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CONTENTS

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THE NEW IMAGE OF THE BUSINESS ELITE IN LEBANESE POLITICS: RAFIK AND SAAD HARIRI, NAJIB MIKATI AND ISSAM FARES

Abstract: The resignation of Saad Hariri in January 2011 was surrounded by frantic analysis. Did the backing, new Prime Minister Najib Mikati received from Hezbollah, means that the Shia movement had taken over the government? Could Mikati's arguments of "independence" be taken seriously?[1] Much of the analyses focus on one of the most interesting aspects of this changeover - how important was the fact that both prime ministers (Hariri and Mikati) were billionaire businessmen? The paper aims to explore the interplay of new business elite's economic interests with the politics of confessionism and foreign alliances. What explains the rise of new businessmen and variations in their relative success as politicians and investors in Lebanon? This question will be measured along three dimensions: success in reaching political office; in gaining control of institutions to further their economic agenda; and in gathering a popular following. In order to address these three questions, the careers of four new contractors - Rafik and Saad Hariri, Najib Mikti and Issam Fares, will be examined. The paper based on historical-comparative and analytical methods of research. The role of above mentioned four contractors is observed with the evaluation approach in the context of confessional, social-economic and political situation of Lebanon. The research methodology also incorporates the issues of a class analysis with the refinement of the sociology of the business elite in Lebanese politics.

Keywords: Lebanon, confessional political system, businessmen-politicians, Hariri, Hezbollah, clientelism, *zuama*, politics, Sunni, Shia

Introduction

The Sunni businessman-politician Rafik Hariri and his son Saad Hariri remain the benchmark of success for this new class in Lebanon. After Rafik Hariri's assassination in 2005, Hariri ally Fuad Siniora (2005-2009) and later his son Saad Hariri (2009-2011) assumed the position of prime minister. The

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[1] Anthony Shadid, "Hezbollah Chooses Lebanon's Next Prime Minister", *The New York Times*, January 24, 2011. https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/25/world/middleeast/25lebanon.html (Accessed May 30, 2020) "Hezbollah-backed candidate poised to become Lebanon PM", *The Guardian*, January 24, 2011. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/24/hezbollah-backed-candidate-lebanon-pm (Accessed May 30, 2020)

Hariri business empire has a large stake in Lebanese banking, construction and media. Rafik Hariri started building up a popular following in the mid-1990s and his son turned this "movement" into a coherent organization. Sunni businessman Najib Mikati acted as minister of public works and transport from 1998 to 2004, headed the Lebanese government in 2005, and was appointed prime minister again in January 2011. His company, Cellis, held a mobile phone operating license from 1994 to 2002. He has also built up a popular following through clientelism, but he cannot nearly match Rafik Hariri's ability to mobilize. Finally, the Greek Orthodox businessman Issam Fares served as deputy prime minister from 2000 to 2005. He has business interests in the media and used to own a Lebanese bank. He also engages in philanthropy but has been unable to mobilize a significant popular following.

This paper examines three dimensions of similarities and differences between these businessmen-politicians. The first is their pursuit of collective economic and individual business interests. All members of the new business elite support a neoliberal transformation of the economy in order to create larger investment opportunities for the private sector. Such reforms are not politically neutral and aim to strengthen the power of the capitalist classes.[2] Furthermore, "neoliberal reforms are often accompanied by cronyism and rent-seeking through privatized monopolies, where "networks of privilege" shape markets to their advantage".[3] The new contractors therefore also compete with each other for contracts and the chance to snatch up privatized state enterprises and control market-regulating agencies. The second dimension is international politics. Due to the "weakness" of the Lebanese state, Lebanese politicians seek foreign alliances in order to protect their domestic "standing". The choice of foreign allies and the strength of support the businessman-politician receives is a major determinant of political success. Rafik Hariri's relatively greater success is best explained in the context of his strong backing from the Saudi monarchy. The third dimension is confessionalism and the mobilization of popular support through clientelism. The new business elite also cannot remain outside the confessional system. The power-sharing formula that allocates political office according to community shapes the horizon of political ambition for new contractors and forces them to act as representatives of "their confessions", even when they pursue a wider economic agenda. Electoral success is first of all tied to mobilizing voters from the businessman's own community. An important determinant of the success of a new businessman is also the "space" for new leaders in the politics of the confessional community. The Shia, Maronite and Druze communities emerged with

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[2] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 19.
[3] See Steven Heydermann, *Networks of Privilege in the Middle East: the Politics of Economic Reform Revisited* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

confessional leaderships that had achieved a virtual monopoly on the "representation" of their own community in Lebanon's confessional political system. The same was not true for the highly fragmented politics of the Sunni community, which made it easier for new businessmen to rise to the top.

This paper is divided into three sections: the first one observes the rise of the new contractors during the second civil war from 1975 to 1990. The second section focuses on Rafik Hariri's governments between 1992 and 2004, contrasting the overwhelming success of Rafik Hariri with the less successful strategies of Najib Mikati and Issam Fares. The third section looks at the dynamics since 2005. Saad Hariri monopolized Sunni politics to an unprecedented degree. This is a considerable problem for Mikati's government. However, the power struggle between the two billionaires obscures the significant interests they share.

The Rise of the New Business elite in Lebanese politics

The dominance of businessmen in Lebanese politics is not new. The commercial-financial bourgeoisie of the pre-war era was central to the formation of the country's state and economy. The National Pact of 1943, which formalized the confessional power-sharing political system, can be seen as a compromise between the Maronite and Sunni business elites.[4] The former dominated trade with Europe and the USA, while the latter had strong relations with the Arab Gulf. Despite opposing nationalist ideas among the two communities, their bourgeois families reached a confessional compromise which made the Lebanese state a vehicle for the appropriation of rent from financial intermediation between Arab East and Western financial markets and from entrepot trade entering the Arab market via Lebanon. The economic and political elites of the country remained so closely intertwined as to be virtually congruent as most *zuama* – the political leaders of the pre-war era -hailed from a few dozen bourgeois families.[5] This network of families maintained Lebanon's *laissez-faire* economic system. The increasingly illiberal economic environment in "revolutionary" Arab states and the underdeveloped banking systems in the Gulf allowed Lebanese bankers and traders to act as intermediaries between the Arab world and the global economy. The dominance of Lebanon's business families came under attack in the 1960s and 1970s. President Fuad Chehab (1958-1964) expanded the developmental role of the state and undermined the bourgeoisie's economic power and their political power, based largely on maintaining confessional clientele. Furthermore, the social crisis arising from Lebanon's

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[4] Michael Johnson, *Clan and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanon State 1840-1985* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986), 25-26.
[5] Hrair Dekmejian, *Patterns of Political Leadership: Egypt, Israel, Lebanon* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1975), 22-23; Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 115.

barely restrained economic liberalism led to the rise of predominantly Muslim popular leftist movements.[6] Together with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), they eventually challenged the power of the Maronites. On the other side of the ideological divide, popular Maronite parties such as Kataeb and later the front of Lebanese rightists, Lebanese Forces, undermined the ability of Christian *zuama* to compromise with their Muslim counterparts.

During the Second Civil War (1975-1990), bourgeois families lost their role as the dominant capitalist class to the new contractors. This was due to domestic developments and wider changes in the world economy. With the demise of the Bretton Woods system and the rise of the Wall Street-centric global financial system, the Gulf countries started recycling their oil income directly into US banks. In Lebanon, the civil war led to the dominance of militias in the economy, affecting trade and finance.[7] These internal and external developments did not completely destroy the pre-war bourgeoisie but broke its economic and political dominance. The stage was set for the rise of the new business elite. The oil boom in the Gulf had led to large-scale emigration of Lebanese to the Gulf States. The oil boom increased the number of Lebanese workers in the Gulf from 50,000 in 1970 to 210,000 in 1979-1980, representing slightly more than a third of the nation's workforce.[8] A small but not insignificant number of Lebanese emigrants managed to accumulate great wealth as contractors in the Gulf. Their success was due to a mixture of personal entrepreneurial flair and connections to key individuals with access to royal contracts. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, this new contractor bourgeoisie returned to Lebanon to invest and to seek political influence. As the heads of transnational enterprises, the new businessmen belong to a faction of the "transnational capitalist class" that promotes neoliberal globalization.[9]

Class analysis is thus a crucial and neglected element in understanding post-civil war Lebanese politics. However, its exclusive focus on the actors' relationship to the means of production tends to be too crude an instrument to understand the behavior of business elites in specific domestic contexts.[10] It

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[6] See Salim Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War: The Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism", *MERIP Middle East Report,* no. 73, (1978): 3-13.
[7] On the civil war economy see Corm George, "The War System: Militia Hegemony and Reestablishment of the State", in *Peace for Lebanon? From War to Reconstruction*, ed. D. Colling (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 215-230, Elizabeth Picard, The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon, in *War, Institutions and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of Californian Press, 2000), 292-322.
[8] Salim Nasr, "The Political Economy of the Lebanese Conflict" in *Politics and the Economy in Lebanon*, ed. Nadim Shehadi, Bridget Harney (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1989), 44.
[9] See Leslie Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000).
[10] Batty Hindess, *Politics and Class Analysis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 16.

is necessary to adopt a more "sociological" perspective, focusing on the role of "elites" and how the elites that belong to the capitalist class promote their interests and how state elites relate to capitalists.[11] The question is how classes organize and how they are politically represented in pursuit of their interest. "Elite" is a more open category than class. "It allows for a richer account of individuals and groups beyond their economic position and including such identity categories as community". Elites are conventionally defined as "decision-makers", while Pierre Bourdieu defines them as those with a high degree of social, symbolic, economic and cultural capital.[12] The two definitions are not mutually exclusive, as decision-makers are likely to also possess great "capital". These different ways of thinking about elites are both important for the study of the new businessmen. While Hariri's network gained control of centers of decision-making, other businessmen were forced to focus more on building up a network that is strong in "cultural capital". Pierre Bourdieu also provides a framework to think about the way in which economic power, the power to shape systems of accumulation, can be used to obtain symbolic power, the power to confirm or transform the social order.[13]

Rafik Hariri left Lebanon for Saudi Arabia in 1964, unable to pay for his studies and in search of employment. His first attempts at contracting ended in bankruptcy due to highly volatile oil prices, and the attendant volatility in input prices for construction.[14] Having experienced more than one cycle of boom-and-bust, Hariri struck gold in 1976 by teaming up with Nasr al-Rashid, a Saudi engineer from a prominent family who had access to royal contracts. Hariri's success is therefore due both to his own personal qualities and the patronage politics of the Saudi state. Hariri had no direct access to the Saudi King, but this changed in 1982. In the wake of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hariri demonstrated his political usefulness to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia by initiating the clean-up of Beirut. The King was pleased and took over the funding for the project.[15] Till then, Hariri acted as a "Saudi mediator" between the various factions of the Lebanese civil war.

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[11] Hindessm, 28-33, See Scott John, *The Sociology of Elites, Volume III: Interlocking Directorships and Corporate Networks* (Aldershott: Elgar, 1990).

[12] In his study of Arab elites Perthes Volker uses the conventional definition of elites as decision-makers. See Perthes Volker, *Arab Elites: Negotiating the politics of Change* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004). On Bourdieu's definition of elites see Michael Hartmann, *The Sociology of Elites* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007).

[13] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 170.

[14] Hadi Makarem, "Actually Existing Neoliberalism: The reconstruction of Downtown Beirut in post-civil war Lebanon, London School of economics and political science" (PhD diss., London, September, 2014), http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3078/1/Makarem_Actually_Existing_Neoliberalism.pdf (Accessed May 30, 2020)

[15] The initial posters on Oger's trucks publicized the "Project of Cleaning Beirut courtesy of Rafik Hariri, Oger Liban 1982". See Shalaq Al-Fadl, *Tajrabatyy ma'a al-Hariri (My Experience with Hariri),* (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2006), 60.

As "the real voice of King Fahd"[16] and through the use of chequebook diplomacy, Hariri was able to participate in civil war diplomacy - the negotiations to end the Shouf war in 1983, the Geneva and Lausanne meetings in 1983 and 1984, the militia agreement in 1985 and the Taif Agreement in 1989.[17] In the early 1980s, Hariri acquired Banque Mediterranée, established a second bank and started three major urban development projects that only came to fruition in the post-war period. These development projects included the seeds of Solidere, the reconstruction project for central Beirut.[18] A student loan program supported almost 32,000 students between 1983 and 1996 but, importantly, Hariri had not yet used it to build up a consistent grassroots following.

The rise of Najib Mikati was due to the Arabian Construction company, founded by his brother Taha Mikati in Abu Dhabi in 1967. It had great success in the Gulf. At one point Taha Mikati also took some subcontracts from Rafik Hariri.[19] In 1982, Najib and Taha Mikati founded the telecommunications company Investcom, which penetrated markets such as Sudan, Liberia and Yemen[20]. It also ran an analogue mobile phone network in civil war Lebanon. In 1983, the Mikatis bought the license for the British Bank of Lebanon from the British Bank of the Middle East.[21] The Mikatis are understood to have maintained good relations with the Syrian regime. In 1988, Taha and Najib Mikati founded the Azm wa Saade foundation, which provides health and social services.[22]

Issam Fares is from a Greek Orthodox family from Akkar in North Lebanon. He began his experience as a merchant in Abela Group, one of Beirut's traditional trading houses owned by a prominent Greek Orthodox family.[23] He then became a hugely successful businessman by owning a controlling interest in Dutch-based construction and engineering company Ballast Nedam. Through good contacts in Saudi Arabia, he secured highly

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[16] Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr Lebanon: the Assassination of Rafik Hariri and its impact on the Middle East* (London: LB Tauris, 2006), 25-26.

[17] On Hariri's involvement see Kett Michael, *Imposing Power Sharing Conflict and coexistence in Northern Ireland and Lebanon* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), Elie Salem, *Violence and Diplomacy in Lebanon: The Troubled Years*, 1982-1988 (London: IB Tauris, 1995).

[18] Makarem, "Actually Existing Neoliberalism," 216-269; Eric Verdeil, "Reconstruction manqué a Beyrouth, la poursuite de la guerre par le projet urbain", *Annales de la Recherche Urban*, no. 91 (2001): 65-73.

[19] See the personal website of Najib Mikati. www.najib-mikati.net/EN/Outlenterests/110/Philanthropy (Accessed May 30, 2020).

[20] Middle East Economic Digest, November 21, 2008, 74.

[21] Al-Nahar Arab Report and Memo, June 4, 1984, 6.

[22] Fawwaz Traboulsi, *Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung - Middle East, 34-35.
https://lb.boell.org/sites/default/files/fawaz_english_draft.pdf (Accessed May 30, 2020).

[23] The information on Issam Fares is from Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, November 2003, 12-17.

lucrative contracts, most famously for the bridge linking Saudi Arabia to Bahrain. He later sold the group and invested in a variety of oil, real-estate and media interests through a holding company called Wedge Group. In 1983, Fares opened Wedge Bank in Lebanon, employing former President Elias Sarkis as its chairman.[24] Fares supported Bashir Gemayel's bid for the presidency in 1982, but thereafter built close ties to the Syrian regime via Ghazi Kanaan, the Syrian head of intelligence in Lebanon. This was partly because Fares' home region of Akkar was under close Syrian control. In 1987, he started the Issam Fares Foundation, which established health centers in Akkar and pursued other projects in the cultural and social sphere.[25]

The neoliberal politics of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Lebanon (1992-1998 and 2000-2004)

Among the four businessmen analyzed in this paper, Rafik Hariri had the best position to take over a political role, since Saudi support had given him access to civil war diplomacy. Hariri became prime minister in 1992. He remained in office until 1998 and then returned from 2000 to 2004. Together with a network of technocrats, Hariri promoted a neoliberal reconstruction program. The strategy was to make Lebanon "competitive" in a "new Middle East", in which there would be no conflicts and in which liberalizing Arab economies would integrate fully into the world market. The way to achieve competitiveness was to build "world-class" infrastructure and to avoid the currency crises that had wrecked the Lebanese economy in the 1980s. The central projects of the Hariri cabinets were the rehabilitation of infrastructure and especially the reconstruction of central Beirut, as well as the stabilization of the Lebanese pound through government over-borrowing. The primary function of the state was to make the economy "competitive" through the provision of infrastructure and a good business environment, but it was to play only a minimal role in income redistribution and welfare provision.[26] While often presented as a purely technical and "common sense" project, neoliberalism is also highly political. Firstly, neoliberalism involves the reassertion of the power of capitalist classes.[27] Secondly, the restructuring of

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[24] See Hannes Baumann, "The ascent of Rafiq Hariri and Sunni philanthropy" in *Leaders et partisans au Liban*, Karthala-IFPO, 2012, 81-106.

[25] See the website of the Issam Fares Foundation, http://www.fares.org.lb/main.asp (Accessed May 30, 2020).

[26] See Samir Khalaf, Philip S. Khoury eds., *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993, Saree Makdisi, "Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere', *Critical Inquiry*, 23(3), (1997), 660-705, Peter G. Rowe, Hashim Sarkis (Eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1998), David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 64-65.

[27] Gerard Dumenil, Dominique Levy, "The Neoliberal (Counter-) Revoilution" in Saad-Filho Alfredo and Deborah Johnston (Eds.), *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 9-19.

the state, markets and privatization provides scope for cronyism and rent-seeking.[28] Hariri's reconstruction program was neoliberal in both these senses. He sought to open up investment opportunities for foreign investors and the new contractor bourgeoisie, while also seeking to ensure that he and his business allies obtained the largest slice of the pie. The politics of reconstruction in central Beirut and the effects of "anchoring" the exchange rate through government borrowing at high interest rates have been described in great detail elsewhere.[29] The important point here is that Hariri applied a neoliberal logic determined by his class position. In order to realize the two policies, Hariri placed former employees and associates at the head of the institutions in charge of reconstruction and finance: the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) and Solidere, the central bank and the finance ministry.[30] Hariri was not in complete control of economic policy. When he was out of office from 1998 to 2000, President Emile Lahoud and Prime Minister Salim al-Hoss obstructed the Solidere project and changed the *modus operandi* of government debt management. Hariri's efforts at privatizing state-controlled entities such as the electricity company, telecommunications and the national carrier Middle East Airlines were countered by former militia leaders and the military establishment, all allied to Syria. Hariri's rivals feared a curtailment of their patronage power and sought to prevent Hariri from acquiring even more economic power.

The alliance with Saudi Arabia had been the basis for Hariri's ascent to power. Saudi Arabia brokered the US-Syrian concord which facilitated the Taif Agreement of 1989[31] and enabled Syrian troops to dislodge its greatest opponent, General Michel Aoun, from the presidential palace in 1990. In return for Saudi acceptance of Syrian dominance in Lebanon, the Assad regime tolerated Saudi-ally Hariri as prime minister. Hariri's "reconstruction" was running alongside the "resistance" by Hezbollah. In the 1990s, Rafik Hariri defended Syrian dominance in Lebanon and supported the marginalization of any opposition to Syria. However, this was an alliance of convenience, and tensions between Hariri and Damascus came to the fore

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[28] See Steven Heydermann, Networks of Privilege in the Middle East: the Politics of Economic Reform Revisited, 292-322.

[29] George Corm, "Reconstructing Lebanon's Economy", in Shafik N. ed., *Economic Challenges Facing Middle Eastern Countries: Alternative Futures*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 116-135, Deoneux Giulain, Robert Springborg, "Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa of the Levant?", *Middle East Policy*, 6, No 2 (1998), 158-173, Gaspard Toufic, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[30] Hannes Baumann, *Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Post-War Lebanon*, (PhD Thesis, London:, SOAS, 2012), 62; Giulain Deoneux, Robert Springborg, "Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa of the Levant?", *Middle East Policy*, 6, no 2 (1998): 158-173.

[31] See Joseph A. Kechichian, "One Lebanon was his vision", *Gulf News Weekend Review*, May 9, 2008.

from the mid-1990s onwards. The breakdown of the Syrian-Israel peace negotiations in 2000, the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon and regional tension in the wake of the Iraq invasion then led to deteriorating relations between Hariri and the new President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad.

An important factor in the ability of various businessmen to rise to high political office was their position in Lebanon's confessional politics. The prevalence of Sunni politicians among the new contractor bourgeoisie is striking. Emigration patterns played a role because it is possible that Sunni Muslims were more drawn to the Gulf, Shia would be more likely to migrate to West Africa or the Americas, and Christians were drawn to Europe. However, a more important factor is the state of the civil war era leadership among different communities. The Kataeb party, the Lebanese Forces and Aoun monopolized leadership among Maronites. There was limited space for a Maronite businessman to become a political leader. Some Shia contractors had become wealthy in the Gulf or in West Africa but they tended to support established political movements such as Hezbollah or Amal, which had virtually monopolized leadership within their community. Among the Druze, Walid Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) was the dominant force. The situation of Sunni leadership was very different. The pre-war Sunni *zuama* had been marginalized by popular Nasserite movements and their militias during the civil war, helped by their alliance with the PLO. The militias lost much of their power after the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut in 1982 and military action by Syrian-allied Shia and Druze militias in 1983 and 1984.[32] Sunni Islamists never achieved the same prominence, coherence and influence within their own community as Hezbollah did within the Shia community. The assassination of the Sunni Mufti Hassan Khalid in 1989 further fragmented the community's leadership. This fragmentation allowed for the rise of Hariri and other Sunni businessmen to high political office. No pre-war *zuama* or civil war militias could automatically lay claim to the role of Prime Minister, the highest position reserved for Sunnis in Lebanon's power-sharing formula.

