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The current issue of the "Contemporary Eurasia" VII (1, 2) is devoted to the ongoing developments and processes in the Eurasia and their impact on the region. The volume includes analyses of the security issues, key political developments and transitions in the Middle East and Caucasus.

The publication may be of interest for social scientists, experts and students.

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## SECURITY ISSUES IN EURASIA

ARTSRUN HOVHANNISYAN

### ASIA-PACIFIC THEATER IN FOCUS: COMPARISON OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS OF NEAR- PEER COMPETITORS, CURRENT ISSUES

#### *Abstract*

Comparison of military capabilities and weapons systems that can be brought to bear in case of regional crisis by near-peer competitors in Asian-Pacific, namely the USA, China, and Russia, is increasingly taking a prominent place in contemplations of academic community. Add to this equation the capabilities of such “middle-weight” military powers as the both Koreas, Japan, and other countries of the South China Sea (SCS), and we have an increasingly contested and congested region, where the balance of forces is positively worth studying. To begin with, regardless of numerous incentives for cooperation, first of all for the sake of trade relations, the United States and China are also indirectly facing off on a number of issues in Western Pacific, including on Pyongyang’s behavior and China’s assertiveness in SCS, to name but a few. Following a fairly tough response of the United States to North Korea, the problem of balance of forces in Asian-Pacific strategic realm, in fact, is becoming more vital. After the American new administration came to power, there was a certain tension in the relations with China as it was. One should take into account that it has been already several years there exist problems in relations between China and Japan as well in respect of laying claims to certain disputed islands. Rumors are flying that China is actively creating artificial islands which can become military strongholds far from its shores at approximately operational depth. Philippines and Vietnam are seriously concerned in that regard. This tension is already manifested in concrete actions and statements.

**Keywords:** USA, China, China’s People-Liberation Army (PLA), UAV, fighter, missile, navy, air supremacy.

#### *Introduction*

In October 2018, in the South China Sea, the Chinese torpedo boat forced American USS Decatur (DDG-73) torpedo boat to leave the area,

nearly bringing real collision risks. At the end of the same month, American former general Ben Hodges announced that clash between US and China is not far from reality and that could not wait a long time.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, it will be very interesting to study the balance of forces in the Asian-Pacific region, especially within the analysis of American military doctrine and Chinese specific military actions to counter it. It is common knowledge that today some political circles and professional staffs in the United States are really concerned about the actions of China and Russia and their capabilities that can significantly limit the US access to key regions of Eurasia.<sup>2</sup> At present, China and Russia have great potential to influence American traditional Land Forces, Air Forces, Navy and even the command and control networks and orbital groupings.<sup>3</sup>

These two countries are perceived in the US as potential adversaries trying in every way to reach the level of the American military and developing powerful technologies. Russia as well as China, in particular, is developing powerful satellite systems, various long-range missiles, fighter jets, UAVs etc. New Electronic Warfare (EW) systems are being developed to suppress or weaken the command and communication systems of the US and its allies.<sup>4</sup> China’s People-Liberation Army (PLA) also has the capability to destroy satellites, disrupt extraterrestrial intelligence, wreck command and control networks, etc.<sup>5</sup> Some experts believe the US Armed Forces cannot be sure to provide reliable and secure communication and signals during the conflict on the theater of military operations, i.e. on operational and strategic level. On theater level, the US Armed Forces are already considered vulnerable.<sup>6</sup> Many of them claim that China has created an arsenal of means within the A2/AD (anti-access and area denial) strategy, which is capable to cause the U.S. armed forces irreversible

<sup>1</sup> “Amerikanskiy general predskazal voynu SshA s Kitayem cherez 15 let,” (in Russian), [“An American General forecasted war between US and China in 15 years”], *Russia Today*, October 25, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/inotv/2018-1025/Business-Insider-amerikanskiy-general-predskazal> (accessed November 7, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> David Ochmanek, “The Role of Maritime and Air Power in DoD’s Third Offset Strategy,” *RAND Corporation* (Santa Monica, December 2014), [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT420/RAND\\_CT420.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT420/RAND_CT420.pdf) (accessed November 7, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> David Shlapak, “Question of Balance: The Shifting Cross-Strait Balance and Implications for the U.S.,” *RAND Corporation* March 2010, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2010/RAND\\_CT343.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2010/RAND_CT343.pdf) (accessed November 7, 2018); Evan B. Montgomery, “Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China’s Rise and the Future of U.S. Power Projection,” *International Security*, Vol. 38, no. 4, (2014): 115–149.

<sup>4</sup> Randy J. Forbes, “Caucus Brief: Chinese Military Capable of Jamming U.S. Communications System,” *The Congressional China Caucus*, September 20, 2013, <http://forbes.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=350448> (accessed November 7, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Wendell Minnick, “China Developing Capability to Kill Satellites, Experts Say,” *Defense News*, August 4, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Marriages, “Toward a New Offset Strategy: Exploiting U.S. Long-Term Advantages to Restore U.S. Global Power Projection Capability,” *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA)*, Washington, DC, October 27, 2014, 23, <http://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/Offset-Strategy-Web.pdf> (accessed November 7, 2018).



damage that will induce additional huge losses for recovery or turn out to be impossible to heal altogether.

The vulnerability of the land bases is considered to be the most salient as they are few and identified and can be exposed to attacks not only by traditional offensive armaments but also by terrorist and other capabilities. Especially problematic might be strikes launched by the Chinese Army to target the US military installations located in South Korea, Japan, the Philippines and other parts of the region. Some experts assert that these attacks are extremely dangerous also for the Carrier Strike Groups (CSG) when the CSGs strikes may not be as effective, as long as only the 2<sup>nd</sup> artillery corps of the Chinese Army has formed seven brigades of short-range ballistic missiles, three medium-range ballistic missile brigades and three brigades of ground-based cruise missiles.<sup>7</sup> Based on various estimates, the number of Chinese short-range missiles for close range operations runs up to 1000 and "CJ-10/20" "H-6K" bombers armed with cruise missiles can reach as far as even American bases "Apra Harbor" and "Andersen".<sup>8</sup> PLA is currently developing ballistic missiles with the range of 3000-5000 km "beyond the second chain of islands" (Japan, Guam and the Mariana Islands, right up to Indonesia) bringing its capabilities closer to high-precision strikes.<sup>9</sup> In 2013 according to "The US-China Economic and Security Review", PLA in multifaceted way is rapidly developing its striking capabilities directed to American installations, Navy and Air Force bases located in the Pacific, including in Guam.<sup>10</sup>

The US potential adversaries' reconnaissance and strike networking systems include torpedoes, air, sea, and ground-based anti-ship cruise missiles, as well as ballistic anti-ship missiles in relation to China and Iran. Chinese "DF-21D" ballistic missiles (aircraft carrier "killer") have more than 1500 km range, which allows them to attack large warships, including aircraft carriers in the Western Pacific.<sup>11</sup> As stated by a num-

ber of experts, the range of Chinese anti-ship ballistic missiles had to be increased up to 3000km by 2015.<sup>12</sup> In 2018 China demonstrated its anti-ship new missile models (Operative-tactical ballistic missiles "CM-401" and "WS-600L", ultrasonic, universal missile "HD-1" etc).

Iran also is working to create similar missiles called "Khalij Fars" which is the modification of "Fateh-110" missile with the estimated range of 300km and has mounted infrared/optical head for automatic aiming in the final part of the trajectory.<sup>13</sup> Russian missiles long before were able to hit targets up to 1000 km, while the new-cruise missiles have twice as higher technical data, which were shown during the Syrian war either. According to some experts on PLA, China strives to increase the range of its conventional assets all the way to 8000km by 2020.<sup>14</sup>

Having in mind that China is creating artificial islands in the South China Sea, in unsafe areas for Vietnam and the Philippines, as well as has claims on Senkaku islands; experts have concluded that China can use these islands as large springboards for air forces, Navy and other services of Armed Forces. The situation became especially strained by the fact that according to some information, the Chinese "YJ-26" – was able to detect the American fifth-generation "F-22" fighters.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, some of the American theorists also have other concerns. They believe within the areas close to the theater of military operations (500-1000 miles), the most part of the aircraft of the US Air Forces have limited combat capabilities due to lack of airfields. A solution to this problem could be the use of aerial refueling planes, but they are of the opinion that this approach is also susceptible to failure. American ground-based fighters' combat range reaches up to 300-600 miles, depending on the type of the aircraft, weapons and flight characteristics. From 2019 onwards short-range fighters and long-range bombers ratio will make ten to one (10:1), and the medium altitude long-endurance and long-range UAVs (e.g. MQ-9 Reaper), approximately three to one. In 2019 American Air Forces will be equipped with 971 fighters and 96 heavy bombers.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ron Christman, "China's Second Artillery Force" in *China's Near Seas Combat Capabilities*, Eds. Peter Dutton, Andrew Erickson and Ryan Martinson, *China Maritime Studies*, no. 11, (Newport: Naval War College Press, February 2014) 31–34.

<sup>8</sup> Toshi Yoshikawa, "Chinese Missile Strategy and the U.S. Naval Presence in Japan: The Operational View from Beijing," *Naval War College Review*, Vol 63, no. 3, (2010), <https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/69198ee2-edc2-4b82-8f85-568f80466483/Chinese-Missile-Strategy-and-the-U-S--Naval-Presen> (accessed November 5 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Erickson, "Beijing's Aerospace Revolution" in *Chinese Aerospace Power*, Eds. Andrew Erickson and Lyle Goldstein, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>10</sup> U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2013 Report to Congress, Washington, DC: GPO, November 20, 2013, 233, [http://www.uscc.gov/Annual\\_Reports/2013-annual-report-congress](http://www.uscc.gov/Annual_Reports/2013-annual-report-congress) (accessed November 5, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013," 5–6, [http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2013\\_china\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2013_china_report_final.pdf) (accessed November 7, 2018); Ronald O'Rourke, "China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities," Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, Washington, DC: CRS, August 2018, 5–6, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33153.pdf> (accessed November 5, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Amy Chang and John Dotson, "Indigenous Weapons Development in China's Military Modernization," Staff Research Report, Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, April 5, 2012, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Binnie, "Iran Rolls Out Ballistic Missiles," *Jane's 360 Defence*, March 6, 2014, <https://www.janes.com/article/35187/iran-rolls-out-ballistic-missiles> (accessed November 2, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Mark Stokes, "China's Evolving Conventional Strategic Strike Capability: The anti-ship ballistic missile challenge to U.S. maritime operations in the Western Pacific and beyond," Project 2049 Institute (Arlington, September 14, 2009), 2, [http://project2049.net/documents/chinese\\_anti\\_ship\\_ballistic\\_missile\\_asbm.pdf](http://project2049.net/documents/chinese_anti_ship_ballistic_missile_asbm.pdf) (accessed May 10, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> "Kitayskiy radar YJ-26 sposoben obranujit F-22," (in Russian), [Chinese YJ-26 radar can detect F-22], *Voenni paritet*, [Military parity], November 17, 2014, [http://www.militaryparitet.com/tp/data/itp\\_7072/](http://www.militaryparitet.com/tp/data/itp_7072/) (accessed November 5, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Aviation Inventory and Funding Plan: Fiscal Years (FY) 2014–2043*, Washington, DC: DoD, May 2013, <http://breakingdefense.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/06/DoD-Aircraft-Report-to-Congress.pdf> (accessed November 7, 2018).

China's new capabilities result in most serious consequences for the US Air Forces as some Chinese fighters' operational range without refueling is 950-1400 km, which, as suggested by a number of experts, makes US tanker planes and fighters vulnerable. According to many experts, the main threat to US Air Forces and airborne weapons (AW), is a land- and sea-based unified Air Defense (AD) system. Integration of AD system becomes more prevailing and reliable. Prevalence of a modern unified Air defense system makes traditional American Air Force design problematic, since the vast majority of aircraft have little flying range and are not stealthy. The number of aircraft with low visibility (B-2, F-22 and RQ-170 Sentinel) comprises less than 10% of the US Air Forces inventory.<sup>17</sup>

### *Air Supremacy issues*

Combat and logistic support of high tempo air operations is also problematic.<sup>18</sup> Detection of surface ships in the seas and oceans, their tracking and attacking requires not only a wide network of radars but also a creation of command, control and communication (C3) system that collects, processes, unifies and distributes the data to strike systems by expediency. Thus, it is not about ordinary reconnaissance-strike systems but networks, the emergence of which in China and Russia, in particular, has been a serious challenge for the United States throughout the past two decades. They were displayed during the Syrian war. For example, according to some estimates, China's reconnaissance-strike network now has the capability to detect and guide American surface warships not only in the South China Sea but also in the western part of the Pacific Ocean. According to naval expert Norman Friedman: "Probably by around the year of 2030 we will have to admit that it might be possible to detect, identify and guide them a few hundred or a few thousand miles away from the shore, given appropriate efforts are exerted to resolve this problem."<sup>19</sup>

In the western sector of the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea, the launching distance of missiles without entering the engagement zone of the air defence system can exceed 1,500 miles. This, as considered by some experts is 500 miles in excess of the range of Tomahawk missiles' strikes on ground targets and almost three times exceeds "F / A-18E / F Super Hornet" multipurpose fighter's operational radius without refuel-

<sup>17</sup> Carlo Kopp, "Evolving Technological Strategy in Advanced Air Defense Systems," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 57, (2010): 93.

<sup>18</sup> Martinage, "Toward a New Offset Strategy," 26-27.

<sup>19</sup> Norman Friedman, "The U.S. Navy of 2030," *Defense Media Network*, June 21 2012, <https://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/the-u-s-navy-of-2030/> (accessed November 5, 2018).

ing. In subsequent campaigns, when China's reconnaissance-strike network gets completely expanded and assigned to operational readiness, US destroyers and cruisers armed with cruise missiles might get under attack during combat application of their main weapons. Similarly, if Carrier Strike Groups (CSG) have to maintain distance in order to avoid anti-ship ballistic missile attacks, the use of carrier aviation with combat payload, for both execution of combat mission and return to the estimated area will require several circles for air refueling.<sup>20</sup>

Some experts say the situation is not good in the space domain as well. Russia and China are developing capabilities for creating attack laser systems in order to carry out direct attacks (hit-to-kill), creating satellite interceptor aircraft, to accurately arrest anti-satellite systems, direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) intercepts and co-orbital attacks.<sup>21</sup> The former director of National Intelligence J. Clapper noted: "Chinese and Russian servicemen realize the unique information benefits provided by space systems and therefore they develop capabilities to deny use of space to the US".<sup>22</sup>

There are certainly even worse assumptions in relation to the use of ground forces, which is quite natural. Thus, the increasing vulnerability of military bases located in the immediate vicinity of the theater, capabilities to hit large surface ships and CSGs with ballistic and long-range cruise missiles, without entering air defense zone, development of joint air defense system, as well as the potential loss or weakening of space-based key capabilities can qualitatively change the capacity of American potential. Such actions can be enhanced by other threats, such as aggressive electronic cyber-attacks on centralized command and control nodes, communication networks, U.S. intelligence computer systems.

### *Different View*

Certainly, it is hard to ignore all these concerns, as China and Russia today evidently and intensively are developing their offensive and defensive potential, creating weapons and new tools of warfare; and it is obvious by doing this they are rapidly reducing their backwardness from

<sup>20</sup> Martinage, "Toward a New Offset Strategy," 28.

<sup>21</sup> Andrea Shalal-Esa, "China's Space Activities Raising U.S. Satellite Concerns," *Reuters*, January 14, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-satellites/chinas-space-activities-raising-u-s-satellite-security-concerns-idUSBRE90D08620130114> (accessed November 4, 2018); Brian Weeden, "China's BX-1 Microsatellite: A Litmus Test for Space Weaponization," *The Space Review*, October 20, 2008, <http://www.thespacereview.com/article/1235/1> (accessed November 4, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> James Clapper, Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, *Director of National Intelligence, Statement for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, January 29, 2014, 7, [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Intelligence%20Reports/2014%20WTA%20%20SFR\\_SSCI\\_29\\_Jan.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Intelligence%20Reports/2014%20WTA%20%20SFR_SSCI_29_Jan.pdf) (accessed November 2, 2018).



American Armed Forces that used to exist after the Cold War. On the other hand, the American military culture has a quite flexible tradition to rapidly assess their potential opponents' capabilities, sometimes even overestimate them, to use them for developing their own projects thus contributing to the Armed Forces improvement. And here it is worth analyzing everything in terms of use of concrete available forces. It is clear that this hypothetical collision will be close to China's coast involving also allies from both sides. And surely the main forces at play would be Navy and Air Force; involvement of other services of Armed forces can be limited, otherwise it might turn into a world war with the use of nuclear weapons, which is unlikely.

The US Air Forces currently have about 600 two-engined fighters of the fourth and fifth generation "F-15" and "F-22". Of course, not all of them are combat-effective at a time, the major part might be decommissioned by 2025, but the bulk of them will still have combat efficiency and after the specified time they will be replaced with more powerful aircraft. Within a short period of time they can be deployed to the Pacific zone. The radius of their flight without extra tanks makes more than 600 miles. They can cover ranges of up to 800 miles with about 4-5 tons of payload and if fitted with additional fuel tanks. This figure of aircraft should be added by 200 similar fighters just to count for Japan's and South Korea's involvement, not to mention Australia. If we add aircraft from Australian bases, the number will increase, amounting to approximately 900 platforms. Here we don't count American heavy bombers, as well as 500 similar to "F-18E / F" Navy fighters, about 200-300 of which can be concentrated in this region.

China, purely in quantitative terms can contrast with about 400 two-engined fighters. Only the ratio of these makes 2-2.5 / 1. But that is not the point. Yes, Chinese fighters have the same flight range, as some American experts note. They are mostly Russian "SU-27" family's old and new fighter aircraft or their Chinese modification "J-11". Although having the same flight range as American fighters they, still yield the top place to American platforms by some capabilities. First, these aircraft cannot carry as much payload; they can take on board amount of armament equal to American fighters only in "air-to-air" mode, but as a multipurpose aircraft they lag behind on their armament. They have poor aiming equipment and limited range in air fights, relating to both radars and missiles. In Chinese Air Force particularly weak are refueling and airborne control systems, without which it is impossible to carry out a modern air battle. Chinese fighters cannot carry operational range "air-to-surface" missiles, such as the "AGM-158 JASSM", "AGM-154A JSOW"

and "AGM-84E SLAM", which are launched from ordinary fighters firing two or more missiles. American fighter jets with similar missiles can have operational range of up to 1,000 miles. These missiles are launched without entering the Chinese ground air defense zone. Both sides do not count one-engined fighters that are quantitatively significant, but have problems in operational radius and armament carrying capabilities; however, in that regard "F-16" jet also significantly surpasses its Chinese competitors, while the new generation fighters 'F-35' are on the whole beyond comparison. This single-engined fighter can have a combat radius of 640-760 miles with combat payload.<sup>23</sup>

American Army's capabilities are as follows: it is planning within 30-50 days to be able to launch up to 1,000 cruise missiles daily.<sup>24</sup> The Air Force and Navy together already possess:

1. About 2000 "AGM-158 JASSM" multifunctional cruise missiles of various types,
2. About 20 000 "AGM-154A JSOW" multifunctional cruise missiles
3. About 1000 "AGM-84E SLAM" missiles.

The same program includes about 5,000 sea and air launching large cruise missiles ("BGM-109", "AGM-86") having a flight range of 500-2500 km. Now the Navy is already armed with 3000 long-range cruise missiles and by 2025 their number will be 6000.<sup>25</sup> According to other information, today the Navy has 4000 cruise missiles and in the future might have up to 7,000. These are mainly missiles launched from American submarines and here Chinese fleet, on the whole, is unable to compete with them. Some experts fear that the American fleet can be monitored and subjected to attacks. Of course, similar possibilities cannot be excluded but still there are some butts here. Firstly, it is possible to detect surface ships but the world's most powerful underwater fleet (combined number of which is about 50 and they carry over 1,000 long range cruise missiles) cannot be so easily detected. Even after having been detected it is not so easy to hit a big aircraft carrier as:

- This class of warships is armed with the world's most reliable and powerful anti-missile system "Aegis"
- The American fleet is equipped with still the most powerful detection systems: even in case of mutual pressure on each other, that

<sup>23</sup> Gary North, "F-35: The future is now," *Lockheed Martin Corporation*, April 2016, <http://www.fisher.org.il/2016/Adir%20Powepoint/GaryNorth.pdf#page=7> (accessed November 7, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> S. Lavrenov, "Voyna XXI veka. Strategiya i vooryuzhenie SShA," (in Russian), [S. Lavrenov, XXI Century War.US strategy and armament.] M. AST. Astrel, 2005, 80.

<sup>25</sup> A.V. Aleshin, A.N. Popov, V.V. Puchnin, "Voennno-morskaya mosh Rossii v sovremennix geopoliticheskix usloviyax," (in Russian), ["Russian naval power in modern geopolitical circumstances"], *Voennaya Mysl*, [Military thought], (2016): 12-14.

might cause disruption of some systems of both sides, American warships will have advantage because they are greater in numbers and have more accomplished and advanced network.

- In practice, an aircraft carrier has never been hit by a ballistic missile so far. Above mentioned Chinese missile still have to demonstrate their reliability.
- Such ships, as proven in practice, are not immediately hit and sunk even with one ton of combat payload, and aircraft on deck can take off and complete their mission.
- The American main surface ships can launch their missiles from about 1000-1500km off the coast: "BGM-109, Tomahawk Block IV" has 900-1000ml. or 1600km launching range.<sup>26</sup>
- Submarines can do it from a closer distance as they can be detected with more difficulty.

Here we should also note that Chinese side has problems also in matters of fleets; so in number and total tonnage of ships they are inferior to US Pacific fleet and if we take into account allies' fleets then the difference multiplies not in favor of China.

The Chinese fleet has an aircraft carrier CV-16 *Liáoning Jiàn*, designed with the basis on the 1143.6 Soviet project. China is building a similar carrier by their own design – Type 001A or CV-17 – that is to be tested soon.<sup>27</sup> Both ships are listed in the same series as the Russian "Admiral Flota Sovetskogo Soyuzu Kuznetsov" carrier. Some experts claim that China is making big steps already and can push the U.S. out of the first island chain (Japan, Korea, the Philippines) even with two or three of these carriers. We consider that claim to be too optimistic, as even in case of mass production, the Chinese aircraft carriers will still have a number of issues. Firstly, the lack of catapults means that the fighters take off with half of fuel and weapons. For the same reason, the ships cannot carry large airplanes with airborne command posts and aerial refueling capacities. This shortcoming further undermines the abilities of Chinese carriers, which take on board and operate half the amount of planes their American counterparts do as it is. Another issue is the fighting efficiency of the aircraft, although it is not the whole story. Accompanying combat and logistics ships (bunkers, supply ships, etc.) play a big role in the operation of aircraft carriers. Combat ships in a squadron must be able to protect aircraft carriers with their major weapons and support the carriers

<sup>26</sup> "Tomahawk Cruise Missile," US Navy fact file, [http://www.navy.mil/navydata/fact\\_display.asp?cid=2200&tid=1300&ct=2](http://www.navy.mil/navydata/fact_display.asp?cid=2200&tid=1300&ct=2) (accessed November 5, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Gabriel Dominguez, "Future Chinese carriers to deploy J-20, J-31 stealth fighters, says report," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, December 7, 2017, <http://www.janes.com/article/76242/future-chinese-carriers-to-deploy-j-20-j-31-stealth-fighters-says-report> (accessed November 5, 2018).

in combat, particularly with cruise missiles. The Chinese fleet has neither these ships nor, which is more important, the experience in their coordinated operation. Contrary to that, the US Navy in this region can concentrate up to 8 aircraft carriers, apart from amphibious ships.

Chinese Navy doesn't have cruisers and in quantity and quality of destroyers they are inferior even to the Japanese Navy. Chinese "Type 052D" destroyer warships, total number of which doesn't reach 20, by almost all its fighting qualities are inferior to Japanese "Atago class" and partly "Akizuki-class destroyer", number of which exceeds 30. Moreover, pointless is even to compare it with American "Arleigh Burke" class warship, as they are almost unanimously accepted by all experts to be the best of their type in the world. Chinese submarines also can have trouble even with Japanese fleet only, not including South Korean one.

Chinese surface fleet has 1400-1500 anti-ship and anti-air missiles in total, 10 percent of which are able to hit only coastal targets or surface ships that are in the distance of 250km and more. In the meantime, Japanese warships have missiles of the similar amount and almost of the same type, not including South Korean warships. It is true, general launching range of Japanese anti-ship missiles is partly inferior to the armament of recent Chinese destroyers, but compared with other warships it even surpasses them. American Pacific fleet for short-term duration can concentrate from 40 to 45 out of its 60 destroyers, thus providing more than 4,000 anti-ship, SAM and other missiles that are able to deliver strikes to coastal areas, and surpassing Chinese fleet missiles by all their technical characteristics. This number does not include about 1400-1500 similar missiles, that can be launched from American cruisers and about 1,000 long-range cruise missiles launched from submarines.

Thus China in response to its 1400-1500 sea-based and about the same number of ground-based missiles can expect to get about 6,000 American only marine platform-based missiles, from which cruise and long-range surface-to-air missiles have an absolute advantage in all types of technical performance. To this, you need to add about 2000-3000 "AGM-86", "AGM-158 JASSM" and "AGM-84E SLAM" cruise missiles that can be launched from American bombers and some fighters. Thus the ratio actually becomes three to four. The US air force and navy can counter 400 Chinese fighters which will operate without aerial refuelers and airborne control systems with 900 fighters and about 40 airborne control systems and aerial refuelers. Chinese airborne control systems are very few and air refuelers are old, with short-range flight capability as well as no experience in this kind of operations.



Now one should try to simulate what could happen in a limited regional conflict. Let us conditionally recognize that for some reason the situation is tense and the conflicting sides are concentrating forces. Japanese, two Korean states' forces are brought into combat readiness, Taiwan and China are making combat preparations and meanwhile, the US aircraft carrier groupings are arriving in the region. One of the sides in accordance with the degree of readiness will attempt to use force, trying to rapidly administer a surprise strike. Having regard to American experience and quality of its forces, probably the US Navy joint formation will be one to carry out attack first; but conceiving of China as being able to administer the first strike. At its first strikes China can launch as most 2000 anti-ship and anti-ground ballistic and cruise missiles. This is the maximum that Chinese Armed Forces are able to do today. Having regard to US electronic-warfare capabilities, as well as regional ballistic-missile defense and naval AMD (Anti-Missile Defense) systems capacities, Chinese missiles may not have so high efficiency. Results at best might make 30-40%, which means loss of about a dozen ships, and around the same number of ground targets taken out of the battle space. Each target is hit by several missiles.

Naturally, the counter strike in the first phase can be delivered even minutes later, and about 4000 cruise missiles will be launched at a time from all types of platforms; and as the Chinese targets will mainly be of ground nature and most of them might give their positions away just after the first strikes, then American strikes will definitely produce greater effect. Certainly, Chinese EW and AMD systems will become operational either, suppression systems will also be brought to bear on satellites, but in this regard, American forces again have a higher level of performance, as well as valuable expertise. For comparison, the U.S. currently has more than 570 satellites in space, while the number of Chinese satellites does not reach 190.<sup>28</sup>

To our estimates, Chinese Air Forces and Navy have about 150 anti-aircraft missile systems, which can be used as AMD systems.<sup>29</sup> These systems are able to hit six targets at a time. In ideal conditions all of them can hit up to 900 air targets at a time, but not cruise missiles; abilities to hit the latter get limited, not including the impact of EW. So, even the counter strike by the U.S. has greater chances to be more effective. American allies in the region have about 50 "Patriot" SAM systems; about 100 similar missiles American Forces can deploy to protect their land bases

<sup>28</sup> "How many satellites are orbiting the Earth in 2016?," *Pixalytics*, August 24, 2016, <http://www.pixalytics.com/sats-orbiting-earth-2016/> (accessed November 7, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> The International Institute For Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2017*, (London: Routledge, 2017), 250-258.

and to this amount they can add several "THAAD" missile defense systems. American Navy can increase this number by approximately 60 pieces of "Aegis" SAM defense system, while Japanese and South Korean Navies can add to that number about ten similar systems. "Patriot" and "THAAD" systems are able to hit 8, while "Aegis" systems can destroy 18 targets at a time. Moreover, the last two systems can even hit Chinese satellites in the orbit, while ordinary Chinese anti-missile systems do not have appropriate capabilities to do that. Hence all American SAM systems together can hit over 2000 various types of missiles. Anti-missile capabilities of these systems are significantly higher than Chinese systems of the same type. At the security forum held in China In 2016, the first deputy chief of the Russian General Staff, Lieutenant-General Victor Poznikhir in his report alerted about capabilities of these systems. As he noted, the modeling showed that particularly American naval missile defense systems and cruise missiles are posing a threat to Russian and Chinese ballistic missiles, as well as upsetting the balance of power in favor of the US.<sup>30</sup> According to him, these systems are able to hit Russian ballistic missiles even before they reach the highest altitude of their flight when the warheads are not detached yet.

### Experience and Challenges

This simple calculation shows that even given EW impacts and other electronic jamming from both sides directed to each other, there will be less Chinese missiles to get to their targets than American ones, if nothing, launched in a greater amount. In this situation, when the sides exchange couple of strikes using long-range firing assets and make attempts to concurrently interdict each other and hit those missiles also in the air, then the Air Force will be the entity to first assume control over the situation. As we noted, American Air Force and Navy together have about 900 two-engined fighters apart from allies' similar aircraft. Most of them will be used primarily to establish air superiority, by which, first of all, they will deprive Chinese fighters of performing any other tasks; then by providing up to 3000 sorties on a daily basis, they will gain air suprem-

<sup>30</sup> "Pervij zammachlinka GOU Generalnogo Shtaba VS RF general-leytenant Viktor Poznikhir vystupil na Syanshanskom forume po bezopasnosti," *Ministerstvo oboroni* (in Russian), ["Lieutenant General Victor Poznikhir, First Deputy Head of Russian General Staff Main Operations Directorate, gave a speech at Xiangshan Security Forum"], *Defense Ministry*, October 10, 2016, [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/world/more.htm?id=12099373%40egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/world/more.htm?id=12099373%40egNews) (accessed November 5, 2018); "Opasnost PRO SSHA dlya yadernix potencialov RF i Kitaya okazalos nedoocenenoj," (in Russian), ["The Threat of US Missile Defense for Russian and Chinese Nuclear Powers is Underestimated"], *Interfax*, October 11, 2016, <http://www.interfax.ru/world/531967> (accessed November 7, 2018).

acy by destroying Chinese fighters through their airborne control systems. Certainly, there will be losses, but they will be less. Owing to the airborne control systems, as well as more powerful radars of American two-engined fighters, C2 systems and long-range "air-to-air" class missiles, it is not difficult to guess the outcome of the air battles. Even suffering some losses, the US forces will still be definitely able to deprive the Chinese fighters of operational flights and some amount of American fighters will even take part in delivering strikes to Chinese fighters' airbases, AD installations, and other targets. Certainly, all sides will suffer losses, but in all respects the side which is better prepared, experienced and has more resources will be able to achieve greater success. The number of first strikes by cruise missiles, UAVs, along with missile decoys can daily make up to 5000-6000, which in accordance with the appropriate EW can ensure a breakthrough of Chinese defense. One should be reminded that tactical fighters at this time can carry "air-to-air" missiles, four long-range cruise missiles, own EW assets and additional fuel tanks at a time while one-engine fighters that are not counted in this equation can ensure up to 1000ml flight radius with additional fuel tanks, minimal armament and missile decoys. But only with their flights and launching some "ADM-160 MALD" and "ADM-141 TALD" missile decoys from each fighter, American aircraft can reveal the Chinese AD system, force them open useless fire and then suppress them.

The fact is that over the past years the American military has completely mastered the strategy of breaking similar protections, while China has no experience or some specific assets: the core of this model is that Chinese side is willing to assume the role of a goalkeeper that will try to administer blows only from the ground depths. Thus actually the initiative will pass to the American side and if the latter is able to deliver the first punch then everything will be easier. Over these years the following pattern has been formed, which can break any defense.

1. Air grouping initially will be composed of approximately 50-60% strike aircraft and 40-50% of supporting air force special assets. These include primarily reconnaissance, airborne control and EW flying assets. This percentage may somewhat decrease, taking into account those aircraft of new generation, which successfully combine strike and other functions.
2. During the first strikes until air superiority is not completely ensured, the density of strike assets must be at least 1,5-2 times more than AD target engagement channels. Additional aircraft with their secondary problems may further complicate the situation for ground AD, but just strike assets launched from aircraft must be in that ra-

tio (*Digital formula refers not only to ground AD but also to the confrontation with enemy fighters which are more dangerous for air superiority. The quantity is provided by not simple rules. Only few aircraft can take off, but missiles launched from those aircraft also become target engagement channels and thus exceed the permissible amount of AD strikes. Today micro-UAVs have already been used which already provide hundreds of targets per plane.*)

3. The first strikes should be electronic-firing, 1-2 or 1-1 ratio, i.e. 1 EW aircraft falls to 1-2 strike aircraft. No matter what total EW suppression will be provided by superior's assets, which can also be beneficial for secondary means, this ratio is necessary at the beginning of the strikes. The strike asset possessing its own EW can be considered a suppressive tool, but they are few as a rule. Division of general strike aircraft into groups and their tactical flexibility are greatly dependent on these requirements.
4. The preliminary strikes if not fully, but have to be predominantly of high precision. Preferably, strikes in this phase are launched more from aircraft and long-range UAVs.
5. As long as the enemy's AD system is not generally destroyed, 70-80% of combat flights must be conducted just for that purpose. This is the first phase of strikes. For this mission, it is urgent to constantly allocate forces in the further phases of operation and not merely through combat flights (Destruction is a relative concept to this issue. It is necessary that surface-to-air missile systems (SAM) mostly be deprived of their combat capacities and lacking organized and active countering *(even given full air superiority, approximately ten percent of combat flights are conducted to complete that task. For destruction of AD pockets, other airborne weapons are actively used, especially tactical and operational high precision ballistic missiles).*)
6. The main portion of strikes in all phases must be carried out in the direction of mobile targets, as well-trained enemy disguises the targets carefully, and just after the first strikes they get them out from cover and quickly maneuver.

These are basic, but not all conditions under which almost any level of ground-based AD system or the unity of the AD of Air Forces built on that basis can be neutralized. In April 7, 2017 the US Navy launched strikes to Syrian Al-Sharyat air base which was a reassertion of the above-mentioned pattern and criteria. US Navy launched 59 missiles to ensure the required density, which together with other assets guarantees overcoming of any ground-based AD system. Syrian and Russian new generation SAM and ground-based EW stations had been located along



the direction of the missiles' flights and they actually did not do anything to head off the air strikes. If the Russian side did not take steps toward that end, it was only because of technical difficulties for implementation. China's Air Forces and long range AD can hit at best about 2000-3000 targets at a time, not including army's AD and AD systems deployed in depth, actions against which are less likely. Combat operations will take place at best on the coast or coastal areas of China. It is naive to think that there might be an action to occupy China. As we noted, in the first phase air strikes can be carried out through daily 5000-6000 sorties, including with decoy missiles. Of course, the targets of initial destruction can be just as many, but the gradual destruction or suppression is a matter of time. The next strikes may doubly come down but this time the Chinese air defense and air superiority capabilities would be significantly weakened. And it was then that the tactical air forces could put into action more than 20,000 "AGM-154 JSOW" air-to-surface missiles, which are mostly launched beyond the long-range AD assets operational zone, from distances of 110-556 km.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, even American single-engine fighters can carry these missiles. That is, once air superiority is established, American planes can operate more easily and confidently, striking targets of second-hand importance. Additional density at this stage can be provided by various UAVs which can operate more effectively in conditions of fairly suppressed air defenses. The US Air Forces and Navy are ready for such density of air strikes and are able to conduct operations spanning from one to six months, whereas the Chinese side simply cannot withstand this. The Russian Air Forces and Navy will suffer almost the same fate in the Pacific theater, although there are some differences. The Russian Navy has counter-strike capabilities in a certain depth of an ocean but the Russian side has other problems associated with actual supply of modern anti-ship missiles, communications and control systems, etc.

