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A strip of land situated between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas, the post-Soviet Caucasus embarked on a painful identity quest at the turn of the third millennium. This – still ongoing – quest involves several daunting choices: between Moscow, Washington and Brussels, between oil and democratic values, and between feudal realities and revolutionary ideals. Throughout the last decade, the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute has been conducting in-depth research of the conflicting and often subtle trends in the regions' politics. This volume contains a selection of research papers published by the Caucasus Institute since 2001 in Armenian, Russian and English, which best represent the challenges faced by this varied region at this crucial stage of development.

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NOT A SINGLE STEP AHEAD: TURKEY AND THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN 2009¹

By Mitat Çelikpala²

INTRODUCTION

The consequences of the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008 have affected not only the Caucasus, but almost the entire global equilibrium deeply. The chain of events initiated by this war directly affected Turkey as well: as a regional power, Turkey has recently been pursuing an active and assertive foreign policy throughout the geographies that it belongs to. Responses to the attempted adoption of a “new” perspective generated discussions about the policies of Turkey, a country that struggles to assure stability and produce solutions for problems as a regional actor. In this sense, the South Caucasus has been an attractive model in order to monitor the newly developing foreign policy course of Turkey through a set of political narratives such as “zero problem with neighbors,” a “problem solving country,” “rhythmic diplomacy,” and the effectiveness of it as well. The policies Turkey pursues with respect to the developments in Caucasus would make it possible to understand not only the course of Turkish foreign policy, but also the goals and policy-making process in general. This kind of analysis would be enlightening to evaluate Turkey’s effectiveness as a regional power.

This paper aims at a comprehensive evaluation of Turkey’s foreign policy in the South Caucasus in 2009. An assessment related to the responses given and the steps taken by Turkey with respect to the emergent events would facilitate the comprehension of Turkish foreign policy parameters in general. Throughout the paper, Turkey’s foreign policy in the South Caucasus will be discussed under topics such as Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform, which was proposed by Turkey with an attempt to restore the regional order and stability, the Armenian Opening, Turkey-Azerbaijan relations, commercial and economic ties, and energy cooperation.

1 This paper was published by CI as: Çelikpala, Mitat. “Turtsiya i Yuzhnyi Kavkaz v 2009 g.” *Kavkaz – 2009. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* (“Turkey and the South Caucasus in 2009.” *Caucasus 2009. CI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 2011 (in Russian). – Pp.172-190.

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August 2008 and Turkey: Regional Solutions for Regional Issues

At midnight on August 7-8, 2008 Georgian troops entered South Ossetia to “restore the constitutional order” in Georgia. As Russian troops crossed through the Roki Tunnel and simultaneously entered South Ossetia to prevent an alleged “genocide,” the tension between the two countries turned into a war. Since Georgian troops had been obliged to retreat at the face of Russian military power, the war rapidly spread to Georgian territories. When Russian troops invaded Georgian cities such as Zugdidi and Gori, and reached 40 kilometers outside of Tbilisi, the situation had turned into an international crisis.³ Armed conflicts that brought two parties towards the edge of a total war came to an end by a ceasefire agreement mediated by France, which held the presidency of the EU.⁴

The primary expectation of the international community was the adherence to the agreement and Russia’s *withdrawal* to positions held *before the conflict* began. Conflicts were expected not to be repeated, and an acceptable solution for regional problems was sought to be agreed upon with the attendance of the international community. However, Russia stated that the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia could not be a matter of negotiation/bargain, and emphasized that the territorial integrity of Georgia was out of the question. Therefore, Russia officially recognized both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Due to this decision, the Caucasus turned into a complicated international issue. Following this decision, not only the political map of Caucasus changed, but also the territorial integrity of Georgia became a highly controversial issue. Moreover, because of rigid policies that the parties could adopt regarding other disagreements like Nagorno-Karabakh, tension and insecurity in the region increased even more.

In line with these developments, questions like “Is Russia going to be a global pole again” or “Is there any possibility of a new cold war” occupied the international agenda during the second half of 2008. While EU countries handled their energy-centered relations with Russia even more carefully, the United States (US) signaled that it was going to reshape its Europe-Atlantic security perception in which Russia

3 Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, September, 2009. <http://www.ceiig.ch/Report.html>; *Civilians in the Line of Fire: The Georgia-Russia Conflict*. London: Amnesty International, 2008.

4 For the letter of agreement see “15-16 August Ceasefire Agreement and Side-Letter”, Appendix B, ICG. *Russia vs Georgia: The Fallout*. Europe Report No 195, August 22, 2008, pp. 32-35. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5636&CFID=19608001&CFTOKEN=59208996>

will be placed at the center. Redefining relations with Russia had been the main discussion of this period.

The short-term impacts of these developments in the South Caucasus are dramatic. Not only the infrastructure of Georgia, which was established with great efforts in recent years, was destroyed; but also the reputation and self-confidence of the reconstituted military had substantial damages and national moral was ruined. In addition to a set of military establishments, including Vaziani and Marneuli which were modernized with Turkey's support, the commercially important Poti port was also heavily damaged. As a result of the bombardments of bridges and communication facilities, most of the highways and railways became unusable and serious difficulties were encountered through energy transmission lines. In terms of economy, this situation directly affected not only Georgia, but also neighboring countries and regions, Turkey in the first place. Due to this situation, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline become unusable and the gas flow of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) natural gas pipeline was disrupted for security reasons. In addition, commercial ties with Armenia were blocked, and a substantial portion of Azerbaijani national income was lost.