When Hariri became Prime Minister of Lebanon in 1992, he still styled himself mostly as a "national" leader rather than a confessional one. He contrasted his reconstruction program with the confessional violence of the militias. His student loan program was already winding down and Hariri refused to engage in the kind of large-scale grassroots clientelism usually associated with confessional leadership. He also sought to shape public opinion through his TV channel Future TV, a stake in the *al-Nahar* newspaper, fostering close relations with a large number of journalists and eventually starting his own newspaper called *al-Mustakbal* (Future). Hariri's neglect of his own community led to some disappointment among the

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[32] See Skovgaard-Petersen Jacob, "The Sunni Religious Scene in Beirut", *Mediterranean Politics,* 3, no 1 (1998): 69-80.

grassroots of the community. Sunni *zuama* maintained doctoral independence from Hariri in the 1992 and 1996 parliamentary elections. Sunni Islamist movements such as *al-Abbash* and *al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya* experienced a brief flowering and some limited electoral success. However, all this changed when Hariri imposed himself as the prime leader of his community from the mid-1990s.[33] In 1996, Hariri had his favored candidate elected mufti, a position that had remained vacant since Mufti Hassan Khalid's assassination.[34] Starting in 1999, the Hariri foundation also began engaging in grassroots clientelism, building health centers and schools in predominantly Sunni neighborhoods. Although the health centers are open to patients from any confession, the location and the association with Hariri work as signifiers that these are "Sunni" institutions. In preparation for the 2000 parliamentary elections, Hariri politically neutralized the Al Makassed association[35], which had traditionally been Beirut's premier Sunni philanthropic association and a patronage instrument of the Salam family[36]. Hariri's transformation from a "national" to a specifically "Sunni" leader in the mid-1990s was an electoral strategy. The businessman-politician was coming under increasing political pressure from rival politicians allied to Syria, especially when army commander Emile Lahoud was elected president in 1998. Subsequently, Hariri resigned as prime minister. In order to return as the head of government, Hariri sought electoral success, which in Lebanon is best achieved through confessional mobilization. There can be little doubt that Hariri would have been able to build a grassroots base beyond his Sunni community, but this would be viewed as an encroachment by rival leaders. Means of curtailing such encroachment included blocking accreditation by the health ministry, rejection of health centers by municipal authorities, or, in times of heightened confessional tension, the threat of physical attacks on Hariri institutions. The confessional system had disciplined the new contractor.

Hariri had become more like the *zuama* of the pre-war era, using

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[33] For the changes in Sunni politics in the early mid-1990s, see Skovgaard-Petersen Jacob, "The Sunni Religious Scene in Beirut", 69-80.

[34] The electoral process was tightly managed by two advisors to Rafik Hariri in order to produce the desired outcome. Skovgaard-Petersen, "The Sunni Religious Scene in Beirut", 78-79, Rougier Bernard, *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 130-131.

[35] Al Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association of Beirut was founded in 1878. It is a charitable, humanitarian, and non-profit Islamic association that seeks to build a distinguished Makassed community based on sublime values and proud of its national belonging. Al Makassed Association implements the principles of Islam with the aim of developing its society's capacities and educating its generations. For this purpose, it disseminates Islamic education through its diverse institutions, provides healthcare, and offers educational, medical, social, and cultural services by subsidizing the costs of these services.

[36] On the political uses of the health centers and schools, see Cammett Melani, Sukriti Issar, "Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: The Political Geography of Walfare in Lebanon", *World Politics,* 62, no. 3 (2010), 381-421.

confessional clientelism to win elections. However, there are also differences between the clientelism of the pre-war *zuama* and the new contractor Hariri. One difference is scale. The *zuama* tended to dominate in particular locations, for instance, the Salams in Beirut or the Karamis in Tripoli. Hariri managed to build up a truly national presence by spending amounts that were beyond the financial capability of the *zuama*. In the late 1970s, he started charitable works in his home town of Sidon but then quickly moved to provide services across the whole country through his student-loan program from 1983 to 1996. In the parliamentary elections of 2000, Hariri became the most prominent Sunni politician in Beirut, winning all the seats in the capital and relegating traditional Sunni Beiruti leaders to the second rank. Such complete domination in a locale other than their region of origin would have been inconceivable for a pre-war *zaim*. Secondly, Hariri relied primarily on his own wealth and funding from the Gulf to pay for his philanthropic ventures. In contrast, the philanthropic associations controlled by pre-war *zuama* were often financed collectively through donations by bourgeois families or the middle class. The *zuama* therefore had to be much more responsive to the interests and ideologies of these constituencies, while the new *zaim* Hariri was financially independent from domestic Lebanese groups.[37]

The contrast between Hariri on the one hand, and Mikati and Fares on the other illustrates the conditions for success and failure of new businessmen. As a Sunni Muslim, Mikati also had ambitions to become prime minister. However, he lacked the powerful foreign sponsor that Hariri had in the form of Saudi Arabia. The warm relations that Mikati had fostered with the Syrian regime could not make up for this shortcoming. The Syrians relied much more on other types of elites - on former militia leaders such as Nabih Berri or Walid Jumblatt, on the military and intelligence establishment around Lahoud, and loyal allies such as Michel Murr. Mikati did enjoy some political success - he became minister for transport and public works under the Selim Hoss government in 1998, after Hariri had already left office. He retained his ministerial position until 2004. Despite the grand title, these ministries were of little use to Mikati. They had been marginalized in the reconstruction effort by the CDR, headed by a Hariri loyalist for most of the time between 1991 and 2005. Mikati's main interest was in telecommunications. In 1994, Cellis had won a 'build-operate-transfer' (BOT) project. One-third of the company was owned by Najib and Taha Mikati, France Telecom owned the rest.[38] However, Mikati had no direct control of the institutions in charge of telecommunications. The second most popular mobile phone operator was Libancell. Their relationship with the

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[37] See Hannes Baumann, "The ascent of Rafiq Hariri and Sunni philanthropy", 81-106
[38] Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Country Report: Lebanon, July 2002. https://www.iuj.ac.jp/mlic/EIU/Report/Lebanon/July_2002_Main_report.pdf (Accessed May 30, 2020).

government was tense. Both the Hariri and Hoss governments "imposed various charges on the mobile phone companies and turned down offers to convert the ten-year BOT contracts into twenty-year operating licenses".[39] "At stake were the large profits of the duopoly. In 1998, revenue from mobile phone operations reached USD 440 million"[40]. The sector's future was endangered by a conflict between Hariri, who sought to privatize the sector, and Lahoud, who sought to allocate as much of the mobile phone profits for the state as possible. In the end, Lahoud managed to control the telecommunications ministry from 2000 to 2004 and impose his preferred solution. "Mikati sold his stake in Cellis to France Telecom, and in December 2002 both mobile phone companies formally transferred their assets to the state".[41] Mikati is not completely reliant on income from within Lebanon. However, his investment company M1 Group[42] owns New York and London real estate, the French fashion company Faconnable and interests in oil exploration in Colombia. Hariri also eclipsed Mikati in the size of his popular following. Mikati had built up a philanthropic association that could act as an instrument of patronage during elections. He first entered parliament as a deputy for Tripoli in 2000 on the list of the Maronite *zaim* Suleiman Frangieh, while Hariri refrained from fielding his own candidates in the constituency, probably as a result of pressure from Syria.[43] While Mikati managed to build up a following in Tripoli, he never managed to create the national reach that Hariri and especially his son Saad enjoyed. Furthermore, while Hariri had managed to gain control of a major economic and symbolic space in Beirut – the Solidere area – Mikati never achieved such economic success in the capital.

Issam Fares was less successful than Hariri or Mikati. As a Greek Orthodox Christian, his advance to the highest state position was hindered by Michael Mur, who had supported Syria's policy in Lebanon since the mid-1980s and was one of Assad's closest allies in the country. From 1992 to 2000, he was deputy prime minister, the highest position a Greek Orthodox can occupy. Fares only managed to occupy the post from 2000 to 2004. The post provides the holder with little power and Murr's influence stemmed more from his control of the interior ministry (1996-2000), a position later held by his son Elias (2000-2004). Fares, meanwhile, was stuck with a largely ceremonial role as deputy prime minister without any control over the institutions that shaped economic policy. Fares had allied himself with Emil Lahoud, who sought to draw a wealthy businessman into his network to

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[39] EIU, Country Report: Lebanon, 4, Quarter 1995, 14; EIU, Country Report: Lebanon, 1, Quarter 1996, 14; EIU, Country Report: Lebanon, October 2000.
[40] International Telecommunications Union, Arab States Telecommunications Indicators 1992-2001, Geneva: ITU, 2002.
[41] EIU, Country Report: Lebanon, July 2002; EIU, Country Report: Lebanon, January 2003.
[42] See Najib Mikati, https://www.forbes.com/profile/najib-mikati/#41041d378d63 (Accessed May 30, 2020)
[43] Middle East International, August, 18, 2000, 13.

counter Hariri's influence in Lebanon. Like Hariri and Mikati, Fares built up a philanthropic association but it fell far short of the size and scope of the Hariri Foundation. It runs health centers and supports schools in Fares' home region of Akkar and supports a number of social and cultural projects in the north of Lebanon.[44] Fares first entered parliament in 1996 within a joint list alongside Omar Karami and Suleiman Frangieh. However, the peripheral location of Fares' home region and the spread of Greek Orthodox Christians throughout Lebanon made the kind of confessional rallying that Hariri achieved among Sunni Muslims impossible.

The limitations Fares faced in terms of his position in the confessional system and popular mobilization led him to adopt alternative strategies along two lines.[45] First, he spent a lot of time and money in cultivating ties with American politicians. Fares was already involved in "brokering" closer relations between Syria and the USA in the 1980s, a rapprochement which eventually facilitated the Taif Agreement of 1989 and the ousting of Michel Aoun. Fares became a master at playing the game of informal financial contributions and cultivating "friendship" with leading American politicians from both major parties. The most visible initiative was a lecture series at Tufts University, for which speakers received generous remuneration and has featured former President George H. W. Bush, former Secretary of State James Baker, former President Bill Clinton, and former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and Colin Powell shortly before he was called upon to serve as secretary of state for George W. Bush. Fares used his influence on US politics in the 1990s to maintain American tolerance for Syria's role in Lebanon.[46] The second pillar of Fares' influence is public opinion. His media empire is of a different nature and smaller than Hariri's. After the arrest of Samir Geagea (the leader of Lebanese Forces) in 1994, Fares took a 10 percent stake in the ownership of the Forces' TV station LBC.[47] Damascus regarded Fares as a "safe pair of hands" to curtail the station's habitual criticism of Syria. Fares also created public policy think-tanks. He funded the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and a domestic public policy institute where intellectuals and former government officials sympathetic to Fares worked. As mentioned, elites are conventionally defined as "decision-makers", while Pierre Bourdieu regards them as those rich in cultural, financial or social capital. Fares managed to gather a network of elites endowed with great "cultural" capital who wield symbolic power to confirm or transform the social order. This was partly done to make up for the failure to gain control of the institutional centers of decision-making.

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[44] For more information on the association, http://www.fares.org.lb/main.asp (Accessed May 30, 2020).
[45] Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, November, 2003, 12-17.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Middle East International, March 23, 2001, 13.

The new configuration of Lebanese politics after Rafik Hariri: Fuad Siniora, Saad Hariri and Najib Mikati

On 14 February 2005, Rafik Hariri was assassinated and the immediate question from the perspective of the Hariri network was the future of the "Mustakbal (Future) movement". Saad Hariri became the knot that held together all the strings of power of the Hariri network – personal wealth, the Saudi alliance and "Sunni leadership". Saad Hariri had previously been in charge of parts of the Hariri business empire and nothing in his professional experience marked him out for political leadership. This is further evidence that the neoliberal project of the new contractor bourgeoisie was being mediated by the familiar confessional, clientelist and dynastic dynamics of Lebanese politics.

Saad Hariri became the head of the coalition that was fighting to put Syria out of Lebanon and which had received a boost with Rafik Hariri's assassination. Rafik Hariri had been reluctant to join the opposition against Syria, which included many traditionally anti-Syrian Christians, Walid Jumblatt's Druze as well as a growing secular "Democratic Left", which was fed up with Syrian authoritarianism. Within the confessional logic of Lebanese politics, the fact that Hariri brought "the Sunnis" into the opposition camp was significant. The anti-Syrian opposition formed the 14 March coalition, named after the rally staged on that day in 2005. The 8 March coalition brought together the Shia movements Hezbollah and Amal and the predominantly Christian supporters of Michel Aoun (who had opposed Syrian influence in Lebanon during the 1990s). Under the leadership of Saad Hariri, the 14 March coalition achieved the resignation of pro-Syrian Prime Minister Omar Karami, leading to the appointment of Najib Mikati as the interim head of government to oversee the elections in May 2005. The 14 March coalition achieved their goal of forcing the withdrawal of Syrian troops in April-May 2005.

Internal confessionalism linked up with the wider agendas of regional and global powers. The USA and France came together to presume Syria's guilt in the Hariri assassination. The two countries had fallen out over the Iraq War in 2003 but there had been a rapprochement when French President Jacques Chirac led the way in putting together UN Security Council Resolution 1559 in September 2004.[48] The resolution called for Syrian non-interference in Lebanon's presidential elections and the disarmament of all the militias (mainly Hezbollah) in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia also joined the international coalition on Lebanon. Through the initiative of these major states, the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIIC) was established by the UN Security Council on 7 April 2005 to investigate

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[48] International Crisis Group, Syria after Lebanon, Lebanon after Syria, Brussels: ICG, 2005, 9.

Rafik Hariri's assassination. Later, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) was set up in May 2006. Its mandate was to prosecute the perpetrators of the Hariri assassination. The 8 March forces declared that "the investigation and the tribunal are instruments of the USA, France and Saudi Arabia as well as 14 March to pressure Syria and Hezbollah.[49] Defenders of the court argue that the investigation should be independent of any government.

Confessional solidarity was a major factor in rallying popular support behind Saad Hariri after his father's assassination.[50] The success and the limits of this strategy arose from Hariri's position in the Sunni community. Rafik Hariri had built some of his own institutions, especially the Hariri Foundation and a political organization called the "Future Movement". However, more often than not, Hariri was not so much displacing existing Sunni structures but using patronage resources and a highly flexible "ideology" to entice existing Sunni social, religious and political organizations into joining his network. The "Future Movement" could be all things to all people, claiming to pursue a range of contradictory goals such as being a champion of neo-liberalism, a defender of the Sunni community, an ally of Saudi Arabia and the West, an opponent of Syria and Iran, and a patron of the "poor". The backdrop to this strategy of confessional mobilization was the emerging Sunni-Shia contradictions in Lebanon. Within the confessional logic of Lebanese politics, the assassination of the most prominent Sunni leader was perceived as an attack on the whole community. 14 March immediately blamed Syria and its main Lebanese ally Hezbollah, achieving the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. This, in turn, increased the insecurity of Hezbollah, which had relied on Syria to protect its status as a legitimate resistance movement. The domestic rift was doubled by confessional violence in Iraq and the development of a regional Sunni-Shia split, which also involved a deepening of Saudi-Iranian contradictions. The 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon exacerbated the confessional divide. While Hezbollah considered it a vindication of the need for "resistance" as deterrence, 14 March denounced the "recklessness" the militia had displayed in drawing Lebanon into war. Hezbollah ministers and their allies had participated in the government of Fuad Siniora after the May 2005 elections but in December 2006, five Shia ministers and one Christian associated with 8 March withdrew from the cabinet. 8 March organized a protest in central Beirut, demanding that Siniora resign. Given Lebanon's power-sharing formula, the protest was interpreted as a Hezbollah attack on Sunni prime ministership and hence on the Sunni community as a whole. The Sunni-Shia split thus led to a closing of ranks within the Sunni community and provided

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[49] Nadim Shehadi, Elizabeth Wilmshurst, The Special Tribunal for Lebanon: The UN on Trial? (London: Chatham House, 2007), 8.
[50] International Crisis Group, Lebanon Politics: The Sunni Community and Hariri's Future Current, Brussels: ICG, 2011.

the rationale for an alliance with Western powers and Saudi Arabia in order to oppose the Shia movement, which was supported by Iran and Syria. This closing of ranks meant that Saad Hariri achieved virtually unchallenged leadership of the Sunni community.

The nearly absolute hegemony of Saad Hariri in the Sunni community led to various alliances that are critical to Lebanese political configurations. In defense of the neoliberal economic program, the billionaire mobilized Sunni followers from the most deprived areas of Lebanon, such as Akkar in the north. The "Future Movement" relied heavily on patronage and the ever-expanding health and social service provisions of the Hariri Foundation[51]. Saudi Arabia allegedly spent "hundreds of millions" of dollars to ensure the electoral success of the "Future Movement" and its allies in the 2009 parliamentary elections[52]. The mobilization of Sunni Muslims was primarily political but inevitably included religious sheikhs on behalf of the "Future Movement".[53] The Hariri camp courted Islamists, especially in Tripoli and the Akkar region. It entered into an alliance with the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, pressed for amnesty for militants arrested over Islamist violence in Denniyeh in 2000 and recruited former Salafist Khalid Dahir as a parliamentary deputy.[54] At one point, the Hariri movement started arming its supporters via a private security company.[55] The strategy of armed confrontation with Hezbollah failed when the Shia militia and its allies took control of much of the capital in May 2008, surrounding Hariri's residence. The "Future Movement" functionary in charge of arming Sunni youths was thereafter demoted.[56]

The clashes led to the Doha Agreement of May 21, 2008, which brought together both 14 March and 8 March leaders. The rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Syria led to a visit from Hariri to Damascus.

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[51] Hadi Makarem, Actually Existing Neoliberalism: The reconstruction of Downtown Beirut in post-civil war Lebanon, London School of economics and political science, London, September, 2014, 216-219. http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3078/1/Makarem_Actually_Existing_Neoliberalism.pdf (Accessed May 30, 2020).

[52] Robet F. Worth, "Foreign Money seeks to buy Lebanese votes", New York Times, April 22, 2009.. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/23/world/middleeast/23lebanon.html (Accessed May 30, 2020).

[53] International Crisis Group, Lebanon's Politics: The Sunni Community and Hariri's Future Current, May 26, 2010, 22. https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/lebanon-s-politics-sunni-community-and-hariri-s-future-current (Accessed May 30, 2020).

[54] See Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution, in Are Knudsen and Michael Kerr eds., (London, 2012), 140.

[55] Borzou Daragahi, Read Rafei, "Private force no match for Hezbollah", *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2008 http://articles.latimes.com/2008/may/12/world/fg.security12 (Accessed April 2, 2020)

[56] Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution, 140.

However, Hariri's swift "readiness" to compromise after an extended period of political crisis and communal mobilization – which even included arming his supporters – resulted in disillusionment with the billionaire's leadership. Some Sunni allies of the "Future Movement" distanced themselves from it.[57] Hariri was learning a lesson that the pre-war Sunni *zuama* had had to learn as well – confessional mobilization makes compromise more difficult.

The governments of Fuad Siniora (2005-2009) and Saad Hariri (2009-2011) focused mainly on the struggle against Syria and Hezbollah, but also sought to deepen neoliberal economic reforms. The finance ministry, the Council for Developments and Reconstruction (CDR) and central bank were headed by people closely associated with the Hariri camp. The Hariri network thus controlled the most important economic institutions of the country. The commitments of the Siniora government at the "Paris III" donor conference in 2007 reiterated the neoliberal program of the previous Hariri governments, including the privatization of state-controlled entities and welfare reform aimed at curtailing patronage opportunities of political rivals.[58]

However, this agenda was almost impossible to realize in the face of the interests of rival elites. When the Siniora government mooted the abolishment of the Council of the South and the Central Fund for the Displaced it met determined opposition from Speaker Nabih Berri (leader of Shia Amal Movement) and Walid Jumblatt (leader of Druze Progressive Socialist Party) who use these institutions as patronage instruments.[59]

Saad Hariri's government was brought down by the veto of 8 March ministers in January 2011 over his refusal to renounce the STL that was to indict and try Rafik Hariri's assassins. Mikati assumed the post of prime minister with the backing of 8 March. 14 March refused to participate in this government. Appropriating the language of popular protests in Tunisia and Egypt, The "Future Movement" declared a "day of anger". The protesters complained that the Shia Hezbollah had become the decisionmakers in terms of who should be prime minister, a position reserved for Sunnis. As one Sunni cleric put it at a Tripoli rally: "Saad Hariri is the only man who represents the Sunni faith... We will not accept Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah choosing our Prime Minister".[60] The protesters argued that Hariri was the only true representative of the Sunnis and that Mikati lacked legitimacy – hence the talk of a "constitutional coup". This sense of ownership of the prime minister's post is unprecedented in Lebanese history.

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Lebanese Republic, "Recovery, Reconstruction, Reform", paper presented at the International Conference for Support for Lebanon, Paris, January 25, 2007.
[59] Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution, 140.
[60] "Protests as Hezbollah poised to form Lebanon government", *BBC News*, January 24, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middleeast-12272483 (Accessed April 2, 2020).