In April 2017 media reported about a new Russian missile "3M22 Zircon (Циркон)" under testing that can break the velocity of Mach 8. Many experts immediately considered this fact as very dangerous for American ships, especially for carrier vessels. In reality though, detection and engagement of ships at such speeds is quite difficult.<sup>32</sup> Undoubtedly, this is a new issue, a new challenge for carrier vessels. However, there are several systemic problems that seriously hinder successful employment of even such missiles. First of all, it is about air superiority: the point is that air

superiority, especially in the vast of ocean and not-so-littoral sea areas to be provided by carrier vessels, has a decisive role for navies, and Russian ships without air superiority are doomed to detection and engagement, before having time for fulfilling their essential task. The second problem is the reliability of these missiles: it is a known fact that technology attains such speeds not for the first time. Nevertheless, the motors that provide for such velocities are not as reliable as solid propellant rocket engines. The thing is that such missiles ("SS-N-12 Sandbox", "SS-N-19 Shipwreck", "SS-N-26 Strobile" and others) currently deployed on the best Russian vessels have large dimensions – up to 10-11m length and weigh 3-4, sometimes up to 7 tons. Aerial vehicle of such parameters is easily detected regardless of its velocity, especially taking into account the fact that today main American naval detection assets are not shipborne radars, but various sensors installed onboard aerial vehicles such as "E-2D Advanced Hawkeye", "Boeing P-8 Poseidon", project "UCLASS" and others. For example, flying at such velocities will make the missile to overheat; this is the best "gift" for modern sensors which can detect such missiles at ranges of up to several hundred kilometers. It should be reminded that the thermal detection sensor of American "F-35" fighter has detected such missiles at one thousand kilometer range. And after detection, it is possible to hit such missiles with shipborne "Aegis" system. After detection comes the next major issue for a Russian missile: it can be hit not only with modern or future AMD systems which decision-making capabilities are increasing at incredible rate, but also with EW assets. Suppressing systems and especially airborne EW systems are not "embarrassed" by speed; they do their job in a matter of seconds.

### Conclusion

Those American experts that are warning about China's and Russia's increasing military power are certainly doing important reviews. Indeed, these countries are increasing their military expenditures, manufacture new weapons, adopt the automatic control systems and basically repeat achievements of the American military machine and even try to surpass it. However American military system possesses and develops such technologies, that are out of competition and yet dictate the common directions of development. That are orbital fighters, such as "X-37B", orbital control systems, fifth generation fighters "F-22" and "F-35", modernized and improved fighters "F-15" and "F-18", which have active radars

<sup>31</sup> "JSOW-ER," Guide to Military Equipment and Civil Aviation, [http://www.deagel.com/Land-Attack-Cruise-Missiles/JSOW-ER\\_a001153007.aspx](http://www.deagel.com/Land-Attack-Cruise-Missiles/JSOW-ER_a001153007.aspx) (accessed November 7, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Dave Majumdar, "Russia's Monster Battle Cruisers Are Getting Hypersonic Anti-Ship Missiles," *The National Interest*, February 19, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/russias-monster-battlecruisers-are-getting-hypersonic-anti-15263> (accessed November 7, 2018).

and ultrasonic speed, long range missiles "AIM-120D", "JSOW-ER", "JASSM-ER" and also automatic control systems.

A lot of systems or weapons having been manufactured over the last years of the Cold War and after that are now considered worn out and liable to decommissioning; so by the end of 2020s the American military will take out of service significant number of aircraft, ships and other military hardware. Therefore, appropriate substitutes must be found for all of them, though the majority of new systems have already been created or are under development. Here, taking necessary steps towards upgrading and enhancement of the US Armed Forces will ensure their dominance in the world for a long time and force its rivals to lag well behind. After the Cold War, the US and its allies got too much carried away by the so-called "irregular warfare," it's time to re-focus again on traditional warfare.

## THE MILITARY DOCTRINE OF AZERBAIJAN: ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND POLICY IMPLICATION

### *Abstract*

In June 2010 the Military Doctrine was adopted in Azerbaijan, and new policies were put into implementation based on the vision of the document. The MD has become the proper installation of Azerbaijani aspirations to restore territorial integrity by any means including military operations. The document provided an impetus to spend billions of dollars on purchasing weaponry, developing army structure, constructing new military bases and enlarging arms production. Policies derived from the Doctrine not only pushed the rapid military growth of Azerbaijan but led to the high level of public securitization as well. Therefore, this research has an aim to assess the causation between the document adoption and defense policies, which were implemented to guide the military build-up of Azerbaijan and achieve social unity legitimizing the possibility of war.

*Keywords:* military doctrine, Azerbaijan, military build-up, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

### *Introduction*

The four-day war in April 2016 cost the lives of 106 Armenians. It has become the most intense eruption of violence since the ceasefire was signed by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in May 1994. Although the April war is considered as a peak of escalations since 1994, it is not an exceptional case of ceasefire violation. Front-line aggression and violations of ceasefire have become more intense and frequent especially in the past nine years. But the question why the character and frequency of ceasefire violations have been changed recently remains open. There are indications to claim that Azerbaijan proves to be more confident to provoke violence as intentions to develop the army have given tangible results. Azerbaijan has tried to enhance its military capabilities since its independence. But the adoption of Military Doctrine in 2010 has marked a new phase in the military build-up of the country. Policies derived from



the document gave a new impetus for enhancing military capabilities and pursuing the military agenda of Azerbaijan during the past nine years. Policy implementation stemming from the Doctrine created a new reality in Azerbaijan regarding military potential, which allowed to put on the table of discussions the military solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

However, there is no study in the literature that analyzes the link between policies derived from the Military Doctrine and its implications. It is essential to reveal the causation between the document adoption and defense policies, which were implemented to guide the military build-up of the country. This policy implementation led not only to the high level of militarization and army modernization but also created a fertile ground for securitization of the Azerbaijani public domain. Therefore, the research has an aim to assess the policy implementation stemming from the Doctrine and understand how it has contributed to the military growth of Azerbaijan. To answer this question, the study is divided into several interlinked sections. The literature review is devoted to the discussion and elaboration of the concept "security" and definition of Military Doctrine as such. Constructivism theory and the phenomenon of securitization are also analyzed as a theoretical framework for further analysis. The second section discusses the Military Doctrine of Azerbaijan: what are the fundamental goals and desirable ends for the Republic, what issues are prioritized in the document and how those can be solved. The third section is the assessment of policy results regarding military growth registered since 2010. In this framework, investments in the military build-up, enlarged military partnership, improvement of army structure and the growing defense industry are the variables to be discussed. And last but not least, the final section is directed to the data discussion and interpretation in order to strengthen the analysis done in the previous sections.

### Defining Security

Up to the end of the 20th century, the research tended to focus mainly on state-centric view to define the concept of security. Although Barry Buzan addressed individual security as an important level of theoretical analysis, it was considered as "subordinate to the higher-level political structures of state and international system".<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that academic studies have not dealt with a state as a mean to provide individual security, but vice versa, state is a most prominent structure in projecting

<sup>1</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold war era*. (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1991).

security for human beings. Consequently, if a state is the main nexus to ensure individual security, elaboration, and development of the concept of national security remains a task of vital importance.

Since the 1970s, however, emerging economic interdependence and multi-dimensional character of international affairs caused a division within academia. On the one side, traditionalists (narrowers) continued to insist that security is a derivative of power connecting it with the containment of war and ability of military statecraft. Wideners, on the other side, came to claim that security is multi-dimensional phenomenon including not only military warfare but other layers as well (political, economic, military, societal and environmental).<sup>2</sup> Although the Widener approach installs security as a multi-dimensional and multi-vector concept appropriate to the complexity of the modern era of interdependence, it does not answer the question why the military affairs are still at the core of states' national security paradigms.

### Constructivism as a framework for analysis: The process of securitization

Up to the 1980s, the security paradigm was studied from two main angles: realism and idealism. If realism considered security as a tool of survival directly connected with a state's capabilities to project its power, idealists were quite romantic describing "security as a consequence of peace".<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact, that the concept of security was profoundly investigated from the perspectives of above-mentioned standpoints, all of them did not pay attention to the cultural component in conducting and projecting security. As a result, at the crossroad of different approaches constructivism came to the stage describing security as a "socially constructed" phenomenon based on shared values.<sup>4</sup>

The social constructivist framework created a baseline for formation and articulation of the term securitization in the 1980s by the Copenhagen School of thought.<sup>5</sup> If politicization of an issue means the inclusion of particular issue in policy discourse of governing elites, securitization is

<sup>2</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *SECURITY: A new framework for analysis*. (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Buzan, *People, States and Fear*.

<sup>3</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*.

<sup>4</sup> Jef Huysmans, "Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies: The Normative Dilemma of Writing Security," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 27, no. 1 (2002): 41-62; Buzan, *People, States and Fear*; Buzan et al., *Security*; Matt McDonald, "Securitization and the Construction of Security," *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 4 (2008): 563-587.

<sup>5</sup> Thierry Balzacq, Sarah Léonard and Jan Ruzicka, "Securitization revisited: Theory and cases," *The Institute for Strategic Research (IRSEM)*, (2015): 494-531; Buzan, *People, States and Fear*; Buzan, et al., *Security*.

the extreme level of politicization which circulates a problem as a “security threat”.<sup>6</sup> In Buzan’s explanation “security is a self-referential practice because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because of a real existential threat but because the issue is presented as such a threat”.<sup>7</sup> In this framework the key questions are – how the ruling elites (securitizing actor) design a problem and how they deliver it to the public (audience), what techniques they use to pursue people that the problem is a direct threat to their safety and why society’s support is vital to eliminate a particular threat.<sup>8</sup> This process is called “speech act” serving as a tool to mobilize and unify people for handling a specific issue.<sup>9</sup>

Although the literature covers the process and outcome of securitization in different cases, there is little evidence how securitization works in the post-Soviet countries, which are dissatisfied with the status quo and seeking public mobilization in order to challenge the existing order. Therefore, the research would be based on the constructivist approach in order to investigate how the concept of securitization works in the South Caucasus region, particularly in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

### What is military doctrine? Managing uncertainty.

If security is a desirable end for any country, military doctrine (MD) is a toolbox to achieve it. It is considered as one of the most important national security documents containing the elements of planning, prediction of war and preparation of army for combat operations. It is directed to the management of uncertainty based on military research and analysis in order to define mechanisms to achieve national security objectives.<sup>10</sup> Posen identifies three main types of doctrine – offensive, defensive and deterrent.<sup>11</sup> He opposes the Clausewitz’s notion that “defense is the stronger form of war”, stating that “offensive posture of document allows to conduct a certain plan and strategy and is more efficient in terms of reducing uncertainties”.<sup>12</sup> Defensive doctrines, on the other hand, concentrate more

<sup>6</sup> Ibid; McDonald, *Securitization and the Construction of Security*, 4; Elif Uzgoren, “Explaining social constructivist contributions to security studies.” *METU Conference on International Relations*, 7(3), (2006): 27-48.

<sup>7</sup> Buzan, *Weaver and Wilde, Security*.

<sup>8</sup> Balzacq, et al., *Securitization revisited*, 518; Buzan, et al., *Security*; McDonald, *Securitization and the Construction of Security*. Holger Stritzel, “Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond,” *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(3), (2007): 357-383.

<sup>9</sup> Buzan, et al., *Security*.

<sup>10</sup> Barry Posen, “Foreword: Military doctrine and the management of uncertainty,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 2 (2016): 159-173; Paul Latawski, “The Inherent Tensions in Military Doctrine,” *Royal Military Academy Sandhurst*, (2011); Brinthon Holley, “Technology and Military Doctrine,” (Air University Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Posen, “Foreword: Military,” 172.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 164.

on defense policies improving the military environment and capabilities of armed forces during peacetime.<sup>13</sup>

MD’s definitions given by different countries are quite similar, although some marginal variations exist. The NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions’ definition of doctrine is entirely inclusive; “doctrine includes fundamental principles by which the military forces guide their actions in support of objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.”<sup>14</sup>

In order to understand Russia’s approach in guiding the elaboration of the MD, it is important to find out the role and contribution of the Soviet legacy in this regard. Although contemporary Russia’s definition does not emphasize the importance of military preparations exclusively as the MD of USSR did<sup>15</sup>, the directedness of Russian and Soviet MDs remains the same.<sup>16</sup> As during the Cold War, the USSR aimed to counter the West, contemporary Russia does not go far prioritizing “the challenges that the policies of Western states create for Russian security”.<sup>17</sup>

Described as a “soul of warfare”<sup>18</sup> the doctrine itself is theoretical and this creates some difficulties. Logical flaws in doctrine are inescapable as it is elaborated in a peaceful time identifying the ways how an army should operate in case of war.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, doctrine should be revised periodically in a way to remain “practical and teachable” and harmonized with the external changes of conflict environment.<sup>20</sup>

### The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan

#### *Brief overview: the process of adoption*

The formation and adoption of the MD of Azerbaijan took quite an extended period. Since Ilham Aliyev came to power in 2003, the initiative to develop the MD was put into the process. This period coincided with the intensified cooperation with NATO in the framework of IPAP (Indi-

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 161; Arnold L. Horelick, “Perspective of the study of comparative military doctrines,” *The RAND Corporation*, 1973: 1-17.

<sup>14</sup> “NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions: Listing terms of military significance and their definitions for use in NATO,” *AAP-6 22*, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> CIA Special Collection Release, “The Nature of Soviet Military Doctrine,” 2000.

<sup>16</sup> “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” (2014): <https://www.offiziere.ch/wp-content/uploads/001/2015/08/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine.pdf> (accessed May 7, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Izabelle Facon, “Russia’s National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine and their implications for the EU,” *European Parliament, Policy Department*, 2017; “Russia’s New Military Doctrine: Same as the Old Doctrine,” *RAND Corporation*, 2015: <https://www.rand.org/blog/2015/01/russias-new-military-doctrine-same-as-the-old-doctrine.html> (accessed December 7, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey Sloan, “Military doctrine, command philosophy and the generation of fighting power: genesis and theory,” *International Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2012): 243-263.

<sup>19</sup> Latawski, “The Inherent Tensions”; Sloan, “Military doctrine, command philosophy”.

<sup>20</sup> Latawski, “The Inherent Tensions”; “Sloan, Military doctrine, command philosophy”; Posen, “Foreword,” 170.



vidual Partnership Action Plan). Though consultations and strengthened cooperation ended up with the adoption of National Security Concept in 2007, the process of adoption of the MD had become more complicated. Although the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan party had an overwhelming majority in Milli Mejlis (Parliament) of Azerbaijan, ratification of MD was delayed periodically. It took another three years to finalize the document, and it was ratified by the National Assembly only in June 2010, with the 110 votes in favor, with 2 against and one abstention out of 125 members of Milli Mejlis.

The MD of Azerbaijan consists of general provisions, 7 main sections and 75 clauses.<sup>21</sup> Doctrine is defensive in its character stating that national security objectives are based on defensive policy implementation and protection of national interests of the RA.<sup>22</sup> MD defines military-strategic, military-operational, military-technical dimensions of national security handles tactics and techniques in order to achieve primary objectives defined by National Security Concept.<sup>23</sup> The MD establishes the scope of the country's foreign and military cooperation as well. The document is designed in a way to escape foreign dependency phrasing it "as a direct threat to the sovereignty of the RA (3.21).<sup>24</sup> Thus, Azerbaijan did not make its strategic choice as other countries in the South Caucasus did.<sup>25</sup> Although Euro-Atlantic integration was stated as a vision, becoming a member of NATO's military bloc is not a goal of Azerbaijan.

### Tackling external threats

The doctrine defines possible internal and external threats and determines means how to eliminate them. Although the domestic issues such as prevention of financial and economic crisis, security of energy resources, containment of separatist movements, etc. play a significant role in elaboration and implementation of MD, the scope of capstone put forward the examination of external directedness of the MD and policy implementation derived from it. If to analyze the main external threats reflected in the MD, the three main categories will be formed:

- Iranian factor: Iran's aspirations to develop nuclear power, frequent violations of naval and air borders by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the separatist Shiite threat coming from the southern neighbor.
- Russian factor: Changing regional landscape after 2008 Georgian crisis and increased Russian presence in the South Caucasus.
- Nagorno-Karabakh factor: the threat to the RA's territorial integrity and sovereignty- "occupation of territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan by armed forces of the Republic of Armenia" (3.21).<sup>26</sup>

### Countering Iran

Relations between Iran and Azerbaijan were quite complicated since the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991. First of all, the confrontation has cultural and religious character. Iranian religious community not once condemned Azerbaijani secular regime for spreading Western values across the region.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Iran, by all means, supports radical Shiite movements in neighboring Azerbaijan trying to change the secular character of the state regime. Azerbaijan has always perceived Iran as a potential threat to its sovereignty especially when Iranian gunboat attacked two Azerbaijani survey ships in Caspian basin in 2001 and when Iranian jets several times violated the air borders at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Intensified cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel constitute a significant source of concern. On the one side, the alignment of regional adversary Israel and Azerbaijan is not beneficial for Iran, on the other side, militarily strong Azerbaijan may become a serious opponent dividing energy resources in the Caspian basin.<sup>28</sup>

### Russia: breaking the military balance in the region

The scope of possible threats was widened after 2008 August war in Georgia, implications of which were taken into account drafting the MD.<sup>29</sup> Even though Russia's "political expansionism" and radical movements in the North Caucasus were taken into account, those do not play a central role in the defense policy of Azerbaijan. In contrary, Russia's active military presence in the South Caucasus, strengthened military deals with the Republic of Armenia and 25-year renewal of Russia-Armenia agreement

<sup>21</sup> The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan," (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Roman Ternikov, "The Military doctrine of Azerbaijan: it is very balanced unlike other doctrines," *Sputnik az*, 2010, <https://az.sputniknews.ru/news/20100609/43433685.html> (accessed June 7, 2018); "Azerbaijan Adopts Military Doctrine at Long Last," *Radio Liberty (Radio Free Europe)*, June 9, 2010, [https://www.rferl.org/a/Azerbaijan\\_Adopts\\_Military\\_Doctrine\\_At\\_Long\\_Last/2066758.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Azerbaijan_Adopts_Military_Doctrine_At_Long_Last/2066758.html) (accessed June 11, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan."

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Ternikov, "The Military doctrine of Azerbaijan".

<sup>26</sup> The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan."

<sup>27</sup> Ilah Celniker and Gallia Lindenstrauss, "Azerbaijan and Iran: Mutual hostility but limited rivalry," *INSS Insight*, (2012).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> "Azerbaijan adopts new Military Doctrine," *Vestnik Kavkaza*, June 17, 2010, <http://vestnik-kavkaza.net/articles/politics/2606.html> (accessed June 8, 2018); "Azerbaijan Adopts Military Doctrine at Long Last," *RadioLiberty (Radio Free Europe)*.

concerning Russian military base (2010) are considered as a direct threat to the sovereignty of the country. And although the 5.42 article of the MD stated that "possible act of aggression against the state of Azerbaijan is very low", 3.21 article adds "violation of military balance in the region including the creation of foreign military bases in the region is considered as a direct threat to the sovereignty and independence of the RA".<sup>30</sup>

### *Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the agenda*

The central role as an external threat was given to the "occupation of Azerbaijani territories and ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijani people by the Republic of Armenia" (2.14).<sup>31</sup> The rapid military build-up of neighboring Armenia, strategic partnership between Armenia and Russia are security issues of high importance. The MD provides a legal base to preserve and restore Azerbaijani territorial integrity "by any means" (3.28).<sup>32</sup> This, undoubtedly, does not exclude the possibility of military solution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Provision itself contradicts to the Constitution of the RA, which stated: "the Azerbaijan Republic rejects war as a mean of infringement on the independence of other states and way of settlement of international conflicts," and military confrontations are possible only when Azerbaijan "is a victim of aggression" (clause 9.2).<sup>33</sup> Here the wording and design of the problem are essential. Azerbaijan interprets the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict not as an interstate conflict between two neighboring republics. As Nagorno-Karabakh is a de facto state not recognized internationally, Azerbaijan forms restoration of territorial integrity and return of "occupied territories" as an internal conflict to be resolved.<sup>34</sup> This type of interpretation legitimizes the use of force and military actions to resolve the issue.

### ***The Military build-up of Azerbaijan***

#### *Military build-up in numbers*

The development of military domain has been at the core of Azerbaijani political agenda since its independence. The entire process of military build-up can be divided into three main periods. The first attempts to increase the military power have started in 1994 and continued up to

<sup>30</sup> The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan."

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> "The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan," (2016): [http://azerbaijan.az/portal/GeneralConstitution/doc/constitution\\_e.pdf](http://azerbaijan.az/portal/GeneralConstitution/doc/constitution_e.pdf) (accessed June 8, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> "Azerbaijan adopts new Military Doctrine," *Vestnik Kavkaza*.

2004-2005. During this time interval, Azerbaijan spent almost 3bln. US dollars on purchasing military equipment and weaponry.<sup>35</sup> However, Azerbaijan launched the intensified military build-up policy since 2005 spending at an average 1bln. dollar per year. Interestingly enough, this period coincided with the increased oil revenues in Azerbaijan (see the graph below) started at the beginning of the 21st century.

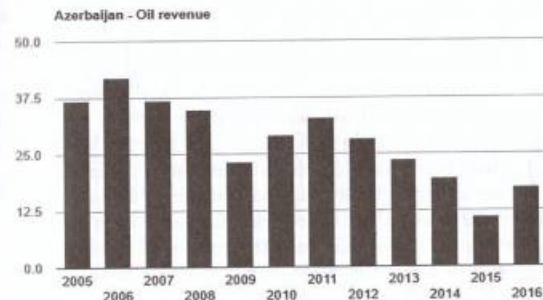


Figure 1 Source. *TheGlobalEconomy.com*

However, even if the oil revenue level is used as an independent variable to explain the military growth in Azerbaijan, it does not explain the sharp change in military development indicators since 2010. Although statistics specify that since the 2000s the oil revenues in Azerbaijan play a significant role, the amount of it is relatively decreased since 2010.

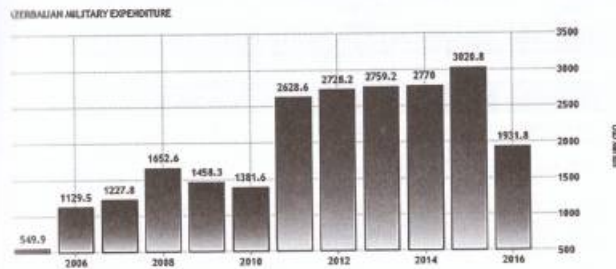


Figure 2 Source. *TradingEconomics.com*

<sup>35</sup> Sergey Minasyan, Levon Hovsepian and Artsrun Hovhannisyian, *Taratsashryani razmekan teghekagqir*, (in Armenian), [Region's military handbook], (Yerevan: Gituyun Publishing House of the NAS RA, 2016).



If to compare two graphs above, it becomes clear, that the oil income cannot be the sole variable explaining constant military build-up in Azerbaijan. As the figure shows the third wave of military growth started since 2010 when the MD of Azerbaijan was adopted, and the policy implementation stemming from it has put into execution. Since 2010 Azerbaijan registered "the second largest increase" in the world regarding the defense budget.<sup>36</sup> According to Global Security's analysis, Azerbaijan purchased 249% more equipment during 2010-2014 in comparison with the period of 2005-2009.<sup>37</sup> Azerbaijan has become the second largest arms importer in Europe receiving 13% of weapon deliveries in 2010-2014 and trailing only UK (14%).<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Azerbaijan is the 4th biggest UAV importing country in the world since 2010. Drone imports comprise 7.8% of global market trailing only the UK (33.9%), India (13.2%) and Italy (9.8%).<sup>39</sup> According to BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversation), Azerbaijan was in the 11th place among the most militarized countries of the world in 2016.<sup>40</sup> If to assess the situation in CIS countries Azerbaijan is on the 3rd place among the most militarized countries after Armenia and Russia.

Table 1 The rate of militarization in CIS countries 2016 (source: BICC, 2016)

CIS countries*	GMI score	Rank
Armenia	832.69	1
Russia	805.61	2
Azerbaijan	774.92	3
Belarus	761.31	4
Ukraine	738.23	5
Georgia	619.45	6
Kyrgyzstan	612.32	7
Moldova	569.7	8
Kazakhstan	565.24	9
Tajikistan	476.26	10

\*No data available on Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

<sup>36</sup> "Trends in international arms transfers, 2014 (n.d.)," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2014, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2015/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2014> (June 15, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> "Trends in international arms transfers, 2015. (n.d.)," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2015, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2015/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2015> (accessed June 11, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> "Global Militarization Index," *Bonn International Center for Conversation*, 2016, [https://gmi.bicc.de/index.php?page=ranking-table&year=2016&sort=rank\\_asc](https://gmi.bicc.de/index.php?page=ranking-table&year=2016&sort=rank_asc) (accessed June 4, 2018).

Overall, the policy implementation in accordance with the MD provisions and, especially, with the 7<sup>th</sup> section of the document (Development of military power) brought Azerbaijan to the 58th place among 133 countries with the power index rating of 0.8875 (0.0000 being perfect) according to the US-based survey Center the Global Firepower.<sup>41</sup> The military capabilities and the size of armed structures allowed The Global Firepower to call Azerbaijan the strongest military power in the South Caucasus (according to Global Firepower Georgia is in the 82nd place, and Armenia was ranked to the 93rd).

#### *Developing the army structure*

According to the Global firepower, the active military personnel comprised of 67,000 manpower and the reserve personnel reached 307,000.<sup>42</sup> Besides army troops, Azerbaijan has the separate subdivision of internal troops, state border service also known as Border Guard of Azerbaijan and the armed forces of National guard incorporated into the Special State Protection service. These subdivisions, of course, strengthen the power and size of Azerbaijani military forces and serve as a mechanism to bypass the inspections regulated by CFE (Adapted Conventional Armed Forces in Europe) treaty put into the force since 1992. For instance, the Border Guard of Azerbaijan has capabilities to intervene and defend Azerbaijani borders under the command of President, if it is necessary to support army divisions. This means that Border Guard may become a direct participant in combat operations. Particular attention is given to the development of those border divisions, which are located near Azerbaijan-Armenia or Azerbaijan-Karabakh borders such as division of Horadiz or Yevlakh.

Army of Azerbaijan consisted of ground forces, naval and air forces. Azerbaijan consistently strengthens its fighter aircraft, the main function of which to provide air defense and support to the ground forces in case of combat operations. Azerbaijan immensely purchases Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) including IAI Heron UAVs sold by Israel, which is considered as one of the best-selling UAVs since 2013.<sup>43</sup> Azerbaijan actively improves military capabilities and structural units of air forces, and in this context, it is important to mention the development of air bases located nearby Azerbaijan-Karabakh or Armenia borders. In this list are included

<sup>41</sup> "Azerbaijan Military Strength," *The Global Firepower*, 2017, [https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country\\_id=azerbaijan](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=azerbaijan) (accessed June 12, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> "V ojidani buri: Yujiny Kavkaz," (in Russian), ["Waiting for a storm: The South Caucasus"], Ed. by Konstantin Makienko, (Moscow: Center of Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, 2018).

airbases of Navtalan (10km), Agstafa (10-20km), Aghjabedi (30-40km), Baylakan (30km), Mingeçaur (45km), Yevlakh (35km) and Qyurdamir (90-110km). Interestingly enough, airbases of Aghjabedi, Mingeçaur and Baylakan are constructed in time interval 2014-2017, the base in Yevlakh was also reconstructed during this period.<sup>44</sup> It is clear, Azerbaijan strongly contributes to the development and equipment of airbases, especially those located close to the Armenian or Karabakhi borders. The figure below illustrates the statement made above (newly constructed air-bases are marked in green).



Figure 3 Air-bases of Azerbaijan locate near Armenian or Karabakhi borders (source: Vrtanesyan et al., 2018)

Azerbaijan invests in the development and modernization of naval forces to project security in the Caspian basin as well. However, the emphasis is done on the development of ground forces connected with the territorial issue with neighboring Armenia.<sup>45</sup> The ground forces consisted of 5 main military corps including the military base in Nakhijevan. However, in 2013 the 5th military corps of Nakhijevan was recreated as a separate combined army unit. The airbase of Nakhijevan is one of the biggest in Azerbaijan with 3300meter airstrip and big military arsenal.<sup>46</sup> The logistics and communication system used in Nakhijevan are provided by Turkey, and the permanent presence of Turkish armed subdivision there ensures the Turkish influence on the development of air and ground forces of Nakhijevani com-

<sup>44</sup> Vahagn Mkhoyan, Karen Vrtanesyan and Taron Hovhannisyann, *Azerbaijan: Razmakan-Qagh-aqakan handes*, (in Armenian), [Azerbaijan: Military-political Periodical], (Yerevan: Zorak Scientific and Educational Youth Foundation, 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Minasyan et al., *Region's military handbook*.

<sup>46</sup> Mkhoyan et al., *Azerbaijan*.

bined army unit.<sup>47</sup> Military corps in Nakhijevan has become one of largest subdivision of the Azerbaijani army having at the same time perfect geographical location to attack the Ararat valley if the fights are restarted.

#### *Evolving the role of the Ministry of defense industry*

The Ministry of defense industry (MDI) was established based on the decree of President Ilham Aliyev on December 16, 2005. However, until 2013 the development of defense industry was not the primary goal; the purpose of ministry was to modernize the Soviet-era equipment and sign new deals. The production of armament did not surpass 1 mln US dollars per year in 2005-2006, and the rate of exports was pretty low.<sup>48</sup> In 2009 MDI had only 16 industrial sites. In 2012 MDI had already 30 industrial sites, which allowed to register the immense growth in arms production. If to compare the number of armament production in 2007 and 2012, it increased ten-fold constituting 130 mln US dollars.

Since 2013, based on the provisions of the MD and the necessity to equip the Azerbaijani army, the MDI started large-scale production of new generation weaponry. Only in 2013 325.10mln US dollars were reallocated to the MDI to launch large-scale new generation weaponry production.

Produced armaments are used not only for the local consumption but also as an export product to more than 10 countries.<sup>49</sup> Today Azerbaijan offers more than 1100 types of modern weaponry such as "Shimshak-10" machine gun, day/night cameras, "Yalguzag" and "Mubariz" rifled weapons, etc.<sup>50</sup> Although Azerbaijan is the fourth drone importing country all over the world, it has started the production of a new generation "Zerbe" (Strike) drone in October 2016.<sup>51</sup>

Overall the rate of production registered constant growth since the beginning of the decade. The output of defense products has grown by 42 times in comparison with 2007 and in 2017 Azerbaijan has already 58 industrial sites instead of 30 (2012).<sup>52</sup> The export rate is increasing rapidly, too: in comparison with 2016, in 2017 the export volume was 2.3 times bigger including in the scope of cooperation countries such as the

<sup>47</sup> Minasyan et al., *Region's military handbook*; Makienko, "Waiting for a storm".

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Faud Shahbazov, "Azerbaijan to Boost Arms Exports in 2018," *The Jamestown Foundation of Research and Analysis*, January 19, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-boost-arms-exports-2018/> (accessed June 13, 2018); "Azerbaijan exports military products to more than 10-countries," *Qafqazinfo*, December 17, 2017, <http://qafqazinfo.az/news/detail/azerbaycan-10-dan-cox-olkeye-herbi-mehsullar-ixrac-edir-205660> (accessed June 13, 2018).

<sup>50</sup> Shahbazov, "Azerbaijan".

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Makienko, "Waiting for a storm".



US, Russia, Pakistan, Iraq and Jordan. Only in 2016, Iraq purchased more than 500 anti-tank grenade launchers RPG -7V2 produced in Azerbaijan, and more than 500 mortars with 60mm caliber, which has become the biggest arm-contract of Azerbaijan yet.<sup>53</sup> MDI has plans to expand the arms production in 2018 as well. 17 new items are designed to be produced including "Tufan" (Storm) armored military vehicle, which will become the first vehicle fully produced domestically.<sup>54</sup>

#### *Building partnership: military cooperation since 2010*

In accordance with its military build-up and modernization, Azerbaijan was also seeking to enlarge the realm of military collaboration after the adoption of the MD. Although military deals of a country were large-scale in their nature before 2010 as well, 2010 has marked the beginning of a new phase of arms purchasing, enhanced military cooperation, and strategic partnership.

On August 16, 2010, the agreement on "Strategic partnership and mutual assistance" was signed between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Although the cornerstone of the treaty was the agreement on reciprocal aid in case of aggression, the formation and articulation of statements were vague enough to put it into implementation. Briefly, the statements included in the treaty do not specify the obligation of both sides to militarily assist each other in case of a war. However, Azerbaijan reached the inclusion of proposition, that the opening of Turkish-Armenian border is directly tied with the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and Turkey would not act against the interests of its strategic partner Azerbaijan; a proposition as a result of which Armenia remained with 80% of closed borders. Treaty also includes regulations and provisions on Turkey-Azerbaijan military cooperation, based on which series of military agreements were signed since 2010.

The Republic of Azerbaijan sees Russia as a potential threat taking into account the existence of Russian military base in Armenia and especially analyzing Russian behavior in the 2008 Georgian crisis. However, potential threats coming from Russia do not hinder the cooperation between countries in the military field. Although the cooperation has rooted in the early 1990s, it had especially intensified after 2010, when between 2011-2012, series of contracts were signed in order to deliver substantial armed packages to Azerbaijan.<sup>55</sup> The contracts included the 1bln-dollar

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Shahbazov, "Azerbaijan".

<sup>55</sup> "Russia starts delivering \$1 billion arms package to Azerbaijan," *Reuters*, June 18, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-azerbaijan-arms/russia-starts-delivering-1-billion-arms-package-to-azerbaijan-idUSBRE95H0KM20130618?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews> (accessed June 7, 2018).

deal on purchasing T-90C tanks and "Smerch" rocket launchers. Separate 2-3 bln-dollar delivery included S-300 missile systems and attack helicopters as well.<sup>56</sup> Notably, during the period of 2010-2015 Azerbaijan bought 85% percent of its arsenal from Russia.<sup>57</sup>

Israel-Azerbaijan strategic ties were formed since the Azerbaijani independence in 1991. One of the major intentions of this strategic alliance is the united aim to counter Iran.<sup>58</sup> Azerbaijan is Israel's second biggest arms purchaser according to SIPRI.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the scale of deals immensely increased since 2010. In 2012, 1.6 bln-dollar deal was signed to deliver drones (HAROP kamikadze-drones) and missile defense systems to Azerbaijan, which were used by Azerbaijan armed forces during 2016 four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, during 2016 military exhibition Orbiter-3 and Orbiter-4 UAVs were illustrated, which are items of Azerbaijani-Israeli joint production.<sup>61</sup> Israel not only one of the major suppliers of high-tech hardware and modern armament, but Jewish diaspora in the USA plays an immense role in balancing Armenian lobby there.