Turkey, due to its regional position, its relationship with Russia and its historical alliance/partnership with the Western World and its institutions, was directly affected by these developments.⁵ In the first stage, Turkey's economy and commercial ties were damaged. Following this, the new strategic condition started to be debated along with its political impacts. Turkey's attempts to develop relations with Azerbaijan and her presence in Central Asia were paralyzed, and a set of serious infrastructure investments were required to reach the pre-war position. In this framework, cooperation with Russia, territorial integrity of Georgia, attitudes toward Abkhazia, relations with Azerbaijan, trajectory of Nagorno-Karabakh issue, and Turkish-Armenian relations were brought up in the agenda as topics needing to be readdressed. Besides, it has been observed that the rupture of Georgian-Russian relations and the uncompromising situation that two parties came up with after the war had the potential to destroy Turkey's Black Sea-centred policies, regional security initiatives like BLACKSEAFOR and Operation Black Sea Harmony, and economic and

5 Çelikpala, Mitat. "Kafkasya'daki Son Gelişmeler: Küresel Hakimiyet Mücadelesi ve Türkiye." *Stratejik Analiz*, No.101, ASAM, Ankara, September 2008; Karasar, Hasan Ali. *Saakashvili Pulled the Trigger: Turkey between Russia and Georgia*. SETA Policy Brief, No.20, Ankara, 2008; Torbakov, Igor. *The Georgia Crisis and Russia-Turkey Relations*. – Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, November 2008; Winrow, Gareth. *Turkey, Russia and the Caucasus: Common and Diverging Interests*. – Chatham House Briefing Paper, November 2009.

politic projects such as BTC/BTE pipelines and BTK railway line. Furthermore, in the context of global rivalry and transportation of Western aid to Georgia, even the Montreux Convention itself and the conditions it demands for the Straits and the Black Sea have become contentious. Due to these developments, Turkey has been taking important steps which deeply influenced her Caucasian policy that was established approximately in the last fifteen years.

Caucasus Security and Cooperation Platform

Turkey's first reaction to the atmosphere of uncertainty and chaos generated by war had been the proposal for the formation of the Caucasus Security and Cooperation Platform (CSCP), which aimed at ending the war promptly and finding solutions to the issues on the regional level.⁶

The proposal was brought into agenda when Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that Turkey might attempt to constitute a "Caucasian Alliance." The proposal came to light when Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on August 11 that Ankara may launch an initiative for the formation of a "Caucasus Alliance," following the Balkan model, adding that the Russian Federation should be part of it.⁷ When Abdullah Gül announced support for this project, the process gained acceleration. The CSCP proposal became official during Prime Minister Erdoğan's Moscow and Tbilisi visits on August 13-14.⁸ The first preliminary meeting, in which the organizational and operational structure of CSCP was addressed, was held in Helsinki on December 4-5, 2008, and the second, in Istanbul on January 26, 2009.⁹

6 About Platform see: Fotiou, Eleni. *Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform": What is at Stake for Regional Cooperation*. ICBSS Policy Brief, No.16, June, 2009; Gültekin Punsmann, Burcu. *The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform: An Attempt to Foster Regional Accountability*. ICBSS Policy Brief, No.13, April, 2009.

7 The CSCP can be qualified as an updated version of the Caucasus Stability Pact (CSP) which was brought onto the agenda by President Süleyman Demirel in January 2000 as a response to the outbreak of the Second Chechen War and the risks of it. Although the CSP, which was proposed to be formalized under the auspices of OSCE, was supported by the leaders of Caucasus republics, a successful outcome has not been obtained. See Celac, Sergiu, Michael Emerson and Nathalie Tocci. *A Stability Pact for Caucasus*. CEPS Working Document 145, Brussels, CEPS, 2000. For the Prime Minister's statement, see "Prime Minister: We can form a Caucasian alliance," *Hürriyet*, August 11, 2008. <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=9634950&tarih=2008-08-11>.

8 "Erdoğan'ın 'İstikrar Platformu' Önerisine Saakaşvili'den Destek," *Referans*, August 15, 2008, p. 15.

9 The first preliminary meeting for the platform was held during the OSCE Council of Ministers in Helsinki. Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russian Federation attended to the CSCP meeting with Deputy Ministers (Deputy Undersecretary), on the other hand, Armenia and Georgia attended with Deputy Directors. See "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform's first meeting will be held in Helsinki."

The fundamental purpose of the CSCP is to contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in the region through dialogue. In this context, it aims to remove the tension with war-like tendencies among these countries by means of a settlement that puts economic and commercial relations at the center. It had been thought that this initiative might serve as a cooperation platform which would bring South Caucasus countries and Russia together within the framework of OSCE principles and give priority to the establishment of security, stability and prosperity in the region. The platform was not intended to become an alternative to any institution, mechanism or any international organization that deals with the problems of the Caucasus; but rather, it was perceived as an additional platform to facilitate the communication between the countries of the region.¹⁰ The main areas of concern for this pact are determined as restructuring of the Caucasian economies, ensuring development and cooperation, boosting economic cooperation with the world, fostering free trade, supporting the private sector, ensuring environmental protection, putting to use the existing and future energy and transportation lines extending from the east to the west, regulating the administrative structure, ensuring administrative transparency, tackling refugee issues and ensuring their integration.

Although the CSCP proposal was officially delivered to all of these countries, no institutionalization was achieved until the spring of 2010. It seems that the biggest problem haunting the search for cooperation in the Caucasus is the lack of sufficient social, political or economic institutions. Plus, an atmosphere of distrust still prevails among Caucasus countries.

