics. After a while in April 2008, Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted supported from the parliament in order to make cooperation with Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the dimensions of economy and humanitarian issues. When the war started in 9 August 2008, Abkhazia army opened a second front and took the control of Kodori Gorge. And jest to this attitude, on 26 August 2008, Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and they were the first country which has recognized.

After this event, Georgian administration withdrew from the 1994 Moscow Agreement (Markedonov, 2013, 29-31).

Turkish governments have always been in the side of supporting the territorial integrity of Georgia and their independence. Bilateral negotiation has always been the first and most important principle in this conflict. But because of the sympathy towards Abkhazian's by Turk's, Turkish governments always had problem with Georgia in secret. There is many Abkhazian's living in Turkey. And it is estimated as 500 thousand. And this number is higher than the ones living in Abkhazia. From this perspective, Turkey and its support is important for them. In 1992, Caucasus-Abkhaz Support Committee was founded and these kinds of foundations against Georgia have always been problem between Turkey and Georgia. Because their pressure and demand from Turkish governments are clear. They want Turkish government to recognize Abkhazia, make more trade and open the ferry between Trabzon and Sukhumi. Especially the legal trade and ferry between Turkey and Abkhazia has always been problem. Georgian costguards have caught many ships which carrying commercial materials between Turkey and Abkhazia.

Especially in the period of conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia, there was direct ship transportation from Turkey through Sukhumi, the capital of Abkhazia. And after the attempts of Georgian diplomats, this transportation was ended up by Turkish Government in 1996. And especially after the second period of 1990s, Turkey's support through Tblisi Government has increased. In the statements of Turkish diplomats, this can be clearly seen. For example; Turkey's Georgian

Ambassador stated that territorial integrity of Georgia including Abkhazia is important for Turkey (Eissler, 2013, 133-134). Because, such a weak Abkhazia could be easily departed from Georgia. And after this separation they could tie with Russia and this would not be a preferred condition for Turkey. According to Turkish administration, an autonomous region of Abkhazia connected to Georgia would be better than connected to Russia. Turkey's attitudes have always been parallel through this policy. In 1999, Turkish government aggregated both sides in the Istanbul meeting of OSCE. However this could be a beneficial attempt, a positive step couldn't be taken by sides (Çolakoğlu, 2005, 37).

Turkey's relations with Abkhazia have been closer after 2008, with the recognition of Abkhazia by Russia. This does not mean that Turkey would recognize Abkhazia, but with the permission of Georgian government, bilateral relations could increase. This effort of Turkish government was also well seen by Georgian government. President Saakashvili expressed that if an inspector of Georgia in Trabzon can work in controlling the ferries coming or departing, then the ferry transportation can start again. These are some important steps taken in the new administration of the new Turkish government. Although the trade has grown with Abkhazia, the number of vessels detained by Georgian coastguard has decreased after the visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu in 2013. This means that Turkey still supports the territorial integrity and respects the opinions of its strategic partner Georgia (Eissler, 2013, 133-134). Turkey's NATO membership is also important in this issue.



#### **4.4 SOUTH OSSETIA PROBLEM**

South Ossetia is an autonomous region in the borders of Georgia. It is located in the slopes of Greater Caucasus Mountains. South Ossetia covers an area of 3.900 km<sup>2</sup> and its capital city is Tskhinvali. Half and more of the population of the region is consisted from Ossetians, which are from India-Europe race and accepted as Iranian origin (Şen, 2008, 38).

Ossetians are living both in the north and south slopes of Caucasus Mountains. The north of Ossetia is an autonomous republic connected to Russia. Soviet Union, which had divided Ossetia into two parts, connected south region to Georgia on 20 April 1922 and the north region to Russia on 7 July 1925 (Alsirt, 2009, 27).

South Ossetia was the first region which had wanted to get separated from Georgia. The most important aim from this separation opinion is based on collecting north and south together under a common roof (Yapıcı, 2007, 78). Many of the Ossetians are Orthodox Christian and some of them are Muslims. Some of these Muslims had migrated to Turkey after 1877-1878 Russia- Ottoman Empire War and some of them after Second World War (Şen, 2008, 29).