Rivalries between different Sunni politicians were common in the pre-war and civil-war eras and only since 2005 has the Hariri camp managed to lay exclusive claim to the post. The choice of protest site was also highly symbolic and the protests were concentrated in Mikati's hometown, Tripoli. Mikati himself showed that he could also speak in a "confessional language". On Lebanon's premier political talk-show, called Kalam al-Nas, Mikati responded to suggestions that he did not represent "the Sunnis" by saying: "I don't accept anyone to question my Sunnism. If there's a Sunni in Lebanon, it's me. I'm Sunni in belief, Sunni in practice, Sunni in politics and I'm the number one defender of the Sunnis in Lebanon. I'm the number one Sunni in Lebanon!".[61]

It is a fact that Mikati would not have become prime minister without the backing of Hezbollah and the other 8 March members, but he also had some leeway. Hezbollah only held two minor ministries and Mikati immediately assured the USA that he would take an independent path[62]. There were important continuities between the governments headed by the Hariri camp and the Mikati administration. The most crucial one was the continuation of Hariri's policy of government debt management. Muhammad Safadi took over the finance ministry in the government of Mikati. Safadi is also a "new businessman" from Tripoli[63]. Mikati resisted demands by Michel Aoun to hand the finance ministry to his Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)[64]. Given the "anti-corruption" stance adopted by the FPM, such a move would have led to great unease among investors. Hailing from an established trading family, he migrated to Saudi Arabia in 1975, where he built residential compounds. Safadi had close relations with the head of the Saudi air force, Prince Turki al-Nasr. In 2000, he founded the Safadi Foundation, which offers health, educational and social services[65]. He first entered parliament in 2000 and became minister of public works in the government of Fuad Siniora in 2005 and minister of economy and trade in 2008 until Najib Mikati appointed him finance minister in 2011. Although previously allied to 14 March, he is clearly trying to assert his independence.

Since 1992, the Hariri faction has been in control of the finance ministry, the post of prime minister and the central bank. The policy adopted

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[61] "The Number One Sunni in Lebanon",. https://qifanabki.com/2012/05/21/the-number-one-sunni-in-lebanon/ (Accessed May 30, 2020).
[62] New York Times, January 26, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/27/world/middleast/27lebanon.html (Accessed April 2, 2020).
[63] Mohammed Safadi, *The Guardian*, June 7, 2007, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/07/bae6 (Accessed May 30, 2020).
[64] *Miqati Assures of His Ties with Saudi: The Government is Ready, Naharnet*, February 26, 2011, http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/3449 (Accessed May 30, 2020).
[65] For more information about Safadi Foundation see the official website, https://www.safadi-foundation.org/ (Accessed May 30, 2020).

in 1993 eventually pegged the currency to the US dollar by, at times, borrowing more on the belief of the government than was needed to finance the government deficit. This scheme drove up the demand for Lebanese pounds, but also raised interest rates on government debt, leading the country into a debt trap.[66] The main beneficiaries were Lebanese commercial banks and their depositors. Lebanese pound deposits are highly concentrated because only the country's financial and economic elites had the necessary savings to invest in government debt instruments in this way.[67] The government therefore needs to maintain the confidence of the country's financial elites and one way of doing so is to appoint one of the new businessmen as finance minister. A second political aspect of debt management is mentioned in an International Monetary Fund (IMF) working paper from 2008, which shows that the continuous rollover of Lebanese government debt depends on an "implicit guarantee" from donors and international financial institutions.[68] In this context, the main guarantor is Saudi Arabia. The kingdom bought up government bonds when investors refused to take them anymore, it provided the largest chunk of concessionary loans at the "Paris II" donor conference that prevented a financial crisis in Lebanon in 2002 and it transferred 1 billion USD to the Lebanese central bank during Israel's war with Hezbollah in 2006.[69] Therefore, the government needed someone who could manage relations with the Saudi monarchy. Safadi ticked both boxes. As a new businessman, Safadi reassured Lebanon's financial elites – the owners of banks and holders of deposits – and his close relations with the Saudi royals meant that the "implicit guarantee" would be maintained.

The most important issue of continuity between Saad Hariri and Najib Mikati was over funding for the STL. Though the court consisted of international jurists and Lebanese judges, the Lebanese government withheld its share of the funding. Mikati threatened to resign over the STL funding issue and eventually paid the government's dues in December 2011. There are several reasons. 1. Mikati argued that he wanted to fund the tribunal in order to avoid possible international sanctions against Lebanon. 2. Mikati could not be seen as going against his own community, where most felt strongly about the STL and regarded the assassination of Rafik Hariri as an attack on the Lebanese Sunni community. 3. Saudi Arabia was pressing for the STL and very few Sunni politicians in Lebanon can defy Saudi pressure.

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[66] See Gaspard Toufic, *A political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
[67] Bassam Fattouh, *"A Political Analysis of Budget Deficits in Lebanon"*, SOAS Economic Digest, June 2, 1997.
[68] See Axel Schimmelpfennig, Edward Gardner, *Lebanon-Weathering the Perfect Storms,* Washington: IMF, 2008, 19.
[69] Ibid, 5.

Saudi Arabia also exerts great economic power in Lebanon and its role as guarantor of Lebanon's government debt is critical. Mikati had previously relied on good relations with the Saudi monarchy to mediate with Hariri. Prior to the 2009 parliamentary elections, Saudi Arabia had reportedly engineered an electoral alliance between Hariri, Safadi and Mikati in Tripoli in order to avoid a deep division within the Sunni community.[70] As a businessman who had accumulated his wealth in the Gulf, Mikati also had close links to Saudi Arabia. Upon taking up the position as prime minister, he stressed the importance of close ties to Riyadh.[71] Saudi support for the tribunal is therefore likely to have played a large role in Mikati's decision to provide STL funding.

Conclusion

The civil war (1975-1990) had left the Sunni community with a leadership vacuum that was filled by Rafik Hariri. From the mid-1990s onwards, Hariri transformed himself from a "national" leader to a mostly "Sunni" leader. He did so for electoral reasons and used philanthropy to build up a clientelist network. This strategy of "confessional leadership" became even more intense under his son Saad, who effectively monopolized Sunni political leadership in the country. This was partly a function of the increasing rift between Sunni and Shia communities, which was driven by domestic and international politics. Hariri's monopoly curtails the ability of politicians such as Mikati or Safadi to lay claim to the post of prime minister.

The rise of the new business elite in Lebanon confirms the importance of class in analyzing Lebanese politics. The emergence of the new businessmen was due to changes in Lebanon's role in the capitalist world economy and the oil boom in the Gulf region. They replaced the traditional commercial-financial bourgeoisie that had dominated the pre-war economy and politics. Rafik Hariri's neoliberal reconstruction program has to be understood in the context of his class interest. The businessman-politician and the neoliberal technocrats in his team were a formidable force for neoliberal reforms. Their ability to realize this project was circumscribed by rival elites – especially former militia leaders – and by Syria. While Hariri was able to shape reconstruction and finance, he was prevented from privatizing state-controlled enterprises. Analyses of Lebanese politics often neglect class and political economy in favor of confessional dynamics and

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[70] International Crisis Group, Lebanon's Politics: The Sunni Community and Hariri's Future Current, May 26, 2010, (Accessed May 30, 2020).
https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/lebanon-s-politics-sunni-community-and-hariri-s-future-current (Accessed May 30, 2020).
[71] "Miqati Assures of His Ties with Saudi: The Government is Ready", *Naharnet*, February 26, 2011, http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/3449 (Accessed May 30, 2020).

international factors. The comparison of Rafik and Saad Hariri, Najib Mikati and Issam Fares illustrates the importance of confessional position and international alliances in explaining the different strategies of new contractors and their relative success.

Issam Fares was less "successful" and focused his efforts on public policy think-tanks. International alliances are also crucial to understanding the relative success of different new businessmen in Lebanon. Hariri enjoyed strong support from Saudi Arabia. Mikati and Fares were allied to Syria, although they also maintained ties with Riyadh. Despite the obvious differences in alliances between Hariri and Mikati, the willingness and the ability of Prime Minister Mikati to chart an independent path from Hezbollah over the STL funding issue approves that the similarities between new businessmen in Lebanon can be as important as their differences.

YEVA HARUTYUNYAN

JAPAN'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Abstract: This paper examines political and economic strategy of Japan in Central Asia* and tries to reveal Japan's main interests in the region. Strategic geography and rich natural resources of Central Asian states are attracting Great Powers and neighboring regional states to increase their influence in this region. Though Japan is not engaged in "new great game" politics, it has its political and economic strategy towards the region. For realizing it, Japan is conducting bilateral and multilateral relationships with the states of the region by using Official Development Assistance (ODA) program as a tool.

Being interested in political stability and security of this region, Japan in its political and economic activities assists the states of Central Asia to overcome economic difficulties and isolation as well as promotes the formation of political union for further integration of Central Asian region.

Keywords: *Japan, Central Asia, oil and gas pipelines, peaceful nuclear energy, Silk Road (or Eurasian) Diplomacy.*

Introduction

With the collapse of Soviet Union, the Cold War came to an end. As a result, old world order was replaced by a new one. The rise of multiplayer world order in place of a bipolar world dominated by the USA and the USSR was the reality of the new global order. These new major centers of power including Japan, European Union, China, ASEAN and Russia came to international flora with growing economic capabilities.[1] Due to the growth of energy demands of Asian states such as China, India, Japan and South Korea the architecture of global oil, and

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* Central Asia, by its most common definition, is a region consisting of five "Stan" that were formerly Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. See "Central Asia: Core and Periphery," Geohistory, October 29, 2017, https://geohistory.today/central-asia/ (accessed August 11, 2020).

[1] Vatsala Shukla, *India's Foreign Policy in the New Millennium: The Role of Power* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Dist: 2005), 8.

gas markets shifted from Europe to Asia.[2] Thus, huge amount of energy resources of Central Asian states increased the interests of Asian states which launch to activate "Old Silk Road" known in literature as "Energy Silk Road" or "Silk Road of the 21st century."[3] The main features of this road are carrying out three components: a Eurasian Continental railroad bridge*, a major highway*, and a pipeline network.[4]

It is noteworthy to mention that Central Asia has always been attractive for the Great Powers. Russian imperial interests in Central Asia started in the 18th century. Later, from 1813 to 1907 the Great Britain and the Russian Empire have been struggling for domination on Central Asia. However, from 1860 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in fact Central Asia was under Russian rule.[5] After the dissolution of the USSR and establishment of independence of five states (Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrghyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan), Turkey, Iran, China, Pakistan, India, the United States and Russia has begun combating for filling influence vacuum in Central Asia. The prize of the "new great game" are pipelines, tanker routes, petroleum consortiums and contracts. Though Japan is not engaged directly in "new great game" politics, it is concerned with the consequences of the "game" and cannot afford the destabilization of Central Asia. According to the

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[2] Seong Min Hong, "Role of Turkmenistan on the New Silk Road in the 21st Century," *RIES Newsletter* 23 (March, 2011): 8, http://hopia.net/hong/file/Role%20of%20Turkmenistan%20Silk%20Road.pdf (accessed August 11, 2020).

[3] Timur Dadabaev, "Silk Road" as Foreign Policy Discourse: The Construction of Chinese, Japanese and Korean Engagement Strategies in Central Asia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 9 (2018): 37.

* The rail transport route for moving freight and passengers overland between Pacific seaports in the Russian Far East and China, and seaports in Europe is known as the Eurasian Land Bridge (sometimes named the New Silk Road or Belt).

* The Asian Highway Network (also known as the Great Asian Highway) is a cooperative project signed between 32 countries of Asia and Europe to allow the highway to cross the continent and also reach to Europe aiming to improve the highway systems in Asia. Most of the funding comes from the larger, more advanced Asian nations like Japan, India, Nepal, Taiwan, South Korea and China as well as international agencies such as the Asian Development Bank. See Hong, "Role of Turkmenistan," 9.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Edward Allworth ed., *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian Dominance: A Historical Overview*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 56.

former ambassador of Japan to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Dr. Akio Kawato Japan is mainly interested in peace and stability in the region.[6]

In this research paper we would like to examine political and economic strategy of Japan in Central Asia and to reveal Japan's interests in the region by using case study method.

Japan after World War II has established a new strategy in its foreign policy which is based on three principles:

1. The United Nation-centered policy,

2. Cooperation with democratic states such as the United States of America, the Great Britain and other allies, 3. The strengthening relationships with Asian states.[7]

It is notable that until the 1990s the definition of "Asian states" for Japan has been limited mostly by Pacific Asia (or Oceanic Asia) and only after the end of Cold War, and the disintegration of bipolar international system, Japan enlarged the geography of cooperation with Asian states including also Silk Road Asia (or South-West and Central Asia).[8]

Central Asia, due to its geography and rich underground resources of natural gas, petroleum gold, and uranium ore, attracts Powers and regional states to struggle for strengthening their influence in this region. Unstable political situation in neighboring states such as in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, is caused for non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, irregular migration, the issues of drug proliferation and trafficking, water resources issue and so on.

It is notable, that the prosperity of Japan mostly depends on the stability and peace around the globe. Therefore, instability in Central Asia and in surrounding regions as a part of the chain will have negative influence on Japan's economy as well. Japan is not only interested in the development of the economy of Central Asian states, and establishment of political independence of these states via regional political

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[6]Lutfullah Mangi, "*The Political and Economic Strategy of Japan towards Central Asia,*" https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/145121/The%20Political%20and%20Economic%20Strategy%20of%20Japan%20towards%20Central%20Asia.pdf (accessed August 11, 2020).

[7] Hosoya Yuichi, "Japan in Search of a New International Identity," *Nippon Communications Foundation*, October 3, 2011, https://www.nippon.com/en/features/c00201/?pnum=1 (accessed August 11, 2020).

[8] Motegi Toshimitsu, "Nihon Gaiko no Kosoryoku [Japan's Diplomatic Initiative]," (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 2003), 114–117.

cooperation, but also assisting the efforts of these states to establish Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the region. Japan, which adopted "three non-nuclear principles" of not possessing, not producing, and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapon in 1967, is encouraging anti-nuclear movement in the world. Mostly Kazakhstan, the soil of which was treated as a nuclear testing ground and was conducted as many as 460 nuclear tests during Soviet Union period, highly appreciated Japan's efforts towards international nuclear disarmament and establishment of non-proliferation regime.[9]

For contributing peace and stability, Japan is using *Official Development Assistance (ODA) program** as a tool to provide financial assistance not only *to international organizations* like the United Nation (UN), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of UN[10], International Monetary Fund (IMF), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO) and etc., but also *supports developing states* directly to overcome internal problems. Thus, ODA is broadly divided into bilateral aid and multilateral aid which provides assistance to developing states via Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA). There are three types of bilateral aid - technical cooperation, loans, and grant aid (see *Map 1*). The type of aid is defined by the level of income of the states.[11]
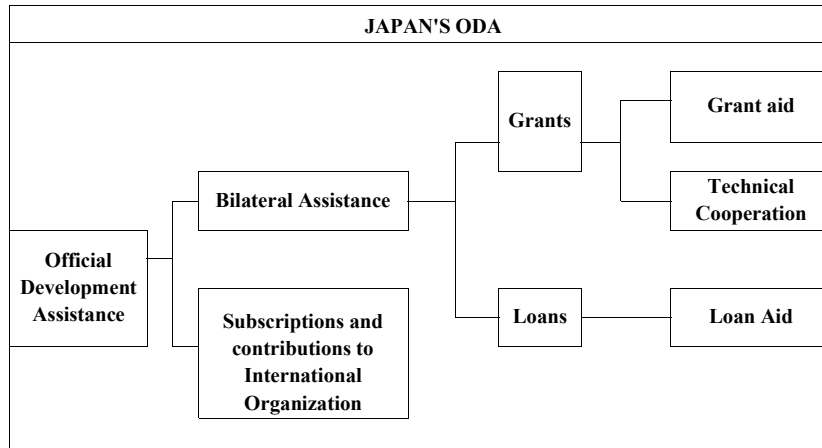
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[9] Nuclear Nonproliferation & Security, Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan Washington, D.C., https://kazakhembus.com/foreign-policy/nuclear-nonproliferation-security (accessed August 11, 2020).

* It is notable that ODA program has taken its start as a part of Japan's post-war reparations program to Southeast Asian countries since the 1960s. In 1978 Japan became the leading bilateral provider of ODA in Asia and eleven years later became the greatest ODA donor in the world.

[10] "United Nations Peacekeepers: Which Countries Provide the Most Troops and Funding?" Best Delegate, January 10, 2017, http://bestdelegate.com/united-nations-peacekeepers-which-countries-provide-the-most-troops-and-funding/ (accessed August 11, 2020).

[11]"Japan's ODA and JICA, "Website of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), https://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/oda/index.html (accessed August 11, 2020).

Map 1

JAPAN'S ODA

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Official Development Assistance
 ├── Bilateral Assistance
 │    ├── Grants
 │    │    ├── Grant aid
 │    │    └── Technical Cooperation
 │    └── Loans
 │         └── Loan Aid
 └── Subscriptions and contributions to International Organization
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Source: Japan International Cooperation System, https://www.jics.or.jp/jics_html-e/activities/tec/index.html.

In line with Japan's economic growth, the ODA's budget was also increased in 1980s and the Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) considered the necessity to establish the procurement specialized institution for realizing Japan's assistance in Grant Aid. Thus, in 1989 Japan International Cooperation System (JICS) was established. [12]

Political and economic strategy of Japan in Central Asia

For understanding Japan's strategy in the region, the paper would like to discuss Japan's economic and political interests in Central Asia.

After the dissolution of the USSR and establishment of independence of five Central Asian states, Japan was among the first countries to establish diplomatic relationships with these states in 1992. Japan, as a first step for interaction, donated about US $2.57 million to five Central Asian countries via ODA in 1993. It reached US $108.48 million and US $242 million by 2008 and 2016, respectively.[13] Japan's ODA loans to Central Asia till 2010 were about US $2 billion; grant aid

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[12]"About JICS," Website of Japan International Cooperation System, https://www.jics.or.jp/jics_html-e/profile/about.html (accessed August 11, 2020).
[13] "ODA by Region Central Asia and the Caucasus," Website of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000406644.pdf (accessed August 11, 2020); Nazarmuhamedov B., "Japan's ODA Policy toward Central Asia and the Caucasus. An Analysis of Japanese Assistance to Economic Development in Kyrgyzstan and Armenia," *Journal of International and Advanced Japanese Studies* 10 (March 2018): 171.

has been US $600 million up to now. Within that sum, about US $260 million was for technical assistance towards capacity building.[14] ODA's loans were mostly used for developing the infrastructures of the states of Central Asia like roads, modernization of airports, railways, fiber lines, bridges, power plants, vocational schools, installation and canalization system.[15]

In the beginning Japan's *economic interests* in Central Asia were based on conducting a feasibility study for developing oil and gas transportation system which would connect Central Asia with Eurasia and would construct oil and gas pipelines from the region up to Japan. Due to Japan's investments in the development of oil and gas spheres were supposed to support these states to overcome economic difficulties and facilitate integration processes in the region.

One of the first projects was the construction of Trans-Asia Gas Pipeline which supposed to link Turkmenistan to Japan through the Tarim Basin (China) up to South Korea.[16] This project has been referred to as the "Energy Silk Road Project" and should be 8000 km long.[17] However, high cost of this project (about US $9 billion) and the distance made Japan suspend the construction works. Later this project was realized by China and for the first time in 2009 the Turkmen gas was supplied to China through this pipeline.[18]

Japan is supporting also the construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, which will stretch from the Turkmen giant Galkynysh field (known as South Yolotan-Osman) to Fazilka on the Indo-Pakistan border. The length of pipeline is calculated

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[14] Mirzokhid Rakhimov, "Central Asia and Japan: Bilateral and Multilateral Relations," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5, Issue 1 (January 2014): 79, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1879366513000328#fn1 (accessed August 11, 2020).

[15] "Focus on the Central Asia, The New Silk Road," Website of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), January 2013, https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/focus_on/central_asia2013/central_asia_01.html (accessed August 11, 2020).

[16] Standing J., Stroth S., "Exxon, Others to Study Asian Pipeline Project," *The Houston Chronicle*, August 23, 1995, 1.

[17] Kuen-Wook Paik, *Gas and Oil in Northeast Asia* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), 186; Sergey S. Zhiltsov, Igor S. Zonn, Andrey G. Kostianoy, *Oil and Gas Pipelines in the Black-Caspian Seas Region* (Switzerland, 2016), 111.

[18] Zhiltsov, *Oil and Gas*, 112.

about 1800 km long. The construction of the TAPI pipeline began in December 2015 with a total value of US $10 billion.[19] It is expected that the TAPI project, dubbed the "Peace Pipeline", will ensure peace and stability in the region through cooperation between the states of the region and interdependence in meeting energy needs. Due to this, the gas pipeline will connect South and Central Asia.[20]

The other sphere of Japan's economic interests in the region is the development of oil producing market. Since 1998 Japanese companies have engaged in developing the Kashagan field in Kazakhstan, which is considered as one of the largest fields in the world. Its total oil reserves are estimated at 38 billion barrels of which recoverable from 13 billion barrels. Production at the Kashagan oil field was supposed to begin in 2005, but it had to be postponed several times. Thus, oil production was started only in 2013. The reason for the delay in production at the Kashagan oil field is associated not only with the freezing of the North Caspian Sea during the winter, which complicates offshore production, but it is also located in the center a unique natural habitat. Due to the specific chemical composition of Kashagan crude (with its high levels of poisonous H_2S (hydrogen sulphide)) and high oil pressure, field development can have a serious impact on the region's ecosystem, including potential danger to birds, marine fauna and human health.[21]

From a logistical standpoint, the lack of pipeline capacity for oil and gas exports is yet another key challenge for this project. It is important to note that due to the high cost of building pipelines from Central Asia to Japan, as well as the existing distance between two sides, the hydrocarbon resources of this region have not yet been exported to Japan. However, Japan is interested in construction of pipelines in

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[19] Bhutta Z., "Japan, China Companies Win Contracts for TAPI Project," *The Express Tribune*, August 24, 2016, http://tribune.com.pk/story/1169388/energy-supplies-japan-china-companies-win-contracts-tapi-project/ (accessed August 11, 2020).
[20] Bhutta, "Japan, China."
[21] Nadia Campaner, Shamil Yenikeyeff, "The Kashagan Field: A Test Case for Kazakhstan's Governance of Its Oil and Gas Sector," *International Nuclear Information System* 42 (1), Issue 24 (1) (October, 2008): 9, https://inis.iaea.org/collection/NCLCollectionStore/_Public/42/050/42050161.pdf (accessed August 11, 2020).