During the meetings held through the Turkish initiative, the parties declared their commitment to common efforts and cooperation for solving the disagreements in the region; however, the negative atmosphere created by bilateral problems prevented the formation of the CSCP. The idea for the formation of a regional platform had come up due to the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of extra-regional solution suggestions; however, countries like Georgia stood aloof from the proposal due to the importance they attached to the role of non-regional political actors such as the US and the EU. On the other hand, the suggestion to institutionalize the CSCP according to the principles of the OSCE meant the exclusion of regional ac-

Haberler, November 30, 2008, <http://www.haberler.com/kafkasya-istikrar-ve-isbirligi-platformunun-ilk-haberi/>. The second preliminary meeting was held in Istanbul with the attendance of Foreign Affairs Ministers/Deputy Undersecretaries. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ocak2009.tr.mfa>

¹⁰ For the assessment of Ali Babacan, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time, see, Babacan, Ali. "Calming the Caucasus." *International Herald Tribune*, September 23, 2008.

tors such as Iran from the process and put parties like Abkhazia and South Ossetia into an ambiguous position.

Moreover, Turkey's CSCP proposal caused suspicion, even a reaction, among Western allies, most obviously in the case of the US. The reason for this reaction rested in the suspicion that Turkey might be taking steps independent of its allies, while the allies in the West were trying to build a common stance against the Russian Federation within the framework of the EU and NATO.¹¹ It should be noted that the suspicious outlook at the initial stages of the proposal was fundamentally caused by the exclusion possibilities due to the stress on regionality and the unease generated by the fact that the first negotiations were carried out with Moscow.¹²

In addition to the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan and Armenia also supported the CSCP proposal. During Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's official visit to Turkey on September 2, 2008, the subject of the CSCP proposal was also addressed along with matters of bilateral cooperation. At the joint press conference with Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, Lavrov stated that the CSCP was an embodiment of common sense since it dwelled on prompting the countries of the region to solve their own problems, and defined it as a settlement that would increase regional stability and decrease any potential for conflict.¹³ The "exclusion" of non-regional actors, primarily the US, was at the basis of Russia's quick and positive response. Against the backdrop of positively developing relations between Russia and Turkey,

11 Baran, Zeyno. "Will Turkey Abandon NATO?" *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2008, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121997087258381935.html>; Laçiner, Sedat. "Is Turkey Getting Away from the US in Caucasus?" *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, August 31, 2008. <http://www.turkishweekly.net/comments.php?id=2973>

12 In this context, Turkey, while shaping initiatives in the region and establishing policies, has to consider its relations with Russia and Russia's perceptions of interest as well. Several incidents show Turkey is aware of this situation. For example, Prime Minister Erdoğan made his first visit for platform to Moscow; Russia was asked for mediation in order to include Armenia in to the process; the Commander of the Turkish Naval Forces held consultations with his Russian counterpart.

13 "Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference with Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan." September 2, 2008, İstanbul, http://www.turkey.mid.ru/hron/hron_e_19.html. Similar assessments can be seen in all of the visits/meetings that Turkish-Russian high-level officers attended, and in the texts of the agreements as well. For example, see: Joint Declaration between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Progress towards a New Stage in Relations and Further Deepening of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership. Moscow, 13 February 2009, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-declaration-between-the-republic-of-turkey-and-the-russian-federation-on-progress-towards-a-new-stage-in-relations-and-further-deepening-of-friendship-and-multidimensional-partnership_-moscow_-13-february-2009.en.mfa

the CSCP was perceived in the Caucasus as a settlement that would ensure the influential position of Russia in the region.

The Azerbaijani perspective on the CSCP was that in this format, the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue could be discussed by taking Azerbaijan's arguments into consideration. In addition to the prospect of discussing and solving the issue on a regional platform including Turkey, the forging of a mechanism that would prevent the spread of conflict into the broader Caucasus region was regarded as reasonable. Armenia, meanwhile, showed a tendency to consider the CSCP a mechanism that would satisfy its own expectations. The primary expectations of Armenia concerned the opening of the Turkey-Armenia border, the possibility to negotiate with Turkey on new grounds, the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in a satisfactory manner for Armenia, and using the CSCP as a supporting/complementary platform for the OSCE Minsk Group. Furthermore, there was the expectation that the CSCP would be a new and efficient mechanism in overcoming the economic and commercial damage caused by the Georgian war.¹⁴ When it comes to Georgia, it could be argued that it was inclined to see the CSCP as a settlement format that would prevent aggressive Russian attitudes and, especially, help in the process of Georgia's EU accession. However, Georgia had its reservations with regard to the CSCP to the extent that it could potentially exclude the EU and hence fail to meet Georgia's expectations in that respect. Even though Saakashvili declared his support for the CSCP during Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Tbilisi on August 14, Georgia's overall tendency is not to take place in any common platform with Russia as long as it has not proven its trustworthiness.¹⁵

In the end, the CSCP is still on the table as a proposal that has not been openly rejected by any of the parties in the Caucasus but proves that institutionalization is dependent on the solution of the region's problems and that regional competition is the biggest obstacle to cooperation and stability. The CSCP, which has been a regional settlement idea with the claim to solve the region's problems, has become the victim of those very same problems. The parties are continuing to pursue sort of a "wait and see" policy.

14 "Armenian Prime Minister: The Really 'Vitaly Important Issue' is the Establishment of Good Neighbor Relations with All the Countries of the Region, Primarily, Azerbaijan," October 7, 2008, <http://www.today.az/print/news/politics/48009.html>.