After the collapse of Tsarist Empire in 1918, which Georgia was under hegemony of this country, Georgia declared its independence and founded a democratic republic administrated by social-democrats so-called Mensheviks. Georgia's independence was also recognized by many other countries especially

from Western ones. On 7 May 1920, Russia and Georgia signed a friendship agreement and according to this agreement Russia recognized South Ossetia as a part of Georgia (Sammut and Cvetkovski, 1996, 12-13).

When we look at the historical records for the situation, we can see that the nearest records point 1936 Constitution. According to 25<sup>th</sup> article of this constitution South Ossetia Autonomous Region is connected to Georgia Soviet Socialist Republic (Alsirt, 2009, 28).

After accepting the law about developing Georgian language in South Ossetia, the Georgian-Ossetian conflict has started in 1988. But on 26 September 1989, South Ossetia administration accepted the development program of Ossetian language and offered to be used as official language such as Georgian and Russian. But this offer was not well-accepted by Georgian administration and Georgian nationalists and nationalist movements against Ossets increased. Parallel to these nationalist movements increased in Georgia, south Ossets also founded some nationalist organizations such as South Ossetia Popular front in 1989, whose opinion was to connect North Ossetia with South Ossetia (Yapıcı, 2007, 78-79). Another important development in the relations was the open letter of The Popular Front group declaring their support for the Abkhazian campaign against opening a Georgian branch of Sukhumi University of Abkhazia. Also, a group from the Supreme Council of South Ossetia demanded that South Ossetia's status must be changed from autonomous blast to autonomous republic, but their demand was rejected by the Supreme Council of Georgia (Sammut and Cvetkovski, 1996, 13-14).

With the rising tension according to these developments, on 23 November of 1989, 40.000 Georgian military units went into the capital city of South Ossetia and killed more than 10.000 people in 2 weeks (Yapıcı, 2007, 79).

In August 1990, related with the parliamentary election in Georgia, the Supreme Council of Georgia passed an election law which was banning the parties participating in the elections whose activities are confined to specific regions. The election resulted with the victory of “Round Table-Free Georgia” coalition headed by Zviad Gamsakhurdia. South Ossetia showed its reaction to this banning as declaring Democratic Soviet Republic of South Ossetia on 20 September 1990. Adding to these developments, they made their own elections on December 1990. But reaction from Georgia was very fast. Georgian administration declared that these elections are illegal and they don’t recognize the new independence republic. Also the Georgian Supreme Council voted to abolish the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast and as a separate administrative unit with Georgian Republic according to some important reasons such as the opinion that when South and North connects, this will give damage to Georgia’s historical integration. But after the violent incidents and the deaths of three Georgian police around Tskhinvali, Georgian Parliament declared a state of emergency in the region on 12 December 1990 (Şen, 2008, 39-40).

On 19 January 1992, referendum was made in South Ossetia. According to the conclusions of this referendum, %97 of South Ossetians wanted to connect with North Ossetia and join to Russia Federation. But after a while of this referendum, the tension in the region increased again and Russian units entered into the region in

establish agreement between two sides. And with the attempts of Russia, ceasefire agreement was signed between two sides (Şen, 2008, 40). This agreement was called as Dagomys Agreement was signed on 24 June 1992 between Yeltsin and Shevardnadze. With this agreement, establishing a peacekeeping force and a commission from Russians, Georgians and South Ossetians was accepted (Çelikpala, 2012, 9).

Shevardnadze always tried to take support from other organizations such as OSCE, NATO and UN in this conflict. He wanted them to support the territorial integrity of Georgia in this conflict and support Georgia against South Ossetia and in some cases against Russia. But these attempts couldn't find concrete support from these organizations. On December 1992, the OSCE mission, which was established in the capital city of Georgia, started its works in order to find friendly and peaceful solutions to this war (Yapıcı, 2007, 79-80). OSCE has always been a balance power for Georgia against Russia (Sammut and Cvetkovski, 1996, 14).