Central Asia for taking off the states of the region from isolation and for overcoming economic difficulties through integration processes.

Japan is also interested in civilian nuclear cooperation. Being the third largest nuclear power in the world regarding the number of operating civilian nuclear plants, Japan is interested in cooperation with Kazakhstan - the second largest uranium-rich state (12% of world uranium reserves), and Uzbekistan (2% of world uranium reserves). For ensuring the interests of Japanese companies in these states Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in August 2006. Later, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between Japanese and Kazakhstani companies in 2007 to help to ensure stable supplies of uranium to Japan in the long run, as well as facilitate the transfer of civilian nuclear technology to Kazakhstan and support the construction of a nuclear reactor. Among the 24 deals, Japanese companies –Marubeni Corporation, Tokyo Electronic Power Co. and Chubu Electric Power Co. agreed with Kazakh state-run atomic company Kazatomprom to obtain rights for developing the Kharasan-1 and Kharasan-2 uranium deposits (2,000 metric tons per year).[22] It is notable that until 2018 the shares of Japanese companies which are known as Energy Asia consortium in Kharasan mine project have been the followings: Marubeni 30%, Tepco 30%, Toshiba 22.5%, Chubu 10%, Tohoku 5% and Kyushu 2.5%. In 2018 Kazatomprom bought a 40.05% share in Energy Asia Ltd and a 16.02% share of Khorosan-U.[23]

For a long-term supply of uranium from Kazakhstan a contract was signed by Japanese Itochu Corp. Japan also agreed to provide Kazakhstan with technological assistance for the processing of uranium fuel and the construction of light-water reactors in exchange for supplies of uranium.

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[22] Togzhan Kassenova, Masako Toki, "Japan and Kazakhstan: Nuclear Energy Cooperation," *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, March 13, 2009, https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/japan-kazakhstan-energy-cooperation/ (accessed August 11, 2020).

[23] "Kazatomprom Completes the Acquisition of a 40.05% Share in Energy Asia (BVI) Limited and 16.02% in JV "Khorasan-U" LLP," Website of Kazatomprom National Atomic Company, December 14, 2018, https://www.kazatomprom.kz/en/media/view/kazatomprom_zavershil_sdelku_po_priobret eniu_4005_doli_v_energy_asia_bvi_limited_i_1602_v_too_sp_horasanu (accessed August 11, 2020).

Another agreement on uranium supply and Japanese help in upgrading the Ulba fuel fabrication plant was signed in May 2008. Kazatomprom seeks to move from a supplier of raw materials to the sale of its uranium as fabricated fuel assemblies. Then negotiations began on a bilateral agreement, in particular, on nuclear cooperation between Kazakhstan and Japan. In May 2011, a high-level intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy entered into force.[24]

In March 2009, Japanese companies Kansai, Sumitomo and Nuclear Fuel Industries signed an agreement with Kazatomprom to process uranium for the Kansai plants. In March 2010, a joint venture was established with Sumitomo: Summit Atom Rare Earth, and in June - Kazatomprom and Toshiba Corp. agreed to set up a rare-earth metals joint venture.

In June 2012 and February 2013, between the Kazakhstan National Nuclear Center (NNC) and the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) were signed research and development agreements relating to the design, construction and operation of a high-temperature gas-cooled reactor (HTR) about 50 MW at Kurchatov, Kazakhstan. This is marked as a national project. In June 2015, an agreement was signed between NNC and JAEA on the third stage of the project for the study of Sodium-cooled Fast Reactor (SFR) in Kazakhstan.[25]

In October 2015, another agreement was signed between Kazatomprom, the Japan Atomic Energy Company (JAPC) and Marubeni Utility Services on the development of cooperation in the construction, and financing of the nuclear power plant, including consultations, exchange of experience in the field of public communications, organization of technical seminars and expert meetings on safety issues and staff training.

As for Uzbekistan, in September 2006, a Japanese-Uzbek intergovernmental agreement was signed aimed at financing the development of Uzbek uranium. In October 2007, Itochu Corporation

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[24] Hisane Masaki, "New Energy Fuels Japan's Diplomacy: From the Middle East to Central Asia," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 5, Issue 5 (May 2, 2007): 7.
[25]"Uranium and Nuclear Power in Kazakhstan," World Nuclear Association, https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/kazakhstan.aspx (accessed August 11, 2020).

agreed with the Navoi Mining and Metallurgical Combine (NMCC) of Uzbekistan to develop technology for the extraction and benefaction of black shale, in particular the Rudnoye deposit, and to receive about 300 tons per year since 2007. But this agreement was no longer heard until February 2011, when Itochu signed a 10-year "large-scale" uranium purchase agreement with NMMC.

In August 2008, Mitsui Corp. signed a basic agreement with the Goskomgeo (State Committee on Geology and Mineral Resources) of the Government of Uzbekistan on the creation of a joint venture for geological research in the development of uranium black-shale reserves at the West Kokpatasskaya, 300 km mine northwest of Navoi.

In October 2008, the Japanese Sojitz Corp. and Uzbekistan signed an agreement for uranium exploration at the Chetbertoye mine (about 350 km west of Tashkent). In June 2009, between the Goscomgeo and JOGMEC (Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation) was signed an agreement on joint exploration of uranium in Uzbekistan. Later, in July 2013, JOGMEC received a five-year license at two areas - the promising deposits Dzhuzkuduk and Tamdiykuduk-Tulyantash in the Navoi region of the country for geological exploration. The minimum amount of funding for the first year of work was US $3 million.

Thus, Japan's economic strategy in the states of Central Asia is aimed at developing oil and gas communication infrastructures and peaceful nuclear energy for taking the states of the region out of the isolation and aiding them to overcome economic difficulties.

The other interest of Japan in Central Asia is ***political stability*** and development of all forms of cooperation with the states of this region, the desire to strengthen and consolidate its presence in the region.[26] During the Cold War, being protected by the security umbrella of the United States, Japan was mainly concentrated its interests on economic affairs. In the post-Cold War world where so-called bilateral stability no longer existed, Japan encouraged a rebirth of "Japan's Asian policy." Japan's policy towards establishing its political presence in Central Asian region can be divided into two periods. ***The first initiatives*** was made by

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[26] Rakhimov, "Central Asia," 85.

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in 1997 which announced to launch Japanese Silk Road (or Eurasian) Diplomacy (1997-2004). This plan defined three directions for cooperation: (1) political dialogue aiming at enhancing trust and mutual understanding; (2) economic cooperation as well as cooperation for natural resource development aiming at fostering prosperity; and (3) cooperation to build peace through nuclear non-proliferation, democratization, and thus fostering the stability.[27] Hashimoto hoped to bring the nations of the former Soviet Union into a network of interdependence by establishing Japanese economic and political presence in Eurasia, and by facilitating Japanese participation in resource exploration. During his speech, Hashimoto laid out the idea that it was time for Japan to forge a new Eurasian diplomatic perspective "viewed from the Pacific" instead of one viewed "from the Atlantic." Broadly speaking, due to this strategy Japan could play a leading role in influencing Eurasian affairs.[28] It is notable that Japan aims to play a leading role without suppressing the interests of other players in "Great politics game." Moreover, Japan is interested in interaction with other regional states, including Russia and China, bridging the geographic isolation of Central Asia and its economic integration into world economic relations.[29] This concept as a specific direction of Japanese foreign policy has been maintained during the Hashimoto administration and its successor, the Obuchi administration (from July 30, 1998 to April 5, 2000), and decreased with time, while the Krasnoyarsk process failed to meet the deadline to conclude the bilateral peace treaty between Russia and Japan.[30]

The second initiatives to engage in Central Asia was made in 2004 in Astana (Kazakhstan) by Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi, who during a joint meeting with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Central

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[27] Timur Dadabaev, "Japan's Search for Its Central Asian Policy," *Asian Survey* 53, no. 3 (June 2013): 515; Takeshi, "Japan's Multilateral," 72.

[28] Christopher Len, "Understanding Japan's Central Asian Engagement," in Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy: Paving the Road Ahead, edited by Christopher Len, Uyama Tomohiko, Hirose Tetsuya (Washington, D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2008), 31.

[29] Timur Dadabaev, "Central Asia: Japan's New "Old" Frontier," *Asia Pacific Issues*, no. 136 (February 2019): 3.

[30] Takeshi, "Japan's Multilateral," 74.

Asian states, except Turkmenistan, declared to launch the new forum - "Central Asia Plus Japan."

The changes in international security as a result of 9/11 and dramatically shifts of a regional strategic environment in Central Asia made Japan play more active role for securing peace and stability not only in this region, but also in entire Eurasian continent.[31] The dialogue will be pursued through the five pillars of (1) political dialogue, (2) intra-regional cooperation, (3) business promotion, (4) intellectual dialogue and (5) cultural and people-to-people exchange. While stressing the importance of intra-regional cooperation for realizing peace and stability and economic prosperity, Summit of Ministers listed ten possible areas of intra-regional cooperation including counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, mining, the environment, water, energy, etc.[32]

Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Aso as a predecessor of Kawaguchi continued his policy. The following guidelines was stressed by Taro Aso in his speech titled as "Central Asia as a Corridor of Peace and Stability": 1) approaching the region from a broad-based perspective; 2) supporting "open regional cooperation"; 3) seeking partnerships rooted in universal values (democracy, a market economy, the safeguarding of human rights, and the rule of law). Thus, Aso developed Kawaguchi's concept of Japan's Central Asian policy putting forward "universal values."[33]

During the second ministerial meeting of "Central Asia Plus Japan" forum member states released an action plan for developing above-mentioned pillars, especially that of intra-regional cooperation.[34]

In August 2006 Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi at first visited the Central Asian republics. It is remarkable that in the same year the

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[31] Ibid, 80.

[32] "Central Asia Plus Japan" Dialogue/Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), Website of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, March 4, 2005, https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2005/3/0304-2.html (accessed August 11, 2020).

[33] Takeshi, "Japan's Multilateral," 82.

[34] "Central Asia Plus Japan" Dialogue - Action Plan, Website of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, June 5, 2006, https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/action0606.html (accessed August 11, 2020).

"Central Asia and the Caucasus Division" was established in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[35]

Later, on November 30, 2006 Foreign Minister of Japan - Taro Aso in his speech titled as "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons" noted the importance of developing the relationships between two sides technically and financially to develop the principles of democracy and market economy.[36]

Since the 2015 visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to five states of this region[37], Japan's policy towards Central Asia region has been shifted to be more goal-oriented and on the practical outputs of such cooperation has been prioritized over the value-based approach. Japanese leadership may cause to this shift, thus, the process of democratization in Central Asia appeared to be a long-term objective, and in the meantime, the economic opportunities of cooperation need to be taken.[38]

Summarizing above mentioned, Japan's political strategy towards this region is enhancing through political dialogue and inputting "universal values" to promote the integration processes in the region for ensuring peace and stability not only in Central Asia, but also in the entire Eurasian continent.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to define Japan's strategy in Central Asia and to reveal Japan's political and economic interests in this region. Being interested in peace and stability of Central Asia as a part of entire globe, Japan is promoting the states of Central Asia to overcome economic difficulties, isolation and security threats by developing the infrastructures of crude oil and natural gas production, by supporting the construction of pipelines to export the hydrocarbon resources to the other continents and by enhancing cooperation of peaceful nuclear energy. Japan is encouraging also the integration processes of creation a political

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[35] Takeshi, "Japan's Multilateral," 75.
[36] Kent E. Calder, Francis Fukuyama, *East Asian Multilateralism: Prospects for Regional Stability* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2008), 179-80.
[37] "Prime Minister Abe Visits Mongolia and the Five Central Asian Countries (October 22-28, 2015)," Website of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, November 2, 2015, https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page3e_000397.html (accessed August 11, 2020).
[38] Dadabaev, "Silk Road," 34.

union between the states of the region for taking out from isolation. Due to Japan's initiatives, "Central Asia Plus Japan" forum was established aiming to overcome all political and economic issues and to develop intra-regional cooperation between two sides. Though in the beginning Japan was interested in development of value-based relationships with Central Asian states where the principles of democracy and market economy was prioritized, later its approaches were shifted to be more goal-oriented and aimed to have the practical outputs of such cooperation.

Japan's strategy in Central Asian region can be described as constructive, aiming to develop various spheres of **cooperation** for establishing peace and stability not only in this region, but also in entire Eurasian continent.

LILIT MAYILYAN

UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING DYNAMICS OF TURKISH-AZERBAIJANI RELATIONS: "ONE NATION, TWO STATES?"

Abstract: The objective of this study is to analyze the underlying factors within Turkish-Azerbaijani relations that is encapsulated in the motto, "One nation, two states," focusing on the main challenges and differences between the two countries. This article maps out the shifting dynamics of bilateral relations since Azerbaijani independence in 1991 and reveals the political, economic and cultural underpinnings of bilateral relations.

This study discusses the place of Turkey and Azerbaijan within each other's foreign policy calculations and claims that the current phase of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations is driven by the national pragmatic interests of each state despite the initial years of romanticized relations. It reveals that the national interests of Turkey and Azerbaijan do not always align and they follow pragmatic national interests, despite their "One nation, two states" rhetoric. The strategic partnership of the two states relies on the energy and transportation projects, as well as cultural, historical and ethnic affinity. However, the political, economic, and cultural contingencies have also been crucial to map out the broader picture of bilateral relations.

Keywords: *Turkey-Azerbaijan relations, "One nation, two states," energy relations, partnership, flag crisis.*

Introduction

The objective of this study is to analyze Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, focusing on the main challenges and differences in bilateral relations despite the narrative of their uniqueness and ideal relations. It focuses on political, economic and cultural underpinnings and the differences within these relations. This regional nexus has undergone certain transformations over the past three decades and plays a vital role in regional dynamics. After the collapse of the USSR, relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan began to develop within the context of ethnic, cultural and historical affinity. Following the dissolution period, Turkey moved to fill the religious and ideological vacuum left by Russia. On November 9, 1991, Turkey became the first state to officially recognize

the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. After the official recognition, the countries established diplomatic relations on January 14, 1992. Turkey's positive image in Azerbaijan is due to its economic development, secularism, and close ties with the West, and this helped to build economic and political ties as well. However, since early 1993, the romanticized relations have been subject to challenges and shifts. Despite the steadily improving friendly relations and the strategic partnership between these two countries, there are several challenges posed by changing realities and perceptions. The identification of these challenges and contingencies is crucial for understanding the real dynamics of bilateral relations and challenging the narrative of the "uniqueness" of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations.

This study consists of three main parts. The first part sheds light on the academic literature tackling Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. The second part maps out the dynamics of the development of relations from the initial stage of engagement in the 1990s as well as the milestones of bilateral relations elaborating on each country's place in the other's foreign policy. The third section examines the parameters of contingencies in bilateral relations in the political, economic and cultural spheres and the countries' positions on these issues. The key findings of the research are provided in the conclusion.

Literature review
Defining Turkish-Azerbaijani relations

A considerable amount of literature tackles the dynamics of Turkish-Azerbaijani bilateral relations. The literature on Turkish-Azerbaijani relations mainly focuses on the phases of the development of relations (from romanticism to pragmatism). Other much-discussed pillars of relations are ethnic kinship and energy cooperation as the main determinants of relations.

The common opinion is that the alliance between Azerbaijan and Turkey encapsulated in the "One nation, two states" discourse is mostly defined by their historical, ethnic, and cultural bonds. This approach is shared by most experts. The academic literature identifies three stages in the dynamics of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. The first phase from 1991 to 1993 evolved in the narrative of "high expectations and hopes and

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Turkey's overestimated ability to help Azerbaijan."[1] The rhetoric of unity and brotherhood sometimes overrode reality due to the lack of understanding of each other's interests and priorities, which led to euphoria. During the second stage, from 1993 to 1997, pragmatism and national interests became the cornerstones of relations, challenging the romanticized relations between the two countries.[2] During the third phase starting in 1997, the energy sector became a higher priority and changed the dynamics in the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, defining the transition from "romance to pragmatism".[3] During this period, bilateral relations reached the strategic partnership level and Turkey became a major consumer of Azerbaijan's oil and gas resources.[4] The relations began to shift because of certain factors since the early 2000s and this period was characterized as the "end of the honeymoon" between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Thus, the maxim coined by Heydar Aliyev "one nation-two states" has been subject to the pragmatic interests of the two countries. Svante Cornell identifies three main factors for this. Firstly, Turkey concentrated on its domestic affairs during the financial crisis of 2000–2001, which was followed by a political crisis. It focused on the European vector of its foreign policy.[5] Secondly, the Islamic conservative party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) that had little enthusiasm for Turkic brotherhood came into power in November 2002. Finally, Demirel's presidency ended (the personal relations between Aliyev and Demirel were considered to be the backbone of their bilateral relations). Nevertheless, relations were not subject to U-turns and deviations. The main difference was putting more emphasis on economic and energy relations preconditioned by the economic development of Turkey.[6]

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[1] Nazrin Mehdiyeva, *Power Games in the Caucasus: Azerbaijan's Foreign and Energy Policy towards the West, Russia and the Middle East*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2011).

[2] Elnur Soltanov, "Turkish-Azerbaijani relations: Brothers in arms or brothers in the dark?" In *Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations: One nation-two states?* ed. Murad Ismayilov and Norman Graham (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 21-54.

[3] Fariz Ismailzade, "Turkey-Azerbaijan: The Honeymoon is Over," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 4, no.4 (Winter 2005).

[4] Mehdiyeva, *Power Games in the Caucasus,* 185.

[5] Svante Cornell, *Azerbaijan since Independence* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 375.

[6] Soltanov, "Turkish-Azerbaijani relations," 33-34.

The paramount significance of energy projects in the dynamics of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations is highlighted by another group of scholars. They share the common opinion that the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations gained new momentum through their energy partnership.[7] Moreover, the current phase of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations is considered to be driven by energy cooperation. Three major energy projects define the energy relations between the two states: Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Oil Pipeline (launched in 2006) and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) Natural Gas Pipeline (launched in 2007) also known as the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) and the Trans Anatolian Gas Pipeline (inaugurated in 2018).[8]

After gaining independence, the Azerbaijani political elite decided to follow the Turkish model of development, which stipulated economic development, secularism and tight cooperation with the West.[9] Azerbaijan has identified the following foreign policy priorities: foster the economy via large-scale exploitation of hydrocarbon resources; strengthen its military power; create a secular image of the country.[10] In order to fulfill these objectives, Baku embraced Turkey as its main ally. In the National Security Concept, the strategic partnership with Turkey is mentioned as an important factor in maintaining peace and security in the region.[11] However, Turkey's perception of its role as a "big brother" has not always been encouraged by Azerbaijan, who did not want to be left at the periphery of bilateral relations.[12] Therefore, Elif Kanca claims that the

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[7] Murad Ismayilov, "Together but apart for twenty years: Azerbaijan and Turkey in Pursuit of Identity and Survival." In *Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations: One nation-two states?* ed. Murad Ismayilov and Norman Graham (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 1-21.

[8] Elçin Suleymanov, Cihat Bulut, and Farhad Rahmanov, (2017). "Economic and Political Analysis of Azerbaijan-Turkey Energy Relations," *Journal of Management, Economics, and Industrial Organization* 1, no.2 (2017):*24-44.*

[9] Soltanov, *"Turkish-Azerbaijani relations,"* 38.

[10] Mehmet Dikkaya and Jason Strakes, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations? Result for Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Process between 2008 and 2010," *Review of Socio-Economic Perspectives* 2, no.1, (June 2017): 90.

[11] National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Approved by Instruction No. 2198 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 23 May 2007. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/154917/Azerbaijan2007.pdf (Accessed May 2, 2020).

[12] Soltanov, *"Turkish-Azerbaijani relations,"* 40.

relations are subject to "hidden otherization under national identity ideology."[13]

The main factors shaping the Turkish policy towards Azerbaijan include counterbalancing Russia in the South Caucasus, mitigating Iranian propaganda, supporting independence, supporting Azerbaijan in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, pursuing further cooperation in the energy sector and preserving a favorable administration.[14] However, the relations with Azerbaijan did not top the list of foreign policy directions during the AKP tenure in the early 2000s, as the AKP government worked on developing relations with Western and Middle Eastern countries. In the framework of "zero problems with the neighbors," the initiatives to normalize relations between Armenia and Turkey led to a major crisis in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations.[15] From 2008-2011, Turkey faced a number of domestic and regional turbulences parallel with increased popular support for the incumbent AKP that affected its development path and a redefined political agenda. The AKP's political agenda was modified, as instead of the EU accession talks and strong pro-Westerm sentiments, it was more about economic development, Turkey's descent into Erdogan's authoritarianism and perpetual debate on secularism.[16] Nevertheless, despite the cool relations at the beginning of AKP rule and Azerbaijan's cautiousness of the AKP's "religiosity" and social conservatism, the president of Azerbaijan, İlham Aliyev, has strengthened relations with his Turkish counterpart due to their predilection for authoritarian tendencies. Moreover, the AKP "2023 Vision" defines Azerbaijan as a unique partner and emphasizes Turkish continuous efforts "to end the Armenian occupation."[17]

However, the literature mostly discusses the exceptional character of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations that is encapsulated in a fashionable

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[13] Elif Kanca, "The "Single Nation, Two States" Idea: Turkey-Azerbaijan Relations in the Post-soviet Period," in *The South Caucasus and Turkey: History Lessons of the 20th Century*, ed. Sergey Rumyantsev (Tbilisi: Heinrich Böll Stiftung South Caucasus, 2012), 196.