15 "Erdoğan'ın 'İstikrar Platformu' Önerisine Saakaşvili'den Destek," *Referans*, August 15, 2008, p. 15; "Rusya Varsa Biz Yokuz," *Hürriyet*, September 1, 2008; "Saakashvili on Turkish-proposed Caucasus Stability Platform," *Civil.ge Daily News Online*, 22 Mart 2009, http://www.civil.ge/eng/_print.php?id=20593.

Armenian Opening

The most significant change that August 2008 has brought to the Turkish Caucasus policy and general foreign policy as well, is the initiation of the process which is called the "Armenian Opening." The interaction between Turkey and Armenia, which has been maintained either openly or covertly since the beginnings of the 1990s, has become increasingly apparent. A series of meetings between Turkey and Armenia became concrete with two protocols signed in October 10, 2009, and reached a critical threshold. However, the beginning of the meetings actually goes back to the Armenian presidential election which was held on February 19, 2008. Following the eventful elections which gave the presidency to Serzh Sargsyan, Yerevan's positive responses to high-level felicitations on the part of Turkey brought the two parties to the negotiation process.¹⁶ Turkish President Abdullah Gül's positive response to Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's invitation in order to attend an Armenia-Turkey qualifying match of the 2010 World Cup in Yerevan has started the process which is called "Football Diplomacy."¹⁷ The military operation that Russia mounted against Georgia at the beginning of August accelerated the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement. In this respect, one must draw attention to Turkey's proposal for the CSCP which would also comprise Armenia and its efforts.¹⁸ As a result, Gül's Yerevan visit, which he made on the occasion of the football game on September 6,

16 In their felicitation messages to Sargsyan, President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that solving the problems between Armenia and Turkey in the framework of good neighborhood and through dialogue is the responsibility for both sides. President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized that they expect, during Sargsyan's administration, that relations between two countries will enter a new phase which will "contribute to the peace, stability and welfare in the region." President Gül, in his message, said "I hope that election of Sargsyan will give the opportunity to create the environment for normalizing the relationship between Turkish and Armenian societies, who had already proved that they can live together with peace and harmony for centuries." Moreover, he emphasized that he expects the joint efforts of the two countries will create an atmosphere based on mutual trust and cooperation which contribute to the peace and welfare in the region. In his responses, Sargsyan said he believed "the direct bilateral meetings will contribute to the solution of all problems that the two countries are related." See, "Sarkisyan'a Kutlama." *Milliyet*, April 28, 2008; "Gül'den Sarkisyan'a Kutlama." *Yeni Şafak*, February 21, 2008.

17 For "Sargsyan's assessment in which the invitation that has initiated the process of "a new start" between Turkey and Armenia has also been mentioned, see: Sargsyan, Serzh. "We Are Ready to Talk to Turkey." *The Wall Street Journal Online*, July 9, 2008, http://www.wsj.com/public/article_printSB121555668872637291.html

18 For example, Turkey allowed the planes flying along the Armenian flight course to pass through its national air space, since transit between Armenia and Georgia were blocked because of the war. "Ankara ve Erivan Karşılıklı Kafkas Krizi Jestinde." *Radikal*, August 9, 2008. – P. 9.

2008, has created a fresh and hopeful political atmosphere that is closely followed by the entire world.¹⁹

Following their bilateral discussion, Sargsyan and Gül declared that they had manifested mutual will in order to establish a political environment through which the issues between Turkey and Armenia would be solved. Gül stated that his visit meant the collapse of psychological walls between the two countries.²⁰ In addition to Gül's "I hope that this visit will create the possibility to improve bilateral relations" statement, Sargsyan's declaration that the two countries showed common political will to solve the issues between them was regarded as a good start. Moreover, Sargsyan's statement on Armenia's support to the CSCP gave Turkey hope that the relations would develop in the general context of the Caucasus dimension. In short, this visit is evaluated as the de-freezing of the ice between two countries.²¹ It has been observed that both parties assess this visit as a "good start" for a fast normalization, and the developments about this issue have created a positive atmosphere in terms of international public opinion.²²

It has to be emphasized that Turkey's concerns about this opening process not only include restoring relations with Armenia and reopening the borders, but also comprise contributing to the solution of other issues as well, with Nagorno-Karabakh in the first place, and thereby restoring order and stability in the Caucasus. In the wake of these developments, Gül's Baku visit that sought to accelerate the process and reach a consensus with Azerbaijan signalled Turkey's efforts to develop this new opening process without damaging the delicate balance in the South Caucasus.²³ Since Baku did not openly criticize Turkey's approach, it was regarded as

19 Gül's visit got a positive reaction in the Armenian and Turkish public, though certain opposition groups criticized it. The general atmosphere of the trip was encouraging. Turkish media also took a positive attitude and encouraged the trip. Moreover, Azerbaijan did not take a very negative stand either. This situation enhanced the hopes for the resolution of problems.

20 "Psikolojik Duvarlar Yıkıldı, Umutluyum." *Taraf Gazetesi*, September 8, 2008.

21 "Bir Maç Çok Umut Verdi." *Milliyet*, September 7, 2008. – P.23; Cemal, Hasan. "Gül ve Sarkisyan: İyi Bir Başlangıç Yaptık." *Milliyet*, September 7, 2008. – P.23; Çandar, Cengiz. "Gül'ün Ardından Erivan: Yolun Yarısı Geçildi." *Hürriyet*, September 8, 2008.

22 Gül's visit was addressed in the non-official meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers which was carried out on the same days in Avignon, France. The EU Term President and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner indicated that this visit should be considered "beyond watching a football match." "EU is glad about the visit." *Milliyet*, September 7, 2008. – P.23.