In 1995, Georgia changed the name of South Ossetia as "Tskhinvali Region" in its constitution. Also on July 1996, Georgia and Russia signed an agreement in order to make cooperation in economic relations and try to find peaceful ways to solve the conflict. After the elections in South Ossetia and victory of Ludvig Cibirov, relations between Georgia and South Ossetia increased. They have made several meetings in 1996, 1997 and 1998. But after the last meeting in 1998, both sides had never come together until 2004 (Yapıcı, 2007, 80).

After the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia and victory of Saakashvili, the policies have changed again with the opinion of re-thinking the territorial integrity and status of autonomous republics in Georgia. In order to solve the problems, the way of increasing economic relations and bilateral dialogs was chose. Although these friendly opinions of Georgian administration, the attempts made by the government in order to create cooperative relations with NATO, made Russia to change their policies towards the conflict. After 2004, the tension in the region increased again and Russia directly declared its side through South Ossetia. The main reason for the rising tension and start of the conflict again in the region can be shown as the Georgian administrations attitude against the smuggling operations especially in “Ergneti Market” (Veliev and Aslanlı, 2011, 239).

With the operations made against this market, Georgia increased its military units in the region and Russia sent some armament to the region with a convoy and this attempt was not well-seen by Georgian government. Georgia tried to solve the problem with the support of Western organizations and countries on the other hand Russians and South Ossetians wanted to solve the problem under a common commission. The conflict started in 11-12 August and ended in 17 August with the attempts of both sides and agreement on ceasefire. Sides agreed on creating buffer zones and the control of Russian Units on these zones. But these zones will be also investigated by OSCE groups (Yapıcı, 2007, 80).

On 7 August 2008 night, Georgian military bombed South Ossetia capital city and the conflict started again not only with South Ossetia, but also with Russia. The

reason for this bomb was shown as the attempts of Russia supporting South Ossetia and the attacks of South Ossetians to Georgian cities for a long time. Russia interfered in the region with the reasons for saving the Russian population and Russian military in the buffer zone. When the war started, Abkhaz military took the support of Russia and South Ossetia and in a short time Russia won the victory and Georgian military retreated. Although Georgian units retreated from the lands of South Ossetia, Russia continued occupation until the sign of Sarkozy Plan on 16 August. With this plan, on 26 August, Russia took back its military from Georgia territories but not from South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Öztürk, 2009, 9).

After this war between Russia and Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia has declared their independence and these declarations were recognized by Russian government. Also another country which had recognized their independence was Nicaragua (Alsirt, 2009, 29-30).

A conflict in a country not only affects the sides but also the whole region. Because of this reason, Turkey gives importance to solve these kinds of conflicts by friendly ways such as agreements rather than wars. Because, any conflict directly affects the stability and peace in the region. Especially after 2000, with the change of Turkish policies towards neighbors, Turkey has given more importance to territorial integrity of the countries, independence and hegemony. Georgia is one of those countries.

In the first days of war, Turkish government and military was accused of giving support to Georgia against Russia. When the conflicts were going on, a

newspaper of Russia stated that Turkish government is giving armament to Georgian Army. On 13 August, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Russia and one day later Tblisi. The reasons of these visits were about ending this war and stating that Turkey doesn't want a conflict zone in the region. After visit to Tblisi, Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that Turkish administration is supporting Georgia's territorial integrity on the parallel with UN statements. Erdoğan also stated that presence and prosperity of Georgia is important and Turkish government is ready for any help and aid for Georgian people. Erdoğan also stated that Turkish government is supporting the memberships of region countries in the cooperation organizations. Russia also supported Erdoğan's opinion. On 21 August 2008, Turkish parliamentary gave permission for 2 USA ships crossing the bosphorus and carrying aid to Georgian's. On 27 August Turkish Foreign Affairs, made a statement that Turkish government is supporting Georgia's independence and territorial integrity. And they also added that problems must be solved with peaceful methods and agreements (Can, 2012, 26).

And also in this period Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform must be established in order to prevent these kinds of conflicts and increase mutual cooperation and negotiation. Because conflicts and wars in the region have direct affect on Turkey (Kasım, 2009, 27).