[14] Dikkaya, and Strakes, "A Paradigm Shift," 87.

[15] Ali Askerov, "Turkey's "Zero Problems with the Neighbours" Policy: Was It Realistic?" *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 4, no. 2(2017):151.

[16] Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, "Turkey between 2008 and 2011: Principal Features in Political Transformations,"*Contemporary Eurasia* 1(2012): 11.

[17] "2023 Vision," AKP, (Istanbul 2011). www.akparti.org.tr/beyanname2011 (Accessed September 1, 2020).

motto "one nation, two states." Only a few scholars have managed to look deeper into the factors that underlie these bilateral relations. While there is certain literature on the omissions of the past crises, the causes of those crises, which mainly derive from the different positions and perceptions of issues and realities and their recent developments have not been properly addressed. Moreover, the existing literature does not comprehensively address the many challenges and divergences of the relationship. The "quasiperfect convergence of viewpoints and interests," does not reflect reality.[18] Therefore, in order to define the underpinnings of this regional nexus, this article identifies political, economic and cultural sets of differences in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. The 1995 March coup attempt, the relations during the Karabakh War and the Flag crisis during the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement process, the PKK factor, Azerbaijan's stance on the TRNC and the consequences of the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relations make up a list of political divergences between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Amid the successful projects that drive bilateral relations, Azerbaijan and Turkey have incompatibilities in their energy policies as Turkey aspires to become an energy hub and Azerbaijan seeks direct energy supplies to Europe. Cultural relations, which include issues of religion and language, will also be discussed in the article.

Methodology and research design

The Azerbaijan-Turkey east-west axis, grounded on ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and historical characteristics, has undergone considerable shifts due to the challenges posed by changing realities, mutual perceptions or misconceptions. Therefore, in order to map out a broader picture of the structural dynamics of Turkish-Azerbaijani bilateral relations, the research questions are as follows:

● Do Turkish-Azerbaijani relations fit into the conceptual framework "One nation, two states"?

● What underlying factors shape the dynamics within bilateral relations?

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[18] Bayram Balci, "Strengths and Constraints of Turkish Policy in the South Caucasus," *Insight Turkey* 16, no.2*,* (Winter 2014): 43-52.

In order to answer this research question, the following hypotheses should be tested:

HP1: Turkey and Azerbaijan are guided by pragmatic intentions and national interests that do not always coincide. Therefore, "One nation, two states" is a rhetorical maxim rather than reality.

HP2: Divergences in various spheres shape the dynamics of bilateral relations and can cause milestone shifts in relations.

This study uses an exploratory research design with qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The data analysis of this research is based on secondary sources such as scholarly articles and media archives, as well as official and non-official statements made by the heads of the countries and other high-level officials and official statistics illustrating the scale of economic relations.

General Background of the Turkish-Azerbaijani bilateral relations

The establishment and development of bilateral relations

Initially, the bilateral relations unfolded in the framework of Turkey's Eurasian policy where Azerbaijan was an important pillar. Among the newly independent Turkic republics, Azerbaijan could offer unique opportunities for Turkey due to its geographical closeness, attractive energy resources and cultural affinity.[19] After the official recognition of Azerbaijan's independence in November 1991, the Turkish Consulate General in Baku was upgraded to the embassy level in January 1992.[20] Initially, relations developed slowly as the first President of Azerbaijan, Ayaz Mutalibov, was vigilant in building relations with Turkey since he feared his powerful neighbors. Moreover, though President Mutalibov paid his first official visit to Turkey in January 1992, where a friendship and cooperation agreement was signed, his Turkish counterparts did not share his willingness to tighten military

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[19] Kerim Has, "Turkey-Azerbaijan–Not Only Energy Affair," *Russian International Affairs Council,* March 9, 2016, https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/turtsiya-i-azerbaydzhan-ne-tolko-energetika/ (accessed March 25, 2019).

[20] "Relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-azerbaijan.en.mfa.

cooperation.[21] Thus, Mutalibov's pro-Russian orientation hindered the development of closer ties at the outset of the partnership. Unlike his predecessor, Abulfaz Elçibey was quite passionate about Turkey and his overtly pro-Turkish stance highly affected Azerbaijan's foreign policy agenda. Elçibey's "erratic style" and vehement pan-Turkic, anti-Russian and anti-Iranian rhetoric strained Azerbaijan's relations with Russia and Iran.[22] Moreover, despite being an ardent supporter of Turkey, Elçibey was perceived as a "destabilizing factor" in Turkish political circles who hindered Turkish goals in the region.[23] However, due to Elçibey and Turkish President Turgut Özal's personal efforts (he was a passionate advocate of Azerbaijan) the relations between the two remained friendly.

When Heydar Aliyev consolidated political power in 1993, he strived to re-establish stability in relations with Russia and Iran and balance his policy towards Turkey.[24] Moreover, in September 1993, Aliyev withdrew from a number of agreements signed by the Elçibey administration, removed Turkish military officers from the country, and introduced a visa regime for Turkish citizens. However, after strengthening his positions domestically, Aliyev reassured his confidence in Turkey. Moreover, President Aliyev's "routine visits to Turkey in the early 1990s" provided insight into Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policy regarding Turkey. Aliyev paid an official visit to Turkey after his inauguration in February 1994 with a delegation of 80 members to emphasize the importance of his visit.[25] Aliyev's first address delivered to the Turkish Parliament on February 6, 1994, was aimed at dispelling the skepticism regarding bilateral relations.[26] During the same visit, at the "Chankaya" palace reception, Aliyev delivered a speech where the famous phrase "one nation, two states" was coined while describing "the

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[21] Rovshan Ibrahimov, "The Extent and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in Azerbaijan, *Rethink Institute, Country Report 2013,* 58.

[22] Cornel, *Independence*, 366.

[23] Suha Bolukbasi, "Ankara's Baku-centered Transcaucasia Policy. Has It Failed?" *The Middle East Journal* 51, no.1,(January 1997):89.

[24] Brenda Shaffer, "Azerbaijan's foreign policy since independence. The Caucasus and its Neighbors: Towards the Future," *Caucasus International* 2, no.1 (Spring 2012):77.

[25] Freddy De Pauw, (1996). Turkey's Policies in Transcaucasia, in *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. Bruno Coppieters (Brussels:VUB University Press, 1996)

[26] Heydar Aliyev, "Speech in the Turkish Grand National Assembly" (speech, Ankara, February 8, 1994), *Heydar Aliyev Heritage*, International Online Library, https://lib.aliyev-heritage.org/en/showmap.html (Accessed 20 March 2019).

unity of the historical roots" between the two countries.[27] The features of democracy, secularity, state institutions and economic development were the focus of Aliyev's subsequent speeches in Turkey.[28] However, relations soured due to a coup attempt in 1994 led by Azerbaijani Interior Deputy Minister Rovshan Javadov.[29] Aliyev accused the Turkish embassy in Baku as well as Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller of being linked to the coup attempt.[30] Though this theory was later proven in Turkish intelligence reports, the detailed evidence was never revealed. However, the fact that high-level officials were publicly discussing this issue was concerning. Nevertheless, the close friendship between Aliyev and Demirel prevented Turkish-Azerbaijani relations from collapsing as the latter warned Aliyev about the possible coup.

In the mid-1990s, Turkey's policy in Azerbaijan was at its lowest point with the victory of the Welfare Party in the parliamentary election in December 1995 in Turkey. Only in February 1997, when the Welfare Party was forced out of power by Military Memorandum, Turkey reassessed its policy toward Azerbaijan. In May 2000, the former head of the Constitutional Court, Ahmet Necdet Sezer succeeded Suleyman Demirel as president. As a professional lawyer, he prioritized the rule of law and democracy and was reluctant to build tight relations with his Azerbaijani counterparts. Azerbaijani authorities condemned Sezer's intolerance towards the democratic flaws of a transitional society.[31]

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[27] Heydar Aliyev, "Speech at the reception in "Cankaya" Palace" (speech, Ankara, February 8, 1994), *Heydar Aliyev Heritage*, International Online Library, https://lib.aliyev-heritage.org/en/2565380.html (Accessed 20 March 2019).

[28] Heydar Aliyev, "Address to Turkish Grand National Assembly" (speech, Ankara, May 5, 1997), *Heydar Aliyev Heritage*, International Online Library, https://lib.aliyev-heritage.org/en/showmap.html. (Accessed 20 March 2019).
Heydar Aliyev, (2001). "Address to Turkish Grand National Assembly" (speech, Ankara, March 12, 2001)
Heydar Aliyev Heritage, International Online Library, https://lib.aliyev-heritage.org/en/showmap.html (Accessed 20 March 2019).

[29] Ismailzade, "Turkey-Azerbaijan,"4.

[30] Cornell, *Azerbaijan,* 372.

[31] Vahram Ter-Matevosyan. "Turk-Adrbejanakan Haraberityunneri Zargacman Mitwumnery yev Hakasutyunneri Eutyuny: Havatarmutyan Gerinery," [The Development Tendencies of Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations and Essence of the controversies: Prisoners of Allegiance] in Razmavarakan Anvtangayin Hetazotutyunner. Yerevan, HH Pashtpanutyan Nakhararutyan D. Kanayani Anvan Azgayin Razmavarakan Hetazotutyunneri Institut (2014), 337.

Nevertheless, while paying an official visit to Baku, Sezer expressed Turkey's solidarity with Azerbaijan in the Karabakh issue at the Azerbaijani Parliament.[32]

However, while the Turkish presidents took a more balanced position towards Azerbaijan, the differences between Elçibey's and the Aliyevs' presidencies are obvious. The Aliyevs eventually acknowledged that the Azerbaijani interpretation of Turkey's unconditional brotherhood was quite exaggerated and tempted by considerations of ongoing realities. This frustration concluded the honeymoon phase between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Moreover, the destination of Heydar and Ilham Aliyevs' first official visits was not Turkey until 2008. The visits were paid to Paris in order to enhance the level of bilateral relations and court France during the peace process of the NK conflict. However, after being re-elected in 2008, 2013, and 2018, the first country Ilham Aliyev visited each time was Turkey. During his 2008 speech delivered to the Grand National Assembly in Turkey, he mainly emphasized the importance of economic cooperation and the BTC project.[33] The fact that there have been only three foreign presidents to deliver a speech at the Turkish parliament and that two of them have been presidents of Azerbaijan also indicates the level of relations. The speeches of all the presidents were mainly focused on fraternity, the NK conflict, hydrocarbon and transport projects. However, economic cooperation has become more emphasized in Ilham Aliyev's addresses, which also points out the increasing role of the energy mega-projects in bilateral relations.

Under AKP rule, Turkey's policy towards the Caucasus was revised as it prioritized religious identity rather than shared ethnicity. However Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with fewer international friends, sees Azerbaijan as a dependable ally. Since assuming the post of the Prime Minister (2002-2014), Erdoğan has made a dozen official visits to Baku. Baku (after Northern Cyprus) was the first foreign destination for the Prime Minister after each election. In July

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[32] Necdet Sezer, "Speech in the National Assembly of Azerbaijan," *Presidency of the Republic of Turkey,* June 12, 2000, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalari-ahmet-necdet-sezer/1721/7426/azerbaycan-mill-meclisinde-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed April 5, 2019).

[33] Ilham Aliyev, "Address to Turkish Grand National Assembly" (speech, Ankara, November 6, 2008) Heydar Aliyev Heritage, International Online Library.

2018, after being elected president, Erdoğan paid an official visit to Azerbaijan and, in his address, he highlighted the importance of the energy projects and mainly TANAP.[34] Thus, the geography of the mutual visits indicated the closeness of relations between the two states, though the nature of their addresses changed slightly from the fraternal rhetoric to focus on more pragmatic issues (mainly the hydrocarbon projects).

The friendly perceptions of the people both in Turkey and Azerbaijan also contribute to the development of relations. The results of the Public Perceptions Polls on Turkey's foreign policy by Kadir Has University portray Azerbaijan as the friendliest country with 65,3%.[35] This percentage has been increasing over time. Azerbaijan's perception was also expressed in another question: "With which countries Turkey should cooperate in implementing its foreign policy?" Azerbaijan was the first in this list as well, with 44,5%.[36] Due to the method of elimination, it can be found that as soon as Turkey deteriorates relations with the West, Azerbaijan remains its only friend, following the saying "a Turk has no other friend but a Turk."

The Energy Dimension of the Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations

The end of the "romance" period brought a new momentum to Turrkish-Azerbaijani relations via energy projects. After declaring its independence, Azerbaijan initiated restoring itself to the position of an oil-exporting nation and launched the exploitation of hydrocarbon reserves following its foreign policy priorities of fostering economic growth via energy resources and alleviating its dependence on Russia by exporting energy resources without going through Russia.[37] In 1994, the Contract of Century on the joint development of the Azeri-Chirag-Deepwater Guneshli oil reservoirs inaugurated a new era for bilateral

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[34] Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "Turkey boosts its exports in defense industry," Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, July 10, 2018, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/94792/-turkey-boosts-its-exports-in-defense-industry-

[35] Mustafa Aydın et al., *Public Perceptions on Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Ankara, Center for Turkish Studies, Kadir Has University, 2019).

[36] ibid

[37] Shaffer, "Azerbaijan's foreign policy,"82.
   Dikkaya and Strakes, "A Paradigm Shift,"90.

energy relations.[38] Considering Turkey's internal and geopolitical peculiarities, Turkey has identified the diversification of energy sources and participation in the construction of energy transport corridors as the main determinants of its energy strategy.[39] Azerbaijan's role as a major supplier and a strategic fulcrum for the transportation of Caspian hydrocarbon reserves has generated mutual dependence between Turkey and Azerbaijan, catapulting Azerbaijan from a poor neighbor into an important ally.

Three major energy projects (BTC, BTE, TANAP) define the economic as well as political relations of the countries. The flagship BTC pipeline project (inaugurated in 2006) turned Turkey into a key actor in the transportation of Caspian oil to the global energy markets. While considered one of the most successful pipelines in the world, the BTC paved the way for two other energy projects in the region. The BTE gas pipeline (active since 2007) has more significance in providing Turkey's economic security and diversifying its gas supplies, considering Russia's share of over 50% of Turkey's gas imports. Thus, the imports of Azerbaijani gas ensure the diversification of gas supplies, reducing dependence on a single source.

The operation of the TANAP pipeline (inaugurated in 2018) is a strategic achievement for Turkey, allowing it to capitalize its vision of becoming a top-notch energy power. At the same time, it will alleviate its dependency on Russian gas by 40% in 2026.[40] TANAP provides diversification of Azerbaijani export destinations by transferring Shah Deniz II gas to Europe. The latter's hydrocarbon legacy from the USSR was mainly connected to Russia. Though the gas price remains a commercial secret (the Azerbaijani gas prices for Turkey are regulated by three long-term agreements which are to expire in 2021, 2032/2033 and 2046), cheaper Azerbaijani gas will allow Turkey to manipulate the Russian and Iranian prices. Moreover, the energy-oriented momentum between Turkey and Azerbaijan serves as an effective foreign policy tool

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[38] Rovshan Ibrahimov, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations: Significant Leverage in the Implementation of the Foreign Policy Interests of Both Countries."*Insight Turkey* 17, no.2 (Spring 2015): 83-100.
[39] Turkey's Energy Strategy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkish Republic, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa. (accessed 2 May, 2020).
[40] Has, "Turkey-Azerbaijan-Not Only Energy Affair."

in their generic goal of alienating Armenia from regional mega-projects. However, though the energy projects have become a major catalyst for Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, there are certain disagreements that will be discussed.

Disagreements in political relations

The Turkish Stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Turkey has frequently expressed its unconditional support for Azerbaijan in the NK conflict. Being the first challenge to Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, the NK conflict has been a major galvanizer in consolidating relations.

Turkey has never demonstrated the military will to increase its support to Azerbaijan regarding the NK issue.[41] Certain factors hindered Turkey's military engagement in the NK conflict during the first years of the war. Domestic political instability was a major obstacle including the fighting against the PKK at the beginning of the 1990s. Secondly, Turkey and Azerbaijan did not have a military assistance agreement. Though the parties signed an agreement on Military Cooperation provisioning mutual assistance in case of foreign aggression in 1992, it excluded legitimate Turkish intervention as in that case Armenia had to be recognized as an aggressor by the UN Security Council. Moreover, Turkey adopted a more cautious policy and rejected signing an agreement on mutual security suggested by Baku in the summer of 1992.[42] The next factor was Turkish relations with the West and the fear of creating substantial obstacles for the EU assessment. Moreover, any Turkish attempt to cooperate with Armenia raised outrage in Azerbaijan as it would have weakened the energy blockade of Armenia. In 1993, Armenia and Turkey were negotiating a deal on electricity supply to Armenia. The Azerbaijani Foreign Minister stated that the energy deal was "a stab in the back."[43] Due to the Azerbaijani criticism and opposition pressure in Turkey, the Demirel government broke the deal before its execution.[44] While

[41] Soltanov, "Turkish-Azerbaijani relations," 43.
[42] Айк Демоян, *Турция и Карабахский конфликт в конце XX–начале XXI веков. Историко-сравнительный анализ* (Ереван:Авторское издание, 2006). 129-130.
[43] Bolukbashi, "Ankara's Baku-centered Transcaucasia Policy," 84-85.
[44] Shamkhal Abilov, "The Discourse "One Nation Two State": The Position of Turkey in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," *Journal of Caspian Affairs* 1, no.2 (Summer, 2015): 32-38.

Azerbaijan could somehow tolerate Turkey's reluctance for military intervention, the cooperation with Armenian in this framework was unacceptable.

The most ardent critic of the absence of the Turkish assistance was head of the Nationalist Movement Party, Alparslan Türkeş, claiming that "Turkey cannot stand idly by while Azerbaijan's territory is being occupied."[45] The head of the Democratic Left Party, Bülent Ecevit, asserted that not providing unambiguous support for Azerbaijan could undermine Turkey's authority in Azerbaijan. The main opposition leader, Mesut Yılmaz, argued for Turkish troops to be deployed along the Armenian border to deter Armenian advances.[46] The Armenian advances in May 1992 caused Ankara to take a clear stance in support of Azerbaijan. Turkish Prime Minister Demirel and President Özal had different stances on Turkish intervention in Karabakh. While Demirel was quite reluctant to accept Turkish direct support unless Turkey had the support of the great powers, Özal claimed that the Armenians needed to be "a little bit scared."[47] However, after the Armenian armed forces captured the Kelbajar district, Turkey severed all the means of communication between Turkey and Armenia.[48] Nevertheless, Turkey did not play the role Azerbaijan expected and was not as powerful as Azerbaijan thought. Despite Azerbaijani expectations, the only tangible move from Turkey was the closure of borders and Azerbaijan blames Turkey for its failure in Karabakh, claiming that the closure of borders was not enough and that Azerbaijan should have been valued more highly. More recently, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan backed Azerbaijan during the Four Day War in April 2016 with his standard verbalized expressions such as Azerbaijan is "the rightful owner" of NK, Armenia is an aggressor, etc.[49] However, in July 2020, when Azerbaijan attacked the Armenian border in Tavush, Turkey's Defence Minister Hulusi Akar's statements were tougher than usual, claiming that Armenia

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[45] Cornell, *Azerbaijan after independence,* 369.

[46] Ibid

[47] Soltanov, "Turkish-Azerbaijani relations," 22.

[48] Svante Cornell, *The International Politics of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 93.

[49] "Erdogan: Karabakh will be returned to Azerbaijan one day," Daily Sabah, 4 April, 2016 https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2016/04/05/erdogan-karabakhwill-be-returned-to-azerbaijan-one-day (accessed 16 July 2020).

"will be brought into account" for attacking Azerbaijan.[50] Nevertheless, President Erdogan's statement was a continuation of Ankara's usual rhetoric of unconditional support and solidarity.[51] Thus, the Turkish stance on the NK conflict contributed to the collapse of romanticism in bilateral relations. Despite the absence of official statements claiming that Turkey will provide military assistance if Baku initiates war, Azerbaijan claims that Turkey has guaranteed such assistance, referencing the military alliance between them.

Rapprochement in the Armenian-Turkish relations and its impact on Azerbaijan

One of the major shocks that the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations experienced has been the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement and their culmination in the Zurich Protocols in October 2009. However, six months after signing the protocols, the Turkish Prime Minister declared that the ratification of the protocols depended on the NK conflict resolution process. Subsequently, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan suspended the Protocols in 2010 and recalled them in 2015.[52] The rapprochement instigated vociferous debates and waves of protests in both Azerbaijani public and political cycles.

The AKP government undertook measures for the implementation of a "zero problems with neighbors" policy to materialize its ambitions of becoming a regional power. Azerbaijan felt uneasy about this initiative since the launch of so-called "football diplomacy", when President of Turkey Abdullah Gul arrived in Yerevan to watch the FIFA world cup Armenia-Turkey qualifying match with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan in 2008.[53] At the beginning of the crisis, Azerbaijan was

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[50] "Turkey's Defence minister says Armenia will be brought to account" for attack on Azerbaijan," Hurriyet Daily, 16 July 2020, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-defense-minister-says-armenia-will-be-brought-to-account-for-attack-on-azerbaijan-156602 (accessed July 17, 2020).