23 President Gül, during his visit to Baku, informed Azerbaijan President İlham Aliyev about his Yerevan trip and shared his observations. Gül indicated that during the visit he mostly highlighted the issues related with the Caucasus, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. He said that Sargsyan also recognized that the issues with Azerbaijan should be solved. In this context, the most important

a kind of an approval. Gül, in Baku, indicated that instability of Caucasus could be considered as a “wall” and threatened everybody’s peace and security. He assessed that “if security, peace and stability is provided in the Caucasus, this place will be a highway that bring us to Central Asia, to China.”²⁴ This assessment clearly indicates that Turkey perceives the Armenian opening as a concrete implementation of Turkey’s “zero problems with neighbours” policy. Besides, it is also an evidence of Turkey’s attempts to establish a policy in economic and commercial areas that are related to common interests. Almost in the same period, on November 2, 2008, near Moscow, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a five-point joint declaration aimed at resolving their dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. This declaration made Turkey think that the parties were making progress towards a solution, and that the talks between Turkey and Armenia would support this process.²⁵ Since the developments provoked political discussions in Turkey about the 1915 events and Turkish-Armenian relations, the issue became a topic of domestic politics as much as foreign policy.²⁶

message Gül gave to Aliyev was that Armenia was willing to withdraw from the occupied territories. He noted, “that’s what I have seen in my meeting with Sargsyan.” Gül also stated that Armenia should withdraw from the territories of Azerbaijan and said that “refugees will return to their country, of course. The occupation will end.” He repeated that the Yerevan trip did not change Turkey’s political stand in respect to the situation in the Caucasus; on the contrary, he stressed that Turkey evaluated the solutions of the regional problems in the framework of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity.

24 President Gül stated that he was very satisfied by Aliyev’s attitude and did not meet with any remonstrations. He expressed that, similar to Armenian President Sargsyan, Azerbaijan President also has a considerate optimism against his opponent. Gül said that “the disturbance of the stability in Caucasus should be pacified immediately, otherwise, the integrity of Caucasus will be challenged” and stated that, fortunately, both Armenia and Azerbaijan adopt confident attitudes in regard to the solutions of the problems.

25 For the letter of agreement see, “Declaration between the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation”

<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/11/208708.shtml>; “Armenia, Azerbaijan Sign Joint Declaration Over Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 2, 2008. http://www.rferl.org/content/Kremlin_Hosts_Peace_Talks_Over_NagornoKarabakh/1337420.html; Fuller, Liz. “Moscow Declaration’ A Victory for Armenia.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 3, 2008.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Moscow_Declaration_A_Victory_For_Armenia/1337592.html.

26 The most apparent and intense debate of this period was generated in the framework of “Armenian Apology Campaign.” On the one hand, more than 200 signatories, including academicians, journalists, authors, and ambassadors, have initiated a petition campaign named “Armenian Apology Campaign.” On the other hand, a group of reactionists, including approximately 50 retired ambassadors, harshly criticized this campaign: “Büyükelçiler isyan etti.” *Hürriyet*, December 16, 2008. In spite of the harsh criticisms of the opposition groups, certain positive developments have also been experienced. For example; a growing number of Armenian tourists come to Turkey; Turkey

Following these visits and the CSCP summit held in Helsinki in December, high-level talks between Turkey and Armenia became frequent.²⁷ During the talks, which were mediated by Switzerland, the grounds of Turkish-Armenian normalization were reviewed and the course of this process was addressed. The comment “normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations are not a dream anymore” was made by national and international newsmakers at every stage of this process, instilling the public on both sides with hope, although sparking debate as well. Turkey, taking Azerbaijan’s reservations into consideration, informed Baku about all meetings and tried to include Azerbaijan into the process through bringing the meetings onto a trilateral level in certain ways. This situation is a sign of Turkey’s awareness about the delicacy that the developments would spawn in the Caucasus. Ankara anticipated that the normalization between Turkey and Armenia would contribute to the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh issue and Armenia’s withdrawal from occupied territories. It should be noted that these developments correspond with the assessments of Davutoğlu which he made about Nagorno-Karabakh and the policies that Turkey is required to adopt in his book *Stratejik Derinlik (Strategic Depth)*. Yet another cause of foreign policy concerns for Turkey is the lobbying activity of the Armenian diaspora aimed at urging parliaments to adopt documents in which the 1915 events are described as “genocide.” The course and density of the lobbying traffic show parallelism with April 24, namely a targeted date of these activities.²⁸ What makes 2009 different from the previous years is the attitude of Barack H. Obama, who assumed the presidency in the US. Obama’s political stance, which stands close to Armenian arguments, contains elements that urge Turkey to pursue active policies about rapprochement with Armenia.

In addition to President Obama’s speech that he gave at the Grand National Assembly during his official visit to Turkey, his first transoceanic visit on April 5-6,

condoned illegal Armenian labor force in Turkey; even though indirect, the trade volume between Armenia and Turkey has increased; interactions in cultural-academic fields have become frequent.

27 For example; then-Foreign Minister Ali Babacan held a meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia on September 26; Babacan and Nalbandian came together on the occasion of BSEC summit held in Istanbul on November 24; a meeting was held in Helsinki on December 4; in addition to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Erdoğan conducted a meeting with Sargsyan in Davos at the end of January; a meeting was held in Munich on the occasion of International Security Conference in February; Babacan visited Yerevan on April 16 to attend BSEC summit.