## CONCLUSION

After the Cold War era, Turkey could not create effective policies in South Caucasus until 2000s due to several reasons. The most important reason for this failure was the policies established on the opinions of the “Western World”. But potential power of Turkey solely on affecting Caucasus shouldn't be undervalued.

With EU membership process after 2000, Turkish administration has been closer with West. But also, while constructing close relations and building policies through this target, building close relations with Caucasus have also been in an important foreign policy. Especially after 2000, with the change in Turkish foreign policy, new Turkish government tried to be effective both in West and East. After 2000, it is obvious that the new government has created more realistic policies rather than emotional ones which can be clearly seen in the relations between Demirel and Elchibey. However, these pragmatic policies sometimes created crisis with regional countries such as with Azerbaijan in 2008. Because of the approachment in relations between Turkey and Armenia, Azerbaijan administration stated their sadness and tried to perform some sanctions to Turkey which were especially in energy relations. Sometimes such sanctions can be inevitable in relations between countries, but Turkish government is aware of the potential of the region and necessity of building up friendly relations due to its foreign policy. Therefore, foreign policy and relations have been more realistic rather than emotional ones.

After the collapse of Soviet Union and emerging a big space in the power balance in the region, Turkish administrations could not find how to react in foreign



policy and in the relations with these newly founded countries. But in a short time after the collapse, for about ten years, Turkish policies towards the region matured and began to give fruits. Establishing freindly relations and signing many important projects with Azerbaijan and Georgia can be good examples for these developments. For example, the projects started in the end of 20<sup>th</sup> and continued in the beginning of 21<sup>th</sup> century, which is called BTC pipeline and BTE natural gas projects are important not only for the region but also for Europe, too. These projects continue to make Turkish governments more effective in foreign policy.

Adding to close bilateral relations with regional countries, it is obvious that Turkish government AKP is more effective and more participating in regional issues in the first quarter of the new century than before. While being more effective and more participating in issues, AKP government has been paying attention in every statement about Turkey's view in regional issues due to their foreign policy principles. These are mostly about the issues which are related with the territorial integrity of countries, independence and common values. These kinds of attempts and statements can be easily seen in the relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia and about their territorial problems especially. Because of this bilateral respect and support, it is clear that relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia have really developed and this development will continue due to this respect. It is also clear that relations with Armenia have been in a positive progress due to the statements of Turkish government. But, there is a problem known as Nagorno-Karabakh which has been the most important obstacle in front of Turkish-Armenian relations. Azerbaijan government prevents Turkish government not to take any positive steps to Armenia

until this issue is solved. And Turkish government has not taken any effective step about solving this issue since 2009. This problem prevents more cooperation and regional development exactly. But with bilateral endeavours of the sides, it can be seen that problems can be solved by negotiation.

It is also important for Armenia on building close relations with Turkey in order to make trade in the region and easily transport their goods to Europe. Otherwise, the only way to make trade with other countries can be through Georgia and Russia and this will decrease the profit.

Turkish government has been giving importance to relations on borders according to “zero problems with neighbors” policy after 2000. Region with zero problems will be more beneficial not only for Turkey but also for all the countries and bring more gainings than before and today. But according to the relations of Turkey and its neighbors, this policy can not be accepted as successful. Because Turkey have many problems on borders which have not been solved yet.

According to this principle, AKP executives have always been careful in their statements about the regional events. Respect and support on territorial integrity and safety of borders have always been in the first line of foreign policy because of some reasons. PKK is one of these reasons. Although, other countries have such inner problems, PKK is more harmful than others because of their terrorist acts. Turkish government’s expressions about Abkhazia are good examples for this issue. Turkish executives have always stated that Georgia’s borders safety, including Abkhazia, is important for Turkish government. Otherwise, such a movement of PKK in Turkey

can take support from the countries which Turkish administrations don't support their territorial integrity.

The potential of region is obvious. Turkish governments have to be very careful in creating policies towards this region. Not only the region, but also Turkey needs the region in order to develop. With long-term and rationalistic projects, Turkish administrations could be in the position trying to create stability in the region which will bring more beneficial results in long term.