[51] "Turkey will never hesitate to stand against any attack on the rights of Azerbaijan," Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 14 July 2020, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/120623/-turkey-will-never-hesitate-to-stand-against-any-attack-on-the-rights-of-azerbaijan- (accessed July 17, 2020).

[52] Rovshan Ibrahimov, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Energy Relations: Significant Leverage in the Implementation of the Foreign Policy Interests of Both Countries."*Insight Turkey* 17, no.2 (Spring 2015): 83-100.

[53] Dikkaya, and Strakes, "A Paradigm Shift,"97-98.

reluctant to directly meet with the Turkish government. The Azerbaijani elite believed that Turkey would not sign any agreement without referring to the NK conflict and expected "parallel processes" with the rapprochement.[54] Nevertheless, Azerbaijan launched media mobilization articulating the narrative of the negative impact of the rapprochement on Azerbaijani-Turkish relations. Azerbaijan intensified bonds with the Turkish opposition mainly with the Republican People's and the Nationalist Movement Parties. Finally, Azerbaijan used its energy card to make Turkey reshape its policy, suggesting shifting the direction of its energy cooperation with the EU countries toward Russia. Leaked U.S. diplomatic cables revealed that President Aliyev was resentful of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation efforts and distrustful of Turkey.[55] Moreover, Aliyev expresses his discontent through boycotting bilateral and multilateral events like the Alliance of Civilizations Summit held in Istanbul.[56] President Gül and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had a phone conversation with Aliyev urging him to join the Summit and offered to organize a meeting with Obama. Nevertheless, Aliyev was quite obstinate. Furthermore, he did not even delegate any high-level representatives, besides his daughter. Abdullah Gül's assertion that "Turkey thinks of Azerbaijan in its every act" also failed to inspire confidence.[57] The Azerbaijani opposition media blamed Armenia for misleading Turkey and denied the self-interest of their ally. At the same time, opposition leaders in Azerbaijan (such as Isa Gambar from Musavat Party) claimed that the normalization of the Turkish-Armenian relations would open new perspectives for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict.[58] However, after the Protocols were signed, the opposition parties made a statement that the rapprochement without the NK issue as a precondition would harm Turkish-Azerbaijani relations.

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[54] Elhan Mehtiyev, "Turkish-Armenian Protocols: An Azerbaijani Perspective," *Insight Turkey* 12, no.2 (Spring 2010):41-47.
[55] "Azerbaijan-Turkey: Still One Nation, Two States?" *WikiLeaks,* 2009, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAKU201_a.html (Accessed 25 March, 2020).
[56] Emre Özdemir, "Zero Problems with Neighbors: The Case of Azerbaijan," *Reflections Turkey,* October 13, 2012, http://www.reflectionsturkey.com/2012/10/zero-problems-with-neighbors-the-case-of-azerbaijan/ (Accessed February 10, 2019).
[57] Dikkaya, and Strakes, "A Paradigm Shift," 191-192.
[58] Ibid, 197.

Nevertheless, on 10 October 2009, Ahmet Davutoğlu and Edward Nalbandyan, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Turkey, signed protocols "On the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations" and "On the Development of Bilateral Relations". The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan released a statement claiming that "Turkey's decision directly contradicts the national interests of Azerbaijan and overshadows the spirit of brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey built on deep historical roots."[59] Azerbaijan regarded the official statement as a betrayal that forgave Armenia for its "violation" of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

The emotional tension between Azerbaijan and Turkey reached its peak during the second episode of "football diplomacy" in Bursa on October 14, 2009, where Azerbaijan's flag was not allowed in the stadium. The Azerbaijani media made an uproar showing the pictures of the flag thrown into a restroom box by a Turkish officer. On the next day, the Turkish flags in the Baku's Martyrs' Alley (memorial to Turkish soldiers who fought for Azerbaijan's independence) were removed. Though Baku claimed that this was not a political move, the Turkish media claimed that it was a response to banning the Azeri flags during the football match.[60]

Turkey spoiled the normalization process by tying it to the resolution of the NK conflict "to mitigate Azerbaijani resentment."[61] These developments incited Azerbaijan's outrage because the backbone of Azerbaijani foreign policy towards Armenia was its "economic isolation and strategic marginalization," exclusion of regional energy and transport projects.[62] Thus, Turkey, hand in hand with the international community and Armenia, was going to destroy that strategy. The failure

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[59] "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan," *Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 12, 2009, http://mfa.gov.az/eng/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=580. (Accessed January 20, 2019).

[60] Askerov, "Turkey's "Zero Problems with the Neighbours" Policy,"4.

[61] Alexander, Iskandaryan. "Armenian-Turkish Rapprochement: Timing Matters." *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 3 (September 2009):37-44.

[62] Ibid.

 Elnur Soltanov, (2009). "Turkish-Armenian soccer diplomacy: A direct hit at Azerbaijan's foreign policy architecture," November 2, 2009, http://www.today.az/print/news/politics/57107.html (Accessed February 8, 2019).

of the normalization process brought to the fore the idea that the Turkish policy towards Armenia is decided in Baku rather than in Ankara.[63]

The political shocks due to the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement showed that relations should be built on rational and institutional bases. The developments provoked energy crisis, public hatred and even ramifications in religious issues (several Turkish mosques were shut down) and revealed that the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement had ramifications not only at the emotional level but also practically.

The Azerbaijani Stance on Northern Cyprus

Another significant issue in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations concerns Northern Cyprus where Baku officially tries to take a pro-Ankara position. In this regard, though several sources claim that in the late 1990s the Supreme Assembly of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan recognized the independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus independence with a non-binding resolution, there has been no official statement of recognition or relevant comments from the Azerbaijani government.[64] Azerbaijan itself does not recognize the TRNC because of concerns that it will create a precedent for the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey, however, claims that the conflicts are different and Azerbaijan ought to do more to help Northern Cyprus. Though the recognition of the TRNC has repeatedly been included in the parliament agenda of Azerbaijan, it has never been discussed considering the analogues with the NK conflict.[65]

In 2004, the issue of the TRNC generated higher pressure in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations when the Azerbaijani delegation missed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasburg voting to grant the TRNC representative status. The initiative failed and Azerbaijan was blamed in the headlines of the Turkish media for betraying its "big brother" and acting against Turkey's interests. The head of the Azerbaijani delegation claimed the votes of six delegates of Azerbaijan

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[63] Bayram Balci, "Strengths," 48.

[64] "Europe, the US, Turkey and Azerbaijan recognize the "unrecognized" Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," *Regnum,* December 13, 2010, http://www.regnum.ru/english/708006.html (Accessed March 3, 2019).

[65] Rufat Abbasov, "Azerbaijan Embraces Northern Cyprus," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, July 28, 2005, https://iwpr.net/global-voices/azerbaijan-embraces-northern-cyprus (Accessed March 10, 2019).

would not have saved the bill and the delegation avoided voting as the bill would create a precedent for the "recognition of unrecognized regimes."[66] The scandal escalated because just two weeks prior Aliyev pledged that if the Turkish side approved the Annan Plan for Cyprus reunification and the Greek Cypriots did not, Azerbaijan would recognize the TRNC. Though Greece rejected the Annan Plan, Azerbaijan did not recognize the independence of the TRNC.[67] Once again, Azerbaijan explained its position using the example of the NK conflict. However, Aliyev yielded and became the first country after Turkey to launch regular direct flights to TRNC in 2005, violating the principles of international law.[68] Moreover, Baku declared it would recognize TRNC passports and sent official representatives to the Peace and Freedom holiday in TRNC. However, due to Greek protests, the direct flights were postponed. Azerbaijan faced strong condemnation from the EU and its communicational and commercial ties with the TRNC impeded South Caucasus countries from starting negotiations on the EU Neighborhood Policy Action Plan on time because of the Greek veto.[69] Thus, though the recognition of Northern Cyprus by Azerbaijan will not strengthen the bargaining potential of Turkey, it will increase Western opposition to Azerbaijan and cause Cyprus and Greece to recognize Nagorno Karabakh. In this case, Azerbaijan is driven by its own pragmatic interests despite Turkey's pressure.

The Turkish-Israeli Crisis and Azerbaijan

Israel is considered to be a major factor in Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. In the late 1990s, the nature of the interaction of Israel with these two Muslim states especially in the energy security sector was so

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[66] Ismailzade, "Turkey-Azerbaijan," 8-9.

[67] Sefer Levent, "Trusting the future of Turkish Cyprus," *Hürriyet Daily,* February 21, 2017*,* https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/trusting-the-future-of-turkish-cyprus-109968 (Accessed April 19, 2019).

[68] Vahram Ter-Matevosyan. "Turk-Adrbejanakan Haraberutyunneri Zargacman Mitwumnery yev Hakasutyunneri Eutyuny: Havatarmutyan Gerinery," [The Development Tendencies of Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations and the Essence of the Differences: Prisoners of Allegiance] in Razmavarakan Anvtangayin Hetazotutyunner. Yerevan, HH Pashtpanutyan Naxararutyan D. Kanayani Anvan Azgayin Razmavarakan Hetazotutyunneri Institut (2014), 337.

[69] Zaur Shiriyev, "Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations: Beyond Mottos," *Today's Zaman*, September 11, 2012, https://bit.ly/2Ywxmcq (Accessed February 5, 2019).

enthusiastic, that the relations were depicted in a trilateral framework ("trilateral axis" and "entente").[70] Azerbaijan followed Turkey and Egypt in establishing relations with Israel. It took several decades to do so. In 2010, Israeli-Turkish relations were at their lowest point. Israel attacked the Turkish aid boat Mavi Marmara that was headed to Gaza, causing the death of Turkish citizens.[71] The Mavi Marmara crisis revealed that bilateral ties in this tripartite setup were much stronger than the "trilateral axis" itself. Thus, though Turkey put tremendous pressure on Baku to stand by Ankara in this stalemate, Baku was able to withstand the extreme pressure and continue its cooperation with Israel.[72] On September 19, Turkish Ambassador Khulusi Kylych was interviewed on the government-friendly ANS TV, and he called on "brother Azerbaijan" to "reconsider its relations" with Israel, urging them to cut relations with Israel just as Turkey had closed the border with Armenia and threaten Israel with possible disruptions concerning their oil supply.[73] Azerbaijan could not disregard its closest ally and voted for Palestine's observer status at the UN.[74] Though crisis and constant pressure caused Azerbaijan to distance itself from Turkey, Azerbaijani diplomacy passed its test in conflict management as the expediency and the pursuit of its own interests prompted the smaller state to preserve its relationship with Israel.

The Kurdish Issue in the Framework of Bilateral Relations

Another important component of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations is the Kurdish issue. The Kurdish minority in Azerbaijan led by Beylar Eyyubov, the President's security service chief, has been accused of

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[70] Alexander Murinson, "Opportunities and Challenges in Israeli-Azerbaijani relations, The Caspian Energy Dance: Towards a New Age of Partnership?" *Caucasus International* 2, no.2 (2012):177-187.

[71] Daniela Huber, and Nathalie Tocci, "Behind the Scenes of the Turkish-Israeli Breakthrough," *Istituto Affari Internazionali, IAI Working Papers* 13, no.15 (April 2015).

[72] Gallia Lindenstrauss, "Israel-Azerbaijan:Despite the Constraints, a Special Relationship," *Strategic Assessment* 17, no.4 (January 2015):74.

[73] Dudi Cohen, "Turkey to Azerbaijan: Stand with Us against Israel," *YnetNews,* September 25, 2011, https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4127332,00.html (Accessed April 20, 2019).

[74] Eldar Mamedov, "How Deep Are Azerbaijan-Israel Relations?" *Eurasianet,* January 18, 2013, https://eurasianet.org/how-deep-are-azerbaijan-israel-relations (Accessed April 7, 2019).

contributing to Kurdish penetration from Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey.[75] Though the head of the Public and Political Issues Department at the Presidential Administration Ali Hasanov denied the resettlement, the Turkish authorities considered it a political challenge. Generally, Kurds in Azerbaijan have close links to the Aliyev family and the Kurds occupy high-level positions, enjoying state sponsorship. Turkey is also concerned about allegations regarding links between Azerbaijani elites and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Former National Security official Ibragim Musayev claimed that Azerbaijan was funneling arms and ammunition to the PKK through Nakhchivan despite being organized locally.[76] Moreover, former Azerbaijani diplomat to Turkey, Turgut Er, claims that according to Elçibey, Heydar Aliyev contributed to the creation of the PKK and Ilham Aliyev inherited his Kurdish networks.[77] However, a U.S. diplomatic cable in Wikileaks ascribed the rumors of Azerbaijani support of the PKK to the Azerbaijani opposition.[78]

Nevertheless, despite constant Turkish demands, Azerbaijan has not legally recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization. The Spokesmen of the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan explained this, stating that there was an absence of an Azerbaijani policy of qualifying terrorist organizations. Though Baku has several times stated that Azerbaijan regards the PKK as a terrorist group, Azerbaijan is quite cautious in regards to satisfying Turkish demands in a legal resolution.[79] Given the NK conflict, Azerbaijan is reluctant to have the Kurds as another antagonist strengthening Armenia's bargaining position. The Turkish concerns and eagerness to have Azerbaijan adopt a legal document on the

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[75] Станислав Тарасов, "Баку, Анкара и курды: Почему помощник главы Азербайджана посетил Турцию," *Regnum,* Октябрь 30, 2016, https://regnum.ru/news/2199275.html (Accessed April 7, 2019).

[76] Joshua Kucera, "Allegations Resurface of Azerbaijani Support of PKK," *Eurasianet*, September 9, 2013, https://eurasianet.org/allegations-resurface-of-azerbaijani-support-of-pkk (Accessed April 17, 2019).

[77] "Turgut Er: Heydar Aliyev behind creation of Kurdistan Workers' Party," *Panorama,* October 20, 2015, https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2015/10/20/turgut-er-aliyev/1465734 (Accessed March 22, 2019).

[78] "Azerbaijani Public and Government Stand with Turkey Against the PKK," *WikiLeaks,* 2007, https://wikileaks.org/Plusd/Cables/07BAKU1337_A.Html (Accessed March 22, 2019).

[79] "Ilham Aliyev: Azerbaijan Recognizes PKK as a Terror Organization Officially," *Milaz,* July 28, 2011, http://www.milaz.info/en/news.php?id=6142 (Accessed March 22, 2019).

PKK and Azerbaijan's reluctance to do so, once more proves that the relations of these two countries are driven by their own interests.

The disagreements in economic and energy relations

Amid the successful projects that drive the economic and energy relations of Turkey and Azerbaijan, the two countries also diverge in a number of ways in this sector. Considered to be interdependent in energy relations, there is a certain incompatibility between the two countries' energy policies. As an emerging energy hub, Turkey aspires to become a price formation center creating price benchmarks rather than serving as a transit county.[80] In contrast, Azerbaijan seeks to become a direct energy supplier of gas to Europe.[81] The crisis in 2009-2010 gas negotiations revealed differences in energy policies. Although many believe that Turkish-Armenian rapprochement was the main reason for the troubles in energy talks between Turkey and Azerbaijan in 2010, different interests and incompatibilities in the energy policies between the two states were the real cause.[82] On the contrary, the energy relations between the two countries are contingent upon political developments and though the tensions on gas price predated the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement, the fact that the latter exacerbated tensions is undeniable. Turkey tried to use its role as the major consumer and the main transit route to achieve favorable terms in negotiations. Azerbaijan played its trump card, first signing a gas agreement with Russia, after manipulating the low prices of Azerbaijani gas. The crisis has pushed relations into a more realistic ground and was resolved with the Shah Deniz II agreement signed in June 2010.[83] The energy crisis accompanied by political developments concerning the Armenian-Turkish normalization process displayed that the countries did not hesitate to use the leverage they possess to get what they want.

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[80] Emin Akhundzada, "Turkey as an Energy Hub: Opportunities and Challenges," *Caspian Report* 7 (Spring 2014):110-115.
[81] Şaban Kardaş, "The Turkey-Azerbaijan Energy Partnership in the Context of the Southern Corridor," *Istituto Affari Internazionali,* Working Papers 14, no.4 (March 2014).
[82] Şaban Kardaş, "Turkish–Azerbaijani Energy Cooperation and Nabucco: Testing the Limits of the New Turkish Foreign Policy Rhetoric," *Turkish Studies* 12, no.1 (Spring 2011): 55.
[83] Murad Ismayilov, "Power, Knowledge, and Pipelines: Understanding the Politics of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy," *Caucasus Survey* 1, no.2, (Spring 2015): 91.

Despite close energy relations, there is a significant gap between the actual and potential levels of economic relations in the non-energy realm. The intense development of energy relations and engagement in energy projects hindered the development of non-energy cooperation. Turkey has identified main shortcomings in the economic realm between the two countries: the immigration policy of Azerbaijan, visa regime and absence of a free trade agreement. Without a free trade agreement, Azerbaijan loses its attractiveness compared to the other post-Soviet countries and Russia particularly. As for the visa regime, Azerbaijan was reluctant as the abolition of the visa regime for Turkish citizens would trigger similar demands from Iran. However, with an agreement signed in February 2020, Turkey and Azerbaijan mutually abolished the visa regime for their citizens for a 90-day stay.[84] Nevertheless, Azerbaijani immigration policy hinders employing Turkish citizens, and as Turkish businessmen see Azerbaijan as a "tribal state in which a small number of families control the political and economic levers of power"[85], business relations have not realized their potential. These issues also hinder the Turkish FDI in Azerbaijan despite them being the top investor. One the other hand, Azerbaijan is one of the top FDIs in the 2019 list of FDI countries with $565 million.[86] Moreover, in 2013, SOCAR acquired the Star Media Group, which was comprised of a daily newspaper and two national TV channels.[87] This helps Azerbaijan have a certain influence in Turkey and shape public perception on sensitive issues. In 2017, the SOCAR chairman Abdullayev announced at the World Petroleum

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[84] Nurbanu Tanrikulu, "Turkey and Azerbaijan to allow visa-free travel for citizens," Daily Sabah, June 3, 2020, https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-and-azerbaijan-to-allow-visa-free-travel-for-citizens (Accessed July 5, 2020).

[85] "Azerbaijan-Turkey: Still One Nation, Two States?" *WikiLeaks,* 2009, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAKU201_a.html (Accessed February 2, 2019).

[86] The Central Bank of Turkey, *Foreign Direct Investments in Turkey by Countries/Azerbaijan* (2020), https://evds2.tcmb.gov.tr/index.php?/evds/serieMarket/collapse_18/5981/DataGroup/english/bie_ydydyul/ (Accessed May 22, 2020).

[87] Can Muşlu, "Turkey-Azerbaijan: When the "Little Brother" becomes almost overbearing," *Repair-Armeno-Turkish platform*, November 15, 2017, https://repairfuture.net/index.php/en/geopolitics-standpoint-of-turkey/turkey-azerbaijan-when-the-little-brother-becomes-almost-overbearing (Accessed March 16, 2019).

Congress that SOCAR would complete a $19,5 billion investment in Turkey. This was realized in 2019.[88]

One of the indicators of the economic relations between states is foreign trade. Turkey is Azerbaijan's 3rd largest trade partner both in exports (after Italy and Israel) and imports (after UK and Russia) while Azerbaijan is not included both in export and import in the top 15 of Turkey.[89] The level of trade turnover below the potential indicates the countries are much more interested in the energy sector, which leaves the trade in the non-energy realm underdeveloped. Nevertheless, the differences and difficulties in the economic relations are less vocal than the ones in politics and in the long-term these issues will become less challenging.

Culture, Religion and Identity in Bilateral Relations

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, secular Turkey became a model for Azerbaijan considering their common cultural and linguistic identity. However, there are significant cultural differences between Azerbaijan and Turkey despite their many similarities.

Thought religion has not played the most important role and has been a politicized issue in the dynamics of bilateral relations, independence from the Soviet Union galvanized a search for identity in Azerbaijan and Islam had to play an important role in this process.[90]After Azerbaijan declared independence, the government's official policy towards Islam was led by the highest Muslim authority in the country, the Muslim Board, which encouraged the emergence of a non-radical and non-political "special national brand of Islam."[91] Due to the post-Soviet religious gap in the country, Azerbaijan was subject to foreign influence in terms of religion from neighboring Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and its closest ally Turkey. The Azerbaijani government saw the penetration of foreign influence as a threat and introduced regulations in its policy on

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[88] "SOCAR in Turkey," *SOCAR,* 2020, http://www.socar.com.tr/en/about-us/socar-turkey (Accessed May 27, 2020).

[89] "Foreign Trade by Countries,"*Turkish Statistical Institute,* (2020), http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046 (Accessed May 29, 2020).

[90] Sofie Bedford, "Turkey and Azerbaijan: One religion – two states?" In *Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations: One nation-two states?* ed. Murad Ismayilov and Norman Graham (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 133.

[91] Bedford, "Turkey and Azerbaijan," 133.

religion. Thus, in 1996, the country adopted a Law on the Freedom of Religious Belief which prohibited religious propaganda by foreigners.[92] However, Turkish movements enjoyed the Azerbaijani government support as Heydar Aliyev considered it a counterweight to radical Islam promoted by other Middle Eastern countries.[93] Turkish influence in Azerbaijan penetrated in two main ways: governmental (Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi-Ministry of Religious Affairs of Turkey) and non-governmental (mostly Gülen movement).[94] The most influential non-governmental channel of Turkish influence was the Gülen movement, named after its contemporary leader Fethullah Gülen. Though the movement endeavored to spread its ideology through secular institutions and media, and was mostly oriented towards educational networks (schools, gymnasiums, Qafqaz University) that helped to generate close sentiments towards Turkey among young Azerbaijanis and penetrate different strata of society.[95] The AKP government in its turn enjoyed Fethullah Gülen's global influence and used it as an effective foreign policy tool. However, the disruption between the government and the Gülen Movement in 2013 negatively affected its networks in Azerbaijan.[96] Later, when Gülen was blamed for the July 2016 military coup attempt, the Azerbaijani government thoroughly supported Erdoğan and shut down its networks in the country. The soft power of Turkish religious influence in Azerbaijan significantly shrank. Thus, Ankara will have to provide a new equilibrium between religious and political influence as Turkey is losing its religious influence in Azerbaijan. Formerly, the Diyanet managed Turkish mosques and the Department of Religion at Baku State University. Yet, its management was passed to the state. Moreover, in 2010 new regulations in religion policy entailed that

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[92] Ibid, 136.