28 Up until now, “Genocide bills” have been approved by the parliaments of 21 countries: Argentina, Armenia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Greek Cypriot administration of Southern Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, Vatican and Venezuela. In the USA, the genocide bill has been brought on the agenda several times.

2009, his various statements at press conferences have aroused some suspicion in Turkish public opinion about the president's April 24 statement.²⁹ In this period, it was argued that Turkey was going to open the Armenian border as a gesture during Obama's visit. However, Prime Minister Erdoğan decisively stated that it is impossible to open the border unless some steps are taken toward the resolution of the Karabakh issue and Armenia withdraws from occupied Azerbaijani territories. Since then, Turkey's political stance, clearly expressed in Erdoğan's statement, has not changed. During the period between Obama's April 6 visit until April 24, a strained atmosphere prevailed, both because of the uncertainty of the language that President Obama was going to use in his April 24 statement and the ambiguities surrounding the Turkey-Armenia initiative. This atmosphere entered a new dimension on April 22, when the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Turkey and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs issued a joint statement announcing that a road map of normalizing relations has been identified. The statements announced that:

“Turkey and Armenia, together with Switzerland as mediator, have been working intensively with a view to normalizing their bilateral relations and developing them in a spirit of good-neighborliness, and mutual respect, and thus to promoting peace, security and stability in the whole region.

The two parties have achieved tangible progress and mutual understanding in this process and they have agreed on a comprehensive framework for the normalization of their bilateral relations in a mutually satisfactory manner. In this context, a road-map has been identified.

This agreed basis provides a positive prospect for the on-going process.”³⁰

Although the details of the “Road Map” were not clarified in the announcement, it has been thought that the map involved the steps towards resolution of the Turkey-Armenia and Azerbaijan-Armenia issues. The announcement was released at midnight, its timing directly related to the approaching April 24. As a result, in his annual commemoration statement, President Obama avoided using the word “genocide” and pronounced the Armenian “Meds Yeghern” word which means

29 “Remarks by President Obama to the Turkish Parliament.” April 6, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Obama-To-The-Turkish-Parliament/

30 “Joint Statement of The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Turkey, The Republic of Armenia and The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.” No: 56, April 22, 2009. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-56_-22-april-2009_-press-release-regarding-the-turkish-armenian-relations.en.mfa

“The Great Calamity.” Obama’s words did not satisfy the Armenian diaspora and provoked various thoughts and discussions in Turkey.³¹

Observations indicate that Azerbaijan feels as uncomfortable about the developments as the Armenian diaspora does. The likelihood of an obligation that may arise from the “Road Map,” which compels Turkey to open the border before a solution is provided about Nagorno-Karabakh issue, provoked a reaction in Azerbaijan. President Gül, in order to reassure and calm Azerbaijan, telephoned Ilham Aliyev and emphasized the “significance of traditional sympathy, solidarity and cooperation between two countries.” He reaffirmed that this development would contribute to the stability and welfare of the region. In spite of this clarification, relations became strained and the debates got tougher. In order to settle the reactions, Prime Minister Erdoğan paid an official visit to Azerbaijan on May 13. Following the private meeting with Aliyev, Erdoğan, in the speech he delivered in the Azerbaijani parliament, said that Turkey’s policies on Nagorno-Karabakh issue had not changed and strongly emphasized the “exact continuity” of the “one nation, two states” approach. He stressed that the opening of the Armenian border depended on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and said “unless the occupation ends, opening the borders will be unlikely.”³² Since the most emphasized phenomenon had been solidarity and fraternity, and Erdoğan tied the border’s opening to the consequence of Aliyev-Sargsyan meetings, some suspicions came up about the applicability and sincerity of the “Road Map” discourse. Although Azerbaijan proclaimed that it was satisfied and “no suspicion remained among the Azerbaijani public,” the course of events proved that the “issue” had not been clarified.³³ From the announcement of the “Road Map” until the signing of the protocols, Turkey constantly highlighted that “Azerbaijan should trust Turkey.” However, evidence shows that Azerbaijan was

31 “Statement of President Barack Obama on Armenian Remembrance Day.” 24 Nisan 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-of-President-Barack-Obama-on-Armenian-Remembrance-Day; Kınıklıoğlu, Suat. “Meds Yeghern.” *Zaman*, April 27, 2008; Dişli, Fatma. “Obama and Meds Yeghern.” *Zaman*, April 27, 2008; Ekşi, Oktay. “Laf Cambazı”, *Hürriyet*, April 25, 2009; Çandar, Cengiz. “Büyük Felakette Buluşma: Obama, 30 Bin, Hrant...” *Hürriyet*, April 25, 2009.

32 “Başbakan Erdoğan Bakü’de.” *Sabah*, May 13, 2009; “Prime Minister Erdoğan Puts Baku’s Armenia Concerns Rest”, *Today’s Zaman*, May 14, 2009.

33 Erdoğan, in the speech he delivered at the Parliament, said “Recently, our fraternity is being attacked by certain lies; Turkey would never turn its back to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.” He emphasized that Turkey’s recent silence about the Armenian opening is caused by the nature of diplomacy and indicated that Azerbaijan should trust Turkey. Karan, Ceyda. “Aliyev Şüphem Kalmadı, İçim Rahat.” *Radikal*, May 14, 2009, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalYazarYazisi&ArticleID=935831&Yazar=CEYDA KARAN&Date=14.05.2009&CategoryID=100>

not really satisfied in one way or another. During this time, issues that were not expressed loudly in previous periods began to be raised: they centred around subjects like the Azerbaijani bind on Turkey's Caucasus policy, the existence of both countries' own interests and the pricing of natural gas. This situation indicates that the two parties shifted their grounds in their mutual relationship.