There are very complicated ethnic problems and unsolved border issues in the region. Also slippery ground in the region is obvious. With a small spark, there can be very important loss for many countries. Sides must be very careful in their relations, statements and approachments in regional issues. The war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 can be an important example. These kinds of conflicts and problems can create important effects such as status change and losses for the whole region.

After the foundation of new countries in the Soviet era, relations of them with Turkey have increased and especially after 2000s, it has reached the highest point with mutual efforts. With friendly policies and relations, many agreements have been signed bilaterally. In these relations, Azerbaijan has an important role between Turkey and "Turkish World". They have been a bridge between two sides. For many countries, which have been founded after the collapse of Soviet Union, Turkey's relations with regional countries have always been a model. Although these relations are in the highest point, it is not enough for regional integrity and

development. Turkish government AKP is trying to be a center country for “Turkish World” due to its new foreign policy and their efforts can be accepted in searching success. And while being interested in these issues, AKP government has always given importance in not interfering countries local affairs in Caucasasia.

Another important issue in building relations with regional countries is aware of Turkish administrations in the energy needs especially in the new century and the potential of the region about the issue. Also, these countries are in a very important jeopolitic position. Turkish government wants to use the advantage of being near to these three countries. This will not be very hard because of the sharing common historical, cultural and ethnical background. However some problems continue with Armenia because of the events in history. But these could be solved by bilateral dialogue, understanding and with the support of powerful countries. It is also important to solve this problem without damaging the relations with other regional countries. Azerbaijan and Armenia relations can be a good example for this issue. The close relation must not disturb other side especially who is accepted as “brother country”.

Turkish government policies are based on geographical, geopolitical and geostrategical importance of the region. Historical, cultural, ethnical issues and energy needs are some of them. And these policies have been shaped with regional struggles and conflicts of global and regional countries. Stability in South Caucasus has always been important for Turkey’s safety also. Although there aren’t many conflicts as before with the obvious and important efforts of Turkish administrations,

there are still some issues which haven't been solved yet. Turkish government, with new policies, tries to solve these problems diplomatically and with negotiation. Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation is one of these projects of Turkey in the region for more cooperation and preventing conflicts.

South Caucasus has always been a struggle area for many countries who have been trying to take control over this region. Using pro-active policy in regional issues and relations has been very important in being more effective from others. With adding the common historical background, Turkey is one step ahead from other ones and this advantage can bring benefits to Turkey if used effectively. We can also add the wish of the regional population. Except Armenia, Georgian and Azerbaijan people are supporting Turkey's population and government policies in the region.

Stability of the region is also an important issue for the region in order to develop close relations. Although the problems which effect whole of the region are supported by some countries such as Russia, USA and France, Turkish government has been trying to be far from these problems. If Turkish diplomats and executives do not be aware of this slippery ground, crises between countries or groups can occur easily. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's statements about the 1915 events not only took respect from other countries but also have strengthened Turkish government on international stage about Armenian issue.

In the new century, it is obvious that Turkey's foreign policy has changed sharply. And in this change, failures in the past were very effective. The new policy producers of Turkey, with using their experiences, try to build more effective Turkey

not only in the region but also in the world. Constructed on strong basis, their efforts can be accepted as successful due to Turkey's position on the international stage and in the region in the first quarter of the century.

Although opposite opinions of western Turkish partners, Turkish government has applied its Black Sea policy successfully parallel with Russian government. Because of this achievement, Russian government has not put strong obstacles in front of Turkish government in developing close relations with regional countries. And also, Turkish government has applied its policy through the region without any sunni-centric approach. We cannot see this approach in the Middle East policies, such as in Syria and Iraq. For this Turkish government cannot be accepted as successful in the Middle East.

Although achievements of Turkish government, we cannot talk about the same success in solving problems with Armenia. Because of taking steps without having any reconciliation with the regional countries and Russia, Turkish government couldn't solve this problem. This fault caused Turkey to lose its initiative in solving Turkish-Armenian problems. Unsolved Nagorno-Karabakh problem between Azerbaijan and Armenia took place in the center of Turkish-Armenian relations. Therefore, the future of Turkish-Armenian relation depends on the solution of this conflict.

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