[93] Altay Göyüşov, "Islamic Revival in Azerbaijan," *Hudson Institute,* (2008) https://www.hudson.org/research/9815-islamic-revival-in-azerbaijan (Accessed April 27, 2019).

[94] Fuad Aliyev, "Turkey's Soft Power in Azerbaijan and the Gülen Movement," in Religion And   Soft Power In South Caucasus, ed. Ansgar Jödicke and Kornely Kakachia (Tbilisi, Georgian Institute of Politics, 2017), 41-49.

[95] Nigar Göksel, "Religiously-Inspired Bonding: Changing Soft Power Elements in Turkey's Relations with Azerbaijan," *Center for conflict prevention and early warning* 4, no.8, (2011).

[96] Aliyev, "Turkey's Soft Power,"46.

only the citizens educated in Azerbaijan can conduct religious ceremonies and banned the exchange of clerics. The operation of Turkish mosques has never been welcomed as they are considered to inject and promote sectarian divides among the predominantly Shia population.[97]

The decline of Turkish religious influence in Azerbaijan has been also preconditioned by the fact that, after independence, Azerbaijan became more unobstructed in religious issues and the initial tolerance and coexistence of Sunnism and Shiism has become more difficult to provide. For instance, Turkish politicians were condemned for raising the issue of hijab in Azerbaijan in order not to polarise Azerbaijani society regarding this issue.[98] U.S. diplomatic cables revealed Ilham Aliyev's discontent with Gul's and Erdoğan's wives wearing headscarves. According to the cable, Turkey has been even included in a list of countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and some Gulf states that pose an Islamist threat to Azerbaijan.[99]

Another issue in the cultural aspect of bilateral relations has been language. Azerbaijan faces a challenge regarding its language as is so similar to the language of its more powerful ally that the distinctive qualities of the language may be difficult to preserve.[100] A law enacted in 1992 declared the government language as "Turkish." But the Azerbaijani constitution adopted in 1995 signified the "rebirth" of the Azerbaijani language seeking to protect it from external influences, including from Turkish.[101] In 1991, the Azerbaijani Parliament adopted the Latin alphabet which generated huge debates with arguments that Azerbaijan would become more dependent on Turkey and that the Turkish language would absorb their language.[102] The introduction of the Latin alphabet encouraged by Turkey increased the spread of Turkish and today Azerbaijan is more cautious about the preservation of Azerbaijani

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[97] Ismayilov, "Together but apart," 14.
[98] Göksel, "Religiously-Inspired Bonding."
[99] WikiLeaks, "Azerbaijan-Turkey: Still One Nation, Two States?"
[100] Safarova, "Azerbaijan Grapples."
[101] Altay Göyüşov, "The Language of Azerbaijan: Turkish or Azerbaijani?" *MeydanTV,* August 22, 2016, https://www.meydan.tv/en/article/the-language-of-azerbaijan-turkish-or-azerbaijani/?/ref=redirect (Accessed March 30, 2019).
[102] Tamam Bayatly, "Alphabet transactions," *Azerbaijan International* 5, no.2 (Summer 1997): 22-24.

linguistic distinctiveness.[103] Turkish television channels broadcasted in Azerbaijan, translated literature either into Turkish or Russian, studying at higher education institutions in Turkey, and attending Turkish schools in Azerbaijan has made the influence of the Turkish language even greater.[104] In 2007, among foreign movies, only the Turkish ones had the privilege to be broadcasted in original, but the decision was reviewed and in 2012 the Turkish broadcastings were also dubbed.[105] Moreover, a WikiLeaks cable revealed that Aliyev ordered the cessation of broadcasting Turkish soap operas as they were promoting an Islamist agenda as well as wearing headscarves. Moreover, some intellectuals in Azerbaijan promote the motto "my language is my existence."[106] Thus, there are Azerbaijani diplomats and military officials who are reluctant to speak with Turkish conjugations. Turkey displays a hierarchical approach to this issue and refers to the Azerbaijani language as a Turkish dialect that is sometimes neglected and defined as primitive.[107] Azerbaijanis are usually more eager to learn Turkish while in Turkey, whereas the Turks are reluctant even to use some Azerbaijani words while living in Azerbaijan. In this regard, Turkish human capital investments in Azerbaijan are also important in expanding the influence of the Turkish language. Besides establishing educational institutions in Azerbaijan, Turkey accepts thousands of Azerbaijani students with incentives that they will make up a Turkish-speaking stratum of society.[108] The flow of Azerbaijani students reached about 15,500 in the 2017-2018 academic year, up from about 6,000 in 2016-2017. This is not comparable to the dozens of Turkish students in Azerbaijan comprising about one-tenth of

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[103] Mehdiyeva, *Power Games in the Caucasus,* 160.
[104] Ibid, 153.
[105] Safarova, "Azerbaijan Grapples."
[106] "Azerbaijani President Commits to Negotiations on Resumption of VOA, BBC, Radio Liberty Broadcasts,"*WikiLeaks,* 2009b, https://repairfuture.net/index.php/en/identity-standpoint-of-turkey/turkey-azerbaijan-one-nation-two-stahttps://bit.ly/2VRegRqtes (Accessed April 1, 2019).
  Bayram Balci, "Turkey-Azerbaijan: "One Nation, Two States"?" *Repair - Armeno-Turkish platform*, November 14, 2016, https://repairfuture.net/index.php/en/identity-standpoint-of-turkey/turkey-azerbaijan-one-nation-two-states (Accessed April 3, 2019).
[107] Kanca, "The Single Nation,"199.
[108] Göksel, "Religiously-Inspired Bonding," 124.

Azerbaijani students.[109] Students leaving to study in Turkey also contribute to the ongoing brain drain in Azerbaijan as many students are reluctant to return. However, the analyzed issues display that cultural relations are not the core of the relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey. This sphere of relations is frequently influenced by the political developments between the two countries and has the potential to evolve and put bigger strains on their bilateral relations in the future.

Conclusion

After almost 30 years of engagement, the Azerbaijani-Turkish strategic partnership is an important foreign policy pillar for both countries. Despite the initial years of kinship and affinity, the later phases of relations are driven by the pragmatic national interests of the states. With their conservative Islamic leadership, Turkey has adopted a more moderate agenda for Azerbaijan, while the latter has increased its self-confidence due to hydrocarbon supplies and successful regional projects. These realities have modified Turkish-Azerbaijani relations that had been described as "One nation, two states." The changing realities proved that despite the claimed ever-closer brotherhood, the pragmatic interests of the countries do not always coincide, though statesmen from both countries occasionally express support for each other. The purpose of this study was to discover multiple nuances and discrepancies that shape relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Among the main factors of bilateral relations, energy and transportation projects have been identified as a driving force. Cultural, historical and ethnic affinity should be considered as important determinants in bilateral relations, though they are sometimes subject to sensitive challenges. On the other hand, positive public perceptions and the government in power have an immense influence on shaping relations. However, contingencies in the political, economic and cultural realms have also been crucial determinants of bilateral relations, despite being underestimated. The research on political disagreements revealed that among all the issues discussed the possibility of the normalisation of Armenian-Turkish relations without considering

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[109] Austin Clayton, "Azerbaijani students increasingly drawn to Turkey," *Eurasianet,* April 11, 2019, https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijani-students-increasingly-drawn-to-turkey (Accessed April 12, 2019)

the vital interests of Azerbaijan and neutral stance of Turkey during a possible war in NK may cause a crisis in almost every field of bilateral cooperation from energy issues to cultural ones. At the same time, this can also aggravate the other schisms present. In the case of other political issues, there is a certain positive/negative status quo whose development depends on a broader picture. The economic issues are not grave enough to provoke a massive shift in cooperation, though their solution will result in a significantly larger volume of transactions. The structural-cultural differences are more difficult to solve. However, these are contingent upon political developments. Thus, this study supports the following hypotheses. The pragmatic intentions and national interests of Turkey and Azerbaijan do not always coincide despite the rhetoric of "One nation, two states", and the divergences in different spheres shape the dynamics of bilateral relations and can cause large shifts in relations.

ASTGHIK HAYRAPETYAN

MANIFESTATIONS OF NEOCONSERVATISM IN US MIDDLE EAST POLICY DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF GEORGE W. BUSH (2001-2009)

Abstract: US dominance in the post-Cold War world order was disrupted by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This laid the groundwork for revising US Middle East policy mechanisms, tools, and emphases in terms of regional implementation, based on the political-ideological beliefs and approaches of neoconservatives. The unilateral and practically contradictory policy of "The Vulcans", proponents of imperialist and "pro-Likudnik" tendencies that embraced a global "war on terror" and promotion of democracy through hard power, failed in post-war Iraq's reconstruction period and was severely criticized. However, despite all this, the principles of neoconservatism remain viable as an expression of "American exceptionalism", manifesting itself predominantly in the Middle East.

Keywords: neoconservative, USA, Middle East, Iraq, promotion of democracy, Wilsonianism, rogue state, al-Qaeda, terrorism, "the Vulcans", interventionism.

Introduction

Neoconservatism dates back to the 1930s-40s, emerging from a combination of liberal-idealism, Marxism, and political realism, eventually becoming known as "democratic imperialism". The neoconservatives' political-analytical views and ideas materialized after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and were fulfilled due to its advocates engaging in the policy-making process, including the hardline Republicans in the White House and Pentagon. This article covers the manifestations of neoconservatism in US Middle East policy in the late 20th and early 21st century, particularly during the presidency of George W. Bush in 2001-2009, analyzes the tough approaches of the neoconservatives when designing regional policy, illustrates the impact of neoconservatism on US Middle East policy under G.W. Bush and presents criticism of the

Bush administration's policy's failure to "reorganize" the Middle East during the 8 years of his presidency (2001-2009).

In this context, the author, building upon a combination of academic literature, relevant primary sources and periodical press, has tried to develop certain provisions on the issue in question set out in the relevant works of American, European and Russian political scientists and thinkers.

The origin of the neoconservatism

At the turn of the 21st-century, neoconservatives greatly contributed to the elaboration of US foreign policy and national security.

There is still no clear definition of neoconservatism in political science. It is the "chimera" of present-day world politics[1] (in Greek mythology, this was a monster considered to be a lion in the forepart and a goat in the middle with a tail that ends in a Dragon's head).[2] Opponents of neoconservatism argue that this "chimera" represents the inconsistent unity of US military supremacy and the idealistic views of Wilsonianism. With regards to the latter, to some followers it is assumed as a label that is used to describe neoconservatism.[3] As noted by M. Boot, a neoconservative principles advocate, the neocons are the hard Wilsonians or the Wilsonian idealists who believe that the United States should use its power to spread American values, the most important one being liberal democracy, which provides security to the United States.[4] In other words, neoconservatism is a combination of the military imperialism of Theodore Roosevelt in regard to foreign policy and the idealistic imperialism of Woodrow Wilson. It also refers to a selective use of democratic peace principles with strategies based on realism.[5] Regarding the connection between neoconservatism and realism, according to Gerard Alexander, neoconservatives are realists who emphasize the balance of threat more than the balance of power.[6]

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[1] Stephen Mcglinchey, "Neoconservatism and American Foreign Policy", E-International Relations, June 1, 2009, https://www.e-ir.info/2009/06/01/neo-conservatism-and-american-foreign-policy/.

[2] Chimera, Britannica, www.britannica.com.

[3] Max Boot, "Think Again: Neocons", Foreign Policy, no. 140 (Jan. - Feb., 2004): 21, https://foreignpolicy.com/.

[4] Ibid, 24.

[5] Ibid.

[6] John Dumbrell, "The neoconservative roots of the war in Iraq", in *Intelligence and national* *security*

Given its broad and sometimes contradictory approaches to domestic and foreign policy development, it would be difficult to call neoconservatism purely an ideology or a movement. Therefore, the followers of neoconservatism consider it a collective worldview that unites the masses[7]. The godfather of neoconservatism, Irving Kristol, due to its lack of demarcating boundaries, described it in the best manner known so far: "persuasion".[8]

The rise of neoconservatism occurred in the early 2000s, due to shifts in the emphases of Middle East policy implementation. To understand the Middle East policy developed during the presidency of G. W. Bush, it is necessary to identify the origins of neoconservatism and its distinguishing features.

While the classical American conservatives[9] have normally represented big business, the neoconservatives, were not from high society. Their first generation (former City College of New York Trotskyist students[10] Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glaser as well as Norman Podhoretz, Seymour Martin Lipset and others) were from Jewish immigrant families and were initially the followers of left-wing ideologies. The first manifestations of neoconservative anti-Stalinist left ideas can be found in journals like "Commentary" and "The Public

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policymaking on Iraq: British and American perspectives, ed. James P. Pfiffner and Mark Phythian (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 31.

[7] Patrick Corscadden, "The Neoconservative Influence on US Foreign Policy and the 2003 Iraq War", E-International Relations, June 14, 2014, https://www.e-ir.info/2014/06/14/the-neoconservative-influence-on-us-foreign-policy-and-the-2003-iraq-war/.

[8] Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion", Washington Examiner, August 25, 2003, https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/weekly-standard/the-neoconservative-persuasion.

[9] Seymour Martin **Lipset**, "American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword", The Washington Post, 1996, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/americanexceptionalism.htm (Accessed August 17, 2020). As noted by S. M. Lipset what Europeans have called "liberalism," Americans refer to as "conservatism": a deeply anti-statist doctrine emphasizing the virtues of laissez-faire. Ronald Reagan and Milton Friedman, the two current names most frequently linked with this ideology, define conservatism in America. American classical conservatism is founded upon the maintenance of common Christian and ideological values, advocacy of American exceptionalism, respect and the preservation of Western culture and American traditions, republicanism, business, and anti-communism.

[10] Pierre Bourgois, "The PNAC (1997-2006) and the Post-Cold War 'Neoconservative Moment", E-International Relations, February 1, 2020, https://www.e-ir.info/2020/02/01/new-american-century-1997-2006-and-the-post-cold-war-neoconservative-moment/

Interest" already in the 1930s and 1940s. The first generation of neoconservatives were comprised of socialists, social democrats, and liberals of the Cold War era, who, according to Ted Boetner, "supported both the strong anti-communism policy of Presidents Truman and Johnson and the welfare state".[11] However, as T. Boetner continues, in the late 1960s, many neoconservatives "found themselves at odds with the new socio-political realities especially the emerging counter-culture".[12] This was mainly due to changes in the American domestic life in the 1950s and 1960s (including the reduction of various inequalities within American society, namely granting equal civil rights to the black population rejected by the American conservative society, banning the compulsory prayer from schools, etc.) combined with skepticism among American society typical of the bipolar world order dictated by Cold War realities. The proponents of this persuasion considered these shifts to be steps undertaken by the Democrats against American society.[13] Thus, the neoconservatives that adhered to "the belief in an anti-communism and a liberal interventionist foreign policy (Cold War liberal consensus), departed from the left and moved to the right".[14] This was the reason that neoconservatives politically realigned themselves and abandoned many of the principles of liberalism. Therefore, Irving Kristol defined a neoconservative of this time as "a liberal who had been mugged by reality".[15] He believed that, as a result of this realignment, the historic mission of neoconservatism and its political commitment should be to transform American conservatism (first and foremost the Republican Party) into a new type of conservatism capable of governing modern democracies.[16]

Regarding the second generation of neoconservatives, according to Kislitsyn it acquired "one characteristic feature - the strengthening of dynastic and even more family ties". The representatives of this generation were the main ideologues of the modern "neocons" - William

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[11] Ted Boetner, "Neo-Conservatism and Foreign Policy", (Master Thes., Durham, University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository, 2009), 16, https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1115&context=thesis.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Corscadden, "The Neoconservative Influence".
[14] Boetner, "Neo-Conservatism and Foreign Policy", 17.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion".

Kristol (son of Irving Kristol), Robert Kagan, (son of neoconservative historian Donald Kagan) John Podhoretz (son of Norman Podhoretz) and so on[17]. Contrary to the first generation, these neocons were no longer, for the most part, former liberals that converted to conservatism over time. They were fully fledged conservatives defending a "Neo-Reaganian" American foreign policy and advocating for American "benevolent hegemony" or **Pax Americana.**[18]

The distinctive features of neoconservatism (utilizing the example of Middle Eastern policy)

As for its distinguishing features, Francis Fukuyama in his "After the Neocons. America at the Crossroads" best illustrates the distinction between other political theories and schools of thought and the neoconservative persuasion.

First of all, the neoconservatives are in favour of direct interference in the internal affairs of other states in order to introduce democracy and fundamental human rights[19]. According to Brian Schmidt and Michael Williams, neoconservatives believe that democracy was the most powerful ideology in the world, and thought that by introducing democracy in Iraq, the United States would be able to do the same in other countries in the region, acting as a liberator.[20]

The formation of neoconservatism was influenced by the 28th US president Woodrow Wilson, one of the 20th century's prominent representatives of the American liberalism, and the author of the post-WWI "14 Points", who put forward the basic principles of collective security based on a liberal foreign policy.[21] As noted by S. V. Kislitsyn,

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[17] Sergey Kislitsyn, "Foreign policy ideology and practice of American neoconservatism", (PhD diss., Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2019), 91.

[18] Bourgois, "The PNAC (1997-2006)".

[19] Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*, (Moscow, KHRANITEL (Conservator), 2007, 28.

[20] Brian C. Schmidt & Michael C. Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives Versus Realists", *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008): 203.

[21] Kislitsyn, "Foreign policy ideology and practice of American neoconservatism", 55, Here are those 6 principles : 1) democratic states should be the basis of peace, 2) free trade, socio-economic exchange have a modernizing and civilizing effect on the state, 3) international law и international organizations should contribute to the strengthening of the global world, 4) a stable world must be based on the principles of collective security, 5) these conditions are possible because the world is progressing, 6) American values and

"the connection between neoliberalism and Wilsonian ideas can be summed up in two points: the importance to spread democracy as an American national interest and the ideas of American moral leadership".[22]

However, in terms of building a democratic world, the roles of international law and organizations, and the approaches of neoconservatives, were different[23]. From this point of view, John Mearsheimer describes the Bush doctrine as "Wilsonianism with teeth", referring to its idealistic direction[24]. Neoconservatives are convinced that many issues concerning US national security depend on the number of democratic countries in the world. At the same time, however, they are certain that military power and its display are crucial to world politics. In fact, on a practical level, we are dealing with an irreconcilable contradiction: spreading democracy through the use of force.

An example of promoting democracy by use of force is the US policy in Iraq, which deviated even from the Westphalian system that served as the basis for the formation of the principles of international law, and was a transition from traditional American "isolationism".[25]

The next feature emphasized by Fukuyama is the division of the world into the camps of "good and evil" and the belief that US military could be used to spread American ideals. This provision, which is a cornerstone of neoconservative moral values, was expressed as a red line in George W. Bush's speeches, in which he noted that the liberation of the Iraqi people from tyranny is God's will.[26] This was not in line with the official *casus belli* of the Iraq campaign represented as the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, which had been declared as the official cause of the Iraqi campaign. In general, the neoconservatives, referring to the concept of "American exceptionalism",

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principles are universal, the United States is at the forefront of progressive development and has a special responsibility to inspire the rest of the world to convey ideas.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24]John Mearsheimer, "Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq war: realism versus neo-conservatism", *Open Democracy*, May 18, 2005, https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/A0037.pdf, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/morgenthau_2522jsp/.

[25] Alison Mitchell and Carl Hulse , "Threats and Responses: The Vote; Congress Authorizes Bush to Use Force Against Iraq, Creating a Broad Mandate", *New York Times,* October 11, 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/11/us/threats-responses-vote-congress-authorizes-bush-use-force-against-iraq-creating.html.

[26] Kislitsyn, "Foreign policy ideology and practice of American neoconservatism", 91.

believed that weak states, instead of acting against the United States, should, on the contrary, seek to unite with it.[27]

Its third important feature is "skepticism about the ability of international law and institutions to solve serious security problems". This feature, as F. Fukuyama states, was relevant to the Cold War-era arms race and manifested itself while "by-passing or undermining the United Nations Security Council"[28] before the Iraqi campaign. The latter showed that the US was more inclined to act "unilaterally to defend its interests if it feels the necessity to do so", even in the case of the highly debatable extent of the existing terrorism threat to the United States of America.[29] As for B. Schmidt B and M. Williams, "in their advocacy of American hegemony, neoconservatives express their theoretical antipathy to traditional balance-of-power politics. A hegemonic order led by the United States is viewed as clearly superior to a balance-of-power order"[30]. Therefore, the neoconservatives oppose the traditional "balance-of-power" order to a certain extent. They renounce the practice of ironing out problems through multilateral diplomacy and are considered to be proponents of unilateral foreign policy with a subjective interpretation of international law (this is what we witnessed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the case of interpreting the UN Charter's 51st article to ensure legal justification to intervene Afghanistan and Iraq). This was the reason for the development of a unilateral policy as a pillar of the Bush doctrine, aimed at the self-defense of US national security. Consequently, the role of international organizations was being pushed to the background. In practice, this meant rejecting international treaties that had already been signed (the Kyoto Protocol, The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, etc.). According to the famous neocon John Bolton's work "Is There Really 'Law' in International Affairs?", "international law is not law; it is a series of political and moral arrangements that stand or fall on their own merits, and anything else is simply theology and superstition masquerading a law".[31] Thus, given that unilateralism was one of the

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[27] Schmidt and Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War", 196.
[28] Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*, 29.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Schmidt and Williams, «The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War", 196.
[31] John Bolton, "Is There Really 'Law' in International Affairs?", *Transnational* Law *& Contemporary Problems*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 48.

pillars of Bush's doctrine, as noted by Charles Krauthammer, Bush's doctrine is synonymous with neoconservative foreign policy.[32]

The fourth feature was the idea of targeted and ambitious social engineering. It should be noted that this very provision distinguishes the first generation of neoconservatives from the post-Cold War period neoconservatives. The neoconservatives avowing anti-communist views during the Cold War rejected the idea of creating a common society through political, social, economic, and cultural total control as it was considered impossible and imaginary.