The list of military partners of Azerbaijan is not limited to the countries listed above. Azerbaijan intensively enlarges the scope of military cooperation with different countries including Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan, etc. Ukraine is one of the major suppliers of armament and artillery to Azerbaijan since RA's independence. The Azerbaijan-Pakistan strategic partnership is unique in its nature. Pakistan was one of the first countries recognizing Azerbaijani independence in 1991 and one of the few states, which did not establish diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan's main adversary Armenia. The development of bilateral dynamics between Azerbaijan and Saudi Arabia is quite promising, too. Saudi Arabia not only a key state where Azerbaijani weaponry products are exported, but it is an important ally, which refused to recognize the independence of the Armenian Republic and consistently condemns "Armenia for its aggressive policy towards Azerbaijan".<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> "Report: Azerbaijan Gets 85 Percent of Its Weapons from Russia. (n.d.)" *Eurasia.net*, March 18, 2015, <https://eurasianet.org/s/report-azerbaijan-gets-85-percent-of-its-weapons-from-russia>, (accessed June 4, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Emil Souleimanov and Maya Ehrmann, "Focused on Iran? Exploring the rationale behind the strategic relationship between Azerbaijan and Israel," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no. 4 (2014): 471-488; Oğuzhan Gökse, "Beyond Countering Iran: A Political Economy of Azerbaijan-Israel Relations," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 4 (2015): 655-675.

<sup>59</sup> "Trends in international arms transfers, 2016. (n.d.)" *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2016. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2015/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2016> (accessed June 13, 2018).

<sup>60</sup> "Israel signs \$1.6 billion arms deal with Azerbaijan," *Haaretz*, February 26, 2012, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5190757> (accessed June 7, 2018).

<sup>61</sup> Mkhoyan, et al., *Azerbaijan*.

<sup>62</sup> Rashid Shirinov, "Azerbaijan produces new generation weapons," *Azernews.az*, January 19, 2018, <https://www.azernews.az/nation/125791.html> (accessed June 8, 2018).

The well-balanced foreign policy of Azerbaijan allows to diversify the sources of military supply without putting into dependence its military aspirations on one country. Till now, Azerbaijan achieves large-scale successes in terms of military build-up and technical development and expansion of military industry, which precisely fits the provisions and goals of the MD adopted in 2010.

### Data and Findings

Analysis of the Martial Law of RA<sup>63</sup>

On February 14, 2017, the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev signed a decree on Martial Law (ML) which put the bill into the force. The law was drafted in accordance with the Constitution of the RA and provisions of the Military Doctrine. Occupation of Azerbaijani territories, threat to the territorial integrity and possibility of war declared to Azerbaijan are mentioned as emergency cases when the ML can be used (MD indicates that possibility of aggression by Armenia is high, 5.42).

The ML provides grounds for a high level of public securitization. First of all, the Article 1.3 of the ML sets the principle of military censorship assuming a strict control over mass media. This directly contradicts the Article 50 of the Constitution of the RA. The article on freedom of information indicates, that "media censorship, including the press is prohibited" (Constitution of the RA, 2016). The law also supposes TV broadcast and radio restrictions, control of internet or telephone conversations, bans rallies and the right of people to assembly. The ML emphasizes the importance of the restriction and confidentiality of military information – information about situation in the front-line, number of casualties, etc. Moreover, the public will get the information that the government wants to deliver without having the chance of alternative sources. Consequently, the law legalizes the "manipulation of information" and supposes the spread of "right" data in order to create a sense of fear, obedience, and mobilization of society.

Moreover, if before the revision of the law President could appeal to Milli Mejlis to announce martial situation and it should discuss the appeal during 72 hours, now the time limit was reduced to 48 hours (6.2). This eliminates procedural difficulties, eventually, leading to the monopoly of power in the hands of Aliyev clan, suppression of the opposition and securitization of the Azerbaijani public domain.

<sup>63</sup> "The Martial Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan," *Azeritag.az*, April 5, 2017 [https://azeritag.az/xeber/Herbi\\_veziyyet\\_haqinda\\_Azərbaycan\\_Respublikasının\\_Qanunu-1048586](https://azeritag.az/xeber/Herbi_veziyyet_haqinda_Azərbaycan_Respublikasının_Qanunu-1048586) (accessed 15 June, 2018).

### Analysis of the Law on the armed forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan

On December 15, 2017, Milli Mejlis of Azerbaijan adopted a new law on Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The revision of the law was connected with the goals and objectives of the MD adopted in 2010 (Ch2.Article 3)<sup>64</sup> as the 1991 Law on the Armed Forces did not reflect installed objectives and implementation of those.

The law on armed forces changed the term of "Armed forces and other military units of Azerbaijan" to the "armed forces of Azerbaijan". Consequently, if before only issues connected with the army were under the law regulations, now the law regulates the functioning of other military units (1.1) as well. Although the law does not specify which military subdivisions (1.3) go under the control of National Army, it is clear that provision refers to – the Internal Troops of Azerbaijan, National Security Services, State Border Guard, External Intelligence Services, Azerbaijani National Guard.

Now all military subdivisions are subordinated to the National Army of Azerbaijan assuming high level of militarization of the country. Moreover, if the regulation of public order was under the legislation of the internal troops, now it is a task of National Army of Azerbaijan. This means that army will have control over civilian life. Since it has also a duty to implement control over the information flow, freedom of expression and access to information will be subordinated to the needs and security interpretations of military elites.

Overall, it is clear, that modification of the legal base in accordance with the provisions of the MD leads to the consolidation of presidential power, securitization of society and preparation of it for war-torn situations. Both laws allow to interpret the information in accordance with the elites' will by using a security threat as propaganda for gaining social support and obedience.

### Analysis of the speeches of Ilham Aliyev

In order to assess policy implications stemming from the MD, it is important to examine how often Aliyev refers to the Doctrine and its provisions during his speeches. Such statements are indications of document's importance and President's commitment to follow the spirit and vision of the Doctrine. Random sampling strategy is used for the content analysis of speeches. Since 2010, President Aliyev made 43 speeches on defense-related topics, which are available on the official website of Ilham

<sup>64</sup> "Law on the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan," <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/043a36/pdf/> (accessed June 7, 2018).



Aliyev (President.az). Speeches are classified in chronological order and each fifth speech is used to be analyzed.

First and foremost, it should be stated that the MD of Azerbaijan put on the table the possibility of a military solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (3.28).<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, Ilham Aliyev's speeches made since 2010 follow this logic. Aliyev frequently emphasizes the importance and urgency of the modernization and development of the armed forces. Statements such as "Azerbaijani army should be ready to liberate Azerbaijani territories from occupants"<sup>66</sup>, "we should have a say when a ripe moment for resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict comes"<sup>67</sup>, "we should be able to restore historical justice at any moment"<sup>68</sup>, "we will raise our flag in Khankendi (Stepanakert) very soon"<sup>69</sup> are the examples in point. Army modernization is linked not only with the weaponry import, but also with the production of "the most modernized weaponry and artillery"<sup>70</sup> corresponding to the 35.2 clause of the MD. Aliyev's statements most often are the vivid illustration of securitization of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Although the MD (35.2) indicates the importance of armed mobilization and their readiness to combat operations, Aliyev goes beyond calling for national mobilization to "fight for homeland and liberate it".<sup>71</sup> He uses a "speech act" not only to securitize the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but also to manipulate the patriotic feelings of the society. In his speeches, Aliyev frequently expresses gratefulness to the Azerbaijani families, who raise soldiers with the high sense of patriotism, courage and the readiness to serve the national interests of Azerbaijan.<sup>72</sup> April war in 2016 intensified the use of patriotic statements in Pres-

ident's speeches. In this context, Aliyev makes statements such as "how deep is the sense of patriotism in Azerbaijani soldiers and how they can acquire a victory in any crisis"<sup>73</sup> or "the courage of our soldiers returned Lelelope and Aghdara, we will restore the historical justice soon".<sup>74</sup>

Overall, in his speeches Aliyev does not cite the MD very often. However, repetitive claims on "liberating territories through any means", "necessity of military mobilization", "increasing spiritual readiness and patriotic sense of the army" etc. are reflected in the MD of the RA as separate clauses and provisions. Therefore, even if direct citations to the document are absent in most cases, the link between document's goals and Aliyev's statements is clear. This allows to conclude that Ilham Aliyev's speeches follow the "soul" of the MD of Azerbaijan and have an aim not only to legitimize high ranks of military spending and intensive militarization, but achieve public securitization and social cohesion as well.

### Conclusion

The research revealed that number one priority for Azerbaijan is the constant military growth, army modernization and its readiness for war. The Military Doctrine served as a guideline for fulfilling these objectives. The MD has become the proper installation of Azerbaijani aspirations to restore territorial integrity by any means including military operations. The document provided an impetus to spend billions of dollars on purchasing weaponry, developing army structure, constructing new military bases and enlarging arms production. The analysis in the third section shows how the military policies of Azerbaijan suit the provisions of the Doctrine as it was able to register a huge military build-up and improve the army structure within several years. Moreover, if to compare the current military indices of Azerbaijan with the indices registered before 2010, it is clear that the Doctrine gave another shape to the military development of the country. Policy implementation derived from the MD contributed to the evolution of military partnership with different countries. Azerbaijan enhanced military partnership not only with its key allies such as Turkey or Israel but took steps to establish and develop military cooperation with other countries as well including Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Steps were undertaken to develop arms production in accordance with the "soul" of the Doctrine as well.

The findings explain the causation between the policy implementation stemming from the MD and registered military build-up in Azerbaijan.

<sup>73</sup> "Speech of Ilham Aliyev in the Cabinet of Ministers assessing the socio-economic developments of the first half of 2016".

<sup>74</sup> "Speech of Ilham Aliyev devoted to Novruz Bayrami," 2017.

<sup>65</sup> The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan".

<sup>66</sup> "Speech of Ilham Aliyev on Joint tactical-operational drills of the Armed Forces of the RA, *President.az*, 2010, <https://ru.president.az/articles/279> (accessed June 5, 2018).

<sup>67</sup> "Speech of Ilham Aliyev in the Cabinet of Ministers assessing the results of 2010," *President.az*, 2011, <https://ru.president.az/articles/1401> (accessed June 5, 2018).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>69</sup> "Speech of Ilham Aliyev devoted to Novruz Bayrami," *President.az*, 2017, <https://ru.president.az/articles/23218> (accessed June 5, 2018).

<sup>70</sup> "Speech of Ilham Aliyev in the Cabinet of Ministers assessing the results of 2010."

<sup>71</sup> "Speech of Ilham Aliyev devoted to the 95th anniversary of the Armed Forces of the RA," *President.az*, 2013, <https://ru.president.az/articles/8574> (accessed June 5, 2018); "Speech of Ilham Aliyev to Participants of the First Azerbaijan International Defense Industry Exhibition," *President.az*, 2014, <https://ru.president.az/article254165> (accessed June 5, 2018);

"Speech of Ilham Aliyev in the Cabinet of Ministers assessing the results of 2010," 2011; "Speech of Ilham Aliyev devoted to Novruz Bayrami," 2017; "Speech of Ilham Aliyev in the first summit of Organization of Islamic Cooperation devoted to science and technology in Astana," *President.az*, 2017, <https://ru.president.az/articles/25189> (accessed June 5, 2018);

"Speech of Ilham Aliyev on the 6th congress of Yeni Azerbaijan party," *President.az*, 2018, <https://ru.president.az/articles/26998> (accessed June 5, 2018).

<sup>72</sup> "Speech of Ilham Aliyev devoted to the 95th anniversary of the Armed Forces of the RA," 2013, <https://ru.president.az/articles/8574> (accessed June 5, 2018); "Speech of Ilham Aliyev in the Cabinet of Ministers assessing the socio-economic developments of the first half of 2016," *President.az*, 2016, <https://ru.president.az/articles/20650> (accessed June 5, 2018); "Speech of Ilham Aliyev devoted to Novruz Bayrami," 2017; "Speech of Ilham Aliyev in the first summit of Organization of Islamic Cooperation devoted to science and technology in Astana," 2017.

Content analysis strengthens this statement proving that the doctrine has become the fundament for immense military growth guiding the defense policies of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the first hypothesis is accepted – the Military Doctrine served as a guiding document for an immense military build-up of Azerbaijan since 2010. Moreover, analysis of legal reforms in military fields, as well as, the analyzed Presidential speeches illustrate, that the Azerbaijani government uses external threats (particularly the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh) to securitize the Azerbaijani nation. This, of course, allows to achieve a high level of social unity and create public support. Not only “speech act” mechanisms are used to trigger patriotic feelings of the nation, but also the legal framework has been modified to provide limitless power for ruling elites and strengthen Army’s role in the country. After the legal amendments, the Army has control over civilian life and has a duty to control information flow, especially the information concerning military situation in the front-line. Thus, the second hypothesis is also considered as proved – the Military Doctrine created a baseline for securitization of society by the Azerbaijani authorities legitimizing possible military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

## THE 2016 COUP ATTEMPT IN TURKEY: A RESULT OF CHANGING CIVIL-MILITARY BALANCE IN TURKEY

### *Abstract*

In 2016 Turkey made headlines with yet another coup, however, this time with an unsuccessful outcome. While there were many similarities with previous coups, there were also major differences. After the failed coup, people showed unprecedented support for the civilian government. Military commanders of different units made statements assuring their loyalty to the civilian government. Although purges, martial law and arrest followed the coup attempt, which was nothing new after a military intervention, this time roles had been reversed. It was the civilian government which purged the military and removed unwanted people. The paper argues that the 2016 military coup attempt failed as the military’s political power had been weakened following reforms implemented under the demand of the EU in the 2000s. There was also obvious fragmentation in the military as only one faction participated in the plot.

*Keywords:* civil-military relations, coup attempt, fragmentation

### *Introduction*

Military coups, coup d’états and military interventions in politics are nothing new for Turkey. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 there have been five successful interventions by the military in 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997 and 2007 as well as a few failed attempts to intervene into politics. Whenever the civilian government failed to maintain stability in the country and whenever there was an attempt to deviate from the principles of Kemalism and secularism the Turkish military intervened to reestablish the order that they thought served the national interest of the Turkish people best. As the military had an important role in the establishment of the Turkish Republic the military took the protection of the national interest upon themselves. By describing to themselves the role of guardians of secularism and Kemalism the military saw coups as legitimate interventions. After each intervention, the military’s political position was further strengthened. One important lever of influence under



the military was the National Security Council which made policy recommendations concerning almost every aspect of life in Turkey. As Turkey showed aspirations for EU membership the strong presence of the military in Turkish politics emerged as a major obstacle which had to be overcome. Since 2001 Turkey has implemented a number of reforms which have significantly decreased the political powers of the military. Nonetheless, 2016 saw another coup attempt in Turkey, again arranged by the military. However, this time things took a different turn as the military intervention ended in failure. It was the government that got to consolidate its power and purge the military. The paper will describe how the 2016 coup was different from the previous ones. Two hypotheses will be directing the path of the study:

H1: Turkey's aspirations to join the EU enabled the civilian government to gain more control over the political sphere through reforms.

H2: Fragmentation in the Turkish military led to the failure of the coup.

### *Literature Review*

Historically, the military had an established role, to protect the security of a given country from external threat. Throughout centuries the military institution became more complex and more accomplished. The post-World War II period saw a number of military interventions in the political life of many established as well as emerging states. Even in democracies like the United States, a need was felt to balance relations between the military and civilian authorities. It is widely believed that in democracies the civilian government has control over the military. However, in some cases it is the military which has control over the civilian government, like in Cuba, Iraq during Saddam Hussein, Turkey etc. Thus the study of Civil-Military Relations (henceforth CMR) emerged, as there was a need to explain the new conditions between the militaries and civilian authorities of numerous states. The relationship between the military and the civilian authorities becomes a dichotomy as the main challenge lies in the following: how to establish a military which is strong enough to protect the society from external threat, but which will at the same time accept authorization from the civilian government.<sup>1</sup>

For a long time the civil-military field of studies has been dominated by the theories of Samuel Huntington. Huntington believed that a professional army would never intervene in the political life of a state. The more

the military approaches the professional ideal the stronger and more effective it is in its performance, however, once it falls short of that ideal the military becomes weak and flawed. Huntington established that civilian control is concerned with the relative power between civilian and military groups, which means civilian control is achieved through the reduction of military power. Thus the main problem of civilian control is to minimize the power of the military. Huntington distinguishes between subjective and objective civilian control. Subjective civilian control entails maximizing civilian power which seems to be the simplest way of minimizing military power. Objective civilian control is directly opposed to subjective civilian control and postulates the emergence of professional attitudes and behavior among the members of the office corps. Hence, it entails maximizing military professionalism. Objective military control entails the existence of autonomous military professionalism contrary to subjective military control which supposes denial of an independent military. Under objective civilian control minimization of military power is achieved by professionalizing the military and thus by making them politically neutral. Peter Feaver also states that the civil-military challenge is to find mitigation between a military which is strong enough to carry out the orders of civilian authorities and a military with enough will to act under civilian oversight.<sup>2</sup> When analyzing Huntington's subjective and objective civilian control models, Feaver claims that the latter's dichotomous model needs at least one additional category, which is assertive control that considers the coexistence of civilian supremacy and military professionalism.<sup>3</sup> He also questions Huntington's claim that professionalism equals subordination. He claims that militaries which could be described as professional by most criteria have still conducted coups and otherwise intervened into politics.

Samuel Finer challenges Huntington's professionalism theory, arguing that only the acceptance of civil supremacy will hinder the military to intervene in civilian politics. He claims that Huntington's theory is based on a very specific definition of professionalism. If soldiers act differently than this special definition of professionalism, then they are deemed as unprofessional. However, there are instances when a professional army, such as the German and Japanese armies, has intervened into politics.<sup>4</sup> Hence a narrow conceptualization of professionalism does not solve the civil-military problem. Finer argues that the very nature of professionalism often throws the military into conflict with civilian authorities. If the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The role of the military in Politics*, (Routledge, 2017), 25.

military regards its occupation as a profession they may be drawn to think of themselves as the servants of the state rather than that of the incumbent civilian government. This kind of reasoning may lead the military to intervene in political affairs whenever they judge the civilian leaders to be acting contrary to national interest.<sup>5</sup>

Feaver also states that traditionally CMR has focused on the direct seizure of political power by the military, which is the coup. Coups are the traditional focus of civil-military relations because they symbolize the main problem: the military exploiting their ability to use violence to displace a civilian government. A coup may indicate military strength as well as weakness. A military which carries out a coup may seem strong compared to other political actors. However, a coup also indicates the military's inability to achieve its goals through political means.<sup>6</sup> Feaver argues that the frequency and success rates have fallen which indicates important changes in the nature of civil-military relations over time. Like Feaver and Finer other authors also take a critical approach on Huntington's theory of professionalism. Some authors claim that CMR need reconsideration especially after the end of the Cold War and the spread of democratization that followed. Douglas Bland proposes a theory of shared responsibility between the military and civilian authorities. His main thesis is that civilian leaders and military officers should share the responsibility of asserting civilian control over the military.<sup>7</sup> James Burk also argues that a new CMR theory needs to address the modern problems among the two entities. He claims that the traditional role of the military has changed and that nowadays the military should be an instrument for protecting and sustaining democratic values within and beyond the nation state.<sup>8</sup> David Albright also argues that it is important to stop thinking about the military and civilian authorities as two dichotomous terms. If sometimes conflict does exist in civil-military relations in specific countries, it is not necessarily the case at all times for all states. The cooperative or adversary nature of CMR in a given country depends on the level of cooperation or antagonism between the civilian and military authorities of that country. If the line distinguishing between military and civilian authorities is blurred there is a great chance that relations will be in a cooperative nature.<sup>9</sup> Rebecca Schiff is also among the authors who

reject the dichotomous nature of civil-military relations. She postulates concordance between the two entities. Concordance theory argues that the military, the political elites and the citizenry should opt for cooperation, which may or may not include separation but it is not required.<sup>10</sup> According to her, under concordance military intervention by the military is less likely to occur. Other authors have attempted to rationalize why certain militaries behave the way they behave. According to Amos Perlmutter the dynamics of civil-military relations is related to the specific political system in a given state.<sup>11</sup> He describes states in which the military has a say in political procedures as praetorian. However, he does distinguish between historical and modern praetorian states. A typical example of a historical praetorian state is the Roman Empire with its Praetorian Guard. In a modern praetorian state the military could intervene and technically dominate over the executive.<sup>12</sup> Hence, while in some cases the military controls the country directly, in other cases they more act like a watchdog of the civilian government with enough influence to have a say in decision making. Perlmutter claims that when a civilian government is ineffective the executive cannot control the military.<sup>13</sup>

Koonings and Kruijt also claim that the motives for the military to intervene into politics are different and depend on the specific circumstances in a country. They state that "the starting point for the constitution of political armies is the profound identification of the military with the historical foundation and subsequent fate of the nation" which means that the military develops a strong identification with the nation they were meant to defend.<sup>14</sup> In such cases the military takes on the role of the defender and protector of a nation's national interests. Such behavior and thinking is explained by the fact that the military elite are convinced that the military should define and protect the national interest because of its birthright as well as competence. According to Koonings and Kruijt such thinking is conditioned by the principle of birthright. The military legitimizes their right to intervene into the politics of the nation based on the perception that it has been at the birth of the nation, has participated and sacrificed itself for the creation of the nation-state.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Feaver, "Civil-military relations," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2.1 (1999): 218.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Bland, "A unified theory of civil-military relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 1 (1999): 7-25.

<sup>8</sup> James Burk, "Theories of democratic civil-military relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 29, no. 1 (2002): 7-29.

<sup>9</sup> David Albright, "A comparative conceptualization of civil-military relations," *World Politics* 32, no. 4 (1980): 553-576.

<sup>10</sup> Rebecca Schiff, "Civil-military relations reconsidered: A theory of concordance," *Armed Forces & Society* 22, no. 1 (1995): 7-24.

<sup>11</sup> Amos Perlmutter, "The praetorian state and the praetorian army: Toward a taxonomy of civil-military relations in developing polities," *Comparative Politics* 1, no. 3 (1969): 382-404.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 383.

<sup>14</sup> Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt, *Political Armies: The military and nation building in the age of democracy* (Zed Books, 2002), 19.



### Theories on civil-military relations in Turkey

Turkey can be described as a classic case of struggle for the civilian government to exercise and maintain control of the military. Koonings and Kruijt mention Turkey as an example of the birthright principle of the military's intervention in civilian life. That is, the military participated in the creation of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Ataturk was a military man himself. For that reason the military took upon itself the role of the guardian of the principles and ideology promoted by Ataturk, namely Kemalism and secularism. Perlmutter calls this kind of guardianship by the military praetorian. Sarigil calls it the popular praetorian military, hinting at the popularity of the Turkish military and armed forces among the public.<sup>15</sup> This type of militaries tend to be involved in the political life of the state extensively, however, they act as guardians of the political regime, their actions are more covert than overt and they do not aim to set up a military regime. Nirufel Narli also emphasizes the Turkish military's "role of the army as the defender of Kemalism".<sup>16</sup> Tanel Demirel also argues that CMR should not be regarded as separate entities and should be examined in line with the interactions that take place between those two entities. He argues that it is not only the failure of civilians that the imbalance in CMR in Turkey is towards the military, but the military is not ready to accept the supremacy of civilian authorities due to its perception of itself as the ultimate guardian of the state. He also mentions that Turkish officers did not have extreme praetorian tendencies as they did not favor long-term military control.<sup>17</sup> The autonomy of the Turkish military played a crucial role in impeding civilian control over the officer corps. Umit Cizre Sakallioğlu points out that one of the important features of the Turkish military autonomy is that it accepts the legitimacy of democracy as well as civilian rule. It followed a refined concept of autonomy according to which it exercised control over politicians based on its own ideas. The author infers that the Turkish army is not praetorian as it has not tried to undermine democracy or eliminate civilian authority. The main justification for the military's ability to influence political decision making is based on its guardianship role of the national interest.<sup>18</sup>

Nasser Momayezi claims that men of military background not only established the Turkish Republic but also chose the path that the newly

established republic would take.<sup>19</sup> Gerassimos Karabelias also states that the military institution of Turkey has been the driver of social, economic and political reforms. Hence, in order to understand CMR in Turkey after the establishment of the Republic, the military's standing in the Ottoman Empire should be examined as well. Although Ataturk included men with military backgrounds in almost all state institutions, he also made sure to create legal barriers so that the military does not get involved in everyday political life. After each military intervention the military did not return power to civilians until it made sure that its desired political environment had been established.<sup>20</sup> In an attempt to legitimize military interventions the officers presented it as a forced action for the preservation of democracy.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the military postulated that Kemalism and Ataturk's principles are the foundation for Turkey's democracy. Thus by defending Kemalism the military is also ensuring the prevalence of democracy in the country.

Since the Turkish military had a big contribution in the establishment of the Turkish Republic, it prescribed itself the right to protect the republic and the national interest. As Samuel Finer argues, military's which take on the roles of guardians come up with their own understanding of the national interest. In the case of the Turkish military the national interest was understood in line of the principles of Kemalism. A deviation from those principles led to military intervention.

### Military Interventions in Turkey

The Turkish military regarded coups as legitimate interventions for the sake of the national interest. The interventions mostly occurred whenever the ruling government failed to maintain stability in the country and diverted from the path desired by the military. After each intervention the generals strengthened the legal ground for them to influence the political processes even more. The military interventions which took place in Turkey must be examined in light with the political, cultural and socio-economic situation in Turkey at that time. Junior officers started to show signs of unrest in the mid-fifties. This coincided with the worsening of the economy in the country and it turned out that the civilian government did not meet up the expectations of the people. Low ranking military of-

<sup>15</sup> Zeki Sarigil, "Civil-military relations beyond dichotomy: With special reference to Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011): 265-278.

<sup>16</sup> Nirufel Narli, "Civil-military relations in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 107-127

<sup>17</sup> Tanel Demirel, "Soldiers and civilians: the dilemma of Turkish democracy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 1 (2004): 127.

<sup>18</sup> Umit Sakallioğlu, "The anatomy of the Turkish military's political autonomy," *Comparative politics* 29, no. 2 (1997): 153.

<sup>19</sup> Nasser Momayezi, "Civil-military relations in Turkey," *International Journal on World Peace* 13, no. 3 (1998): 3-28.

<sup>20</sup> Gerassimos Karabelias, "The evolution of civil-military relations in post-war Turkey, 1980-95," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (1999): 130-151.

<sup>21</sup> Gerassimos Karabelias, "The Military Institution, Ataturk's Principles, and Turkey's Sisyphian Quest for Democracy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 1 (2009): 57-69.

Officers started to compare themselves with their NATO counterparts and became aware of their material backwardness. At the same time the business sector was blooming and the junior officers felt even more neglected. Although the Democrats gave the impression that the military was far from neglected, nonetheless it was obvious that the military institution did not top the list of priorities for the government. When inter-party conflict erupted the discontent of the armed forces took a political direction. The officers started to articulate their grievances which were similar to those of the opposition parties. The first coup was carried out on May 27, 1960. When the coup took place there was almost no resistance from troops loyal to the government and the coup was carried out with minimum bloodshed. The aftermath of the coup saw the adoption of a new constitution, the creation of the National Security Council (henceforth, NSC) and the victory of the Justice Party (henceforth JP) and its leader Suleiman Demirel. With the new constitution and the establishment of the NSC the military created for itself more levers to influence politics and in the Justice Party (JP) it sought an ally which would run the country according to the military's notion of national interest. After the coup the army became an autonomous institution and was recognized as the guardian of the new regime it had put to power.<sup>22</sup> The new legislation improved the economic standing of the soldiers. Thus the main concern of the military became to sustain the regime rather than to back any political party. Moreover, the military was ready to intervene against any political party if the regime was threatened. The commanders had become a privileged group in the society and did not need to link their interests with that of a certain political party. On the contrary, it was the political parties which needed to link their interests with those of the military.

The next military intervention happened in March, 1971. This intervention was an interesting case as at first it was not clear which faction of the military had control. The military blamed the politicians for the intervention, claiming that the reason behind the intervention was the policies of the government that created social and economic unrest in the country. Demirel resigned without much protest after he received a memorandum from the military. As it turned out later, the intervention took place to prevent a conspiracy which could have resembled the coup of 1960. The intervention of March 12, was a preventive coup d'état which aimed to prevent the actions of radicals, both military and civilian, who wanted to overthrow the government and implement reforms which were demanded by the intellectuals and the society alike. Reforms were opposed by

<sup>22</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish experiment in democracy 1950-1975*, (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1977), 197.

the business sector in Turkey. The reformers wanted more involvement of the state in foreign capital and the private sector saw this as a threat. The commanders could have easily intervened in support of the reforms however they were divided within themselves as some had a stake in the existing regime. It can be stated that the military intervention of March 12, 1971, also known as the coup by memorandum, took place due to fragmentation in the military. While a faction of officers wanted the reforms to be implemented, commanders and generals who had a stake in the existing regime intervened to prevent the reformers' actions.<sup>23</sup> In this case the military intervention was carried out not for the sake of the society, but for the benefit of the military.

Another coup d'état followed in 1980, which can be described as the most significant coup in Turkish history. Towards the end of the 1970s Turkey was facing serious socio-economic challenges, there was an unprecedented rise in terrorism, and Islamic conflict between the Sunni and Alawite communities was on the rise. Thus, although the military had some stake, the 1980 coup was carried out on behalf of the society, rather than the military.<sup>24</sup> The army started the operation at 02:00 am on September 12. At first soldiers surrounded the headquarters of the major political parties and organizations, especially those which could show resistance to the military. Party leaders were removed and held in different places until the end of the coup. In a very short time the army was able to take hold of key strategic buildings. They detained prominent political figures with almost no resistance, which means that the coup had been planned in detail. There was also almost no public resistance which means that the society was anticipating the military intervention. At 04:00 am on September 12 the first statement of the NSC was made public, according to which the military had carried out its duty and taken full control over the country for the sake of maintaining unity in the country, avoiding civil war, and saving the reputation of the country.<sup>25</sup> The coup d'état was followed by the announcement of martial law in several regions and commanders were appointed to take hold of power. The national assembly was dissolved, political action was prohibited, demonstrations and strikes were forbidden. The NSC which was in charge of governing the country had unlimited powers. On this background the country entered into a transition phase, typical after coups, which lasted around 3 years. The reason was that this time the coup was not carried

<sup>23</sup> Artur Dumanyan, *1980 tvakami razmakan heghashrdjomy Turkiajum. Patcharnery, yntatsqy, hetevanqnyerj. (in Armenian) [The 1980 coup in Turkey: the causes, process and consequences]*, (Yerevan: VMV-Print, 2016), 90.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 98.



out to eliminate one issue or one party; the coup was carried out because of multi-layered issues in the socio-economic life of Turkey and the military required more time to find solutions for those issues. The military intended to undertake multidimensional changes and only after that return power to the civilians.<sup>26</sup> The coup was followed with mass arrests and the first targets were leftists and nationalists. The military aimed to end terrorism in the country and prevent the further emergence of such groups. Left and right radicals were heavily punished and already in October 1980 a number of people were sentenced, people were sentenced to death.<sup>27</sup> Within two months after the coup 7945 people had been arrested for participation in terrorist actions.<sup>28</sup> These actions led to the decline of terrorism, however, it must be mentioned that under the veil of fighting against terror the military was trying to uproot movements which they deemed dangerous for Kemalist Turkey. During the transition period after the coup 1 million 683 thousand people have been interrogated, lawsuits were filed against 650 thousand people 230 thousand of which were arrested. Death penalty was demanded for 7000 people out of which 517 were sentenced to death and 50 people were executed. 388 thousand people were deprived of their passports, 14 thousand people lost their citizenship, 30 thousand people were dismissed from jobs because they were considered "dangerous", 30 thousand people left the country as political refugees, 23 thousand 677 organizations were forbidden, 3854 professors were dismissed, 171 people died in prisons due to abuse (this is according to official statistics, in reality that number is believed to be 300).<sup>29</sup> The purges were mainly directed towards leftist movements, which suffered a massive blow from the military. Thousands of people were sentenced because they "were part of the organization". Major sanctions were also imposed on the media during the transition period.

As had become usual in Turkey, the 1980 coup was followed by the adoption of a new constitution. The military presented the new constitution in 1982 and it was passed with a referendum. This was one of the main outcomes of the 1980 coup. One of the main features of the 1982 constitution was that it significantly decreased the democratic rights and freedoms. Strikes and lockouts were forbidden. Parties were not allowed to have youth, women's and similar fractions. Membership age for parties was raised to 21, so was the voting age. These were done in order to keep the youth apolitical. Another important feature of the new constitution was it significantly increased the powers of the president. This was

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.<sup>27</sup> Ibid.<sup>28</sup> Ibid.<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

not done without a reason and was meant to strengthen the levers of the military because firstly since 1960 all the presidents have been from the military and secondly with the new constitution for the coming 7 years the president was supposed to be the head of the NSC.