Yet another consequence of the parties' agreement on a road map is the impact seen in Armenia. Apart from the strong reaction of the diaspora, the agreement also upset the balance of Armenia's domestic affairs and brought about a large-scale policy discussion. The strongest reaction in domestic politics has been the withdrawal of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's (ARF) from the government coalition on April 27.

The ambiguous content of the "road map" was clarified by two protocols which were announced on August 31. The foreign ministries of Turkey, Armenia and Switzerland simultaneously declared that the two parties have initialized two separate protocols.³⁴ The declarations stated that the parties initialized the protocols as part of endeavours pursued under the mediation of Switzerland. The parties announced that they have agreed on initiating domestic political consultations with respect to the "Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations" and the "Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations." The announcement concluded with a sentence which emphasized that the normalization of bilateral relations would contribute to the peace and stability in the region, and Turkey and Armenia, with the assistance of Switzerland, were determined to pursue their joint efforts.

The protocols detail the definition of normalization between the two countries and explain the time schedule of the steps that need to be taken. The announcement indicated that the protocols proposed a general framework in order to achieve normalization within a reasonable time frame and specified that political consultations would be completed in six weeks. Following this process, the protocols would be submitted to the parliaments of the two countries for ratification. Besides, the announcement stated that the parties were expected to venture to complete the ratification process promptly and adequately in their legal and constitutional procedure. In addition to that, protocols also revealed the calendar that the two countries would have to follow after the ratification by the parliaments.³⁵

34 Press Release of The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Turkey, The Republic of Armenia and The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. No: 153, August 31, 2009. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-153-turkiye-cumhuriyeti-ve-ermenistan-cumhuriyeti-disisleri-bakanliklari-ile.en.mfa (Accessed on September 1, 2009)

35 See, "Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the Republic of Armenia

The “Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations” reconfirmed the parties’ commitment, in their bilateral and international relations, to ensure respect for the principles of equality, sovereignty, non-intervention in internal affairs of the other states, territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers. The Protocol also indicated that the parties confirmed the mutual recognition of the existing border between the two countries as defined by the relevant treaties of international law. According to Turkey, this article meant that Armenia officially recognized the border between two countries. In the “Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations” the common borders were projected to be opened within two months after the entry of this protocol into force. The protocol also projected to prepare the working modalities of the intergovernmental commission and its sub-commissions, a working group headed by the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs to be created two months after the day following the entry of this protocol into force. According to the timetable, the intergovernmental commission and its sub-commissions were planned to organize their first meeting immediately after the adoption of the working modalities. In addition, the protocol also projected to operate sub-commissions regarding political consultation, transport, communications, energy infrastructure and networks, legal matters, science and education, trade, tourism, and economic cooperation, historical dimension, and environmental issues.

Among these commissions, the sub-commission on international history was the most striking one. The parties stated that this commission was intended to implement a dialogue on the historical dimension with the aim to restore mutual trust between the two nations, including an impartial and scientific examination of the historical records and archives to define existing problems and formulate recommendations. It has been emphasized that representatives from Turkey, Armenia and Switzerland, together with other international experts, would take part in the dialogue. The Turkish side perceived this dialogue as a mechanism which would prevent the 1915 events from being regarded as a political issue and enable them to be assessed by historians; on the other hand, the Armenian side emphasized that the commission would not research the nature of the 1915 events but would rather explore the traces of Armenian presence in Anatolia. The course of events and the signing process clearly showed how differently the parties evaluated the protocols.

Since Nagorno-Karabakh was not mentioned in the protocols, the discontent between Azerbaijan and Turkey, which was said to be settled in May, revived without delay. The announcement of the protocols caused great dissatisfaction among

and the Republic Of Turkey” and “Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations Between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey.”

the Azerbaijani public. The Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan announced that the opening of the border before Armenia ends occupation was not compatible with the interests of Baku.³⁶ Although Foreign Minister Davutoğlu said that the Azerbaijani government had been informed in every respect and Baku should trust Turkey's steps, Aliyev refused to attend the UN Alliance of Civilizations summit which was held in Istanbul on September 6-7. Aliyev's attitude was appraised as a reaction to the process.³⁷

The protocols were signed by the Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Armenia in Zurich, Switzerland on October 10, although great debates prevailed in both countries and Armenian diaspora with Azerbaijan's strong reaction.³⁸ Since the Treaty of Kars, these protocols have been the first documents that the two countries bilaterally signed. However, it could not be said that the signatures were appended smoothly. Certain statements in the texts of speeches that the parties planned to deliver after the ceremony induced a crisis, resolved with the mediation of the foreign ministers of the US and Switzerland.³⁹ The ensuing process has not been as swift and smooth as it was expected either.

After both parties started the ratification process in conformity with their own legal and constitutional procedures, the protocols were brought before the Grand National Assembly of Turkey by the Prime Ministry on October 21. The Turkish government believed that these protocols were documents which would shape history and strengthen the Treaty of Lausanne.⁴⁰ According to Turkey, the protocols

36 "Azerbaycan'ın Çıkarlarına Aykırı." *Haber Türk*, September 2, 2009, p.15; Bardakçı, Murat. "Sırada Şimdi Karabağ Kazığı mı Var?" *Haber Türk*, September 2, 2009. – P.9.

37 "Sadece Türk-Ermeni Sınırı Değil Azeri-Ermeni Sınırı da Açılacak." *Radikal*, September 2, 2009. – P.13; "Ankara'dan Bakü'ye: Hiçbir Süreç Azerbaycan Dostluğundan Önemli Değil." *Sabah*, September 2, 2009. – P.19.