The theoretical basis for this distinctive feature was put forth by the second-generation neocons that emerged in the 1980s, towards the end of the George. H. W. Bush administration. In 1992, the first post-Cold War foreign policy strategy based on the principles of neoconservatism was elaborated under Wolfowitz's supervision. The document entitled "Defense Planning Guidance (DPG-92)" highlighted the importance of more defense spending due to the new need for the United States military abroad in an "era of fundamental change".[33] In line with this document, US foreign policy should focus on maintaining the sole superpower status the US gained as a result of the collapse of the USSR.[34] Subsequently, based on this initial political-ideological thrust, the neoconservatives simultaneously began arguing for a more assertive American foreign policy.

Referring to the aforementioned document, the neoconservatives began advocating a new global order of a "unipolar" world where no nation would challenge the positions and rights of the United States in order to create Pax Americana and achieve the universalization of American values.[35] Charles Krauthammer was one of the first people to predict that the end of the Cold War shaped a new era of unipolarity for the US, and, by embracing democracy and unilateralism, it would create a "benevolent Pax Americana" that did not need a balance of power any longer. Both Krauthammer and F. Fukuyama developed the idea that

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[32]Charles Krauthammer, "The Neoconservative Convergence," *Commentary*, (July–August 2005), https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/charles-krauthammer/the-neoconservative-convergence/.

[33] Boetner, "Neo-Conservatism and Foreign Policy", 31.

[34] Boetner, "Neo-Conservatism and Foreign Policy", 35.

[35] Ibid

based on the principles of Pax Americana and the universalization of Western (i.e. American) values, neoconservative foreign policy would depart from the "neo-conservative Cold War absolutism against communism" and move toward a more nationalistic Wilsonian liberalism.[36]

Therefore, building upon those political-ideological tenets, the Bush administration and, in particular, the president's inner circle - "the Vulcans" - believed that through unilateral policy, use of force and democracy promotion it would be possible to introduce Western democracy in a region with a variety of different religious, socio-economic and political characteristics, such as the Middle East[37], which would make the region much more manageable in terms of realizing the third wave of Pax Americana.

The approaches of neoconservatives to US Middle East policy

As for the elaboration of foreign policy in regards to the Middle East, Patrick Corscadden distinguishes two common principles. The first is the imperialist or pseudo-imperialist approach. In line with that approach, which was put forward by the leading neoconservative think thank *Project for a New American Century* (PNAC)[38], the United States was seen as a "force for good," so it was morally right for it to spread its influence and assert its dominance in international relations. Albeit the neoconservatives did not reject the use of soft power in parallel with hard power, the latter was much more prioritized.

From the point of view of rethinking domestic and foreign policy, there was a shift in the neoconservatives' choice of targets for a permanent struggle. During the Cold War, the target was the USSR, in the first post-Cold war decade it targeted the rogue states, and during the presidency of George W. Bush, the target was global terrorism, primarily represented by al-Qaeda. From this aspect, it can be concluded that in

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[36] Ibid

[37] Corscadden, "The Neoconservative Influence".

[38] Kislitsyn, "Foreign policy ideology and practice of American neoconservatism", 112. To understand George W. Bush's foreign policy doctrine, it is important to remember that the guidelines for the neoconservative concept underlying the organization of American national security were put forward in the programming report "Rebuilding America's Defenses" published by the "American New Age Project" as early as 2000 on the eve of the presidential election.

terms of the preservation and understanding of imperialism or, more precisely, pseudo-imperialism, neoconservatives, emphasized not so much the target rather the management of the fear caused by the target that could be a possible threat to US supremacy.[39]

The next common denominator is the pro-Likud approach to the Middle East policy, particularly the peace process. The essence of this approach was that the neoconservatives unconditionally supported the Israeli "Likud" party position in the peace process. This stance was best expressed in an article for Foreign Affairs published in 1991, in which Ze'ev Begin, a right-wing "Likud" member, noted that, "on security and historical grounds, it was impossible to make peace by negotiating any parcel of land coming from the Golan Heights, Gaza, and the West Bank". Such an extremist approach made it impossible to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the basis of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. We see the evolution of this position in the work "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm" developed by a group of neoconservatives such as J. Colbert, Ch. Fairbanks Jr., D. Feith, R. Loewenberg, D. Wurmser, and M. Wurmser under the supervision of Richard Perle, which contained political recommendations regarding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the elaboration of a critical strategy by the United States and Israel. The paper argues that before improving relations with the Palestinians, Israel must "ensure the security of its streets".[40]

To do so, Israel had to conduct regular inspections of Palestinian-held areas. According to the authors, this was a justified practice and would have the support of the United States. The peace process was to be based on signed agreements, but Israel had to be sure that Palestine would act in line with the terms of the agreements. At the same time, it was proposed by the United States and Israel to establish a Joint Compliance

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[39] Didier Chaudet, "The Neoconservative Movement at the End of the Bush Administration: Its Legacy, Its Vision and Its Political Future", *E-International Relations*, October 21, 2009, https://www.e-ir.info/2010/10/21/the-neoconservative-movement-at-the-end-of-the-bush-administration-its-legacy-its-vision-and-its-political-future/.
[40] Richard Perle, James Colbert, Charles Fairbanks, Jr., Douglas Feith, Robert Loewenberg, David Wurmser, and Meyrav Wurmser, "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm", *Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies*, December 27, 2004, https://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Articles/Story1351.html.

Monitoring Committee, which was to regularly examine whether the PLO was meeting the minimum standards of compliance, authority and responsibility, human rights, and judicial and fiduciary accountability. In any case, the reality was that American neoconservative ideologues were voicing what Israel wanted, which was to cancel the Oslo Accords. It was stated that Israel should not be bound by these agreements until the PLO fulfilled its obligations. It was stated that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should not be extended to other Arab countries. On the contrary, the Arabs, in the person of Israel, can find a good partner in the promotion of democracy and human rights.[41]

The establishment of peace via the use of force is best referred to in the section relating to the format of US-Israeli relations. It states that Israel's strategy should be aimed at developing its own economic and military capabilities, in order to ensure peace through the use of force and act as an upholder of Western values in the region.[42]

US neoconservatives criticized those Israeli officials who were in favour of improving relations through negotiations. For instance, John Podhoretz strongly criticized the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who opposed the existence of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, and the Israeli government, which, presumably, had not taken more stringent measures to stop Hezbollah.[43] This proves that the neoconservatives continuously consider negotiations a sign of weakness.

In his article "Some provisions of the US strategy in the context of the Iraqi issue" G. Harutyunyan highlights the neoconservatives' connection with Israel. Harutyunyan emphasizes that the US support for Israel's in the context of its Middle East policy was driven not only by the Jewish lobby but also by the White House Protestant majority. The union of the "Moral Movement", founded by the latter, funded the Israeli right-wing parties that advocated for the protection of Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. Interestingly, this was not due to "Judeophilia", but to the fact that the Protestant-Baptist elite remained faithful to the spirit of the Old Testament. This approach was called "Christian Zionism" as it was in line with the provisions of Zionism.[44]

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[41] Perle et al, "A Clear Break".
[42] Chaudet, "The Neoconservative Movement".
[43] Ibid.
[44] Gagik Harutyunyan, "Some provisions of the US strategy in the context of the Iraqi issue", *The 21st CENTURY* 3, no. 5, (2004): 110.

"Messianic sentiments" also played a role.[45] Some authors tend to believe that messianism was introduced into American foreign policy by the "neocons".[46] However, this is a primitive approach. Neoconservatism is just a derivative of American imperialism. Messianism syndrome is the result of the development of imperial ideology (or, in other words, geo-ideology). As in the past, messianism is often expressed in the form of well-thought-out informative action. For example, in his public speeches, President G. W. Bush often appealed to God and providence by announcing that they are pushing him to take this or that step. In the context of the Middle East policy, it was assumed that after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, Iraq would become a democratic and economically prosperous country and a model for the greater Middle East. Advocates of this approach believed that if countries like Syria, Saudi Arabia or even Egypt did not voluntarily follow the example of Iraqi democratization, the US would have to deal with them much more severely, forcing those countries to comply with the requirements of American civilization.[47]

The impact of neoconservatism on the US Middle East policy during the presidency of George W. Bush

It is important to mention that the key decision-makers in the White House were not neoconservative ideologue. However, Vice President Dick Cheney (an avid follower of hard-line political realism), National Security Adviser, eventual Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, the former Secretary of Defense who served until 2006, and Paul Wolfowitz (Deputy Secretary of Defense and a well-known neoconservative) who, along with Douglas Feith, had a significant impact on the development of national security strategy at the Pentagon, were standing close to the neoconservative ideology.[48] According to Mann, the September terrorist attacks were a good opportunity for the "Vulcans", to try to achieve their long-standing goal of the unilateral reorganization of the post-Cold War world[49] using the ideological

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[45] Harutyunyan, "Some provisions of the US strategy", 112.
[46] The term "neocon" is widely used in mass media and professional literature to refer to neoconservatives.
[47] Harutyunyan, "Some provisions of the US strategy", 113.
[48] Petar Kurecic, "The Key Aspects of Neoconservative Influence on the U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy during the first G.W. Bush Administration", *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* 11, no.1 (2011): 15.
[49] Kurecic, "The Key Aspects of Neoconservative Influence", 22.

provisions of neoconservatism. As a result, unilateral policy and the use of preventive and pre-emptive strikes were formally enshrined in 2002 and 2006 US National Security Strategy documents.

Interestingly, in 2000, during a presidential debate with his opponent, Al Gore, George W. Bush stated that if he became president, he would pursue a "moderate policy" in the Middle East and that ousting Saddam would lead to nation-building in another region which was not in line with their political vision. For his part, D. Cheney asserted that they were for continuing the policy of non-intervention and containment, emphasizing that the opposite is typical of states with imperialist aspirations.[50]

At this point, a question arises regarding whether this was just pre-election rhetoric, or the Iraqi campaign and the further development of Middle East policy were prompted by the September 11 terrorist attacks. According to the second-generation neocon Max Boot, the policy of the White House was conditioned by 9/11, and not by the influence of neoconservatives. As noted by M. Boot, the neocons had no representatives in the administration's "top tier". President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor and later the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have never been neoconservatives. The Bush administration decision-makers were either liberal internationalist or traditional national-interest conservatives who criticized the Clinton administration for its intervention in the Balkans and focus on nation-building and human rights promotion, things that were highly championed by the neocons.[51] M. Boot then states the Bush administration adopted the regional policy of ousting Saddam Hussein and promoting democracy not because of neoconservative influence but because of the impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. After the latter, the United States moved from its "humble" foreign policy, and the ambitious National Security Strategy issued in September 2002 was its direct result. NSS 2002 called for the US primacy, promotion of democracy, and "vigorous actions, preemptive if necessary", to stop terrorism and weapons proliferation. It was a "quintessentially neoconservative document".[52]

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[50] Kurecic, "The Key Aspects of Neoconservative Influence", 18.
[51] Boot, "Think Again: Neocons", 20.
[52] Ibid, 20-21.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, M. Boot believes that the ideas of neoconservatism have never been entirely fulfilled, and "triumph of neoconservatism was hardly permanent or complete" because the Bush administration "didn't adopt neocon arguments to push for regime change in North Korea and Iran".[53] G. W. Bush established friendlier relations with China and even launched negotiations with North Korea. Additionally, as M. Boot further states, Bush put in place "a high-profile effort to promote a "road map" for settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that most neocons predicted would lead nowhere".[54]

However, a profound study of the neoconservatives' programming documents shows that they were in favor of ousting the regime in Iraq before the 2001 terrorist attacks. The Iraqi policy was aimed at securing the economic interests of the United States, where one of the political pillars of the Bush Doctrine formed under the ideological influence of the neoconservatives. In 1995, Republican senators called for permanent US access to natural hydrocarbon reserves, especially in the Persian Gulf region. Even before 9/11 terrorist attacks, a report was issued by the Baker Institute for Public Policy on "Strategic Energy Policy Challenges for the 21st Century" where the destabilizing impact of Iraq on the Middle East's oil market's hydrocarbon supplies are described as a threat to the existing world order and international relations. At the time, it was stated that the US should conduct a comprehensive analysis of Iraq's political, economic, and military capabilities to assess the situation. According to Michael Claire, the establishment of control over Iraq would lead to the recognition of oil as a factor to be reckoned with, and control over the Persian Gulf would also lead to greater influence in Europe, Japan, and China.[55]

The Project for the New American Century launched a specific initiative in 1998 January sending a letter to the US then-president B. Clinton urging him to make removing Saddam from power a priority of US foreign policy. If this was not achieved, then the doctrine of dual

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid

[55] Abrar Turaev, "Neoconservative Practice: Operation "Iraq", *Wschodnioeuropejskie Czasopismo Naukowe (East European Scientific Journal)* 10, no. 50, (2019): 59.

containment in the Middle East would be considered a failure.[56]   The neoconservatives believed that it would be impossible to succeed in the conflict with Saddam Hussein without a war. Neoconservatives favouring the continuous containment of Iraq also opposed the UN humanitarian program "Oil for Food".[57]

Criticism of the Bush administration over its Middle East policy

As many American foreign policy observers have pointed out, there has been a widespread belief among policymakers that "the US political and security interests are advanced by the spread of liberal political values abroad". [58] In addition to this, one of the prominent critics of neoconservatism, the father of offensive realism, John Mershimer, notes that neoconservatives believed that the United States, while implementing its regional foreign policy, "could rely on stealth technology, air-delivered precision-guided weapons, and small but highly mobile ground forces to win quick and decisive victories" [59]. However, opponents have always been quite certain that the invasion of Iraq would divert attention from the real threat posed by al-Qaeda and the true fight against terrorism. As for Iraq, it was considered a manageable country for the United States. It was considered that the United States possessed a huge variety of restraint measures and instruments. Consequently, the neoconservatives' propositions or specific arguments could not justify the actions of George W. Bush. In particular, the right-wing leader of the Republican Party, Patrick J. Buchanan, who was known as a staunch critic of neoconservatives, called them "political parasites". According to P. J. Buchanan, by carrying out military actions in Iraq and waging "permanent war for permanent peace", the US got involved in a region where there had never been any threat to US interests.[60]

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[56] Letter to President Clinton on Iraq, January 26, 1998, https://www.noi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/iraqclintonletter1998-01-26-Copy.pdf, In the text of the letter there were D. Rumsfeld, R. Armitage, J. Bolton, R. Perley, E. Abrams, R. Walsh and other signatures of those who later joined the Bush administration.

[57] Turaev, "Neoconservative Practice", 59.

[58] Jonathan Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in US Strategy", *International Security* 29, no. 4, (Spring 2005): 1.

[59] Schmidt & Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War", 199.

[60] Kislitsyn, "Foreign policy ideology and practice of American neoconservatism", 125,

The Bush administration and the neoconservatives were also criticized by the proponents of the American global leadership and liberal interventionism, who stated that the US president administration executed a unilateral policy and failed to use soft power in Iraq in terms of the promotion of democracy and financing domestic opposition in the Middle East.[61] Stephen M. Walt, in line with his "balance-of-threat theory", noted that a unilateral policy makes the US unpredictable, which is assessed as a threat and in such cases "that states form alliances to balance against threats."[62]

Opposition figures did not deny that Saddam Hussein's policy was too aggressive and expansionist when considering his actions against neighbouring countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. But as Mearsheimer and Walt noted, Iraq's policy was no worse than that of Egypt or Israel, both of which have fought several wars since 1948.[63] Thus, the policy of preventive and preemptive strikes to dismantle Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party's regime not only proved to be a failure but also contradicted US national interests in terms of realpolitik.

Criticisms were also voiced by other neoconservatives. For instance, Fukuyama singled out three major mistakes made by both the Bush administration and the neoconservatives involved in the White House and Pentagon. The first is large-scale social engineering, which was used as the only tool for the export and promotion of democracy and the introduction of the Western model of society in the Middle East. The second is the inability to perceive the legitimacy of the principles of international law and their significance. The third is the adoption of a pro-Israeli stance on Middle Eastern affairs and its application by the United States.[64]

F. Fukuyama concludes that neoconservatism, both as a political symbol and as a theoretical concept, has degenerated into something that cannot be reconciled. The author points out the tendency of the utilization

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[61] Kislitsyn, "Foreign policy ideology and practice of American neoconservatism", 126.

[62] Schmidt & Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War", 206.

[63] Schmidt & Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War", 199, Mearsheimer and Walt's post-war analysis shows that Saddam Hussein was neither sane nor insane. It is no coincidence that WMDs were not found in Iraq, which once again confirms the veracity of the realists' claims. Realists also do not believe in the idea of neoconservatives that Saddam Hussein cooperated with al-Qaeda and that Iraq was a sponsor of international terrorism.

[64] Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*, 9.

of hard power in the Middle East, which, clearly outlined in the works of the neoconservatives, materialized after September 11.[65]

As for the leading American neocon think-tank, the New American Century Project, they declared that the Bush administration was wrong about Iraq's nuclear weapons programs, for those had already been shut down as of 2001. Concerning the data on weapons of mass destruction, the Bush administration was basing this on information acquired by intelligence in 1997 during the presidency of B. Clinton. But the neocons here blamed the CIA for providing false data and accused Donald Rumsfeld of being ill-prepared to face the challenges and possible failures in management.[66]

As a result of the civil war in Iraq and facing criticism from the American public and political circles, Paul Wolfowitz left the Pentagon in January 2005, and Donald C. Rumsfeld resigned from his post in November 2006. As for J. Bolton, who has always had a negative opinion of international organizations, he was sent to the UN in the aftermath of the Republicans' failure in the midterm elections.[67]

Conclusion

Thus, neoconservatism formed in the 1950s and was birthed by Wilsonian liberal values, political realism, Jacksonianism, Cold War skepticism, and American exceptionalism, and experienced its political rise in the first decade of the 21st century under George W. Bush. From a geopolitical as well as a political point of view, an attempt was made to give new life to the concept of Pax Americana based on neoconservative principles, through unilateral policy, military supremacy, preventative and pre-emptive strikes and the promotion of democracy.

The liberal-interventionist policy formed on these pillars manifested itself especially in the Middle East. Reconsidering the US Middle East policy in the unipolar world order, due to the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Bush administration initiated a shift in foreign policy implementation. After 9/11, the target of the fight became international

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Kislitsyn, "Foreign policy ideology and practice of American neoconservatism", 126; Boot, "Think Again: Neocons", 28.

[67] Kislitsyn, "Foreign policy ideology and practice of American neoconservatism", 128.

terrorism, which, according to the G.W. Bush administration, was supported and anchored by the "rogue states", inter alia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The objective of Middle East policy became the management of the threat caused by the target to the US and the overall situation in the Middle East. Interestingly, during the six decades of its existence, the viability of neoconservative beliefs was still conditioned by the presence of an enemy or possible invasion and remains unchanged to this day.

Preventive and pre-emptive strikes were documented as a moral imperative by the National Security Strategy, and the United States, without any UN sanctions, unilaterally "legitimized" the invasion of Iraq within the context of the "War on Terror". Unilateral actions in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, were presented as a main rule rather than an exception, bypassing or selectively interpreting international law. To highlight its ideological assertion, it is necessary at least to quote G. W. Bush saying that different circumstances require different methods but not different moralities.

Although neoconservatism was formed on liberal values, in the case of Middle East policy it took the form of typical imperialism with the strongest preference for the use of hard power. As a result, the neoconservatives' demand to oust Saddam Hussein from power in the 1990s onwards was directed not so much against the supposed threat as it was part of the policy aiming at expanding US influence and presence from the Balkans to Afghanistan.

Thus, it can also be assumed that the Middle East policy, developed under the influence of neoconservatives, was not unrealistic, but rather was a policy based on miscalculations and improper predictions. Particularly after the invasion of Iraq, they were not flexible enough to assess that land fighting against non-traditional actors of world politics via the use of predominantly hard power is not an effective solution.

The Middle East policy based on the ideological provisions of neoconservatism, inter alia, the invasion of Iraq, was criticized not only by political opponents but also by the 44th and 45th presidents of the United States - Barack H. Obama's and Donald J. Trump. However, it is interesting that despite this criticism, the subsequent authorities have not refrained from the temptation to follow the abovementioned political and ideological provisions. This was reflected in their decision-making

represented by engaging the neoconservatives involved in the Bush administration, the use of preventive and selective strikes in the Middle East, as well as in foreign policy statements (e.g. the US NSS 2010 and 2015) in which the formulations on the global dominance of the US through the implementation of a unipolar policy is apparent.

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