Despite the military's efforts to control the rise of religious sentiments in the country it was not successful. Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist Welfare party gained significant prominence in the 1990s which had an impact on the established civil-military relations in the country. During the 1995 elections the Welfare Party gained a significant percentage of votes and managed to form a coalition government. Erbakan targeted not only the military tutelage but also the western secular ideology. Such actions, of course, would not be tolerated by the military. What followed was the so-called "post-modern coup". During a National Security Council meeting in February 1997 the NSC issued a decision which furthered the demand of the Prime Minister's resignation. This was the end of Erbakan's coalition government. By some authors this is considered to be the last successful military intervention in Turkish history. The younger generation of Islamists learned lessons from the mistakes of politicians like Erbakan. After founding his Justice and Development Party (AKP) rather than confronting the military Recep Erdogan sought ways to drive the military into an institutional exclusion. He presented himself and his party as pro-EU and pro-Westernization and thus sugar coated his negative Islamist image. Erdogan managed to convince the civil society in his democratization agenda which gradually pushed the military out of politics. Although contested, it can be argued that the last successful military intervention took place in 2007. This time the military made a statement on their website regarding the presidential elections of 2007. The candidate who would most likely be elected was pro-Islamist Abdullah Gul won. The statement of the military articulated concerns arguing, that the election of Gul as president was against the secularist ideas of Turkey (BBC). As a result, Gul was not elected during the first voting. The coup is called e-memorandum as the military's statement was exclusively published on their website. As the older generation of pro-Islamist politicians was defeated by the military, representatives of the younger generation, such as Recep Tayyip Erdogan drew lessons from the failure of their predecessors.<sup>30</sup>

After 2002 Erdogan has won every local and national election and in 2010 he secured a victory on the constitutional referendum. A major step taken towards curbing the influence of the military was the abolishment of immunity for generals. Another major change foresaw trials of

<sup>30</sup> Koray Caliskan, "Explaining the end of military tutelary regime and the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey," *Journal of Cultural Economy* 10, no. 1, (2017): 98.

coup plotters in civilian courts. Besides, no civilians would be tried in military courts anymore. Other changes entailed oversight of the parliament in case of party closures and the enlargement of the constitutional court. The latter amendment enabled the Prime Minister and the President to have room for maneuver and appoint loyal people into the constitutional court.<sup>31</sup> Among such loyal people were followers of the Fethullah Gulen Movement (henceforth FGM). The movement is named after its founder, Fethullah Gulen, who is considered by some as Turkey's second most powerful man. Gulen and Erdogan were brought together with their shared Islamic ideologies. At his initial stage of coming to power Erdogan used the expertise of FGM members in various spheres to run the country. The AKP and FGM joined efforts to sideline the military and after that was achieved a power struggle erupted between the allies. Many FGM followers were appointed to key positions in the judiciary, which started a massive prosecution against the military. Many officers were accused of plotting a coup, which was followed by arrests of officers and generals. This was the first time in Turkish history that officers were persecuted in civilian courts for planning coups.<sup>32</sup> Although most of the accusations were fabricated, the mere fact was nonetheless important as civilian rule was able to prove its strength.<sup>33</sup> The military did not resist and remained silent during these processes. Moreover, in July 2011 the entire senior command of the military resigned including the Chief of the General Staff. During this period many FGM followers were appointed to positions in the civil and military spheres in the country. Under the Ergenekon accusations many officers were tried, deemed by some as unfairly. This served to further strengthen the civilian government positions over the military. In 2013 the alliance between Gulen and Erdogan seemed to break. Once the common enemy, namely the military, had been weakened there erupted what seemed to be a power fight between the two groups. Erdogan's government turned to the persecution FGM followers. The culmination of the fight between the once allies seems to have been the 2016 July failed coup attempt. There are still many missing links and unclear facts about the coup attempt. The main action of the coup followed the usual plot of arrests of generals and party leaders, takeover of TV stations etc. The major difference was that only a faction of the military participated in the coup plot. Many commanders and generals were quick to announce their loyalty to the government in different parts of Turkey.

<sup>31</sup> "Can Erdogan Pull It Off?," *The Economist*, September 11, 2010, [www.economist.com/node/16994644](http://www.economist.com/node/16994644) (accessed March 10, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Caliskan, "Explaining the end of military," 105.

<sup>33</sup> Caliskan, *Ibid.*, 106-107.

The aftermath of the coup was not different from previous coups as it was followed by large-scale purges. The failed coup attempt was used to crack down on anyone who was perceived as pro-Gulen and deemed as unwanted by the government. In the immediate aftermath of the coup attempt around thousands of military officers were detained, judges were removed and detained for their alleged role in the coup on July 16th. Over the week following the coup attempt already 7,500 military officers had been arrested; the number of suspended police officers was about 8,000, and 1,000 were imprisoned; 21,000 teachers lost their teaching licenses and fifteen universities ceased to operate. In addition, a ban was placed on all civil servants and academics to leave the country.<sup>34</sup> This situation was ideal for Erdogan to purge the state from the Gulenists, who were once his allies in weakening the political powers of the military. The events of July 15 and its aftermath will have an important and long-lasting impact on civil-military relations.

Upon studying the military interventions in Turkey a certain pattern becomes evident. The military intervened whenever there was instability in the country, whenever any of the principles of Kemalism were threatened and whenever the interests of the military itself seemed to be under attack. In 1960, 1980 and 2016 (although unsuccessful) the military intervened directly with the deployment of soldiers. In 1971, 1997 and 2007 the interventions were indirect and did not cause any clashes. After the interventions of 1960, 1971 and 1980 the military consolidated more power and increased its levers of influence. In terms of the aftermath of coups, in the extent of purges, the 1980 aftermath and 2016 one were similar, albeit revised roles. The further unfolding of events will show whether the pattern has been broken and whether the civilian government has once and for all established control over the military.

### EU Reforms and the Military

Although the government of Erdogan cracked down on the military using allegations of coup plots, which by some are considered to be fabricated (at least some of them) more legitimate levers, like reforms prompted by the prospect of EU membership were also used to curb the power of the military. Already in 1997, with Agenda 2000, which was the action plan for preparing the EU for further enlargement, Turkey was singled out among other aspiring countries because of the Turkish military's

<sup>34</sup> Francesco Milan, "Turkey: What hides behind a failed coup attempt," *The RUSI Journal* 161, no. 4 (2016): 30-31.



profound role in politics. The Turkish military was described as a “deep state” which had been the de-facto ruler of the country.<sup>35</sup> Such conditions were not acceptable for a democratic country functioning under the rule of law. Thus the EU demanded that Turkey amend its legislation to curb the political powers of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). In 1999 Turkey became a candidate state for EU membership. Since then it had to implement a number of reforms concerning almost all spheres of life in Turkey. Among those were the reforms concerning civil-military relations. There was hope that with Europeanization the political activism of the Turkish military would be eradicated.<sup>36</sup> The reform process was launched in October 2001 aiming at major constitutional amendments.

The reforms had to be carried out in line with the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) which is the Western type of balance of civil military relations and is promoted by the EU as well as NATO. Although there is no customized model of democratic control of armed forces for each individual country there is a general idea what it entails. “Democratic control of armed forces refers to the norms and standards governing the relationship between the armed forces and society, whereby the armed forces are subordinated to democratically-elected authorities and subject to the oversight of the judiciary as well as the media and civil society organizations”.<sup>37</sup> The effective democratic control of armed forces entails the following aspects: civilian control, democratic governance, civilian expertise, non-interference in domestic politics, ideological neutrality, minimal role in national economy, effective chain of command, and respect for the rights of military personnel.<sup>38</sup> Thus it is assumed that the military has to be an apolitical instituting with no stake in politics or the economy. The military must have a certain degree of internal independence to ensure its proper functionality however it should have no say in the formation of national interest. The military should also stay out of decisions concerning the state budget. Democratic control norms are implemented through a number of mechanisms such as a clear legal framework in which democratic control principles may be embedded in the constitution or the parliament may adopt necessary laws for democratic control, or the creation of institutional mechanisms which ensure that rule of law is respected within the military, development of educational measures which educate the civilian and military societies on civil-military

relations and the integration of the armed forces within the society as well as the involvement of the security personnel in trainings on democratic values and human rights.<sup>39</sup> As Turkey aspired for full membership into the European Union the reforms of the civil-military relations had to be carried out within these lines, which also entailed reforms of the judicial system and governance.

Since 2001 Turkey has shown significant progress on DCAF reforms, which were conditioned by Turkey’s desire to join the EU.<sup>40</sup> In line with DCAF requirements Turkey had to focus on a few major reforms, namely to bring the Chief of General Staff under the oversight of the Defense Minister instead of the Prime Minister, civilian bodies had to consist solely of civilian representatives which excluded the presence of military representatives, the decisions of the Supreme Military Council were to be open to judicial review, an institution of a military ombudsmen with military oversight should be established. The Turkish legislation on civil-military relations has been significantly amended in harmonization with EU norms. Among others, EU demands of democratic control included full parliamentary oversight and control over military expenditure, removal of military representatives from different civil boards as well as the restriction of military court jurisdictions over civilians.<sup>41</sup> From first sight it seemed that the defense budget was appointed and approved by the parliament, however, in reality the parliament had no say in it and just approved the budget presented to them by the military.<sup>42</sup> In 2003 Parliament authorized the Court of Auditors to audit the accounts of the TAF, including state property. Although the military resisted and for example classified property and the Defense Industry Support Fund were not subject to audit, the fact that the parliament did authorize at least some audit of military funds was an important step towards civilian supremacy.<sup>43</sup> Another major criticism of the EU underlined the presence of military members and representatives in civil boards. For example, following the 1980 coup military representatives were appointed to such boards as the Higher Education Council and the Radio and Television Supreme Council. This was done in an attempt to control education and media broadcasts. With reforms carried out between 2003 and 2004 the NSC and Turkish General Staff were deprived of the authorization to appoint members to a num-

<sup>35</sup> Ünlü Bilgiç, “The military and Europeanization reforms in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 5 (2009): 804.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Democratic Control of Armed Forces, DCAF Backgrounder, 2008, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/55845/17\\_bg\\_dem\\_control\\_armed\\_forces.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/55845/17_bg_dem_control_armed_forces.pdf), (accessed March 12, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Bilgiç, “The military and Europeanization reforms in Turkey,” 803-824; Aylin Guney and Petek Karatekioloğlu, “Turkey’s EU candidacy and civil-military relations: Challenges and prospects,” *Armed Forces & Society* 31, no. 3 (2005): 439-462.

<sup>40</sup> Arzu Güler and Cemal Alpgiray Bölteç, “Motives for reforms on civil-military relations in Turkey,” *Turkish Studies* 17, no. 2 (2016): 252.

<sup>41</sup> Bilgiç, “The military and Europeanization,” 803-824.

<sup>42</sup> Bilgiç, *Ibid.*, 805

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

ber of civil institutions. An important aspect of criticism where Turkey secured progress was the application of Military Penal Law to civilians. The military courts had jurisdiction over civilians both in times of war and peace. Through reforms the military courts' jurisdiction over civilians was gradually reduced and in 2006 civilian trials by military courts were finally abolished.

The Turkish National Security Council (NSC) and its influence over Turkish politics was another major concern for the EU. The NSC was established after the 1960 coup with the adoption of the 1961 constitution. The role of the NSC was significantly increased with the adoption of the 1982 constitution after the military intervention of 1980. The NSC is defined in the Constitution as a consultative organ<sup>44</sup> and if in 1961 its suggestions had an advisory nature, with the 1982 constitutional amendments the recommendations of the NSC became a priority for the Council of Ministers. Moreover, with the 1982 amendments to the constitution the number of civilian members was reduced to five thus creating an equal number of civilians and military members. Although the main task of the NSC is to advise the government on the formulation and implementation of the National Security Strategy its influence was visible on every matter going as far as the organization of educational curricula. Although the recommendations were of advisory nature they had to be considered seriously if not fully implemented. The EU regarded the NSC as the main channel of influence for the military. It was evident that the existence of the NSC provided the grounds for the military and civil roles of the armed forces hence civilianizing the NSC was a priority set by the EU.<sup>45</sup> Among the reforms, one of the most crucial amendments was done to the NSC. By amending Article 118 of the constitution the number of civilian members was increased on behalf of military ones thus creating a civilian majority in the NSC. Moreover, the decisions of the NSC were limited to mere advice which would be evaluated by the government but would not be regarded as priority. Before the reforms national security and defense were defined rather broadly and the duties of the NSC went well beyond national defense policy. With the implementation of the Seventh Harmonization Package the duties of the NSC were limited. The duties of the Secretariat of the Council (always a member of the military), which supervised implementation of NSC decisions on behalf of the President and the Prime Minister, were also limited as it was stripped of its executive powers. The oversight of implementation was transferred to a Deputy Prime Minister, thus power went from the military to the civilians. The

main duty of the Secretariat became the definition of the agenda of the NSC thus its duties were limited to clerical services. The Prime Minister also gained executive control over certain funds that had been allocated to the NSC. One of the major achievements regarding the civilianization of the NSC was the appointment of a civilian Secretary General of the Council instead of a four-star army general. Although Turkey did not fulfill all reforms proposed by the EU, there were significant changes done to civil-military relations in line with EU reforms as a result of which civilian leadership gained more authority than it ever had previously in the history of the Turkish Republic. The military participated and influenced the reforms demanded by the EU for accession, nonetheless, the reforms did play a role in curbing the powers of the military and strengthening the positions of the civilian government. One major achievement was limiting the powers of the National Security Council. Since its establishment after the 1960 military intervention the NSC had served as one of the main channels of influence for the military.

### *Findings and Analysis*

By creating the role of guardians of secularism and Kemalism for itself, the Turkish military had in a way legitimized military interventions as a way to restore order in the country. Whenever, according to them the civilian leaders diverted from the right path, the military intervened to restore order and stability. As a result since the establishment of the Turkish Republic the military has had five successful interventions, a few unsuccessful ones and the latest failed coup of 2016. Since the 1960s there have always been factions in the military which have sought to sort matters through military intervention. There have been abortive coups in the 1960s where younger officers have tried to intervene but older generals have been able to hold them back. During previous coups, generals who did not wish to participate in the interventions would keep solidarity and not inform civilian leaders about coup plots. The 2016 failed coup, although similar to the previous ones in the way it was carried out and the in what followed afterward, was different in essence. The style of the coup did not differ much from the previous ones. However, the main difference between the 2016 and previous coups was that not only a small faction within the military participated in the coup. The remaining factions showed their support for Erdogan's government and took action against coup plotters. The plotters may have hoped that their move might ignite a spark and other officers would join the coup, as they had

<sup>44</sup> Güneş and Karatekelioğlu, "Turkey's EU candidacy and civil-military relations," 445.

<sup>45</sup> Bilgiç, "The military and Europeanization," 803-824.



declared themselves as hardline Kemalists.<sup>46</sup> However, the coup did not attract other officers, moreover, the public did not welcome the intervention either. Erdogan's supporters stormed the streets after Erdogan's call to take to the streets and even secularists saw the intervention as an attack against democracy. If the accusations of Erdogan are correct and the coup was plotted by followers of Gulen, then it can be concluded that Kemalist officers and generals stayed loyal to the government. If accusations are wrong and Fethullah Gulen did not stand behind the failed coup, it means that either the Kemalist ideology has weakened in the military or there was no unity among the Kemalists officers. It is evident that the majority of the military did not see an intervention as a means to sort issues. With the purges which have been taking place in Turkey since Erdogan came to power many of his supporters were appointed to positions within the military. While the aftermath of the 1980 coup was unprecedented with the extent of purges organized by the military the aftermath of the 2016 coup may be similar in its extent. However, if after 1980 the military used the occasion to declare martial law and eliminate everyone who presented a danger for the order that the military preferred, this time the roles were reversed. Erdogan and his government used the occasion to serve their own interest. An emergency situation was declared and thousands of officers were detained with the accusation of participating in the coup plot. The purges have not stopped yet in Turkey. The failed coup attempt was used by the government to crack down on Erdogan's enemies be they coup plotters, Gulenists or supporters of the Kurdish cause.

The unfolding of the coup and its failure proved the army in general stayed loyal to the civilian leadership, which means that the balance of civil-military relations in Turkey had shifted towards civilians. The reforms carried out under the flag of Europeanization played an important role in curbing the powers of the military. Although reforms were not fully implemented and some were carried out under the direct influence of the military<sup>47</sup> nonetheless, the positions of the military were significantly weakened. The EU Commission's 2008 progress report on Turkey states that the military still has significant political power in Turkey, however, the following reports, that of 2008, 2009 and 2010 state that progress has been made in civilian oversight of the military. The achievement mentioned is the abolishment of trials of civilians in military courts as well as subjecting decisions of the Supreme Military Council to judicial review. The arrangements made for high-ranking officers to be tried by civilian

courts were also stated as progress. The 2011 report states the oversight of the military expenditures as progress. The 2015 report states the following in regards to Turkey's progress on civilian oversight over the military "The situation in this area remained stable, without undue interference in politics by the military. Civilian oversight of the law enforcement duties of the gendarmerie was widened. The military and intelligence services lack accountability in parliament".<sup>48</sup> One of the main accents of Erdogan was the weakening of the NSC under the EU reforms. The number of civilian members was increased on behalf of military members, the Secretary General of the Council was chosen from the ranks of civilians rather than amongst generals and the decisions of the NSC were given an advisory status and were not regarded as mandatory. The duties of the NSC were also limited to defense and security policies, thus the NSC could not exercise influence in every aspect of social life in Turkey anymore.

The reforms had another result which indirectly contributed to the weakening of the military's political power. With the reforms the strict ban on religious practices was lifted, adherents of Islam were not suppressed anymore which weakened the public support of the military. Up until the 90s whenever there was political instability in the country the society expected the military to intervene and restore order. The fact that thousands of people took to the streets in support of Erdogan proves that the military did not enjoy the public support it ones used to. The failure of the coup can be attributed to the weakening of the military under the EU promoted reforms and the fragmentation in the Turkish military. On the eve of the coup plot the civil-military balance had shifted in the country. And as only a faction of the military participated in the coup plot, the civilians were able to take control of the situation as the core of the military was under their control.

### ***Conclusion***

At first sight the 2016 July coup attempt may not seem very different from previous coups. It followed the usual plot of coups; official buildings were seized, generals were abducted, an announcement was made on the main TV channel and adherence to Kemalism and secularism was emphasized. Despite the similarities there were also start differences. Only a faction of the military participated in the plot limited to a group from the

<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Stevenson, "Turkey: The Attempted Coup and Its Troubling Aftermath," *Strategic Comments* 22, no. 5 (2016): 2.

<sup>47</sup> Bilgiç, "The military and Europeanization," 803-824; Güney and Karatekielioglu, "Turkey's EU candidacy and civil-military relations," 439-462.

<sup>48</sup> EU Commission, *Turkey 2015 Report*, November 10, 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/next/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2015/20151110\\_report\\_turkey.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/next/files/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_turkey.pdf) (accessed March 15, 2018).

air force and ground forces. The bigger part of the military which did not participate in the coup stayed loyal to the government and intervened on behalf of the latter. An unprecedented number of people took to the street to show their support for the government. Regardless of the coup plotters were supporters of Gulen or not, the military did not act as a unitary entity. The purges that followed the failed coup were also similar to those of previous ones. In its extent it was in particular similar to the aftermath of the 1980 coup. However, this time roles had been reversed. The government was the one arranging a purge in the military. The arrests in regards to the coup attempt of 2016 continue to this day.

The paper proved that as a result of EU reforms and fragmentation in the Turkish military the political power of the armed forces was significantly weakened. This fact played a major role in the unsuccessful finish of the coup plot. Future research should also consider the role of leadership in Turkey and how Erdogan's role as a leader impacted the outcome of the coup. The emergence of a pro-Islamic supporter base for Erdogan should also be considered. Another major factor which should be paid attention upon for further research is whether Turkish ideology towards the military and national identity has undergone changes.

## RADICAL ISLAM IN RUSSIA: THE CASE OF TATARSTAN

### *Abstract*

The spread of Radical Islam among Russian Muslim is a central issue for the authorities of Russia. The first conflict in Chechnya facilitated the radicalization of Islam in the North Caucasus. Chechen warlords became involved in terrorism and organized terror bombings in Moscow in 1999, thus making terrorism a domestic issue for Russia. Hence the second Russian military campaign in Chechnya was labeled as counter-terrorism operation. In Volga-Ural region the situation was stable. However, Tatarstan has been encountering the issue of the radicalism since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the 2010s there were several Islamic jamaats, which were involved in terror attacks in the territory of Tatarstan (mostly bombing pipelines), international Wahhabi organizations are active in Tatarstan. The terror attack in Kazan in July 2012, when the Mufti of Tatarstan was injured, indicated the strong presence of radicals in the region. The attack made the authorities of Tatarstan take severe approaches towards the radicals. The law enforcement bodies operate professionally: those who are suspected to have radical views are immediately caught and imprisoned. The active propaganda of traditional Islam in which the state is also involved is another way to prevent the radicalization of the region. Though the Wahhabi presence remains, the situation in Tatarstan is stable due to the work of the law enforcement bodies.

**Keywords:** *Russia, Tatarstan, Islam, Radicalism, Wahhabism*

### *Introduction*

“Our Islamic community is at home” those are the words that the President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin said during his meeting with Muslim religious leaders in Kazan on 25 January 2018<sup>1</sup> (Putin 2018). Today, about 20 million Muslims live on the territory of Russia. Large numbers of Muslims live in Moscow and St Petersburg. Russian Muslims are

<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Vstrecha s Muftijami Centralizovannyh Religioznyh Organizacij Musul'man Rossii i Rukovoditeljami Bolgarskoj Islamskoj Akademii,” (In Russian), [Meeting with Muftis of Centralized Religious Organizations of Muslims of Russia and Leaders of the Bulgarian Islamic Academy], *Official website of Kremlin*, January 25, 2018, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56702> (accessed April 15, 2018).



mostly concentrated in two regions: North Caucasus (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia), Volga-Ural (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan). According to the geographical position, the Russian Muslims are divided into two communities: Muslim of the North Caucasus and Muslims of Volga Ural region. Despite the anti-religious policies during the Soviet Union, Islam managed to keep its essence. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought the wave of nationalist-separatist movements, and Islam became a unifying force for Muslims who were fighting for the independence of their region.

There are two main branches of Islam: Sunni and Shia. Majority of Muslims in Russia are Sunni. However, Muslims of the North Caucasus and Volga – Ural are ethnically diverse. They practice different forms of Islam, are loosely connected, and have no influence on each other. Muslims of Volga – Ural region belong to Sunni Hanafi school, while Muslims in the North Caucasus profess Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam. In Dagestan small amount of Shia Muslims can be found. Islam in Russia is polycentric, there are fourteen spiritual boards of Muslims across the territory of Russia.

Vladimir Putin demonstrates no discrimination against the Muslim. All are the citizens of the country. The president mentions that the traditional Islam is an essential component of Russian culture. On the other hand, the president adopted severe approaches towards the radical Islam.<sup>2</sup> Following the breakup of the SU, the dynamics of Islam can be described as the radicalization of Islam or the proliferation of nontraditional Islam, which in Russia is referred to Wahhabism, Salafism, fundamentalism, and Islamism.

The issue of Islamic radicalism in Russia is connected to the conflicts in the North Caucasus, particularly with Chechnya. The first Chechen war triggered the radicalization in the North Caucasus. Though it started as a secular movement for independence, it led to the radicalization of several warlords who later would play an important role in the second Chechen war. The bombings in 1999 organized by Chechen radical leaders in Moscow showed that Russia now had to deal with terrorism. The threat of radicals had reached to the heart of Russia, and the second campaign in Chechnya turned into counter-terrorism operation, and the Chechen fighters were named terrorist.<sup>3</sup>

Though Putin successfully ceased the radicals of the North Caucasus, still radicalism remains a major issue for the president. In the 2010s the

emergence of ISIS brought new problems for Russia. Many radical Muslims from Russia not only started to support but also to join the terrorist organization. According to Aleksandr Bortnikov, the head of Russian FSB, nearly 4500 Russian citizens have been fighting in ISIS by 2017, and many of them form the North Caucasus.<sup>4</sup>

Compared to the North Caucasus the situation in the Volga Ural region was stable. However, the situation changed after terror attacks in Kazan in July 2012, when a prominent Islamic cleric was killed. These events shocked not only Tatarstan but entire Russia. Tatars are considered to be culturally assimilated to Russians. There is a well-structured Spiritual Board of Muslims that controls the religious life of the society. For almost two decades the Muslim and Orthodox communities of Tatarstan lived in harmony. The July events indicate that radicalism has passed the borders of North Caucasus and gradually is penetrating into the central areas of Russia.

When studying the issue of radical Islam, the North Caucasus comes first, while little has been written on the Volga-Ural region. Thus, this paper aims to study radicalism in the Volga Ural region, concentrating on the case of Tatarstan. Tatarstan is of the twenty-two federal republics of Russia. The republic is one of the most important subjects of the federal state. Tatarstan is a donor region because of its petroleum resources. The rise of radicalism can definitely bring destabilization of the region which will negatively affect the federal state. The role of Islamic factor for Tatar people, the factors that contribute to the rise of radicalism will be studied in its all complexity for the first time in English.

### Literature Review

Most of the literature connects the spread of radicalism to economic grievances, political marginalization and perceived injustices.<sup>5</sup> These factors affect religious groups differently: religious persecution together with economic marginalization make individual embrace violence. That was the case in Chechnya. The first Chechen war (1994-1996) facilitated the

<sup>2</sup> "FSB Rasstavljaet Akcenty," (in Russian), [FSB puts emphasis], "Nezavisimaya Gazeta, December 19, 2017, <https://rg.ru/2017/12/19/aleksandr-bortnikov-fsb-rossii-svobodna-ot-politicheskogo-vlianiia.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Edwin Bakker, "Jihad Terrorists in Europe, Institute of International Relations," (The Hague: Clingendael Institute, 2006); Marc Sageman, "Understanding Terror Networks," (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Stephen Blomberg et al, "Economic Conditions and Terrorism," *European Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2004): 463-478.

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Vstrecha s Muftijami Centralizovannyh Religioznych."

<sup>3</sup> John Russell, "Mujahedeen, Mafia, Madmen: Russian Perceptions of Chechens During the Wars in Chechnya, 1994-96 and 1999-2001," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2002): 73-96.

radicalization of Islam in the northern Caucasus and within Russia as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

The Chechen struggle against the secular federal authorities provided both historical and religious justification for the Wahhabi of the region to turn to violence. Historically, the North Caucasus has been less developed region, and after the collapse of the SU the economic situation deteriorated rapidly. From the religious point of view, many local Wahhabi took arms in self-defense against the actions of Russian security services. The Russian overwhelming military response during the first Chechen war created many grievances among the local population, which pushed individuals towards radicalism.<sup>7</sup> While the second Chechen war created a new Islamic dynamic in the region by institutionalizing official Islam and marginalizing Islamic insurgencies.<sup>8</sup> After pro-Russian president Ahmad Kadirov, then his son Ramzan Kadirov many radical Islamists were physically destroyed. The remaining insurgencies were under the leadership of Hamil Sadulev (d. 2006) and Doku Umarov (d. 2013) who created the "Caucasus Emirate."

It is argued that Muslims of Russia are highly diverse and practice different forms of Islam, compared to the North Caucasus, in Volga – Ural the number of Islam practicing Muslims is low.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the Muslims of North Caucasus and Volga – Ural regions are weakly connected. Tatar communities have no say in the North Caucasus, and likewise.<sup>10</sup>

Some authors argue that Tatar Muslims are russified and have weak Islamic traditions,<sup>11</sup> while others claim that, though Tatar Muslims are culturally and spiritually close to Russia, there are no obstacles for them to develop strong Islamic foundations.<sup>12</sup> Tatar Muslims belong to Hanafi

school of Sunni Islam. They played an important role in the region and contributed to the spread of Islam in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Tatar Muslims are famous modernists or jadids. As a reform movement Jadidism encourages individualism, welcomes all social activities. It calls for the unification of Islamic values with liberalism and democratic values. It encouraged Tatar Muslims to learn the Russian language and culture. Due to Jadidism Tatar Muslims developed a pragmatic variant of Islam, became closer to Europe and established economic ties. Tatar Muslims created a special image and their missions are to bridge Russian and Muslim world and represent Russian Muslims.<sup>13</sup>

The growing trend towards radicalism was unexpected to the region. But the events in the 2010s brought changes in the lives of Tatar Muslims. Radical groups became active, even demonstrations in Tatarstan were held in support of the Islamists in the Middle East. These changes are described in the literature as "Caucasization of Tatarstan."<sup>14</sup>

The spread of wahhabism is linked with the training of clergy and their education, especially with those who studied abroad.<sup>15</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tatarstan did not have sufficient funds for constructing educational institutions, also the collapsed economy of Russia contributed to the establishment of ties with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia not only gave grants to Tatar students but also financed the constructions of mosques. DUMRT (Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan) started to send young Muslims to Arabic states for religious education.<sup>16</sup>

The collapse of the SU also brought Turkish Gulen Movement to Tatarstan. The movement is considered to pursue radical views and is banned in several countries including Turkey. Gulen started to open private schools and conduct educational activities. Russian authority viewed these activities as a threat and shut it down in 2008.<sup>17</sup>

Today, religious education is becoming more relevant and is gaining more importance in Tatar Muslim society, it has a growing appeal espe-

<sup>6</sup> Dmitri Trenin and Aleksei Malashenko, "Vremya Yuga: Rossiya v Chechnya, Chechnya v Rossii," (in Russian), [Time of South: Russia in Chechnya, Chechnya in Russia], *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 2002; 257; Elena Pokalova, "Islamic Radicalization in Russia's North Caucasus: Lessons from Russia's Handling of Religious Revival," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, (2017).

<sup>7</sup> Pokalova, *Ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> Galina Yemelianova, "Islam, Nationalism and State in the Muslim Caucasus," *Caucasus Survey*, vol. 1, no.2 (2014): 3-23.

<sup>9</sup> Elise Giuliano, "Islamic Identity and Political Mobilization in Russia: Chechnya and Dagestan Compared," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* (2005): 195-220; Aleksey Malashenko, "The Dynamics of Russian Islam," February 1, 2013, *Carnegie Moscow Centre*, <http://carnegie.ru/2013/02/01/dynamics-of-russian-islam-pub-50811> (accessed March 12, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Ahmed Abdel-Hafez Fawaz, "The Muslims in Russia: Between Historical Legacy and Contemporary Problems," *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2016): 365-382. *ilavov*, a, *ianova*, *ess* (2004).

<sup>11</sup> Galina Yemelianova, "Islam and Nation Building in Tatarstan and Dagestan of the Russian Federation," *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 27, no. 4 (1999): 605-629; Aleksey Malashenko, "The Dynamics of Russian Islam".

<sup>12</sup> Rafael Khakim, "Russia and Tatarstan, Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia," *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, vol. 37, no. 1 (1998): 30-71; Sergei Filatov, "Tatarstan: At the Crossroads of Islam and Orthodoxy," *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 26, no. 3 (1998): 265-277; Guzel Yusupova, "Making Ethnic Boundaries in the Society of Religious Renaissance: Islam and Everyday Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Tatarstan," *National Identities*, vol. 20, issue 4, (2018): 345-360.

<sup>13</sup> Khakim, "Russia and Tatarstan"; Filatov, "Tatarstan: At the Crossroads"; Nadir Devlet, "The Tension at Russia's Center: Radical Islam in Tatarstan," *On Wider Europe, Foreign Policy and Civil Society Program* (2012); Yusupova, "Making Ethnic Boundaries in the Society".

<sup>14</sup> Malashenko, "The Dynamics of Russian Islam".

<sup>15</sup> Eduard Ponarin, "The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan," *Central European University* (2008); Malashenko, "The Dynamics of Russian Islam," *Carnegie Moscow Centre* (2013); Nadir Devlet, "The Tension at Russia's Center: Radical Islam in Tatarstan," *On Wider Europe, Foreign Policy and Civil Society Program* (2012).

<sup>16</sup> Azat Akhunov, "Ro'f Zarubezhnogo Faktora v Stanovlenii Sistyemy Religioznoogo Obrazovaniya v Postsovetskomo Tatarstane: Problemy i Puti Ikh Preodoleniya," (in Russian), [Foreign Factor in the Formation of the System of Religious Education in Post-Soviet Tatarstan: Problems and Ways of Overcoming Them] *Islam in the modern world*, vol. 12, no. 3 (2015): 179-188.

<sup>17</sup> Devlet, "The Tension at Russia's Center".



cially among young people but still many prefer to study abroad. Imams usually receive their higher religious education in the courtiers of the ME mostly in Saudi Arabia. Students usually return with radical or fundamental views. However, researches in this field are limited and do not provide statistics on how many students have fulfilled their education or how many students are currently studying abroad.<sup>18</sup>

Another factor that accelerates the spread of radicalism in Tatarstan is external and internal migration.<sup>19</sup> Even president Putin considers immigration as the major factor that contributes to the rise of xenophobia and nationalist extremism in Russia. Islam has become a unifying force for Muslim migrants. Migrants from North Caucasus, Azerbaijan and Central Asia often bring their own Islamic ideologies with them which can be also radical. Migrants especially from Azerbaijan are usually less inclined to turn to religion, but they have started to reclaim Azerbaijani identity and to construct Azerbaijani mosques. Moreover, migration played and continues to play an important role in the ethnic composition of Tatarstan's population. According to official sources, annually nearly 1000 children are born in migrants' families in Tatarstan.<sup>20</sup>

Some authors also view the lack of unity among Muslim communities as another reason for the growth of radical activities. There is a strong competition between Muslim self-governing bodies. They struggle over government's patronage, control of local communities and financial resources.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the Muslim communities in Tatarstan face several challenges such as financial problems, the shortage of literature in an accessible language, lack of highly skilled imams, etc. These factors made them be more dependent on external factors, especially Saudi Arabia, which continues its finance different Muslim communities.<sup>22</sup>

The rising interest of young Tatar Muslim in Islam is another important issue regarding the growing trend of radicalism.<sup>23</sup> The young generation has lost its interest in traditional Islam and seeks something new in religion. Young Tatar Muslims have developed a keener sense of religious

<sup>18</sup> Dilyara Suleymanova, "Islam as Moral Education: Madrasa Courses and Contestation of the Secular in the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia," *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2015): 150–167.

<sup>19</sup> Kimitaka Matsuzato, "The Regional Context of Islam in Russia: Diversities Along the Volga," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2006): 449–461; Aleksey Malashenko and Aleksey Starostin, "The Rise of Non-traditional Islam in the Urals," *Carnegie Moscow Centre*, September 30, 2015, <http://carnegie.ru/2015/09/30/rise-of-nontraditional-islam-in-urals-pub-61461> (accessed September 15, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Malashenko, "The Dynamics of Russian Islam".

<sup>21</sup> Malashenko & Starostin, "The Rise of Nontraditional Islam in the Urals"; Roza Nurullina, "The Revival of Muslim Communities in Russia's Regions," *Russian Social Science Review*, vol. 56, no. 6 (2015).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ponarin, "The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan"; Malashenko, "The Dynamics of Russian Islam".

identity, not linked to ethnic traditions, and have greater interest in political actions. They want to understand the current event in their republic and the world, but traditionalists are not able to give agreeable answers, while radicals are good at providing with the needed information.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, researches in this field comprehensively elaborate on the factors that contribute to the escalation of the radical trend in Tatarstan. This research will go further and will try to understand the developments of radicalism, what is characteristic to Tatar radicals and, what other factors contribute to the rise of the radicalism.

### ***Wahhabism in Tatarstan***

#### *The Spread of Wahhabism in Tatarstan*

The spread of Wahhabism in Tatarstan region during the 1990s is connected with the charity funds opened by Middle Eastern countries. Arab sponsors financially supported the activities of a number of Islamic educational institutions in Tatarstan, of which the most popular one was medrese "Yoldyz" in city Naberezhnye Chelny. Students were trained on the basis of Salafi beliefs, and that rooted the ideology of Wahhabism among young people.<sup>25</sup>

After the achievement of the sovereignty of Tatarstan in 1992, it was decided by Tatar Muslims that Spiritual Board of Muslims of the European part of Russia and Siberia (DUMES) should be moved to Kazan in order to strengthen the role of the city as a spiritual center of the Tatars. However, the idea was not endorsed by Talgat Tajutdin, the mufti of DUMES.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, Tatars created their own SBM, which started to operate independently from DUMES and the mufti became Gabdulla Galiullin. Many mosques did not accept the newly created SBM of Tatarstan and continued to follow DUMES. Tajutdin created a breach of his muftiate in Tatarstan. Hence till 1998 in Tatarstan there were two muftiates: some mosques were following Gabdulla Galiullin, others remained loyal to Tajutdin and Faid Salman, who was appointed by Tajutdin as mufti of Tatarstan. Faid Salman was against the schism and separatism in the religion. He was the first who noticed the spread of Wahhabism and voiced

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Rais Suleymanov, "'Djamaat Bulgar': predsaviteli Povoljya v ryadakh Taliban," (in Russian), ["Jamaat Bulgar" representores of Ural in Taliban.], *The Agency of Political News*, April 16, 2018, <https://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=37222> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> Azar Khurmatullin, "Islam and Political Evaluations in Tatarstan," *Russian Islamic University*, [http://www.pol.ed.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/28682/Islam\\_and\\_political\\_evaluations\\_in\\_Tatarstan.pdf](http://www.pol.ed.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/28682/Islam_and_political_evaluations_in_Tatarstan.pdf) (accessed April 15, 2018).

it. However, authorities did not take his warnings into account.<sup>27</sup> Only after the terror attack in Kukmar city in Tatarstan in 1999, and the revelation that during the Moscow bombing in 1990 one of the terrorists Denis Saytaev was a student of Yoldyz madrese, the problem of Wahhabism became actual.