38 In addition to the foreign ministers of the US, France, and Switzerland, the foreign minister of Slovenia as the president of the EU Council of Ministers and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Javier Solana attended to the "historic" signing ceremony. The large scope of the attendance proved the importance that the world community attached to the event.

39 On the one hand, Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Nalbandyan planned to emphasize that the protocols could not be linked with the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and would be signed without any prerequisites. On the other hand, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu planned to state that the protocols would only be implemented after the Nagorno-Karabakh issue would have been solved. Besides, the parties' perceptions about the history commission also caused trouble. In the end, the protocols were agreed to be directly signed without any speeches, except for a brief talk by the foreign minister of Switzerland, and thereby, the signatures were appended with a 3-hour delay.

40 For the text of Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech he delivered in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey see: "Ermeni Protokolü Meclis'te." *Hürriyet*, October 21, 2009.

referred to the Treaties of Moscow and Kars, in which the Turkey-Armenia borders were settled, and thereby reconfirmed the Turkish-Armenian common border. As Davutoğlu asserted, by means of these protocols, “Armenia also confirms that any claims about border disputes with Armenia or Armenia’s territorial claims become legally invalid.” In this context, the protocols were aimed at “reshaping the one-sided memory which is biased against Turkey” and constituting a just memory. While this was being worked on, Azerbaijan was being treated delicately and given importance. Turkey, in every phase of the process, emphasized that the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh issue did not lie beyond the scope of this process. Such explanations did not affect the normalization process that was projected by the protocols in a positive way.⁴¹ As a result, the reaction of Azerbaijan could not be eradicated.⁴²

The protocols sparked certain debates in Armenia as well. Apart from the dispute between the government and opposition, the diaspora also criticized the protocols severely. The protocols, by force of the procedure in Armenia, have been waiting in the Armenian parliament to be put onto the agenda after being evaluated and approved by the Armenian Constitutional Court.

CONCLUSION

Observations indicate that Turkey’s Caucasus policy, which it attempted to establish after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has shown some vitality after August 2008. This activation has been associated with the proactive and problem-solving new foreign policy discourse which has become prominent with the “zero problems with neighbours” statement. The present situation shows that recent openings

41 Davutoğlu, in the speech he delivered at the session of the parliament, said “The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is as valuable as our territorial integrity”; on the other hand, the criticisms of the opposition were shaped on the basis of Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Şükrü Elekdag, who has addressed a speech in behalf of Republican People’s Party (CHP), argued that since the protocols were brought into the Assembly before a resolution was reached on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the timing was wrong. Oktay Vural, in a speech on behalf of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), stated that his party opposed the establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia unless this country gives up its hostile policy and actions that challenge the territorial integrity of Turkey. He added that his party also opposed the opening of the borders before the occupation in Azerbaijani territories is ended. *Ibid.*

42 After Sargsyan announced that he would be present at the football match between Turkish-Armenian national teams in Bursa on October 14, forbidding the audience to bring Azerbaijani flags into the stadium generated a new tension. When 12 flagpoles at the Turkish Martyr’s Cemetery in Baku were ripped out, and the Turkish flag in front of the Azerbaijani Embassy Religious Services Consultancy was hauled down, Turkey sent a diplomatic note to Azerbaijan. The tension between the two countries shifted into a new dimension; efforts to appease it were made through high-level meetings.

include routines in the traditional line. Solving problems by peaceful means and dialogue through the processes that comprise all parties is one of these routines. The fundamental principle is protecting the territorial integrity of nations and providing the continuity of their independence. Turkey expects from all parties to seek solution for their problems in the context of this approach. It has been thought that permanent and healthy solutions for the problems in the region could only be found through regional initiatives such as the CSCP. Turkish foreign policy makers perceive Turkey as the unique Western actor who has balanced relations with Russia and is able to determine a vision for the countries of the region. It is also believed that the economic and commercial power of Turkey would accelerate and enhance this process.

In addition to the extent and depth of the disputes among regional countries, the nature of the problems and the influence of international actors prevent the solutions from being produced locally. Where the process that began after August 2008 is concerned, the current situation indicates that Azerbaijan keeps its prominent position for Turkey. The normalization process which was jointly initiated with Armenia was aimed at convincing Armenia to seek a compromise solution of regional issues and urge the diaspora to ease the pressure on Turkey. However, the current situation also shows that this policy does not contribute to the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh issue and the prevention of initiatives on “genocide bills.”

At least where public debates are concerned, Turkey’s attitude disturbs Azerbaijan and thereby causes tension between these two countries. While there have been no successful outcomes in relations with Armenia, relations with Azerbaijan have also become troubled. During this process, relations with Georgia remained in the background, though Georgia has a central place in Caucasus politics. Georgia, without doubt, holds the central position in Turkey’s Caucasus policy. However, the impression that Turkish diplomacy has given weight to the normalization with Armenia after August 2008, created the perception that Georgia was pushed into the background. It is also evident that Turkey, with respect to the solution of Abkhazia and South Ossetia issues, did not adopt an attitude that was essentially different from the previous periods. This situation occasionally causes trouble with Tbilisi and Abkhazia as well. In this respect, some incidents draw attention, such as the seizure of Turkish ships on their way to Abkhazia and the arrest of the crew, and the avoidance of the issue of Meskhetian Turks (Ahiska Turks).

Among these complicated relationships, the active foreign policy in Caucasus, which was initiated by Turkey under the name of “football diplomacy,” has not brought Turkey a step further from the pre-2008 period.