The period from 1998 to 2011 when Gusman Iskhakov was the mufti of Tatarstan, can be called as the heyday of Wahhabism in the region. Iskhakov favored Wahhabism. He began to appoint Wahhabis to the posts of mukhtasibats (chief imam of the city or districts) or as imams of large mosques. Many businesspeople and state officials started financially support Wahhabis.<sup>28</sup>

Fears of the possible emergence of radicalism similar to the North Caucasus evoked in November 2011 when three Islamists were killed during the armed clash with the police. Ildus Faizov, that time newly elected Mufti told that Wahhabism and Salafism were a great threat to the region.<sup>29</sup> His deputy, Valiulla Yakupov, was an active opponent of Islamic radicalism and even in his interview to Interfax website said the Wahhabism had to be banned in Tatarstan.<sup>30</sup> Nowadays, the successor of Ildus Faizov, young mufti Kamil Samigullin is actively involved in the propaganda of traditional Islam and demonstrates a strong stance against Wahhabism. Even recently he recommended banning that radical wing of Islam.

In the 2010s ISIS became the new attraction for Tatar Wahhabis. Many started to join the terrorist organization. According to unofficial sources, 88 Tatars are fighting for terrorists in Syria. Some started to come back, but they were immediately caught by law enforcement bodies.

### *Wahhabism in Social and Islamic Movements*

Tatar radicals can be divided into two streams. The first stream is secular nationalists who fight for the independence of Tatarstan. The second stream is Islamic fundamentalist. In the 2000s when Vladimir Putin came

to power, Tatars started to depart from the model of secular nationalism. That became evident when the new president of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov began to pray in mosques.<sup>31</sup> Since then the position of the fundamentalists started to increase, and some nationalists started to proclaim Independent Tatarstan as an Islamic State.

One of the oldest nationalist movements in Tatarstan is Tatar Public Center (TPC), which was formed in 1988. The organization was quite active during the 1990s. They were supporting the leadership of Tatarstan to gain independence. TPC clearly expressed its position towards Islam. They view Islam as a critical element for spiritual revival.<sup>32</sup> The first Chechen came to support the radical developments of TPC. The head of TPC Rafis Kashapov was so inspired by Chechen fighter that he himself went to Chechnya and met Basaev.

The TPC still exists, but now it does not have that massive support which it enjoyed at the time of the collapse of the USSR. In 2015 Rafis Kashapov was sentenced to three years in prison. According to the investigation, Kashapov posted materials on the internet which violated the territorial integrity, the constitutional order of the country, incited ethnic hatred. At that time his followers amounted 20,000.<sup>33</sup>

Another popular separatist movement is the Tatar youth union "Azatlyk." The organization was established in 1990. In 1995, the leaders of the organization declared "If we Tatars had the Chechen mountains and spirit, we too would give Russia a trouncing."<sup>34</sup> Their main activity is organizing rallies, pickets, and processions. In 2017, honoring the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tatar constitution, the members of organization distributed flags of Tatarstan in different cities of the republic. They mostly organize rallies in support of Tatar language and provide online Tatar language courses.

Among the national movements of Tatarstan "Ittifak" differs with its strongly emphasized radical tendencies. It has a relatively small number of followers, but a charismatic leader, the 67-year-old Tatar writer Fauziya Bayamova. She is also known as "the godmother of Tatar nationalism." She was the member of the TPC, but in 1990 because of her radical views she withdrew and created "Ittifak." If "Azatlyk" support the cre-

<sup>27</sup> Rais Suleymanov, "Problema vahhabizma v Tatarstane nikuda ne delas ..." (in Russian), ["The problem of Wahhabism in Tatarstan has not gone anywhere..."], *Russian National Line*, September 18, 2014, [http://ruskline.ru/analitika/2014/09/18/problema\\_vahhabizma\\_v\\_tatarstane\\_nikuda\\_ne\\_delas/](http://ruskline.ru/analitika/2014/09/18/problema_vahhabizma_v_tatarstane_nikuda_ne_delas/) (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> Rais Suleymanov, "Vahhabitskiy Holding", (in Russian), ["Wahhabi Holding"], *Military Review*, April 4, 2015, <https://topwar.ru/72338-vahhabitskiy-holding.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Nicolas Miletich, "V Tatarstane preduprezhdajut ob ugroze radikal'nogo islama," (in Russian), [Tatarstan warned of the threat of radical Islam.], *Inosmi*, May 31, 2011, <https://inosmi.ru/social/20110531/170076539.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> "Vahhabizm v Rossii dolzhen byt' zapreshhen," (in Russian), ["Wahhabism in Russia should be banned.], *Interfax*, May 16, 2010, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=inter-view&div=267> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> "V Tatarstane est' storonniki IGL," (in Russian), ["There are supporters of ISIS in Tatarstan.], *Rabkor*, October 21, 2015, <http://rabkor.ru/columns/interview/2015/10/21/isis-intarstan/> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Khurmatullin, "Islam and Political Evaluations in Tatarstan."

<sup>33</sup> "Tatarskiy aktivist Rafis Kashapov prigovoren k 3 godam kolonii," (in Russian), ["Tatar activist Rafis Kashapov sentenced to 3 years in prison.], *Radio Svoboda*, September 15, 2015, <https://www.svoboda.org/a/27249237.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Trenin and Malashenko, "Time of South: Russia in Chechnya."



ation of a secular independent Tatar state, Bayamova claims independent Tatarstan as an Islamic republic and calls for a Chechen style resolute actions. In 2014 Bayamova was convicted to one-year prison for inciting ethnic hatred.<sup>35</sup>

Along with the rise of nationalism in the 1990s Wahhabism and Salafism started to penetrate into the social layers of Tatarstan. "Tablighi Jamaat" ideological movement appeared in Tatarstan in the 1990s. The followers of the movement are also known as silent Wahhabists<sup>36</sup> can be noticed in traditional Pakistani clothing. Though they declare that they won't participate in socio-political life the region, they have political ambitions – that is the establishment of a radical and uncompromising form of Islam. In Tatarstan, Tablighis can be found in Nurulla and Salikhjan mosques. Though the movement was banned in 2009, it continues its existence.<sup>37</sup> In 2017, nine members of the movement were arrested and sentenced to prison, there were accused of propagandizing the creation of a caliphate. The members mostly conduct activities in mosques and various public places and try to attract as many people as possible.<sup>38</sup>

"Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islam" is an international Salafi movement which came to Tatarstan in 1996. The first emissaries came from Uzbekistan and created their own circle, which included local Tatars, of which the most famous was Rustem Safin, who later became the imam of "Al-Ikhlās" mosque. The tactic of the moment at first was distribution of leaflets and newspapers. Then social networks became a popular mean to spread the information. Though the movement was banned in 2003, the followers continued their activities in Tatarstan. In 2006, 25 followers were detained of which 12 were sentenced to four to eight years in prison. They were accused of "preparing for a forcible takeover of power." After the events of 2012, seven members were arrested including the head Rustem Safin. That raised the outrage of the members and for the first time, the banned organization publicly manifested itself by organizing massive

<sup>35</sup> "Tatarstan's Outspoken Activist Gets One-Year-In-Prison Suspended Sentence," *Radio Free Europe*, October 2, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/tatarstan-fauziya-bayamova-sentence-trial/26617458.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>36</sup> Dmitriy Katargin, "S "Tablighi Dzhamaatom" polemiziroval ubitij terroristami Valiulla Jakupov," (in Russian), [With "Tablighi Jamaat," polemized Valiulla Yakupov killed by Taliban"], *Business Online*, October 20, 2016, <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/326153> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Islam Nurly, "Dzhamaat Tablig v Tatarstane," (in Russian), ["Jamaat Tabligh in Tatarstan"], *DUMRT*, December 19, 2011, [http://dumrt.ru/ru/articles/mm-islam/mm-islam\\_1369.html](http://dumrt.ru/ru/articles/mm-islam/mm-islam_1369.html) (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> Andrej Smirnov, "V Tatarstane osuzhdeny uchastniki jekstremistskoj organizacii "Tablighi dzhamaat," (in Russian), ["In Tatarstan, participants in the extremist organization Tablighi Jamaat"], *Kommersant*, April 4, 2017, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3276620> (accessed April 15, 2018).

auto rallies in October and December. In 2013 Safin was sentenced to two years in prison, and Al-Ikhlās was closed.<sup>39</sup> The mosque still remains closed, and there is no information on Safin after his release. In 2017 eight members of organization, one of which was Azat Adiev an Honored artist of the Republic of Tatarstan, were arrested. The court sentenced the members of the banned organization to 145 years of the colony.<sup>40</sup>

### Jamaats and Terrorism in Tatarstan

#### *Islamic Jamaat*

The first terrorist organization which appeared on the territory of Tatarstan in 2001 was called "Islamic Jamaat." The creation of the jamaat was the initiative of Chechen commanders Khattab and Shamil Basayev, and Ilham Gumerov, the graduate of the "Caucasus" diversionary center, became the leader. The main goal of the jamaat was to create an Islamic state. The main goal of the terrorist was the destabilization of Tatarstan.<sup>41</sup> For three years the members of armed organization have been able to conspire their actions. Only in 2004 after a series of murders the terrorist was found. The members were murdering people in the Borovets forest, in the car burnt by terrorists, human bodies were found. Hafiz Razzakov who was suspected in series of murders admitted that he was punishing infidels. In 2008, 17 members of terrorist organization including the leader Ilham Gumerov were arrested and sentenced to prison.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Rybno-Slobodsky Jamaat*

Terrorist organizations "Rybno-Slobodsky jamaat" was founded by Albert Galiev in 2004. Galiev came up with the idea of creating a jamaat during his trip to the Caucasus in the 2000s. The trip was organized by Ilham Gumerov, the leader of "Islamic jamaat." According to investigations, in Chechnya Galiev joint the terrorist group of Arab commander

<sup>39</sup> "Hizb-ut-Tahrir v Tatarstane," (in Russian), ["Hizb ut-Tahrir in Tatarstan"], *RISI*, February 18, 2014, <https://riss.ru/analytiches/4876> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> "V Kazani sud prigovoril uchastnikov «Hizb ut-Tahrir» k 145 godam kolonii," (in Russian), ["In Kazan, the court sentenced Hizb ut-Tahrir members to 145 years in prison."], *Business Online*, December 8, 2017, <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/366384> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Andrey Shepticky, "Nachalsja sud nad "gruppoj Galieva," (in Russian), ["The trial of the "group of Galiev" has begun,"] *Vid*, 2007, <http://www.e-vid.ru/index-m-192-p-63-article-17987.htm> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> "Islamskij dzhamaat ne postroit na territorii Povolzh'ja islamskogo gosudarstva [Islamic Jamaat will not build an Islamic state on the territory of the Volga region.], *RG*, February 15, 2008, <https://rg.ru/2008/02/15/reg-volga-ural/dzhamaat-anons.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

Seif-Islam and started his training there. He pledged his loyalty to Shamil Basayev, a well-known Islamic leader in Chechnya. On October 2004, he met Alikhan Saduev and the 'president of Ichkeria' Abdul Khalim Sadulayev, from whom he received approval for starting a jihad in Tatarstan. Moreover, the Chechen radical leaders provided Galiev with weapons, money and religious literature.<sup>43</sup> Galiev regularly visited Chechnya, his formally created jamaat became a part of the terrorist organization "Supreme Military Majlisul Shura of the United Mujahideen of the Caucasus" under the command of Basayev. Jamaat consisted of 7 members, two of which were from Chechnya.<sup>44</sup>

The terrorist organization was active during the 2004-2005 period. Within six months the members of the organization carried out seven explosions and five attempts to blow up electric power lines, gas pipelines not only in the territory of Tatarstan but also in other subjects of Volga-Urals region. First, Galiev and his supporters organized terror attacks in the neighboring region of Tatarstan. Attacks in Tatarstan started in July 2005. Terrorists exploded a power line in Tyulyachinsky district and a pipeline in Laishevsky district. After those events four members of jamaat were arrested. According to the investigation, extremists were involved in preparing another terror attack for the 1000th anniversary of Kazan.<sup>45</sup> In December 2014 other two members of the jamaat were captured. The arrested terrorists in 2007 was imprisoned.

Galiev was reported missing. He became the most wanted terrorist of Tatarstan<sup>46</sup>, and he went into hiding for 10 years. Only on May 12, 2015, Galiev was captured in the village Bolshaya Elga. The criminal case of Albert Galiev had been investigated for 2 months. Galiev was accused of 11 terror attacks and sentenced to 22 years in prison. Galiev told in the court that his actions were ordered by Shamil Basayev.

The death of Shamil Basayev in 2006 and the arrest of 4 members significantly reduced the intensity of activities of the jamaat. Galiev was

<sup>43</sup> Irina Plotnikova, "«Vtoroj poshel: v Kazani osuzhden namir Tatarstana», (in Russian), ["The second went": "Amir of Tatarstan" was convicted in Kazan.], *RealnoeVremya*, April 26, 2016, <https://realnoevremya.ru/articles/29864> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>44</sup> Darja Vanjashina, "Predvoditel' tatarstanskikh terroristov prigovoren k 22 godam kolonii," (in Russian), ["Leader of Tatarstan terrorists sentenced to 22 years in prison"], *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, April 26, 2016, <https://www.kazan.kp.ru/daily/26521/3538475/> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Angelina Golovataya, "Ne snimajte nas! My pozhaluemsya v Roskomnadzor!: pochti 250 let tjur' my dlja jekstremistov," (in Russian), ["Do not remove us! We will complain to Roskomnadzor!": Almost 250 years of prison for extremists.], *Biznes Online*, December 9, 2017, <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/366440> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Angelina Golovataya, "Aleksandr Shagulin, Al'bert Galiev, amir modzhahedov Tatarstana, osuzhden na 22 goda," (in Russian), ["Albert Galiev, Amir of the Mujahideen of Tatarstan, sentenced to 22 years"], *Posredi*, April 27, 2016, <http://posredi.ru/amir-modzhahedov-tatarstana.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

mainly involved in the robbery of weapons. By 2018 all members of the terrorist organization are under arrest. In 2017 all six captured terrorists (Galiev not included) were sentenced to 101 years in prison.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Chistopolsky Jamaat or Mujahideen of Tatarstan*

In the morning of July 19, 2012 in the courtyard of the house, six shots from firearms killed Deputy Mufti of Tatarstan Valiulla Yakupov. Later, at 10:15, in the other part of the city, there was an assassination attempt on the Mufti of Tatarstan, Ildar Faizov, his car was blown up. Mufti managed to get out of the car in a few seconds before the explosion. As a result of the attempt, Faizov was only injured.<sup>48</sup>

The event shocked Tatarstan. Ministry of Internal Affairs took urgent measures. All important people were taken under the protection. The "Volcano Four" the operation of finding and detaining dangerous criminals was launched. Though there is no official number of arrested, some sources mention that nearly 500 people were arrested. The president of the Republic of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov mentioned that traditional Islam had never allowed such things especially towards them who serve to Islam.<sup>49</sup>

On the same day of the terror attack, a video appeared on the internet where seven people, six in black masks, in the forest introduced themselves as mujahideen of Tatarstan. Their head Muhammad, who called himself the emir of Tatarstan pledged his loyalty to Doku Umarov. On August 3, another video appeared where the emir took the responsibility for the attack. On that same day another important event happened. During the extraordinary meeting of the State Council of the RT, the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Artem Khokhorin announced that over 13 years on the territory of the republic there had been an undeclared war. According to Khokhorin extremism in Tatarstan had transformed from the individual manifestations into a critical mass. He also added that the attempt of assassination of Mufti was not just a crime, it was a political challenge.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Angelina Golovataya, "Ne snimajte nas!"

<sup>48</sup> Elena Gorbunchikova, "Glavarija terroristov pohoronili zanovo [The leader of the terrorists was buried again.], *Kazan MK*, May 7, 2014, <http://kazan.mk.ru/articles/2014/05/07/glavarija-terroristov-pohoronili-zanovo.html> (accessed 15 April, 2018).

<sup>49</sup> "Pravoohranitel'nye organy ob'edinili usilija dlja raskrytija bespredelennogo rezonansnogo prestuplenija," (in Russian), [Law enforcement authorities join forces to uncover an unprecedented resonant crime.], *Ministerstvo Vnutrennik Del Po Respublike Tatarstan*, July 19, 2012, <https://16.mn.pph/news/item/287040> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>50</sup> Artem Hobarin, "Obshhim frontom my dolzhny ogradi' zhitel' RT ot zarazy jekstremizma," (in Russian), ["We must protect the people of Tajikistan from the infection of extremism with a common front.], *Ministerstvo Vnutrennik Del Po Respublike Tatarstan*, August 3, 2012, <https://16.mn.pph/news/item/287085> (accessed April 15, 2018).



In the late October another video was launched on the internet where the new emir Abdu Musa informed about the death of emir Muhammad (the funeral of the emir was shown on the video). It was investigated that the first emir who also took the responsibility of attack was Rais Mingaleev, who, according to law enforcement agencies, in 2007 created his own network of terrorists, which in 2014 Artem Khokhorin would give the name of "Chistopolsky Jamaat."<sup>51</sup> The second one was Robert Valeev. Both from Chistopol village. Moreover, it was disclosed that Mingaleev faked his death.

Interfax information center in Tatarstan announced that the attempted assassination of Tatarstan's Mufti Ildus Faizov and the murder of Valiulla Yakupova were backed by Taliban.<sup>52</sup> According to the information, Rais Mingaleev in the early 2000s joined the terrorist cell of the "Bulgarian Jamaat", which was a militant formation within Taliban. The Uygur-Bulgarian Jamaat was founded in 1999 by a group of Russian citizens who migrated to Afghanistan. In 2009, the group operated in Pakistan and numbered more than 100 participants, about 30 of whom had previously lived in Russia.<sup>53</sup>

On October 24, 2012, Valeev was killed during the special operation, while Mingaleev managed to go into hiding. Only on May 2014 during the special operation conducted by "Alpha" division of the FSB two terrorists were neutralized, one of which was Rais Mingaleev. Both terrorists killed during the operation.<sup>54</sup> During 2014-2015 period the members of Chistopolsky Jamaat had been detained. In autumn 2014, two were arrested. In the winter other four members were arrested and sentenced to prison. On February 16, 2015, Ildara Vafin was detained and sentenced to 16 years in prison.

On September 26, 2016, Volga Ural military court received the case of "Chistopolsky Jamaat". Nine people were charged with terrorism and for illegal use and construction of weapons. One of the arrested, Gafurov, was accused of participation in the terrorist organization "Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islam". The case of "Chistopolsky jamaat" was considered to be one

of the "loudest" in the history of Tatarstan. There were nearly 400 witnesses. All nine were accused of terror attack near "the Stone of Wishes" in the town of Bilyar, burning a prayer house in the village of Lenino, burning a church on November 17, 2013, launching of explosive devices.<sup>55</sup> On March 23, 2017, all nine has been sentenced to 16 to 24 years in prison. By 2018 16 members of the jamaat are under the arrest. Any connections between the terrorist groups and members of above mentioned social movements, with one exception, were not found.

### Analysis

Based on the collected data and expert interviews it can be argued that one of the reasons that conditions the religious stability in Tatarstan is the existence of one united Spiritual Board of Muslims. Unlike the other republics of Russia, where there are two or three muftiates, who compete with each other, in Tatarstan there is no strong competition within the local Muslim communities. The Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan controls all the mosques and the activities of imams. All imams are members of the spiritual administration. What imams should say, how they should say, how they should behave, all these are controlled by the muftiate. Thus, it is impossible to introduce any kind of radical propaganda as it will be detected immediately.

The Spiritual Board during the times of mufti Ildus Faizov not only had clearly defined goals of fighting radical manifestations but also had consistently implemented them, and the July events in Tatarstan have become the reaction of that work. Today, the Spiritual Board is actively involved in propaganda of traditional Islam. And the fight against the radical ideas is conducted through promotion of traditional values. The propagation of traditional values is requested not only by the Republic of Tatarstan but also by the Russian Federation. However, the term "traditional Islam" remains a debatable issue among scholars. In general, traditional Islam can be interpreted as a form of Islam which was historically accepted and entered into the traditions and culture of the people. However, in Tatarstan different experts define traditional Islam in different ways. For example, one expert says that it is necessary to divide traditional Islam by regions of Russia. In different regions, the term is understood differently. According to that same expert, traditional Islam of Tatarstan is ritual Islam, because the supporters of traditional Islam say that one must

<sup>51</sup> Regina Hisamova, "Delo "Chistopolskogo dzhamaata" zakrito," (in Russian), ["The case of "Chistopol Jamaat" is closed,"] *Idel Realiti*, March 23, 2017, <https://www.idelreal.org/a/28386294.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>52</sup> "Pokushavshiesia na duhovnykh liderov Tatarstana vdhodili v dvizhenie "Taliban" – spetssluzhby," (in Russian), ["Those who took part in the spiritual leaders of Tatarstan were included in the Taliban movement – the special services,"], *Interfax*, October 25, 2012, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=48577> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>53</sup> "Za muftiem Tatarstana ohotilija «Taliban»?," (in Russian), ["Is Taliban hunting the mufti of Tatarstan?,"] *Business Online*, November 1, 2012, <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/69270> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>54</sup> "Unichtozheny terroristy, prichastnye k pokusheniju na muftija Tatarstana," (in Russian), ["Destroyed terrorists involved in the murder attempt on the mufti of Tatarstan,"] *TVС*, May 1, 2014 <http://www.tvc.ru/news/show/id/38699> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>55</sup> Regina Hisamova, "Delo "Chistopolskogo dzhamaata" vkhodit na finish," (in Russian), ["The case of the "Chistopol Jamaat" goes to the finish line,"] *Idel Realiti*, February 16, 2017, <https://www.idelreal.org/a/28313626.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

observe their own traditions, which the Arabs do not have (e.g. memorials for the dead on the third, seventh and fortieth days). Other experts say that Islam in Tatarstan is characterized as mystical-contemplative and intellectual. The other expert mentions the traditional Islam can be defined regarding to what extent it is affiliated to Sufism. While regarding the Sufism another expert says that branch has no influence in Tatarstan. One of the experts mentions that traditional Islam must be loyal to the current political system of the region.

As it is argued, the spiritual Board assures the dominance of traditional Islamic values in Tatarstan. However, the fundamental part of believers does not recognize the structure of the Spiritual Board. There are many disagreements on different issues between traditionalist and those who share fundamental or radical views. For example, fundamentalists insist that Muslim women should wear hijab, while traditionalists say that traditional Tatars cap is enough. Most importantly, the core conflict between the traditionalist and the fundamentalists is that the latter blame the former for being excessively secular. Today, religion in Tatarstan is controlled by the state. The muftiate is heavily dependent on the state and allows it to intervene in religious affairs. Even the Spiritual board can be called as a de facto ministry of religious affairs. One of the experts highlights that the control of the state for the religious life of society is conditioned by factors of state security and constitutional inviolability.

Nowadays, in Tatarstan, the religiosity of people is rising and Islamic factor is becoming more important. Both political and economic factors can explain the raising stance of Islamic factor. The elite of Tatarstan have demonstratively become devout people. Those who were secular people 10 years ago have become pious Muslims and participate in all religious holidays. Moreover, the state finances the construction of mosques. That can be explained that the authorities of Tatarstan want oil rich Arab countries to invest in the economy of Tatarstan, and even the president of the republic often travels to Arab courtiers and participate in different economic forums. Also, the authorities of Tatarstan try to play the role of the pioneer by establishing relations with the Islamic world and then letting Moscow to develop these relations. In this regard, Islam plays an important role in international relations, as for Muslim countries, it is easier to talk with Muslims. While, regarding the role of Islam in everyday life of Tatarstan, there are two views. Some experts say that Islam plays an important role in the social life of Tatar Muslims. That is why many state officials finance the construction of mosques in order to appeal the people and receive their support. While other experts claim that Islam has little influence on the everyday life of Muslim Tatars. Though

the religiosity of the population, the number of mosques has increased, the majority of Tatar Muslims are not actively practicing Islam. They mostly go to mosques on Fridays, on the other days the mosques are generally empty. As one of the experts mentioned Islam has become a "fashion" in Tatarstan.

Simultaneously, in Tatarstan, the radicals are becoming more active. According to the experts, 2% of Tatar Muslims are Wahhabi. Though some of them have left the region, others are under arrest, however, there are still hiding Wahhabis. Moreover, two experts mentioned that there are Wahhabi leaders who enjoy the support of local state officials. For example, head of a district may support the imam who is Wahhabi, he expresses sympathy, protects him, and the imam uses such support and expends the base of his followers. Now the authorities try to prevent such actions.

The appearance of radical groups in Tatarstan according to the experts can be connected with the economic situation of the region. As a rule, when there is a poverty people are moving towards the religion. In Tatarstan the economic situation is stable. Also, two experts mention that high urbanization of the region does not give an opportunity to radicals to find places for hiding. However, there are factors that contribute to the radicalization. One of the experts mentions that there are quite serious transformations of Islamic communities, such as erosion of values, transformation of family institutions and inter-punctual relations. Radicalization of the Islamic communities is the reaction to these transformations. If traditionalists focus on preserving the established values without an open conflict with the emerging system, radicals insist on a coordinated breakdown of the emerging modernity. An important factor which, according to three experts, cannot be ruled out is the factor of 'individuals.' Radicalism in Tatarstan is not a mass phenomenon, radicals are separate individuals and one expert is inclined to the view that radicalization is often a phenomenon of self-realization.

One of the experts holds a different view. According to him, there are no radicals in the region. The terror attacks which have been in the territory of Tatarstan are done by criminals, who use Wahhabism as cover. Even the video of "Mujahedeens of Tatarstan" he considered as fake and unprofessionally shot. The goal of those criminals who cover themselves as Wahhabis is to take control over the recourses and to destabilize the region.

According to experts, local authorities, law enforcement agencies are controlling the situation. All experts highlighted the professional job that the law enforcement agencies are doing. Radicals are regularly caught and imprisoned. The law enforcement bodies adopted harsh approaches



towards the radicals. They operate by the principle of isolating the radicals from the society. Usually radicals receive long jail times. Laws have been adopted according to which even expressing sympathy towards the radicals, regarding the issue of radicalism, is united, everyone wants the situation in the region to be stable and peaceful. Moreover, on expert emphasized that in Tatarstan people and the authorities are very concerned with the image of the republic. Thus they are trying to portrait that the situation is under the control. They are trying to show that radicals are only separate individuals, that the social background for the development of radicalism does not exist.

Overall, based on the conducted interviews, there are three views regarding the issue of radicalization of the region. First, the radicalization is very actual and there is a potential that the situation can be worse, thus the law enforcement agencies must be alert. Second, Tatarstan does not face the issue of radicalism. Third, though there are individual with radical views, they cannot facilitate radicalization in the region.

### Conclusion

This research argues that one of the reasons which explain the spread of Wahhabism is the fact that till now Tatar Muslims do not have clearly defined perceptions of traditional Islam. If in Chechnya Sufism has been recognized as the traditional religion, then in Tatarstan the clergy has to yet clearly and precisely identify the concept of traditional Islam. An important factor is that not only in Tatarstan but in entire Russian Islamic concepts are misused. Fundamentalism, Wahhabism, and Salafism are considered non-traditional and radical. However, it is wrong to consider all fundamentals as radicals, and Wahhabism and Salafism as the same branch of Islam. Though conceptually they are the same but have different approaches. There are also variations within the Wahhabism. On the one hand it is the official religion of Saudi Arabia, on the other hand the conceptual base of ISIS. In-depth examination will show that they are some vivid differences between these two variants of Wahhabism. They are many Muslims in Russia who consider themselves Wahhabi but are not radicals. Thus, calling them all as radicals can arouse frustration and lead them to radical actions.

Based on the collected data and analysis the connection of Tatars to international terrorist organizations facilitates the spread of radicalism. The international social movements, such as "Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islam," "Tablighi Jamaat" which are based on Wahhabi ideology were quite ac-

tive during the 2010s, and many Tatars were required into those organizations. The Tatar terrorist networks had connections to Chechnya and Afghanistan. As the data showed, several Tatar terrorists regularly visited Chechen radical leaders. It is important to note that radicals in Tatarstan are not a mass phenomenon, the number of participants in jamaats never exceeded the twenty, and different jamaats were active in different periods. Still, radicalism continues to remain a critical issue for Tatarstan. However, the number of terror acts has significantly reduced, and nearly all the terrorists who were active during the 2010s, also the members of Wahhabi social movements are in prison now. Under the strong control of both the state and the SBM, the situation in Tatarstan is stable.

## THE ARAB WORLD IN TRANSITION

ARAKS PASHAYAN

### SAUDI ARABIA-QATAR. FROM COOPERATION TO CONFRONTATION

#### Abstract

On June 5, 2017, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and its allies subjected Qatar to a series of boycotts and blockades. The initiative came from KSA, which was concerned over Qatar's growing ambitions to become an influential state in the region. In these terms, the launch of the blockade was intended to diminish Qatar's political autonomy and economic independence. Qatar never saw its tiny population and territory as a barrier to an independent foreign policy or regional influence.

It should be noted that as early as in March 2014, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recalled representatives of their countries' diplomatic missions from Doha, as Qatar authorities had not actually fulfilled their set-forth demands.<sup>1</sup> At that time Qatar was accused of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>2</sup> through the Middle East and North Africa and beyond, as well as establishing dangerous cooperation with Turkey and Iran. The causes of the crisis are directly related also to the coming to power new, young, and ambitious leaders in KSA, Qatar, and UAE who have become the very architects of drawing new milestones of foreign policy for their countries. Saudi Arabia and its allies after the turmoil of the Arab Spring, pushed for Qatar to accept its subordinate status.

**Keywords:** Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Iran, boycott, blockade, crisis, Muslim Brotherhood, Arab Spring

<sup>1</sup> "UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain recall their ambassadors from Qatar," *Gulf News*, March 5, 2014, <https://gulfnnews.com/uae/government/uae-saudi-arabia-and-bahrain-recall-their-ambassadors-from-qatar-1.1299586>, (accessed September 1, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn) was founded in Ismailia, Egypt, in 1928 by Hasan al-Bannā (1906–1949) as a youth club committed to effecting moral and social reform through information and propaganda. MB is the main inspiration for many Islamist organizations in the MENA region and beyond. The movement was initially announced as a purely religious and philanthropic society that aimed to spread Islamic morals and good works. Its emergence, however, was part of a widespread reaction to alarming developments, particularly colonialism, Zionism, secularization, etc, that swept through the Muslim world in that period, Dilip Hiro, *The Essential Middle East. A Comprehensive Guide* (Carroll & Graf Publishers, New-York, 2003), 344-550.

#### Introduction

On November 23, 2013, the final declaration adopted at the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) called on Qatar not to support those forces that were pursuing explosive activity in the Arab world, referring to the de-facto and lasting support of Qatar for the Muslim Brotherhood movement. It was considered that if Qatar continued supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, the United States also would close its airspace for Qatar Airways, and at GCC and the League of Arab States the issue of suspension of Qatar's membership would be raised.<sup>3</sup> Despite Qatar's numerous assurances of fraternity and friendship, in particular between the ruling families of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, there were many acute and lingering issues, including border-related ones. In 1965 a demarcation agreement was signed between the two states, however, in early October 1992, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia occupied al-Khufous, a border post with Qatar.<sup>4</sup> In 1995, when Qatar's Emir Tamim's father Hamad Al Thani (1995-2013) came to power as a result of a palace coup, Qatar accused Saudi Arabia of meddling in the internal affairs of its country. Several hundred influential representatives of the Qatari Al Murrah tribe were deprived of citizenship and expelled from the country.<sup>5</sup> In 2002, an indignant Saudi leadership, furious at Al Jazeera for providing a platform for the kingdom's dissidents, withdrew its ambassador from Doha in a diplomatic spat that lasted five years.<sup>6</sup>

Thereby, the Qatar-Gulf confrontation demonstrates beyond doubt of long-running family rivalries behind the crisis. The rulers have familiar relationship. The issues are personal. Both the Thanis and Sauds originate from the peninsula's Nejd interior, the homeland of Wahhabism. Both Saudi Arabia and Qatar seek to claim their version of Wahhabism is the right path adopting different approaches to this ultra-conservative form of Sunni Islam. "Qatari conservatism was everything but a mirror image of Saudi Arabia's long-standing puritan way of life. Qatar did not have a powerful religious establishment that could enforce ultra-conservative social norms, nor did it implement absolute gender segregation. Non-Mus-

<sup>3</sup> A. I. Alexandrov, "Qatar i Saudovskaya Araviya: otosheniya obostroyayutsya," (in Russian), ["Qatar – Saudi Arabia relations have been strained."], *Institute of the Middle East*, March 11, 2014, <http://www.iimes.ru/?p=20224>, (accessed July 27, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> "Qatar Says Saudis Seized Its Border Post," *New York Times*, October 2, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/02/world/qatar-says-saudis-seized-its-border-post.html>, (accessed May 7, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> "The long-running family rivalries behind the Qatar crisis," *The Guardian*, July 21, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/21/qatar-crisis-may-be-rooted-in-old-family-rivalries>, (accessed May 15, 2018)

<sup>6</sup> "What is the Muslim Brotherhood," *Al Jazeera*, June 18, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/06/muslim-brotherhood-explained-17068091709865.html> (accessed July 2, 2018)



lims could practice their faith in their own houses of worship and were exempted from the bans of alcohol and pork".<sup>7</sup> Qatar has sought to develop the soft power need to compensate for its inability to ensure its security militarily. Qatar calls into question the Saudi version of Wahhabism thereby challenging Riyadh's internal and foreign policy.

#### Qatar's regional power aspirations. Support for the Muslim Brotherhood

It is noteworthy that Qatar was largely involved in provoking and promoting the Arab Spring processes, which resulted in the removal of several Arab regimes from power. "Qatar's political stability, economic wealth, ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, and international reputation as a mediator gave it the confidence to take an intervention role during the Arab Spring".<sup>8</sup> The political establishment backed oppositional Islamist political forces in transitioning countries and led the regional response to upheaval in several countries like Syria for seeking Arab solutions to Arab problems. According to certain information, the Arab Spring processes were prepared by US research-analytical centers based in Qatar and afterward launched with the support of the ruling family.<sup>9</sup>

Doha intended, with the help of Turkey, to bring the Muslim Brotherhood to power in the Arab countries; in such a case, Qatar's role would increase within the political and economic processes of Arab countries. It is no coincidence that since 2012, within the Arab Spring period, the Palestinian Hamas branch began operating in Qatar, which was directly linked to and sponsored by the Muslim Brotherhood and which had been based in Damascus before.

In the same period, the Muslim Brotherhood movement led by Mohamed Morsi came to power in Egypt. Shortly after, on July 3, 2013, Morsi was deprived of power by the military and was imprisoned. In 2013, Saudi rulers threw their weight behind Egypt's brutal crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood supporters. In March 2014, Saudi Arabia designated Muslim Brotherhood a "terrorist" group. A brand of Sunni Islamism that called for

political participation and electoral legitimacy, of which the Muslim Brotherhood is perhaps the best example, was seen as a threat, because it offered a different model of Islamist politics to that of the Saudi state.

#### The Qatar-Gulf clash. Inside story

As already mentioned, in June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt finally suspended diplomatic relations with Qatar and subjected the small country to air, land, and water blockades. Qatar, in the meantime, had gained significance politically and economically and was in the process of being charged with supporting extremism and terrorism. It is noteworthy that on May 21, 2017, a new wave of conflict between Qatar and its neighbors began in Riyadh, about two weeks after the joint summit of GCC and the USA, and US President Trump's visit to the region.<sup>10</sup> The final declaration adopted at the Summit "condemned the destructive role of Iran in the Middle East" and "interference in the affairs of the region."<sup>11</sup>

The US President's visit to Saudi Arabia further highlighted the aspirations of both sides, Washington's desire in particular, to activate the anti-Iranian front; one of the goals of Washington was also the rapprochement of Saudi Arabia and Israel. At the same time, it is unlikely that Riyadh had not previously warned the United States about its movement to break relations with Qatar and had not attained the United States' consent to do so, if we also consider Trump's unwithheld support for Mohammad bin Salman.

The confrontation between Qatar and the Quartet states became the basis for the statement on regional cooperation made by Hamad Al Thani, which was posted on the Qatari state news agency website and which noted in particular: "It's not wise to have strained relationship with Iran, which is a powerful state and a guarantor of stability in the region." Afterward, the representative of the Qatar Foreign Ministry said that the Qatari agency website had been hacked and Qatar Emir's statement was posted by the hackers.<sup>12</sup> Some of the requirements set forth referred to the closure of Qatari Al Jazeera and its sister structures. It was considered that Al Jazeera had served as an information and propaganda platform in the course of the Arab Spring processes. Doha shaped the emerging narratives of protests through Al Jazeera media network.

<sup>7</sup> James M. Dorsey, "Qatari Wahhabism vs Saudi Wahhabism and the perils of top-down change," *BESA Center Perspectives*, Paper No. 676, December 7, 2017, <https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/qatar-saudi-arabia-wahhabism/> (accessed June 5, 2018); James M. Dorsey, "Wahhabism vs. Wahhabism. Qatar challenges Saudi Arabia," *RSIS*, No. 262, September 06, 2013, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/rsis-pubs/WP262.pdf> (accessed June 5, 2018)

<sup>8</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Qatar and the Arab Spring. Policy Drivers and Regional Implications," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September, 2014, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Brief-Ulrichsen\\_Qatar.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Brief-Ulrichsen_Qatar.pdf) (accessed May 7, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> A. I. Alexandrov, "Qatar i Saudovskaya Araviya".

<sup>10</sup> "US, GCC Summit communiqué condemns Iran's regional interferences," *Al-Arabiya English*, May 22, 2017, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/05/22/US-GCC-Summit-communique-condemns-Iran-s-regional-interferences.html> (accessed April 7, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> T. A. Shmelyova, "Istoki konflikta mezhdru Saydovskoh Araviyeh i Qatarom." (In Russian), ["The sources of conflict between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.], *Institute of the Middle East*, June 5, 2018, <http://www.iimes.ru/?p=44881> (accessed September 2, 2018).

### *The role of Iran and Turkey in the conflict*

Saudi Arabia and its allies set thirteen claims as precondition for restoring relations with Doha.<sup>13</sup> Some of those requirements were related to Iran. They demanded that Qatar diminish the level of diplomatic relations with Iran, shut down Qatar's diplomatic mission in Iran, expel from Qatar Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps officials and all those who were connected with those officials, and limit economic ties with Iran in line with international and American sanctions so that they would not have a negative impact on the security situation of the Gulf Cooperation Council Member States, as well as terminate any kind of military and intelligence cooperation with Iran.<sup>14</sup>

The other part of the claims was related to Turkey. The Quartet states demanded immediate closure of the Turkish military base in Qatar and complete suspension of military cooperation with Turkey on the territory of Qatar.<sup>15</sup>

In any case, the Qatar crisis contributed to strengthening the positions of both Turkey and Iran in the Middle East as Saudi Arabia, aspiring to dominate over the region, was so persistently striving to do. Still in 2015, Saudi Arabia and its allies, including Qatar, were drawn into the Yemeni crisis so as to counteract Iran's advancement. However, it was ineffective. In recent years, Saudi Arabia and its allies have failed to cause tangible damage to Iran's positions in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. As for Turkey, it should be noted that if Iran is an enemy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Turkey is its main competitor in the region.

Let us state that by the end of November 2017, two competitive processes took place in the Middle East. A trade deal between Iran, Turkey, and Qatar was signed in Tehran<sup>16</sup>, whereas the Defence Ministers of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, which was formed with about forty-member states on the initiative of the KSA as early as May 26, December 2015, conveyed the first summit in Riyadh.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, if earlier KSA was concerned with the rapprochement of Qatar and Iran, after the blockade of Qatar, bilateral relations would enter a new phase. A new giant port was launched in Qatar which is called on to become Iran's marine gateway. This circumstance will, naturally, boost

the bilateral commodity turnover by the forthcoming 2022 World Football Championship. Additionally, Tehran has provided Qatari airplanes, in particular Qatar Airways, its airspace for flights.<sup>18</sup> The Qatar, Turkey, and Iran alliance creates a new balance of forces in the Middle East, explicitly challenging the dominant positions of Saudi Arabia in the region. The ultimatum proposed to Qatar was not only a serious challenge to the sovereignty of the country, but was also directed against the influence of Iran and Turkey in the region. The confrontation that emerged between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and their allies was also banking-related; a financial-credit war that exposes the competition in the region, in general.<sup>19</sup>

### *Qatar in the focus of terrorism claims*

Finally, another important piece of Qatar paper package was related to supporting international terrorism and extremism by the country.<sup>20</sup> Qatar was required to cut off ties with terrorist, sectarian, and ideological organizations, in particular with the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (Jabhat al-Nusra), and Hezbollah. The Quartet countries demanded that Qatar stop financing terrorists, including terrorist groups that were on the Quartet, the US, and international lists; extradite and imprison all those enlisted with involvement in terrorist acts; confiscate their personal movable property and real estate; and not hide or sponsor such persons in the future. It was noted that upon making a query, Qatar was obliged to provide information on the movement, settlement, and financial situation of such persons, and extradite or return to their homeland all those persons who were released by Qatar after the break of diplomatic relations with the Quartet countries.<sup>21</sup> Overall, Saudi Arabia and its allies demanded that Qatar stop interference in the internal affairs of foreign states, deprive expatriated citizens from Quarter member states of the Qatari nationality, and provide information and relevant evidence about the citizens of the Quartet member states who had ties with Qatar. Additionally, Qatar would undertake a partnership policy with the GCC member states and Arab countries at all levels (military, political, economic, social, and security).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> "Turkey, Iran and Qatar sign new trade-transport agreement," *Middle East Monitor*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171127-turkey-iran-and-qatar-sign-new-trade-transport-agreement/> (accessed April 14, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, Closing Declaration of the Inaugural Meeting of the IMCTC Ministers of Defence Council, November 26, 2017, <https://imctc.org/English/NewsroomDetail/Index/636473045674267274> (accessed May 16, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> "Qatari flights to use Iran's airspace," *Mehr News*, June 06, 2017, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/125759/Qatari-flights-to-use-Iran-s-airspace> (accessed July 4, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> F. I. Laskaris, "Katar-Saudovskaya Araviya: voyna v finansovo-kreditnoy sfere," (in Russian), [Qatar-Saudi Arabia, a war in financial and credit sphere.], *Institute of the Middle East*, October 13, 2017, <http://www.iimes.ru/?p=38353> (accessed June 3, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



The authorities of Qatar slammed the Quartet's claims as ungrounded and unproven, particularly the claims related to Qatar's support of international terrorism.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, even a year later, the government of Qatar did not accept or meet halfway with any of the Quartet's conditions. The government of Qatar, blockaded by its neighboring states, pursued instead rather bold state policies during this period of political crisis, unexpectedly showing that perhaps the steps taken against Qatar did not have tangible consequences nor did they affect Qatar's sovereignty and widening influence.

### Overcoming the blockade of the Arab countries

During the crisis, Qatar suffered a loss of 43 billion dollars; however, the economy of the country did not exhibit a downturn and instead surprisingly recorded growth. For 2018, a 2.8 per cent economic growth is forecast instead of the average 2.3-2.5 per cent<sup>24</sup> of recent years. As of 2018, the annual gas export volume of Qatar amounts to 77 million tons. For 2022-2024, Qatar plans to increase that number up to 100 million tons.<sup>25</sup> It is a fact that Qatar managed to overcome the crisis first of all with the support of Iran and Turkey. It can be stated that Qatar's relationship with Kuwait and Oman is rather stable. After the interruption of commodity turnover with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the Qataris compensated the loss by an increase in goods turnover with Iran and Turkey. It is known that since the blockade, Iran has opened up its ports and airports to supply various types of goods to Qatar, as a result of which Iran's commodity turnover to Qatar increased by 117 per cent<sup>26</sup>, and trade between Turkey and Qatar increased by 30 per cent, amounting to 1.5 billion dollars per year.<sup>27</sup> In fact, a number of factors helped Qatar to overcome the blockade of the Arab countries: firstly, availability of 320 billion dollar reserve funds, and secondly, to a certain degree, multi-vec-

<sup>23</sup> "What is the Qatari crisis?," *DW*, October 21, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/what-is-the-qatari-crisis/a-39795408> (accessed July 8, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> "Qatar's GDP forecasts revised up for 2018," *Gulf Times*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/588081/Qatar-s-GDP-forecasts-revised-up-for-2018> (accessed August 12, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> "Qatar to boost gas production by 30% to 100 million tonnes a year," *The Peninsula*, July 4, 2017, <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/04/07/2017/Qatar-to-boost-gas-production-by-30-to-100-million-tonnes-a-year> (accessed August 12, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> "Sepehr Arefmanesh, Iran Exports to Qatar Up 117%," *Financial Tribune*, November 19, 2017, <https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-domestic-economy/76398/trans-economic-ties-with-qatar-booming-exports-up-117> (accessed August 15, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> "Qatar-Turkey trade grows by 30 per cent since Gulf crisis," *Middle East Monitor*, January 17, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180117-qatar-turkey-trade-grows-by-30-per-cent-since-gulf-crisis/> (accessed August 3, 2018).

tor foreign policy of Qatar's Emirate. Qatar is the US strategic partner and ally. The largest American air base in the Middle East and the US Central Command (CENTCOM) Headquarter is based in Al-Udeid.<sup>28</sup>

The very fact of this military base helped the Emirates to cope with the crisis as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its allies could not fight a war against Qatar bypassing that factor. In February 2018, Qatar's Defence Minister Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah announced that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had planned military intervention in Qatar with a power change purpose to which the Turkish military base in Qatar hampered. Incidentally, it began construction in 2014 after the first serious Saudi-Qatari confrontation. It should also be noted that in the recent period, Qatar has increased its military budget, competing with Saudi Arabia.<sup>29</sup>

It is noteworthy that on June 6, *Le Monde* issued a statement, according to which Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman had written a letter to French President Emmanuel Macron notifying that if Qatar purchased Russian Air Defence S-400 systems, the Saudi Air Force would destroy their located positions. Allegedly, Qatar has not made efforts to purchase them but has provoked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In fact, Qatar, a diminutive yet determined state, is in the midst of a serious arms race in the Middle East. In 2017, Qatar signed a USD 12 billion deal with the United States.<sup>30</sup> Of no less importance is the military agreement with France.<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy that while being a US ally, Qatar never joined the US anti-Iranian campaign, and, on the contrary, expanded its cooperation with Tehran. Qatar shares with Iran the largest gas field in the Middle East, located in the Gulf Waters and known as North Dome, or South Persian the Iranian version. In 2000, Qatar stepped closer to the pressure of Tehran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and shut down the Israeli Trade Center in Qatar that was operational since 1996. Qatar managed to successfully counteract the Quartet's pressures also thanks to skilfully

<sup>28</sup> Greg Jaffe, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "For Qataris, US air base is best defense against Trumps attacks," *The Washington Post*, June 6, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/06/06/for-qataris-a-us-air-base-is-best-defense-against-trump-attacks/?hpid=hp\\_hp-top-table-main-trump-attacks%3Aqatar%3Ahomepage%2Ftj-20170606&utm\\_term=.3e1c67ab1727](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/06/06/for-qataris-a-us-air-base-is-best-defense-against-trump-attacks/?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main-trump-attacks%3Aqatar%3Ahomepage%2Ftj-20170606&utm_term=.3e1c67ab1727) (accessed June 3, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Chirine Mouchantaf, "A huge military build-up is underway in Qatar. But who will man the systems?," *Defense News*, December 15, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/mideast-africa/2017/12/15/a-huge-military-buildup-is-underway-in-qatar-but-who-will-man-the-systems/> (accessed May 28, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> "US and Qatar seal \$12bn deal for F-15 fighter jets," *Al Jazeera*, June 15, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/qatar-seal-12bn-deal-15-fighter-jets-170614221327980.html> (accessed June 3, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Hadeel Al Sayegh, "Qatar flexes financial muscle with 12 billion Euros of French deals," *Reuters*, December 7, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-qatar-france-contracts/qatar-flexes-financial-muscle-with-12-billion-euros-of-french-deals-idUSKBN1E1162> (accessed June 17, 2018).

conducting the propaganda war.<sup>32</sup> According to some estimates, Qatar has spent about 1.5 billion US dollars on PR activities in the United States and Western Europe, aiming at neutralizing Qatar's ties with terrorism. It should be noted that Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was involved in the improvement of Qatar-Gulf relations, yet he failed to succeed in that mission by March 2018, before his resignation from office.<sup>33</sup> The US mediation on overcoming the crisis can be said to have exhausted itself.<sup>34</sup> An official statement of Kuwait announced that the Kuwaiti initiative also failed.<sup>35</sup>

Hence, Qatar has spent about \$1.5 billion on PR efforts since the conflict. Similar amounts were expected to be spent by Saudi Arabia.<sup>36</sup> The Qatar crisis became the biggest split in the Arab world since the second Gulf War. It was a great challenge to regional stability as well. The clash challenged the GCC as well. It has proven itself incapable of serving as a mechanism to resolve the crisis.<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

The research argues that the anti-Qatar coalition failed in its efforts of forcing Qatar to accept its 13 demands, including shutting down Al Jazeera, to cease support for various regional Islamist groups, both Sunni and Shiite, and to break Qatari economy. Saudi Arabia's and its allies' real goal was to force Qatar unable to carry out any independent foreign policy. To that end, the anti-Qatar coalition carried out international propaganda against Doha. It is worth noting the confrontation played out in Qatar's favor. Doha turned for support to Turkey and Iran. On the other hand, anti-Qatar coalition benefits Iran's and Turkey's regional power aspirations in the MENA region. Reports by international organizations

suggest Qatar in the period of conflict improved its human rights record and geopolitical standing.

The murder of Jamal Khashoggi on 2 October, 2018, in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate has damaged Riyadh's reputation and the "counterterrorism" narrative. The new circumstances can put Riyadh to compromise with Doha under Washington and international pressure. In this situation Crown Prince Mohammed Ibn Salman acknowledged the resilience of Qatar's "strong economy" more than a year enforcing an embargo against the small gas-rich emirate.<sup>38</sup> The possible reconciliation between Saudi led coalition and Qatar would serve to US interests advancing "Arab Nato" planes of Donald Trump administration. The United States, which maintains close relations with both sides, could play an active role in trying to bring its quarreling partners together to counter Iran's influence in the region.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> A. Kuznetsov, "Qatarskih krizis: god spustya." (in Russian), ["The Qatari crisis. one year on"], *Institute of the Middle East*, June 15, 2018, <http://www.iimes.ru/?p=45186> (accessed August 9, 2018).

<sup>33</sup> "Top U.S. diplomat ends talks in Gulf; no. sign Qatar crisis resolved," *Reuters*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-idUSKBN19X0WWM> (accessed June 7, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Kristin Smith Diwan, "Qatar's Domestic Agenda and the Gulf Crisis," *Lawfare*, February 25, 2018, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/qatars-domestic-agenda-and-gulf-crisis> (accessed May 21, 2018).

<sup>35</sup> "Kuwait: Not resolving GCC crisis is destructive to region," *Al Jazeera*, April 24, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/kuwait-resolving-gcc-crisis-destructive-region-180424074856648.html> (accessed April 30, 2018).

<sup>36</sup> Hassan Hassan, "Qatar won the Saudi blockade," *Foreign Policy*, June 4, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/06/04/qatar-won-the-saudi-blockade/> (accessed September 3, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Rory Miller, "The Gulf crisis: How it all started," *Al Jazeera*, June 1, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/gulf-crisis-started-180531140250121.html> (accessed June 23, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> "Saudi Crown Prince vows Khashoggi justice in defiant speech," *Bloomberg*, October 24, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-10-24/saudi-prince-vows-to-protect-turkey-ties-after-khashoggi-death> (accessed November 4, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> Philip Gordon, Amos Yadlin, Ari Heistein, "The Qatar Crisis: Causes, Implications, risks, and the need for compromise," *The Institute for National Security Issues*, Special Publication, June 13, 2017, <http://www.inss.org.il/publication/qatar-crisis-causes-implications-risks-need-compromise/> (accessed May 16, 2018).



GOR GEVORGYAN

## THE NEW STRATEGY OF THE U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY AND EGYPT

### Abstract

After the collapse of the USSR, the United States further activated its policy in different continents with the aim of replenishing the so-called "vacuum space" that had resulted from the collapse of the bipolar system. In the light of formation of new correlation of world forces, the American foreign policy focused mostly on those parts of the world that were of direct importance to US national security. In this regard, the official Washington proposed a new concept of geopolitical perception on the global region to regulate its vital issues and secure its influence in the Middle East and North Africa region, which at the same time would allow the United States to set direct control over specific countries, "managing" their key economic resources, as well as ensuring the security of its traditional ally Israel.

The new American concept assumed "reconstruction" of the Middle East and North Africa region and "modernization and transformation" of the countries in the region. By initiating the process, the United States tried to impose the so-called "American democracy" model in the region.

**Keywords:** *U.S. Strategy, "American democracy", "The Great Middle East", "Modernization and transformation Middle East and North Africa", "The Middle East Reconstruction", Egyptian Concept for the Development of the Arab World.*

### Introduction

For a long time, the Middle East was one of the most problematic components of bipolar international relations. The global confrontation between the USA and the USSR in the region was interwoven with local interstate, interpersonal, ethno-religious and other contradictions of the heads of states, as well as with the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli unsettled conflict.

Throughout the Cold War, the United States developed new tactics and even concepts in its Middle Eastern policy to isolate the USSR in the region and establish absolute dominant positions. However, in the region, the American strategy was hampered not only by official Moscow, but

also by rather solid ideology of political systems based on Arab nationalism in a number of Arab countries and anti-imperialist Zionist stance and policy of the leaders of these countries.

More favorable conditions for establishing American domination in the Middle East were created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when globalization, making the borders of states more transparent, gradually began to absorb the world, and integration processes began to target the component of national identity. It was in this period that within the framework of global politics the spread of political concepts of the formation of new, modern systems of governance in different countries began to be implemented more often, which in essence should not only make these countries more democratic, but also dependent from the country that had spread these concepts. During this period, the borders of international terrorism also expanded, which enabled the United States to motivate this or that expansionist policy as well.

In this context, different expert centers of the USA, according to their perception, have proposed a more effective concept of disseminating American domination, first of all targeting despotic regimes, particularly in the Middle East, and aiming to collapse the existing political systems in those countries and introduce the American democratic model instead, establishing the official Washington's control over them.

### The vision of the new concept of the American strategy in the Middle East

The concept of "The Great Middle East<sup>1</sup> or the Reconstruction of the Middle East" was first publicized by G.W. Bush Jr on November 6, 2003, in his speech<sup>2</sup> at the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Authors of "The Great Middle East or the Middle East Reconstruction" concept are H. Kissinger, G. Durpath, D. Rumsfeld, D. Cheney, C. Rice, R. Perl, P. Wolfowitz, M. Grossman and a number of other well-known American officials and politicians. Noteworthy is the fact that Arab-American intellectuals too have played an important role in devel-

<sup>1</sup> "Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: the Project for a "New Middle East," *Global Research*, October 24, 2018, <https://www.globalresearch.ca/plans-for-redrawing-the-middle-east-the-project-for-a-new-middle-east/3882> (accessed November 10, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> It is symbolic that the National Endowment for Democracy was established in 1983 by US President R. Reagan, "for the purpose of strengthening the democratic institutions in the world". See: Evseev V.V., *Kontsepsia "Bolsшой Blijnij Vostok" pod uglom natsionalnoy bezopasnosti (in Russian)* [The concept "Middle East from an angle of National Security"], *Natsionalnaya bezopasnost*, (4 (27), 2013), April 27, 2013, [http://www.nbpublish.com/library\\_get\\_pdf.php?id=25426](http://www.nbpublish.com/library_get_pdf.php?id=25426), (accessed September 15, 2017).

oping the following concept.<sup>3</sup> Participation of Arab intellectuals in the concept was also conditioned by the fact that the focus of the concept, first of all, was the issue of the “reconstruction” of the Arab world.

In his speech at the National Endowment for Democracy, Bush stated that within ten years, he was going to create a free trade zone between the United States and the Middle East which would enable to expand the economic opportunities of the countries in the region. Bush also noted that the process should be in pace with the democratization process of the Middle East countries. In his opinion, the United States had a worldwide mission of promoting freedom and democracy, the pillars of which were Woodrow Wilson’s “14 points”, which had found their summary in the 1941 speech of US President Franklin Roosevelt on “Four Freedoms”.<sup>4</sup>

The process of “modernization and transformation” of the Middle East, according to the American concept, should begin with the collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq. Washington was also convinced that fall of Saddam’s rule would lead to a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue.

Generally speaking, a new American concept had provided a special place for Iraqi occupation.<sup>5</sup> In his speech of November 6, 2003, at the National Endowment for Democracy, Bush also pointed out that Iraqi democracy and the creation of free Iraq in the center of the Middle East would become the breakthrough episode of the global democratic revolution and that it would be the first phase of the implementation of “The Middle East Reconstruction” concept.<sup>6</sup>

Through the realization of the second phase of “The Middle East Reconstruction Framework”, it was supposed to impose pressure on Iran and Syria that were supporting various religious-political movements. One of the confidential points of the mentioned American concept envisaged

physical liquidation<sup>7</sup> of the leaders of the above-mentioned countries if necessary, or applying the Iraqi scenario in those countries.

The statement of the US President’s National Security Advisor, C. Rice made on May 17, 2004, too sheds lights on the content of the new American concept and that is: for nearly 60 years the USA had been perceiving different dictatorships, including that of the Near East, within the frame of the format “though dictatorships, yet stable”. And according to Rice, versus to which the USA received Bin Laden with Al Qaeda and September the 11<sup>th</sup> of 2001. Consequently, according to Rice, availability of such dictatorships was no longer tolerable. Then, as an example, Rice recalled the policy of the first Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, K. Adenauer after World War Two that was anchored on the very democratic values which thereafter ensured prosperity for Europe. Rice emphasized that the United States would try to realize such a program in the Middle East too.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, through the American concept of “The Great Middle East or the Middle East Reconstruction”, the United States made an attempt to transform the Arab world shaping it into pro-American “friendly democratic administrations”<sup>9</sup> that by no means would hinder the world possessing strategy of the USA in that region too.

In March, 2003, Bush initiated the “Liberty to Iraq” military action in Iraq, which as we have already mentioned was the first phase of the implementation of the new American concept.<sup>10</sup>

To be fair, it should be noted that despite the collapse of Saddam’s regime by the launch of the military operation in Iraq, in reality, however, a chaotic situation was created in the country.<sup>11</sup> That was the reason that the concept of the «Middle East Reconstruction» with its “democratization

<sup>3</sup> According to certain information, Edward Said, a well-known politologist and Professor at Columbia University, founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies, too has had his participation in the development of this concept.

<sup>4</sup> George Bush, Commencement Address at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina, *The American Presidency Project*, May, 2003, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/WCPD-2003-05-12/pdf/WCPD-2003-05-12-Pg568.pdf>, (accessed December 20, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> After Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) left the Jordanian-Israeli conflict, Syria and Iraq remained Arab countries that opposed Israel. The Syrian issue was more complicated for the United States, so Washington began its cleansing of the “Arab field” for itself and Israel, baselessly accusing Saddam Hussein’s power of supporting terrorism, creating weapons of mass destruction and lack of democracy. K. Gajendra Singh, “U.S. Guided reconstruction and Democracy in Iraq: But where are the weapons of mass destruction!”, *South Asia Analysis Group*, May 1, 2003, <http://www.southasiananalysis.org/paper676> (accessed November 12, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Tamar Cofman Wittes, “The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative: An Evaluation,” *Brookings*, May 10, 2004, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-new-u-s-proposal-for-a-greater-middle-east-initiative-an-evaluation/>, (accessed November 20, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> “Middle East: Sentenced to Destroy,” *Newsland*, May 28, 2012, <http://newsland.com/news/detail/id/964928/> (accessed November 20, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Cofman Wittes, “The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative: An Evaluation.”

<sup>9</sup> “The Arab Spring: Implications for US Policy and Interests,” *Middle East Institute*, January 13, 2012, <http://www.mei.edu/content/arab-spring-implications-us-policy-and-interests> (accessed December 25, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> After phasing out from the Arab-Israeli conflict of Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, Syria and Iraq remained as opposing countries against Israel. For the United States, the Syrian issue was more complicated; therefore it started the “Reconstruction” process from Iraq with the aim of creating a so-called pilot “regime democracy” in the country; See: K. Gajendra Singh, U.S. Guided reconstruction; Conrad C. Crane, Andrew W. Terrill, “Reconstructing Iraq: insights, challenges, and missions for military forces in a post-conflict scenario,” *Army War College (U.S.), Strategic Studies Institute*, (February, 2003), <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub182.pdf> (accessed December 25, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> “US Attack on Iraq in 2003: Violation of International Humanitarian Law,” *The Peace and Collaborative Development Network (PCDN)*, <https://pcdnetwork.org/blogs/us-attack-on-iraq-in-2003-violation-of-international-humanitarian-law/> (accessed February, 25 2017).



idea" was often perceived as a roadmap for US honorable exit from the Iraqi adventure<sup>12</sup> by different politicians and experts.

The West European countries, particularly France and Germany, expressed their stance over the American concept of "The Middle East Reconstruction". According to the French-German standpoint, the Arabs must overcome their problems on their own and that "The Great Middle East" cannot be created combining in its meaningful perception such different countries, as Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Gulf Arab countries.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of "The Great Middle East" got more finalized outline on June 10, 2004, at the G8 session in the US state of Georgia<sup>14</sup>, where the document on Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Enlarged Region of the Middle East and North Africa. The document actually posted not only the provisions of "The Great Middle East" concept, but also became the roadmap of an expanded American strategy for the region.<sup>15</sup>

It is noteworthy that at the request of the European and Arab countries, an important point in the document was introduced: to direct the efforts of the G8 countries to the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on Resolutions 242, 338 and 425 of the United Nations Security Council.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, in fact, the US proposed a Middle East Concept of Convergence that actually threatened not only to shatter the already traditional and relatively stable security system but also to exterminate it.

At the same time it should be noted that according to President Bush's perception, the issue of the "modernization" of the Middle East was also a guarantee for the reduction of international terrorism.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Andreas Wimmer, "Democracy and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Iraq," *Paper presented at the Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law, Stanford University*, May 5, 2003, <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/mideast/IQ/wimmer.pdf> (accessed September 28, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Radwan Ziadeh, "The EU's Policy on Promotion Democracy in the Arab World," *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, (2009), <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/chapters/the-role-of-the-european-union-in-democracy-building/eu-democracy-building-discussion-paper-32.pdf>, (accessed September 15, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp, "The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative: An Overview," *CRS Report to Congress*, February 15, 2005, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22053.pdf> (accessed February 28, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> "G. Bush considered that in democratic countries there cannot be such a shameful thing as terrorism, President Bush's Speech on Terrorism," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2006, [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/washington/06bush\\_transcript.html?pagewanted=all&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/washington/06bush_transcript.html?pagewanted=all&r=0) (accessed 10 September, 2006) Ivo H. Daalder, "President Bush's Speech on Global Democracy and Freedom," *Brookings*, November 10, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/interviews/2003/11/10/globalgovernance-daalder>, (accessed February, 28, 2017).

### *Egyptian concept for the development of the Arab World as an alternative to the American one*

Since the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of globalization processes, certain steps were initiated by several Arab states to modernize political and economic system, more specifically, human rights protection committees, working groups, and even ministries were being created, which, however, were merely of formal nature serving as a backstage for international community. Such steps taken periodically by the Arab states were intended to maintain high their own authority and political reputation.

A number of Arab countries, Egypt in particular, represented by President Hosni Mubarak, described the US concept of "Modernization of the Middle East" as an attempt to intervene in the domestic political developments in the region and rejected it.<sup>18</sup>

Official Cairo expressed conviction that "modernization and democratic reforms" should be the result of the historical development of the Arab community and not dictated from the outside.<sup>19</sup>

President of Syria Bashar al-Assad, expressing his position on the American concept, noted that the Arabs were not sure in the document because it was impossible to speak of any reform in the realities of war and conflict (Assad meant collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime which resulted in the crisis in Iraq).<sup>20</sup>

Speaking about the concept of "Middle East Modernization", Muammar Gaddafi, President of the Libyan Jamahiriya, too stated that "the Maghreb countries have nothing to do with the developments underway in Mashriq and therefore, the American concept is absurd if it includes also Maghreb".<sup>21</sup>

Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh al-Sabah announced that it was infeasible to accept the US concept of «reconstruction Greater Middle East» as it was threatening to shatter the security system of the region.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, by rejecting the American concept of "The Great Middle East or the Middle East Reconstruction", several Arab countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria, as an alternative introduced the so-called Arab conceptual democratization vision for the Arab world.<sup>23</sup> It should be not-

<sup>18</sup> V. Evseev, "The concept "Middle East."

<sup>19</sup> Cofmann Wittes, "The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative."

<sup>20</sup> A. Vofovich, "O planakh demokratizatsii Blizhnego Vostoka," (in Russian), ["On the plans for the democratization of the Middle East"], August 19, 2004, *Institute of the Middle East*, <http://www.imes.ru/rus/stat/2004/19-08-04.htm> (accessed September 20, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Sergey Kurginyan, "Politicheskoe tsunami: Reformirovaniye arabskogo mira," (in Russian), ["Political Tsunami: Reforming the Arab World"], [http://www.danilidi.ru/3-war/06\\_Kurginyan-political-tsunami-arab-reform.html](http://www.danilidi.ru/3-war/06_Kurginyan-political-tsunami-arab-reform.html), (accessed September 8, 2018).

ed that the initiative of Arab activism regarding that issue belonged to Cairo, which once again tried to emphasize its special role in the matters related to the Arab world.

Thus, at the initiative of Egypt, on May 22, 2004, the concept for "modernization" of the Arab world was presented at the Arab League summit in Tunisia.<sup>24</sup>

The concept for reforms aimed at the so-called "modernization" of the Arab world basically included the following provisions<sup>25</sup>: the reforms in the Arab countries should be carried out on the initiative of the Arab community, namely from the inside of each Arab country and not being imposed by external factors; the reform process should proceed in phases not to shatter the relative security and stability of the region; the reforms should tend to protect the interests of the region and not the political aspirations of different forces; the immediate precondition for the successful realization of reforms is the Arab-Israeli conflict settlement; during the reform process it is necessary to take into consideration the peculiarities of development of each Arab country, excluding the implementation of one common approach towards them; the reforms should not create fertile soil for the activation of various religious and political movements.

Despite the fact that the conceptual provisions of the so-called "reforms" of the Arab world initiated by Egypt did not completely reflect all the real problems those countries had and even led to skepticism among some of the summit participants, however, they were rather realistic and targeted:

It is worth mentioning that the lack of solidarity between the Arab states on various issues and the inability to act jointly further complicated the existing problems therewith creating a fertile ground for intervention by external forces.

The proposal made by President of Egypt Mubarak on setting up a special commission for implementation of the Arabic "reforms" concept was rejected by some of the countries having skeptic stance towards the Arab concept at the Arab League summit in Tunisia.<sup>26</sup>

To be fair, it should be noted that the Arab concept of the so-called "reforms" of the Arab world was condemned to failure from the very beginning: the reform of the political and economic systems of the Arab

countries was directly stipulated with the lack of willingness of the existing regimes to regulate the existing problems and their fear of losing their own power, on the basis of which was their perception: "the stable crisis is safer than the unstable development accompanying the reforms" (the phrasing is by the author G.G.).

That was the reason why different Arab politicians thought, not without reason, that the Arab countries could not independently initiate a modernization process of the political-economic system as the issue of reproduction and self-preservation of the current government was in the focus. In this context, the judiciary factory of those countries is of no less importance, which quite often would modify and transform the existing laws for the ruling regime in such a way so that they would also continue hampering the process of civil society formation.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the "self-modernization" of the Arab world was simply an unsuccessful attempt of "external refurbishing" of the current situation in the Arab world. The Arab Reform Program was directed rather against the US's "The Great Middle East" concept than to the fundamental problem of realization of the reforms, which was well-understood in Washington.

At the summit of Organization of the Islamic Conference (current name: Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) held on June 16, 2004 in Istanbul, the participants noted that the successful pace of reforms in the Arab world was directly related to the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The participants with obvious restraint referred to the US ambitious "The Great Middle East" concept and noted that the problem of "modernization" of the Arab world was exclusively the matter of the Arab countries.<sup>28</sup>

### In lieu of conclusion

In June 2006, the US Secretary of State C. Rice put into circulation a conceptual definition called New Middle East. It was directed at securing American domination in the Middle East, which actually would replace "The Great Middle East concept".<sup>29</sup> In 2006, at a meeting between

<sup>27</sup> Volker Perthes, *Arab Elites, Negotiating the Politics of Change*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 5.

<sup>28</sup> A. Kornilov, "Tureckaya diplomatiya v islamskom mire: problem i priority deyatel'nosti," (in Russian), ["Turkish diplomacy in the Islamic world: problems and priorities of activity"], [http://www.idmedina.ru/books/materials/rmforum/1/sect2\\_kornilov.htm](http://www.idmedina.ru/books/materials/rmforum/1/sect2_kornilov.htm) (accessed September, 15, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> M. Nazemrova, "Plany peredela Bljnego Vostoka: projekt dlya "Novogo Bljnego Vostoka," (in Russian), ["Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a "New Middle East"], *Center for Research on Globalization*, November 18, 2006, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/plans-for-redrawing-the-middle-east-the-project-for-a-new-middle-east/3882> (accessed November 20, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> The fact that only thirteen out of the twenty-two Arab countries were participating in the above mentioned session, already approved the failure of that meeting. It should be noted that only seven Arab countries participated in the final meeting of the League. The first among the Arab leaders who left the session was Mubarak, whose proposal had been rejected.



Rice and Israeli Prime Minister E. Olmert in Tel-Aviv, Israel welcomed the new US-proposed concept, and Rice announced that the new concept would become a guarantor of the Middle East rebirth. In reality, however, the “New Middle East” concept created the so-called “constructive or controlling chaos” in the region that would give the United States a new opportunity to interfere in the affairs of these countries.

One of the authors of the theory of “constructive or controlled chaos” is S. Mann, according to whom in order to control this or that country there is absolutely no need to fight, but to create a chaotic situation. Within the framework of the chaotic situation-making tool, Mann suggests to support democracy in the target country, to support market reforms in the economy, to start activities on perception of upgrading the population’s living standards, to annihilate traditional values and ideologies.<sup>30</sup> These key points were put on the revised American concept of Rice.

Actually, the theory of “controlled chaos” was a kind of new ideological weapon, which could provide the US supremacy in different continents.

An integral component to the theory of “controlled chaos” can be considered the project on Future Boundaries of Greater Middle East States proposed in 2007 by Ralph Peters, the former lieutenant colonel of the US National Military Academy. The project was first shown by Peters in an article titled “Bloody Borders” released in the *Armed Forces Journal*.<sup>31</sup> According to the Peters plan, in order to control the national wealth of the Middle East, first of all, energy carriers, it is necessary to create a chain of non-viable, densely populated dwarf states, so said “to somalize” the Middle East.<sup>32</sup> Peters notes that it is necessary to create a wave of instability, chaos and violence in the region that will start from Lebanon, involving Palestine, Syria, Gulf Arab countries, Iran and reach Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup>

Analyzing the theory proposed by Peters, one can conclude that it is a “roadmap” for specific actions that secures the absolute dominance of the US-Israeli alliance in the Middle East.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ralph Peters, “Blood borders, How a better Middle East would look,” *Armed Forces Journal*, June 1, 2006, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/06/1833899> (accessed September 26, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Nikolay Sologubovskiy, “Somalization plus Qatarization,” March 8, 2012, <http://trueinform.ru/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3671>. Some of the Eastern experts believe that the so-called Middle East unity should be smooth and global, and not spontaneous, since the political and economic situation in the countries of the given region varies. It is also necessary to take into account the social, cultural and educational levels in those countries.

<sup>33</sup> Ralph Peters, “Blood borders, How a better Middle East would look.”

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

In fact, the concepts introduced in the 2000s by the US administration with the aim of taking control over the Middle East region were manifested in 2011 in the Arab world, within the context of the “Arab spring” when the Islamists came forth to replace national dictatorships with the intention of creating a theocratic political system.<sup>35</sup>

The wave of massive protests that had started in the Arab world resulted in a change of power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, created crisis in those countries, and in some cases a lasting war, particularly in Yemen and Syria. The situation that was shaped in the Arab world almost entirely got compatible with the provisions of the aforementioned concepts proposed by the US administration. Moreover, the USA began to control and coordinate the developments underway in the Arab world promoting not only the collapse of the traditional security system of the Middle East and the formation of the chaotic situation, but also the “Somatization” of the Arab countries, in particular, the establishment of the Islamic State.

<sup>35</sup> Nikolay Hovhannisyán, Gor Gevorgyan, *The Arab Spring: The Pan-Arab Uprising towards the Arab Society modernization (Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya)*, (Yerevan, 2017).

MUSHEGH GHAHRIYAN

## THE KURDISH FACTOR IN IRAQ-GULF ARAB STATES RELATIONS

### Abstract

The paper aims to study the process of slow-going normalization of the relations of Iraq and the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf and the Kurdish factor in that context. The Kurdish issue is the most complicated problem in Iraq and poses threat to its integrity. Any country that has political and economic interests in Iraq and develops relationship with it also will have to deal with the ethnic and sectarian problems in the country, involving the Kurdish issue. The paper also examines the economic, political interests of the Gulf countries in Iraq and the Kurdish Region. It argues that the current political situation in the Middle East creates opportunities for rapprochement of the sides, however needs special, careful and balanced attitude from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries.

**Keywords:** Kurds, Gulf states, Iraq, rapprochement.

### The Kurdish factor in Iraq

More than 35 million<sup>1</sup> people live in the Republic of Iraq, 15-20% of which are the Kurds.<sup>2</sup> The Kurdish Regional Government was established in 1992. Now Iraqi Kurdistan has a status of federal region with broad autonomy based on the constitution adopted in 2005. The geopolitical borders of Iraqi Kurdish factor stretch far beyond the geographical territory of Iraq and impacts on the political situation of the other countries in the region.

Large Kurdish communities settle not only in Iraq, but also in Turkey, Syria and Iran, who claim the right of self-determination, conflicting with the national policies of the states. On their way to self-determination Iraqi Kurds have achieved greater progress than their counterparts living in neighboring countries. The Iraqi Kurdish political elite succeeded in establishing government institutions. Iraqi Kurdistan has regular armed

forces, the personnel of which reach around 100,000.<sup>3</sup> The Kurds in Iraq control large oil reserves (more than 45 billion barrels).<sup>4</sup> The sense of national identity is very strong among the Kurds, they do not identify themselves as Iraqi.

### The foreign policy of Kurdistan Regional Government in the Middle East

When the US-led coalition ousted the regime in Iraq, the Kurds played an important role in that campaign. The Kurdish Peshmerga was engaged in ground operations against the Iraqi army. The Kurdish forces captured neighboring territories of the autonomy, including oil-rich fields of Kirkuk. For their support the Kurds ensured larger autonomy and political presence in the central government. The decade of stability in the Kurdish region and high oil prices enabled KRG to boost economy, realize major infrastructure projects.

Iraqi Kurdistan makes efforts to build its own foreign policy and develop economic relations with other countries. The KRG Department of Foreign Relations promotes the interests of the Kurdistan Region and its people in regard to relations with the international community and in accordance with the region's legislation and the Constitution of the Republic of Iraq.<sup>5</sup> The Kurdistan Region has opened 13 representative offices worldwide, around 30 countries have diplomatic representatives in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>6</sup>

Two major economic partners of Iraqi Kurdistan are Turkey and Iran, also having political influence and even military presence in the territory of the autonomy. Along with Turkey and Iran, Saudi Arabia is the third powerful country of the Middle East. Before 1990s Iraq was one of the four strong regional powers. However, Iraq gradually weakened in the last decade of 20th century and finally lost its positions after 2003. After the drop of Iraq the other three countries formed a "triangle of regional hegemony". Iran and Turkey have closer ties with Iraq, while Saudi Arabia's presence in Iraq and in Kurdish region is still insignificant.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Beaumont, "How effective is Isis compared with the Iraqi army and Kurdish peshmerga?," *The Guardian*, July 12, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/12/how-battle-ready-isis-iraqi-army-peshmerga> (accessed July 27, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Khalid Al-Ansary, Bruce Stanley, Anthony Di Paola, "Iraq's Kurds Bypass State for Oil Exports to Tighten Control," *Bloomberg*, 14 July 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-07-14/iraq-s-kurdish-region-exporting-550-600k-b-d-oil-of-own-output> (accessed July 27, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Foreign Relations, *Official website of KRG*, <http://cabinet.gov.krd/p/page.aspx?l=12&s=030000&r=318&p=230&h=1> (accessed May 16, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> "Current Foreign Representations in the Kurdistan Region," *Official website of KRG*, <https://dfr.gov.krd/p/p.aspx?p=37&l=12&s=020100&r=363> (accessed May 16, 2018).

<sup>1</sup> Iraq, *The World Bank Data*, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/iraq> (accessed March 27, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Iraq, CIA, *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html> (accessed March 27, 2016).



Good relations with the countries of the Middle East are essential to Iraqi Kurdistan, because their stance and goodwill on the aspirations of Kurdish people will be decisive factors for the possible recognition of its independence in the future.

While Iran and Turkey had established their strong presence in Iraqi Kurdistan decades ago, the Kurdish region was not a priority in Saudi Arabia's policy. However, there is a possibility of change of this pattern in the coming years. Riyadh is shifting to more active foreign policy in the Middle East, including in Iraq.

Iraqi Kurdistan seeks to build its own foreign relations independently from Baghdad. Economic deals and political meetings of KRG often cause disapproval and discontent in Baghdad. However, in some cases Iraqi government had no leverages to prohibit separate deals. KRG's foreign policy of establishing relations with other countries and foreign visits of Kurdish officials aim to make the region more independent from the center and prove that it has the capacity to enter into relations with the other states as a key qualification of a sovereign state, as mentioned in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States.<sup>7</sup>

Iraqi Kurdistan needs to gain legitimacy abroad if it sets a goal to become internationally recognized state.

The war against IS has made Iraqi Kurdistan an important actor in the region. On the other side KRG faced political, economic and financial crises caused by high dependence on oil revenues which have plunged more than twice since 2014. Another problem was contradictions with central government in Baghdad, which often did not fully pay 17% of oil revenues fixed in the Iraqi constitution.<sup>8</sup> Baghdad used this lever against Iraqi Kurdistan.

KRG claimed that it played an essential role in defeating IS in and deserves to declare independence. However, the only country, which openly supports the independence of Kurdistan Region, is Israel.

### *The Relations of Iraqi Kurdistan and GCC countries*

Iran and Turkey are the biggest economic partners of Iraqi Kurdistan. The trade with these countries reaches billions of dollars. Turkish and Iranian companies operate in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially are widely represented in the construction. Turkey and Iran have broad political influ-

ence in the Kurdish region. The presence of these two countries in Iraqi Kurdistan is explained by historical events and geographical closeness. None of Gulf Arab countries has borders with the Kurdish autonomy. When speaking about the relations of Iraqi Kurdistan and Gulf countries, it should be emphasized, that they are newly emerging and are very limited, but have perspectives to develop.

The UAE has the most extensive diplomatic and political relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government having opened its consulate general there in 2012. The next Gulf Arab country to establish diplomatic representation in Erbil was Kuwait in 2015. Saudi Arabia followed UAE and Kuwait in 2016. Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar still do not have high-level representation with the KRG. The President of Iraqi Kurdistan Masoud Barzani visited a number of Gulf countries in 2015, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

UAE is one of the biggest investors in Kurdistan Region. In 2014, Dubai's Chamber of Commerce opened an office in Erbil to support 150 Emirati companies already registered in the Kurdish region.<sup>9</sup>

Qatar is also keen to invest in Kurdistan Region's agriculture sector and import agricultural products since the country suffers food shortage due to the embargo from the Gulf Arab states. A Qatari delegation headed by Deputy Head of Qatar Chamber of Commerce visited the Kurdistan Region and held meetings with the local officials in Kirkuk and Sulaimaniyah governorates and discussed the ways to deepen economic relations.<sup>10</sup>

President of Iraqi Kurdistan Masoud Barzani visited Qatar and UAE in 2012 to discuss the events in the region and the broadening of mutual relations between the Kurdistan Region and each of the two countries. Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi reiterated the UAE's desire to invest in Kurdistan Region. President Barzani also met with Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani and Crown Prince Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in Doha to discuss means of further developing economic and investment relations.<sup>11</sup>

Oil resources are another field of interest for Gulf Arab countries. Abu Dhabi National Energy Company, which is also known as Taqa, an-

<sup>9</sup> Sinem Cengiz, "The Gulf's Stance on the Kurdish Referendum," *Arab News*, September 15, 2017, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1161761/columns> (accessed June 10, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Baxtiyar Goran, "Qatar to import from Kurdistan to battle embargo," *Kurdistan 24*, July 26, 2017, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/economy/0e3ab29f-b6a9-489f-9bdb-d1d8680cbecb> (accessed June 15, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> "President Barzani returns from official visit to the UAE and Qatar," *Official website of KRG*, November 7, 2012, <http://cabinet.gov.krd/a/d.aspx?s=010000&f=12&a=45748> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> UfO: The Faculty of Law, *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States*, <http://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/01/1-02/rights-duties-states.xml> (accessed September 7, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Iraqi Constitution, Article 112.

nounced in 2013, that is going to invest more than \$300 million in the first phase and will produce about 30,000 barrels a day from Atrush field. The deal between the company and KRG was signed in 2012, although the government of Iraq had not approved it.<sup>12</sup>

Another UAE based company Dana Gas and its partners are major producers of natural gas in Kurdistan Region. The companies produced Khor Mor and Chemchemal gas fields produced over 150 million barrels equivalent of gas and petroleum liquids in Kurdistan. In 2013 Dana Gas and its partners filed a case against the KRG in the London Court of International Arbitration accusing it of underpaying for production. Before the independence referendum in 2017 KRG agreed to pay 1 bln dollar to settle the dispute.<sup>13</sup>

In 2018 Pearl Petroleum, the company consortium led by UAE-based Crescent Petroleum and Dana Gas, has signed a 10-year gas sales agreement with Erbil. The company promised to produce 80 million cubic feet of sales gas per day before the end of 2018.<sup>14</sup>

### *Gulf Arab countries-Iraq rapprochement*

Gulf Cooperation Council unifies 6 monarchies of the region and sets common goals. However, these countries have different attitudes in regional policy. Saudi Arabia is the leading country of the cooperation with its regional ambitions and rivalry with Iran. Qatar is also conducting active foreign policy. In 2017 Doha's partners accused Qatar of funding radical Islamic groups, cooperating with Iran and imposed harsh sanctions. Kuwait due to its geographical vulnerability conducts a policy of balancing between Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The UAE is an important hub in the Middle East and is attractive with its huge funds and investments. Bahrain strongly depends on the support of Saudi Arabia in the face of permanent threat from Iran. Oman poses itself as a neutral country. Thus, the Arab countries of the Gulf are too different in their motivation to conduct joint policy toward Iraq.

On the contrary, after 2003, Iran has changed its policy from confrontation to cooperation, because it has major strategic interests in the area.<sup>15</sup> The GCC countries and Iraq were not able to establish a constructive relationship. The Gulf countries considered the prime-minister of Iraq Nouri al-Maliki's pro-Iranian proxy and were unwilling to deal with him. This attitude facilitated Iran's involvement in reconstruction and development of projects like the new international airport in Najaf, creation of a free trade zone around Basra.<sup>16</sup>

The toppling of Saddam Hussein and the civil war in Iraq changed the paradigm of regional security. Before 2003 Iraq was in an antagonistic relationship with Iran and Saudi Arabia, but after 2003 the country became a stage of competition between them. The country has strategic importance for Iran politically and religiously, as two holy cities of Shia Islam Najaf and Karbala are located in Iraq.<sup>17</sup> Saudi Arabia had fears that Shii forces would strengthen their position too much, and it will harm the interests of the Kingdom in the region.<sup>18</sup>

Saudi Arabia's attitude towards the prime minister of Iraq Nouri al-Maliki (2006-2014) was critical. At an international conference in Egypt King Abdallah refused to meet him.<sup>19</sup> Saudi Arabia accused the government of al-Maliki in inability of solving sectarian conflict, oppression against the Sunni population and increasing influence of Iran in Iraq. However, Riyadh did not close the border with Iraq to support the Sunni population.

Saudi Arabia reopened its embassy in Baghdad only in 2015. Now, the decades of estrangement between Iraq and Saudi Arabia seems to close to end. This rapprochement has started since 2015 and is accelerating. The turning point was the resignation of Nouri al-Maliki and Haidar al-Abadi's election as the head of the government.

Saudi-Iranian rivalry involves a number of countries in the region. In Yemen Saudi-led coalition conducts military campaign against Houthi rebels, who receive military and political assistance from Iran. However, military operation is not successful enough. Since the start of the

<sup>12</sup> "UAE company to pump oil in Iraqi Kurdistan," *The Times of Israel*, October 7, 2013, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/uae-company-to-pump-oil-in-iraqi-kurdistan/> (accessed April 28, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Dmitri Zhldanov, "Kurdistan pays \$1 billion to Dana Gas, partners to settle London case," *Reuters*, August 30, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-dana-gas-arbitration/kurdistan-pays-1-billion-to-dana-gas-partners-to-settle-london-case-idUSKCN1BA272> (accessed July 30, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> "UAE-led consortium signs gas sales deal with Kurdistan gov't," *Arabian Business*, March 21, 2018, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/energy/392496-uae-led-consortium-signs-gas-sales-deal-with-kurdistan-govt> (accessed June 12, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Barzegar Kayhan, "Understanding the Roots of Iranian Foreign Policy in the New Iraq," *Middle East Policy*, 12(2), (2005): 49-57, <https://www.meprc.org/journal/understanding-roots-iranian-foreign-policy-new-iraq> (accessed May 22, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Kumar Pradhan Prasanta, "The GCC-Iraq Conflict and its Strategic Implications for the Gulf Region," *Strategic Analysis*, 35(2), (2011): 271.

<sup>17</sup> Imran Khan, "Why is Iraq so Important to Iran?," *Al Jazeera*, August 10, 2014, <http://blogs.aljazeera.com/blog/middle-east/why-iraq-so-important-iran> (accessed April 07, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Terill, "The Saudi-Iranian Rivalry and the Future of Middle East Security," *U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute (SSI)*, (2011): 45., <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a555137.pdf> (accessed April 22, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> "Iraq-Saudi Relations Hit New Low," *Middle East Online*, May 28, 2009, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=32357> (accessed June 9, 2018).



civil war in Syria, Saudi Arabia and Qatar backed opposition and radical groups and initiated expulsion of Syria from the Arab League. After 7 years of war, Bashar al-Asad is still in power with the help of Iran and Russia. In 2018 the people of Lebanon elected parliament for the first time in 9 years, where pro-Iranian forces recorded success. It is clear, that Iranian backed non-state actors, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, Shii militias in Iraq are important instruments in Tehran's regional policy and in this regard Saudi Arabia loses advantage to Iran. The new king of Saudi Arabia Salman and the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman initiated reforms in the country and are determined to conduct more expansive policy. The limited military opportunities may force Riyadh to focus on the use of soft power.

An example of soft power was the announcement of the UAE, that it would fund the \$50.4 million for the reconstruction of Mosul's Grand al-Nouri mosque. Such gestures could help soften Iraqi antipathy to the kingdom and its Gulf allies.<sup>20</sup>

The war against the IS has had heavy consequences for Iraq. A number of cities and villages are in ruins and it will be too hard to recover without foreign assistance. Taking into account the current situation in Iraq, the country could be attractive for infrastructure and agricultural investments. Gulf countries may also invest in the stability of Iraq by bridging the opposing groups. The Arab countries of the Gulf are interested in Iraq's stability, as in case of anarchy and fragmentation will pose a direct threat to them.

In 2017 the Prime Minister of Iraq Heidar Al-Abadi paid two visits to Saudi Arabia. The prominent Iraqi Shiite cleric and political leader Moqtada Al Sadr paid a similar visit a month later. The visit was described as a "positive development", and analysts said Al Sadr realized that sectarianism is negatively affecting the future of Iraq, its people and all the Arabs.<sup>21</sup>

The visit of Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman was announced in media, but was denied in Riyadh. Deputy Minister for Public Diplomacy Affairs at the Foreign Ministry of KSA, Ambassador Osama Ahmed Nugali, made the announcement in April 2018 and emphasized the importance of strengthening Saudi-Iraqi ties.<sup>22</sup> Riyadh intended

to open another consulate in Najaf and a new border crossing between the countries. Earlier in August 2017, Saudi Arabia and Iraq reopened the Arar crossing for the first time in 27 years.<sup>23</sup>

In 2015, Saudi Arabia reopened its embassy in Baghdad after 25 years of absence. In February 2017, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al Jubeir visited Baghdad. Three months later, Iraqi President Fuad Masum visited Riyadh to attend the Islamic-Arab-American summit.

Besides expanding its diplomatic presence in Iraq, Saudi Arabia promised large investments in various fields. In April 2018 the government of Iraq announced, that the Saudi-Iraqi Coordination Council is examining an agricultural investment project covering 1 million hectares in Anbar province. The projects of Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment Company (SALIC) are expected to create around 60,000 jobs in Iraq.<sup>24</sup>

Another Saudi company, the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation, one of the world's leading petrochemicals companies, has opened offices in Baghdad and Basra to expand economic exchange between the two countries.<sup>25</sup>

At the beginning of 2018, a global donor conference was organized in Kuwait. Donors have pledged almost \$30bn to help Iraq rebuild after the defeating the Islamic State. The money is a mix of grants, loans and investment promises, with neighbors Kuwait, Turkey and Saudi Arabia among the biggest donors, along with Qatar.<sup>26</sup> Saudi Arabia allocated \$1.5 billion for the reconstruction of Iraq. The pledge from Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir included a \$1 billion loan through the Saudi Fund for Development and \$500 million in export credit. Kuwait pledged it would provide \$1 billion in loans from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and \$1 billion in direct investments. Qatar announced \$1 billion in loans and investments. The UAE pledged \$500 million.<sup>27</sup> However, the pledged money has not reached even the half of Iraq's needs. Baghdad announced it needs \$88 billion to \$100 billion, but it raised only

<sup>20</sup> International Crisis Group, "Saudi Arabia: Back to Baghdad," *Report N 186*, May 22, 2018, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iraq/186-saudi-arabia-back-baghdad> (accessed September 7, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> "Saudi strategy on Iraq can be game changer," *Gulf News*, October 23, 2017, <https://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-strategy-on-iraq-can-be-game-changer-1.2111612> (accessed March 18, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> "Saudi Arabia to Open Consulate in Iraq's Basra soon," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, April 11, 2018, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1234451/saudi-arabia-open-consulate-iraqs-basra-soon> (accessed July 16, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Rushdi Al-Ani, "Iraqi envoy: 'Saudi Arabia to open two consulates in Basra and Najaf,'" *Arab News*, August 19, 2017, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1147101/saudi-arabia> (accessed June 8, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> "Iraq agriculture projects attract Saudi investments," *The Arab Weekly*, April 15, 2018, <https://theArabweekly.com/iraq-agriculture-projects-attract-saudi-investments> (accessed May 6, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Ali Mamouri, "Saudi Arabia looks to expand its footprint in Iraq," *Al-Monitor*, March 20 2018, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/iraq-saudi-basra-najaf.html#ix-zz5GjO5O00X> (accessed May 1, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> Emma Graham-Harrison, "Donor conference pledges \$30bn to help Iraq rebuild after Isis," *The Guardian*, February 15, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/15/donor-conference-pledges-30bn-to-help-iraq-rebuild-after-isis> (accessed June 18, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Luwla Shalhoub, "Saudi Arabia to allocate \$1.5 billion for Iraq reconstruction, trade," *Arab News*, February 14, 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1246236/middle-east> (accessed July 13, 2018).

\$30 billion during the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq.<sup>28</sup>

The process of the normalization, however, does not seem smooth. In August 2016 Iraq asked Saudi Arabia to replace its ambassador in Baghdad Thamer al-Sabhan after his remarks about Iranian-backed "Shia paramilitary units. The ambassador accused them of aggravating tensions with Sunni Muslims. The presence of Sabhan is an obstacle to the development of relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia", – responded Ahmed Jamal, Iraq's foreign ministry spokesman.<sup>29</sup>

A major obstacle on the way of improving relations between the Gulf Arab states and Iraq is the issue of Kuwait. Kuwait faced territorial claims from Iraq since declaring its independence in 1961. The relations of two countries were relatively stable until the invasion of 1990. After the liberation of country from Iraqi troops Kuwait strengthened ties with the US as Saddam Hussein was still in power. In 2003 Kuwait hosted the majority of the coalition forces which invaded Iraq in March of that year.<sup>30</sup> Kuwait appointed its ambassador to Iraq in 2008 and received the ambassador of Iraq in 2010. The period from 2010 to 2013 was fruitful in repairing bilateral relations. In 2012 a Kuwaiti delegation visited Baghdad and the government of Iraq issued a statement emphasizing the necessity of Iraq joining the GCC.<sup>31</sup>

Over the last years the government of Haidar Al-Abadi seems to make steps towards the reconciliation of two countries. In summer of 2017 Al-Abadi visited Kuwait. Before the visit he stressed that his country's relations with Kuwait have been developed significantly. He also said that would discuss the compensation of the Iraqi invasion in 1990.<sup>32</sup>

Qatar like Kuwait had significant participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom of 2003. The country provided its territory and logistical support to US Air Force. After the fall of Saddam's regime Doha pledged financial assistance for reconstruction of the country. Qatar also provided a

safe haven for Iraq's Baathists, including several members of his family.<sup>33</sup> Bahrain did not participate in the military operation however expressed willingness to be part of peacekeeping operation after the end of war. Oman was committed to its policy of neutrality and did not participate in the military operation.

After the fall of the Iraqi regime all the states of the region underlined the necessity of protecting the unity, as well as the restoration of the sovereignty of Iraq. The neighboring countries endorsed the establishment of new public authorities, adopt new constitution and hold elections. The Gulf countries stressed that there will be no any interference in Iraq's internal affairs and expressed solidarity to Iraqi people. At the first post-Saddam donor conference for Iraq in the autumn of 2003, Kuwait pledged \$1.5 billion to help reconstruct its former enemy, of which about two thirds was to be in grants and one-third in loans.<sup>34</sup>

With regard to the relations of Qatar and Iraq, in 2017 Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari announced that his country opposes the sanctions of Arab countries imposed on Qatar. "No Arab country should be besieged or encircled, and this year Qatar is certainly better than the previous year," – said the minister.<sup>35</sup>

### *The Response of Gulf countries to the referendum of independence in Iraqi Kurdistan*

In 2014-2015, when ISIL was occupying large territories in Syria and Iraq, the Kurdish peshmerga was the only force capable of fighting against them. At this stage the Kurds received broad international support. The Kurds started to export their oil independently and negotiate with Baghdad from stronger positions. On the other hand Iraqi Kurdistan's economy was declining because of low oil prices. Intra-Kurdish problems, such as KDP-Gorran rivalry, issue of KRG presidency, were also destabilizing factors. To capitalize foreign support and unify Kurds, the authorities of Iraqi Kurdistan initiated a referendum of independence. However, the major powers and regional countries refused the secession of Iraqi Kurdistan and urged to repeal or postpone the referendum. The Kurds voted for yes, but the legitimacy and results of the referendum have not been recognized. Furthermore, Iraq imposed sanctions and air

<sup>28</sup> Maher Chmaytelli, Ahmed Hagagy, Allies promise Iraq \$30 billion, falling short of Baghdad's appeal, *Reuters*, February 14, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-reconstruction-ku/allies-promise-iraq-30-billion-falling-short-of-baghdads-appeal-idUSKCN1FY0TX> (accessed August 3, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> "Iraq asks Saudi Arabia to replace ambassador," *Al Jazeera*, August 29, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/iraq-asks-saudi-arabia-replace-ambassador-160829041208479.html> (accessed August 1, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, (February 19, 2016): 16.

<sup>31</sup> "Kuwait stresses necessity for Iraq to join GCC," *Alsumaria News*, April 27, 2012, <http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/55919/kuwait-stresses-necessity-for-iraq-to-join-gcc/en#> (accessed August 25, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> "Iraq seeks developing relations with Kuwait," *Middle East Monitor*, June 19, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170619-iraq-seeks-developing-relations-with-kuwait/> (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>33</sup> Jon Alterman, "Iraq and the Gulf States, The Balance of Fear," *USIP, Special Report*, Washington, 9, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr189.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> David Pollock, "Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Focus #76*, November 2007, 13.

<sup>35</sup> "FM: Iraq opposes Qatar blockade," *Middle East Monitor*, November 10, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171110-fm-iraq-opposes-qatar-blockade/> (accessed June 25, 2018).



blockade against Iraqi Kurdistan, which received support from the international community. It is clear that the unity and stability in Iraq are undisputable for US and regional countries. The United States strongly opposed the referendum in Kurdistan underlining that it would support the territorial integrity of Iraq and the compromise should be found in the frames of Iraqi federalism.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE expressed concern over the independence referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan and urged to cancel it.

However, there were unconfirmed publications claiming, that UAE and Saudi Arabia supported the Kurds behind the scenes. According to Al-Araby Al-Jadeed newspaper, which quoted an Iraqi official in Baghdad, the UAE Consul in Kurdistan, Rashid Al-Mansouri, visited a polling station in Erbil.<sup>36</sup> The Iranian media also reported on the alleged support from Emirati officials to the referendum of independence.<sup>37</sup> However, there is no any trustful evidence, which could let insist on any support to Erbil from the Gulf countries.

Saudi Arabia urged Kurdish leaders to call off the referendum. Saudi Arabia's Ministry of foreign affairs announced that it "looks to the wisdom of President Barzani in not holding the referendum."<sup>38</sup> Riyadh also offered its mediation between the KRG and the federal government of Iraq for peaceful dialogue.<sup>39</sup>

The UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash wrote in Twitter, that federalism's flexibility and potential, serves as a better alternative than Iraq's separation, especially after looking at the UAE's experience.<sup>40</sup> After the independence referendum Fly Dubai air company announced, that will stop its flights to Erbil because of the ban on flights imposed by the government of Iraq. Another major air company of the Middle East Qatar Airways also stopped flying Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Kingdom of Bahrain expressed its confidence in the wisdom of the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Masoud Barzani, and urged not to rush to hold a referendum on the independence in order to avoid

more risks on the Republic of Iraq, particularly in the current circumstances and challenges facing the region and threatening its people.<sup>41</sup>

Kuwait deputy foreign minister Khaled Jarallah told that his country will not take any measures against the Kurdistan Region and called the sides to settle the conflict through dialogue.<sup>42</sup>

The Gulf Arab states clearly backed Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and called the Kurdish government to cancel the referendum of independence. The stance of these countries demonstrates the importance of good and constructive relations for both sides.

On the other hand, it does not mean, that the attitude towards the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan is inalterable. Moreover, had Iraq lost the war against ISIL, there was a high possibility that Kurdish aspirations of independence would have been encouraged.

In reality, with the support of Shiite militias and US and allies, the army of Iraq held effective campaigns and captured territories under the control of ISIS. Although Riyadh opposed the referendum of independence, we cannot exclude, that the Kingdom will welcome the idea of Iraqi confederation if both Baghdad and Erbil come to agreement. For Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states, considering Iran as a potential threat for them, Iraqi Kurds can become unexpected allies against Iranian influence in the region.

The strengthening of the KRG and the Kurdish position in Iraq in general, has become a powerful strategic interest for Saudi Arabia and the UAE.<sup>43</sup>

Taking into account that Iraqi Kurdistan is in poor financial situation because of long-lasting low prices of oil, which ensures almost the whole income of the budget, political, military and financial pressure from the government of Iraq, the influence of Turkey and Iran, the Gulf countries can be valuable partners for the Kurdistan Regional Government. The latter needs financial and political assistance to overcome internal crisis and improve relations with Iraq, which deteriorated even more because of the referendum of independence in 2017. The Kurds need regional support and alliances in order to consolidate their status and to continue counterbalancing Shi'i power in Iraq and the expansion of religious radicals. The

<sup>36</sup> "UAE Consul in Kurdistan visits referendum polling station," *Middle East Monitor*, September 26, 2017 <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170926-uac-consul-in-kurdistan-visits-referendum-polling-station/> (accessed June 25, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> "Saudi, UAE secretly worked for Kurdistan secession: Report," *Press TV*, October 22, 2017, <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/10/22/539473/Iraq-Kurdistan-Saudi-Arabia-UAE-Iran>, (accessed June 25, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> "Saudi Arabia says hopes Kurdistan vote will not take place," *Reuters*, September 20, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-kurds-saudi/saudi-arabia-says-hopes-kurdistan-vote-will-not-take-place-idUSKCN1BV1L771l> (accessed April 11, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> "Saudi Arabia 'ready' to mediate Erbil-Baghdad, facilitate dialogue," *Al Arabiya English*, September 17, 2017, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/0e326994-0de2-40c6-8f6d-a5bdd6000dd8> (accessed May 1, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> "UAE's Gargash to Kurdistan: Federalism is more viable than separation," *Al Arabiya English*, September 23, 2017, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/09/23/UAE-minister-Gargash-Federal-system-better-alternative-to-separation.html> (accessed May 8, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> "Bahrain confident Kurdistan Region president will not hold independence referendum," *Bahrain News Agency*, September 21, 2017, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/802493> (accessed April 30, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> Leyla Shewani, "Kuwait Will Not Take Any Measures against Kurdistan: Kuwait Deputy FM," *Basnews*, September 27, 2017, <http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/kurdistan/381741> (accessed August 27, 2018).

<sup>43</sup> Hussein Ibish, "The Gulf Arab Countries and the Kurdish Referendum," *Stratfor*, October 4, 2017, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/gulf-arab-countries-and-kurdish-referendum> (accessed August 27, 2018).

problems in the region could offer some common ground towards cooperation between the Kurds and the majority of the GCC states.<sup>44</sup>

A balanced policy towards Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan will allow Saudi Arabia to deepen relations with Erbil and dispel concerns of Baghdad. The confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia puts Iraq and other countries of the region under pressure from both sides. Iraqi Kurdistan will face the same problems, if it becomes an independent state. Iraqi Kurdistan will have to conduct a policy of combining the interests of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, as well as maintain internal stability and consensus between KDP and PUK and other political parties. There is a widely accepted opinion that Kurdish authorities made a mistake by neglecting negotiated solution with Baghdad and focused on international support in their bid of independence. If Kurdish officials agree with this opinion, they will avoid attempts of gaining more autonomy without taking into consideration the interests of the whole country.

### ***Conclusion***

The rapprochement of GCC states and Iraq is the logical reflection of ongoing processes in the Middle East. Wars, instability, rivalry, non-state actors are shaking many countries of the region. No one feels secure. The states have to exert maximum efforts to keep the threat away from its borders. Iraq avoids taking sides in regional conflicts and advocates for preserving status-quo in order to keep good relations with the neighbors and prevent sectarian tensions inside the country. In 2017 Iraq showed its neutrality in the conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and some other states.

The Kurdish issue is the most complicated problem in Iraq and poses threat to its integrity. Any country building relationship with Iraq also will have to deal with the ethnic and sectarian problems in Iraq, involving the Kurdish issue.

Iran's and Turkey's policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan is the part of wider Kurdish policy and strategy. Having their own Kurdish issues, Iran and Turkey are reluctant to see a recognized Kurdish state in their neighborhood as it can inspire the Kurds living within their borders. Both keep vigilant eye on the developments in Iraqi Kurdistan and do not restrain themselves from interfering. In contrary to Iran and Turkey, Saudi Arabia or other GCC countries do not have their own Kurdish problem and are relieved of this problem.

The US and Saudi Arabia are interested in neutralizing Iranian control in the region. For those countries of the Gulf, which are concerned with the growing Iranian influence in the Middle East, Iraqi Kurdistan may be considered as a partner outside of so called Shia Crescent. In its turn Iraqi Kurdistan is in search of allies, inside and outside the region. Partnership and cooperation with the countries of the GCC are very important for the Kurdistan Regional Government. These countries' investments are of crucial importance to recover the economy from recession, realize infrastructure projects.

The visits of Iraqi and Kurdish officials to the Gulf countries, restoration of diplomatic relations, possible Gulf investments in Iraqi reconstruction show yet weak, however sustainable tendency of rapprochement. However, the improvement of relations of Iraq and Saudi Arabia are not irreversible as any careless step may stop the process.

The Kurdish referendum on independence strained the situation in Iraq. The Gulf Arab states defended Iraq's territorial integrity. If Saudi Arabia and its allies are going to be major donors for the reconstruction of Iraq, they also can be mediators between Baghdad and Erbil on the way of de-escalation.

Supporting only Sunni center of Iraq and deepening relations with the KRG without the approval of Baghdad will only make the Iraqi government nervous. The economic and cultural capitals of Gulf Arab countries are the necessary base to build high-trust relationship between the countries and peoples. This strategy will better serve the interests of the Gulf Arab countries. In its turn this can be a solid base to promote its political interests and influence.

<sup>44</sup> Marianna Charountaki, "The GCC in Kurdish Politics," *Journal of Arabian Studies* 6, no. 2, (2016): 203.



## SOUTH CAUCASUS: REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND CHALLENGES

LILIT GALSTYAN

### RUSSIA AND THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT: SPOILING THROUGH MEDIATION?

#### Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the role of the Russian leadership in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and to understand whether they were mediating the conflict or spoiling its peaceful resolution. The cases of Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev are illustrated in order to compare their efforts to reach a peaceful resolution to the NK conflict. The methodology of study comprises secondary data analysis and content analysis of six presidential statements. As a result, based on the analyzed data we conclude that Russia neither spoiled nor mediated the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh by being content with the current state of frozen negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh. What is more, from the analysis of findings we conclude that compared to Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Medvedev made significant efforts to put the NK conflict on the edge of its resolution.

**Keywords:** *Nagorno-Karabakh, Russia, mediation, spoiling, frozen conflict*

#### Introduction

When observing the causes behind the failure of various efforts to find solutions to frozen conflicts, it is necessary to consider the interests and demands of all regional stakeholders, which are involved in the conflicts. More to that, it is essential to take into account that each conflict is unique and that distinct actors always pursue their separate interests by either spoiling the resolution of conflicts or finding a peaceful ground for their settlement. This study focuses on the issue over NK, inasmuch as this topic never loses its importance by remaining a significantly relevant case not only with regards to Armenia and Azerbaijan but also for the entire Caucasian region. The paper will view the Nagorno-Karabakh con-

flict through the Russian lens, as Russia is an important external player and stands behind various attempts and efforts to provide a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The cases of Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev will be explored in order to compare their actions towards the NK conflict resolution.

The reason behind the analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue during different Russian presidencies is to compare the stance of Russia towards the conflict and to find out the major changes occurred in Russia's position during the administrations of Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev. Furthermore, the paper will examine the theoretical notions of "spoiling" and "mediation" within the context of international relations in order to elucidate whether Russia was mediating the conflict rationally or was trying to spoil its peaceful resolution.

#### Setting the context

There is a significant volume of literature covering the mediation missions of various international players by presenting, discussing and evaluating their efforts to end the NK conflict. As such, in their books, the first Russian ambassador in independent Armenia, Vladimir Stupishin, and the head of Russia's mediation mission over the NK conflict from 1992 to 1996, Vladimir Kazimirov, share their memories from Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh by focusing on the mediation of Russia in the settlement of the conflict. For instance, Vladimir Stupishin regards Armenia as a Russian ally and displays a pro-Armenian position by underlining the significance of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence for Russian national interests.<sup>1</sup> In his turn, Kazimirov blames the conflicting sides for the unresolved NK conflict as despite various Russian suggestions on ceasefire, the sides continued violent military operations.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Sergey Markedonov who focuses on the region of Caucasus and post-soviet conflicts asserts that unlike various other conflicts in the Caucasus, in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, both Yerevan and Baku value the role of Russia as a mediator. In addition, he indicates that the Russian balance of support towards Armenia and Azerbaijan leaves the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the frozen format of negotiations and continuing violence.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Stupishin, "Moya missiya v Armenii 1992-1994: Vospominaniya pervogo posla Rosii," (in Russian), ["My mission in Armenia. 1992-1994: Memories of the first Russian ambassador,"] (Moscow, Academia, 2001), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Kazimirov, *Peace to Karabakh*, (Moscow: Ves Mir, 2014), 423, [http://www.vn.kazimirov.ru/mir/2014\\_files/Peace\\_to\\_Karabakh\\_book.pdf](http://www.vn.kazimirov.ru/mir/2014_files/Peace_to_Karabakh_book.pdf) (accessed February 10, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Sergey Markedonov, "Kavkaz-region povyshennogo riska," (in Russian), ["Caucasus-Region of Increased Risk,"] (Moscow: Rossiyskiy Sovet po Mejdunarodnim Delam, 2016), 30.

Following it further, Elena Pokalova from the College of International Security Affairs, focuses her study on the timing of conflict resolutions. According to Pokalova, the mediation attempts that take place right after the escalation of hostilities, damage the real picture of future aggressions by temporarily calming the tensions. In contrast, peace efforts that are too late from responding to the expanding violence, might end up with failure due to the creation of a new prominent party.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the mediation process of the NK conflict is also widely discussed among Armenian observers. For instance, Tatul Hakobyan, a reporter and an analyst at the Civitas Foundation, argues that both regional and global players are demonstrating a neutral stance towards the NK conflict resolution by being content with frozen negotiations.<sup>5</sup> Following it further, in their works, Philip Gamaghelyan, from the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution of the George Mason University and Sergey Minasyan, a political scientist and the Deputy Director of the Caucasus Institute, examine the possible solutions to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and present the existing stakeholders. As such, Gamaghelyan posits that Russia will gain long-term security and economic benefits from the regional stabilization and the peaceful resolution of the NK conflict. However, according to Gamaghelyan, inasmuch as the stable regional peace will result in decreased Russian political influence within South Caucasus, in short-term Russia will mostly benefit from the unstable situation in NK.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Minasyan argues that Russia does not have a vision concerning the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh by leaving the resolution of the NK conflict to an indefinite future.<sup>7</sup> In his turn, when referring to Russian position towards the NK issue, Gerard Libaridian, a historian and the former adviser of Armenia's first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, argues that Russia is mainly interested in preserving a stable situation in the border by being busy with other imminent issues.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, by presenting the Azerbaijani perspective, Tofik Zulfuqarov, the former minister of foreign affairs of Azerbaijan (1998-1999), posits that both Russia and the West refer to their control over any peacekeeping operation in NK as a key factor leading towards the increase of their influ-

ence in the region. What is more, as the author argues, the preservation of a one-sided approach to mediation was more important for Russia than the negotiations concerning the issue over Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>9</sup>

The mediation process of the NK conflict also caught the attention of Western analysts. For instance, Svante Cornell, a scholar and the director of the Stockholm-based Institute for Security and Development Policy, and Thomas de Waal, a senior associate in the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, do not blame Russia for the unresolved NK conflict. As such, Cornell claims that only direct face-to-face discussions between the conflicting sides will serve as a good ground for resolving the NK conflict.<sup>10</sup> In a similar manner, Thomas de Waal argues that the major reason behind the continuing violence is the lack of direct negotiations between the conflicting parties.<sup>11</sup>

Based on the literature review, it becomes clear that the Russian efforts to resolve the NK conflict were unsuccessful. What is more, in the literature it was frequently stated that Russia is satisfied with the frozen status of the NK conflict. Furthermore, the reviewed literature illustrated that while trying to find a peaceful solution to the NK conflict, Russia had always remained neutral towards the question over NK by preserving balanced relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan. The literature also revealed that there is lack of sufficient research concerning the role of individuals and institutions in the Russian mediation process over the NK conflict. Hence, this research aims to understand whether Russia was mediating the conflict or spoiling its resolution by doing a comparative analysis of the Russian mediation missions during the presidencies of Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev. What is more, the study intends to find out whether Russian foreign policy towards NK has changed during three presidencies or the neutral approach towards the conflict resolution characterized the three Russian leaders during their administrations.

## 1. Russian mediation missions between 1991 and 1999

### *1.1. Boris Yeltsin and the Institutional Dualism*

When discussing the mediation missions of Russia in the process of NK conflict, it is worth to state that Moscow took steps for conflict resolution earlier than any other interested player did. What is more, among

<sup>4</sup> Elena Pokalova, "Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts: Timing in Nagorno-Karabakh," *Journal of Balkan & Near Eastern Studies* vol. 17, issue No.1 (2015): 81.

<sup>5</sup> Tatul Hakobyan, *Karabakh Diary: Green and Black: Neither War nor Peace* (Lebanon: Antelias, 2010), 35.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Gamaghelyan, "Intractability of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Myth or a Reality?" *Peace Monitor*, (2005): 3.

<sup>7</sup> Sergey Minasyan, "The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the context of South Caucasus regional security issues: An Armenian perspective," *Nationalities Papers*, (2016), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Gerard Libaridian, "The elusive 'right formula' at the 'right time,'" in *The limits of leadership. Elites and societies in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2005), 37.

<sup>9</sup> Tofik Zulfuqarov, "The obstacles to resolution: an Azerbaijani perspective," *The limits of leadership. Elites and societies in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2005), 40.

<sup>10</sup> Svante Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 48.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas De Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York: NYU press, 2013), 204.



other intermediaries in the mediation process of the NK conflict, Moscow firstly recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as a party to the conflict.<sup>12</sup> The presidents of Russia (Boris Yeltsin) and Kazakhstan (Nursultan Nazarbaev) made the first attempt of international mediation for the peaceful settlement of the NK conflict in September 1991. Boris Yeltsin perceived the conflict over NK as an excellent opportunity to demonstrate his distinct foreign policy approach from Gorbachev by getting international and domestic recognition as a triumphant mediator. According to Boris Yeltsin, Russia had an aim to transform into the guarantor of stability and peace in its "backyard" (former Soviet Republics).<sup>13</sup> The most disputable issues discussed in Zheleznovodsk concerned the necessity of ceasefire, the participation of representatives from NK in the process of negotiations and the status of NK.<sup>14</sup> Even though, initially the Zheleznovodsk negotiations were believed to bring positive results, the Yeltsin-Nazarbaev mediation failed on November 20 when an Azerbaijani (MI-8) helicopter containing 22 officials was shot down near Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>15</sup>

Further, after the first unsuccessful effort to resolve the NK conflict, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) became interested in the issue over Nagorno-Karabakh. During their meeting in Prague on January 30-31, 1992, it was decided that the Soviet republics could also be included in the CSCE composition.<sup>16</sup> More to that, on March 24, 1992, during their Helsinki Additional Meeting, the CSCE Council decided to have its significant contribution to the peace process of the NK conflict.<sup>17</sup> Hence, a decision was made to convene a conference in Minsk that would contain 11 countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Germany, Italy, Russia, the USA, Turkey, France, Czechoslovakia (later-Finland) and Sweden), as well as the elected representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, inasmuch as the hostilities escalated between the opposing sides the conference was postponed. Even though the conference in Minsk failed, the "Minsk Group" became the only body that is internationally mandated to promote negotiations and to settle a good ground for the NK conflict resolution.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> James Nixey, "The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia," *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, (June 2012), 12.

<sup>13</sup> David Laitin and Ronald Suny, "Armenia and Azerbaijan: Thinking a Way out of Karabakh," *Middle East Policy* vol. 7, issue No.1 (October 1999), 158.

<sup>14</sup> Zheleznovodsk Declaration, 23 September 1991, [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/Azerbaijan\\_ZheleznovodskDeclaration1991.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/Azerbaijan_ZheleznovodskDeclaration1991.pdf) (accessed February 10, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Hakobyan, *Karabakh Diary: Green and Black: Neither War nor Peace*, 103.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Druckman and Moorad Mooradian, "Hurting Stalemate or Mediation? The Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh," *Journal of peace research* vol. 36, issue No.6 (1999): 710.

<sup>17</sup> Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Helsinki Additional Meeting of the CSCE Council: Summary of Conclusions*, 24 March 1992, <http://www.osce.org/mc/29121?download=true> (accessed January 8, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Sergey Minasyan, "Nagorno-Karabakh after Two Decades of Conflict: Is Prolongation of the Status Quo Inevitable?" *Caucasus Institute*, issue No. 2(2010): 28.

Following it further, when referring to Boris Yeltsin's administration it is worth mentioning that inasmuch as, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia had lost its glory and power, Boris Yeltsin was concerned that Russia would no longer be able to influence the economic and political processes of its former Soviet Republics. Hence, the regaining of the Russian "Soviet" power became the first priority for Boris Yeltsin. However, during the first years of his presidency, Boris Yeltsin did not possess enough power to make independent decisions. Hence, during the administration of Boris Yeltsin, Russia was actively engaged in the NK mediation process through two ways: the ministry of foreign affairs (Andrey Kozirev (in office from 1990-1996)) and the ministry of defense (Pavel Grachev (in office from 1992-1996)).<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, even though the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Russia was trying to reach a peaceful settlement to the NK conflict, its efforts were fruitless not only because of the growing violence in the battlefield but also because of the chaotic management of state affairs. As such, a good example for the illustration of weak state management was the agreement made on September 19, in Sochi, between the defense ministers of Armenia (Vazgen Sargsyan) and Azerbaijan (Rahim Gaziev). The two sides agreed upon a temporary ceasefire (two months) with the help of Pavel Grachev (Defense Minister of Russia). However, this time again Russian efforts did not produce positive results as Sochi Agreement was a result of an uncoordinated plan and the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Russia was unaware of the agreement.<sup>20</sup>

Further, it is worth mentioning that behind the independent actions of Pavel Grachev and Andrey Kozirev firmly stood their personal interests that were signaling distinct Russian foreign policy approaches. As such, Andrey Kozirev was in favor of the CSCE involvement in the mediation process of the NK struggle. In his turn, Grachev was prioritizing the Russian role in the NK conflict resolution. More to that he was supporting Armenians in the battlefield by the supply of necessary armaments. Nonetheless, inasmuch as Boris Yeltsin favored balanced relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan, he wanted to convince the Azerbaijani president that their military cooperation with Armenia would never be used against Azerbaijan.<sup>21</sup>

Between 1992 to 1994, during the initial stages of the mediation process, besides setting deadlines for the establishment of a permanent

<sup>19</sup> Laitin&Suny, "Armenia and Azerbaijan: Thinking a Way out of Karabakh," 162.

<sup>20</sup> Kazimirov, *Peace to Karabakh*, 79.

<sup>21</sup> Liz Fuller, "Caucasus/Nagorno-Karabakh: Russia seeks to mollify Baku," *Radio Free Europe*, March 1999, <https://reliefweb.int/report/armenia/caucasusnagorno-karabakh-russia-seeks-mollify-baku> (accessed February 16, 2017).

ceasefire and emergency meetings between representatives of the conflicting sides neither the Foreign Affairs and Defense ministries nor the Minsk Group were able to achieve a concrete solution for peaceful conflict resolution. Among the major reasons behind the failed mediation were the continuous hostilities and clashes on the border, Russian weak state control and the independent functioning of Russian Foreign affairs and Defense ministries.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.2. *Compromised behavior between Russia and the West: 1994-1999*

Starting from 1994, Russia highlighted its dominant role in the NK mediation process. As such, it is worth mentioning the Russian efforts to establish a ceasefire and its mediation by solely the Russian representative.<sup>23</sup> Pavel Grachev firstly initiated the discussions on the cessation of military operations by arranging a meeting with the Armenian (Serzh Sargsyan) and Azerbaijani (Mamedrafi Mamedov) defense ministers in Moscow on February 18, 1994. Further, on May 5, 1994, several CIS and Russian officials with the heads of the parliaments of Kyrgyzstan, NK and Armenia assembled in Bishkek and signed a Protocol that called for a ceasefire. The Russian Foreign Affairs and Defense Ministries put forward the "fax diplomacy" and collected three separate ceasefire agreements by fax-machines. As a result, a ceasefire was established and the shooting was stopped on May 12 at midnight.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, aside from the "fax diplomacy" another important and unusual thing about the ceasefire was its establishment without peacekeeping forces. It is explained with the tense relations between Russia and the West during the initial stages of the NK conflict.<sup>25</sup> However, the disagreements between Russia and the West became less apparent soon after the Budapest Summit in December 1994. During the Budapest Summit, the conference members expressed their desire to harmonize their mediation efforts with Russia.<sup>26</sup> Hence, Russia obtained permanent co-chairmanship in 1995.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> International Crisis Group. "Armenia and Azerbaijan: A Season of Risks". *Europe Briefing*, issue No.71 (26 September 2013), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Sergey Markedonov, "Gotova li Armeniya priznat Nagorniy Karabax," (in Russian) [Is Armenia ready to Recognize Nagorno-Karabakh?] *Moskovskiy Centr Karnegi*, 2016, <http://car-negie.ru/commentary/?fa=63589> (accessed March 3, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Hakobyan, *Karabakh Diary: Green and Black: Neither War nor Peace*, 221.

<sup>25</sup> De Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, 238.

<sup>26</sup> Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Budapest Document 1994: Towards A Genuine Partnership in a New Era*, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39554/download-true> (accessed February 16, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). *Mandate of the Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Nagorno-Karabakh under the auspices of the OSCE*, 23 March 1995, <http://www.osce.org/mg/70125/download-true> (accessed March 10, 2017).

The OSCE Lisbon Summit in December 1996 was another turning point that increased the attention of the international community towards the NK conflict. During the summit, the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group recommended three principles to settle the conflict: highest level of self-rule for NK in Azerbaijan, territorial integrity of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and security for Nagorno-Karabakh. Even though all the Minsk Group members agreed to the proposed principles, Armenia used its veto power and hindered the establishment of an official ground for further discussions. Armenia justified its veto by emphasizing that the NK status should be determined according to the principle of self-determination.<sup>28</sup>

Further, in January 1997, France became the next co-chair country, and during the next month, the United States joined and became the third co-chair of the Minsk Group.<sup>29</sup> As Boris Yeltsin stated, "It is important that the parties to the conflict literally feel the breath on their backs of the three great powers and understand that there is no other way than rational proposals to peace and harmony. On our part, we are ready to enhance cooperation with the US to ensure stability and security in the Caucasus and the world as a whole."<sup>30</sup> What is more, during the Denver Summit, on 20 June 1997, Boris Yeltsin together with the presidents of the US and France stated, "We express our deep concern over the continuing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We are encouraged by the continued observance of the ceasefire. However, the ceasefire by itself is insufficient. Without progress toward a durable settlement, the ceasefire could break down. The international community thus has repeatedly called for a settlement; we believe there should be no delay in establishing a stable and lasting peace in the region."<sup>31</sup>

Hence, the three major world powers focused on possible ways for the resolution of the NK conflict by proposing the "package"<sup>32</sup> ("land-for-status") and "step-by-step"<sup>33</sup> ("land-for-peace") settlement models. As such, in July 1997, the Minsk Group presented its "package" approach for the

<sup>28</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). *Lisbon Document 1996*, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39539/download-true> (accessed March 10, 2017).

<sup>29</sup> Volker Jacoby, "The role of the OSCE: an assessment of international mediation efforts," in *The limits of leadership. Elites and societies in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process*, (London: Conciliation Resources, 2005), 32.

<sup>30</sup> Boris Yeltsin, "Boris Yeltsin's Karabakh Letter to Bill Clinton," *Russia in Global Affairs*, 1997, <http://eprss.am/en/2011/01/09/boris-yeltsin%E2%80%99s-karabakh-letter-to-bill-clinton.html> (accessed January 3, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> Joint Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. *G7 Information Centre. Denver*, 20 June 1997, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/1997denver/nagorno97.html> (accessed January 12, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> OSCE Minsk Group. "Comprehensive Agreement on the Resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," July 1997, <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/4b2dd8/pdf> (accessed January 3, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> OSCE Minsk Group. "Agreement on the End of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armed Conflict," December 1997, [http://www.c-7.org/downloads/Accord17\\_22Keytextsandagreements\\_2005\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.c-7.org/downloads/Accord17_22Keytextsandagreements_2005_ENG.pdf) (accessed January 3, 2017).



settlement of the dispute.<sup>34</sup> The proposal included two agreements: the end of armed hostilities and the status of NK. However, Stepanakert was not hesitant in rejecting the proposal, as it did not express the right to self-termination of NK population. The “step-by-step” approach did not put a specific deadline for the determination of NK status. Nonetheless, this time again Stepanakert rejected the proposal and brought the argument that it cannot establish good relations with Azerbaijan.<sup>35</sup>

After the failure of previous proposals, the OSCE Troika presented its new “common state” proposal in November 1988. According to the new suggestion, Azerbaijan and NK should form two components of a single state. Nonetheless, Azerbaijan was against the proposal by arguing that it did not preserve its territorial integrity.<sup>36</sup> In his turn, Boris Yeltsin defended the position of Azerbaijan, by indicating that Russia would not support the “common state” proposal as a mechanism to reach towards the NK conflict resolution.<sup>37</sup> Following it further, starting from April 1999, the negotiations over NK were held at the presidential level. As such, during the CIS Moscow summit, on April 1, Kocharyan and Aliyev had a long discussion that continued on April 26 in Washington. Within the framework of those meetings, the “land-swap” proposal was being circulated. The idea behind the new approach of resolving the NK conflict was the annexation of NK to Armenia and the control of the Armenian Meghri region by Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, the “land-swap” approach towards the resolution of the NK conflict failed in 2001 after the Key West negotiations.<sup>38</sup>

From 1994 to 1999, during the second stage of the mediation process, several serious steps were undertaken towards the resolution of the NK conflict. During Boris Yeltsin’s presidency, Russia successfully utilized the NK struggle as its external policy tool by obtaining short-term benefits. Further, the period was also characterized by the compromised behavior of mediators in reaching a concrete solution to the common problem. Nonetheless, the preservation of the “frozen” status for the NK conflict seemed favorable to Boris Yeltsin, as he perceived the peaceful resolution of the NK struggle as a possible threat to Russian expanding influence within the region.

<sup>34</sup> Vladimir Kazimirov, “Karabakh: Rethinking “phased” vs. “package,” *Radio Free Europe*, June 2001, <https://reliefweb.int/report/armenia/karabakh-rethinking-phased-vs-package> (accessed January 21, 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Levon Zourabian, “The Nagorno-Karabakh settlement revisited: is peace achievable?” *Demokratizatsiya*, 2006, 253.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>37</sup> Liz Fuller, “Caucasus/Nagorno-Karabakh: Russia seeks to mollify Baku,” *Radio Free Europe*, March 1999, <https://reliefweb.int/report/armenia/caucasusnagorno-karabakh-russia-seeks-mollify-baku> (accessed February 16, 2017).

<sup>38</sup> Jacoby, *The role of the OSCE: an assessment of international mediation efforts*, 32.

## 2. Russian mediation missions between 2000 and 2016

### *2.1. The centralized state administration of Vladimir Putin: 2000-2008*

The new stage of negotiations, referred to as the “Prague Process,” continued after 2003, following the presidential changes in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia. Within the framework of the “Prague Process,” on March 19, 2004, with the attendance of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, a meeting took place in Prague between the Armenian (Vartan Oskanian) and Azerbaijani (Vilayat Guliyev) foreign ministers. Further, Kocharyan and Aliyev had another meeting in Astana on September 15, with the participation of the new Russian President, Vladimir Putin.<sup>39</sup> After the meeting, he stated, “We all recognize the complexity of the NK issue. It is very important that the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents continue the negotiations, as without mutual talks it is impossible to find ways for conflict regulation. No matter what is being said on this subject, Russia is interested in settling this issue, as we want to have full-fledged cooperation with Azerbaijan and Armenia.”<sup>40</sup> The other Kocharyan-Aliyev meetings took place in Warsaw on May 15, 2005 and in Kazan on August 27, 2005.<sup>41</sup>

The major points discussed within the “Prague Process” were the referendum, the notion of “interim status” and special arrangements for Kelbajar and Lachin regions.<sup>42</sup> Following it further, during the “Prague Process,” the Armenian side agreed to withdraw its forces from five districts other than Kelbajar and Lachin, by taking into consideration their strategic importance for Armenia. Nonetheless, the Kelbajar case was further discussed during the Rambouillet meeting in 2006 when Armenia stated that it would withdraw its forces from Kelbajar only after the holding of the referendum concerning the NK status.<sup>43</sup>

Vladimir Putin had positive expectations from Rambouillet meeting and stated, “Despite the difficulty of the problem, the parties can find a mutually acceptable solution. There is a chance to solve the problem and we will support in every way so that the problem stays in the past.”<sup>44</sup> Even though the new Russian president was also engaged in the

<sup>39</sup> Pokalova, “Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts: Timing in Nagorno-Karabakh,” 76.

<sup>40</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Putiny Lernayin Xarabaxi xndiry hamarum e “cayrahex bard,” (in Armenian) [Putin refers to NK issue as “extremely difficult”] *Azg* No. 62, 16 September 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Vadim Romashov & Helena Rytovuori-Apunen, “Nagorno-Karabakh: Steps of Settlement Market Out by Russia’s Interests,” *Tampere Peace Research Institute* (2016): 146.

<sup>42</sup> Elkhan Mehtiyev, “Armenia-Azerbaijan Prague Process: Road Map to Peace or Stalemate for Uncertainty?” *Conflict Studies Research Centre* (2005): 4.

<sup>43</sup> International Crisis Group, “Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War,” *Europe Report*, issue No. 187 (14 November 2007): 5.

<sup>44</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Lernayin Xarabaxi kargavorman hamar lracucih xorhdakcutyunner,” (in Armenian) [Additional consultations over the NK resolution] *Azg* No. 33, 23 February 2006.

NK mediation process, in contrast to Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin did not link the Russian mediation mission in NK to the creation of a powerful Russian state. Differently, he mostly relied on Russian energy resources by using them as tools to conduct Russian foreign policy. Consequently, during the first term of his presidency, Vladimir Putin displayed little interest in the NK conflict and centralized his efforts to make Russia a self-confident and strong state.<sup>45</sup>

Following it further, the Prague Process resulted in the creation of "Madrid Principles" that were presented by the Minsk Group co-chairs in Madrid, in 2007. The document included basic principles for the peaceful resolution of the NK conflict. Even though Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed on several principles, the countries did not come up with a common decision concerning the NK status.<sup>46</sup>

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that when comparing the presidency of Boris Yeltsin with Vladimir Putin's first administration, the major difference concerns the functioning of the Russian internal state affairs. As such, due to Vladimir Putin, the foreign policy of Russia towards the region of South Caucasus became coherent and homogeneous without the inner divisions between the Defense and Foreign Affairs Ministries. More to that, as a president, Putin had a clear picture of Russia's internal and external policies and was able to control his new centralized state administration.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.2. On the edge of resolution: Dmitry Medvedev

The NK peace process entered into a new stage during the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev as Russia was most actively engaged in the mediation of the Nagorno-Karabakh struggle during the years between 2008 and 2012. Inasmuch as the administration of the new president coincided with the Russian war with Georgia in 2008, it was important for Medvedev to demonstrate to his Western counterparts that Karabakh was a distinct case and would have a peaceful resolution due to Russian mediation efforts. Hence, to decrease the chances of another significant explosion within the region, on November 2, 2008, Medvedev arranged a meeting between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Mayendorf Castle. The initiative resulted in the "Declaration on Regulating the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," the first signed agreement since the May 1994

<sup>45</sup> Richard Sakwa, "Putin's leadership: Character and Consequences," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol.60, issue No. 6 (August 2008): 882.

<sup>46</sup> Romashov and Rytövuori-Apunen, "Nagorno-Karabakh: Steps of Settlement Market Out by Russia's Interests," 148.

<sup>47</sup> Sakwa, "Putin's leadership: Character and Consequences," 881.

ceasefire. The presidents agreed to use Madrid Principles as a basis to initiate the final settlement of the NK conflict.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, another significant event concerning the NK settlement that took place during the administration of Dmitry Medvedev was the L'Aquila Summit in 2009. The Summit was famous in two ways: joint statement of the three Co-Chairs and the presentation of the updated version of the Madrid Principles. According to the Co-Chairs, the updated Basic Principles stood for a compromise between the right to territorial integrity and the right to self-determination.<sup>49</sup>

However, the updated version fell short of a finalized settlement and further meetings were organized for finding a common ground between the opposing presidents. As such, on January 25, 2010, Medvedev hosted a meeting in Sochi with his Azerbaijani and Armenian counterparts. Another important meeting that was organized during Dmitry Medvedev's presidency was the Muskoka Summit in June 2010. Nonetheless, the meetings did not produce positive results, as according to Aliyev, Armenians were not ready to take the Basic Principles as a basis for resolving the conflict peacefully. However, it is worth to state that Medvedev did not give up and still believed in resolution of the NK conflict.<sup>50</sup> As such, on August 20, 2010, during his first state visit to Armenia, he indicated, "In spite of the challenges and contradicting emotional statements of the sides, Russia continues working with Azerbaijan and Armenia as we believe that it is of utmost importance to preserve peace and order within the region."<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Dmitry Medvedev once again highlighted the importance of regional stability and the mutual talks during Serzh Sargsyan's first state visit to Russia. As such, on October 23, 2011 the Russian president stated, "Our usual meetings are intended to discuss the ongoing events. These discussions are wonderful opportunities to speak of the resolution of the NK conflict by outlining necessary guidelines for the future." More to that, during the Armenian state visit, the Russian president also prioritized the preservation of good relations and military cooperation with Armenia.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Dominik Sonnleitner, "Russia's backyard-unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus," *Politics in Central Europe* vol. 12, issue No. 1 (2016): 90.

<sup>49</sup> Vadim Romashov and Helena Rytövuori-Apunen, "Russia's Karabakh policy: new momentum in regional perspective," *Caucasus Survey* (2016), 4.

<sup>50</sup> Pokalova, "Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts: Timing in Nagorno-Karabakh," 77.

<sup>51</sup> Dmitry Medvedev, "Joint press-conference of the Presidents of Armenia and Russia in the framework of the state visit of the president of RF to RA," President of the Republic of Armenia, 20 August 2010, <http://www.president.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/items/2010/08/20/news-54> (accessed January 21, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> Dmitry Medvedev, "Rusastany exel e ev vstahoren mnum e Hayastani arajin gorcyнкery," (in Armenian) [Russia had always remained the first partner of Armenia] *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*, No.194, 25 October 2011, 4.



Even though the next Astrakhan trilateral meeting on October 29, 2010 between the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia had an intention to strengthen confidence-building measures and bolster the regime of ceasefire, it was not an exception and did not produce positive results.<sup>53</sup> Eventually, the updated Madrid Principles entered into a final stage during the Kazan Summit in June 2011. Both the Armenian and the Azerbaijani presidents had positive expectations from the Summit. In his turn, Dmitry Medvedev believed that the NK conflict is a unique struggle that has big chances to be resolved. "Russia is committed to back the sides and the process will go on," indicated Medvedev.<sup>54</sup> What is more, when referring to the conflict settlement perspectives, the Russian president stated, "There is only one way to resolve the NK conflict: by making arrangements. Arrangements do not have alternatives. Only the war is an alternative of an arrangement. Hence, the conflict has to be resolved by making arrangements. As a president, I have spent a lot of time on this issue. Due to my efforts throughout the last couple of years eight trilateral meetings were organized. In my opinion, it is a good result as we were able to bring the viewpoints closer to each other."<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, the Kazan Summit ended up with failure as the opposing sides started to blame each other for extending the talks. Unfortunately, after the failure of the Kazan initiative, the international community was silent and did not propose new approaches for satisfying the conflicting parties.<sup>56</sup>

However, it is important to note that even though, the Kazan Summit, the Mayendorf declaration and the other meetings organized during Dmitry Medvedev's presidency resulted in failure, they represented major steps towards the NK conflict resolution when over the long period of time, the sides believed in success and compromise. Hence, even though Dmitry Medvedev had a short presidential term, due to his increased attention to the conflict settlement process, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was on its edge of resolution.

### 2.3. Vladimir Putin and the increased level of violence: 2012-2016

The significance of the year of 2013 is explained with the May Decrees signed by Vladimir Putin, as he started his second presidential term. According to the new Foreign Policy Concept, Russia gained an active

<sup>53</sup> Sonnleitner, "Russia's backyard-unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus," 91.  
<sup>54</sup> Dmitry Medvedev, "Dmitry Medvedev believes NK conflict can be settled," *Aysor*, 2011, <http://www.aysor.am/en/news/2011/10/21/medvedev-nkr/350556>, (accessed January 21, 2017).

<sup>55</sup> Dmitry Medvedev, "Heracox Medvedevy cankanum e arag lucl Lermay in Xarabaxi himnaxndiry," (in Armenian) [Leaving Medvedev wants a quick solution for the NK issue] *Chorrod inqishixanutyun*, No.485, 27 December 2011, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Pokalova, "Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts: Timing in Nagorno-Karabakh," 79.

role in the diplomatic and political conflict settlement process within the framework of the CIS. Hence, Russia also highlighted its important contribution to the NK settlement process with other Minsk Group Co-Chairs. As such, in May 2013, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that they have a primary task of unblocking the complex situation in NK as the preservation of peace and stability constitutes a priority within their foreign policy objectives.<sup>57</sup> In his turn, Vladimir Putin referred to NK conflict, during his state visit to Armenia on December 2, 2013. Putin stressed the unique relationship between Armenia and Russia by indicating that it goes beyond strategic partnership. Further, the Russian president mentioned, "Instead of resolving the regional complications by the use of force, we would all like to find solutions to the regional disturbances by using the diplomatically agreed upon international arrangements. The Russian Federation welcomes the direct contacts between the two presidents. We will do our best to resolve the NK conflict and to find solutions that would be acceptable for both parties."<sup>58</sup>

Nonetheless, for the situation on the border, the notions of "routine violence" and "ongoing hostilities" best characterized the NK conflict particularly during the second administration of Vladimir Putin when the violent military attacks started to escalate by melting the frozen conflict. Hence, Vladimir Putin was trying to continue the diplomatic process between the opposing sides for preventing the resumption of hostilities on the border.

Along these lines, the Minsk Group organized a meeting between the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents on 19 November 2013, in Vienna. Furthermore, president Putin had bilateral meetings with the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents when in 2014, the escalations of hostilities induced the Russian president to persuade the sides to find mutually acceptable conditions for the conflict resolution.<sup>59</sup> Still, Putin's efforts were fruitless as in April 2016 the violations escalated when the Azerbaijani side presented its carefully organized offensive and surprised Armenians. The primary attacks targeted villages within NK with rockets and artillery. The Armenian side was not hesitant in responding the Azerbaijani offensive and as a result, the Line of Contact went through four days of war.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Romashov & Rytövuori-Apunen, "Russia's Karabakh policy: new momentum in regional perspective," 7.

<sup>58</sup> Vladimir Putin, "RD naxagah Vladimir Putini petakan aycy Hayastan," (in Armenian) ["The state visit of the president of the RF, Vladimir Putin, to Armenia,"] *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* No.220, 3 December 2013, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Sabine Freizer, "Twenty years after the Nagorno Karabakh ceasefire: an opportunity to move towards more inclusive conflict resolution," *Caucasus Survey* vol. 1, issue No. 2 (2014): 5.

<sup>60</sup> Artsrun Hovhannisyun, "Analysis of the 4-day April war," *Armenpress*, April 2016, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/843561/analysis-of-the-4-day-april-war.html> (accessed February 8, 2017).

It is important to state that, during the April uprisings, Russia was actively engaged in stopping the further developments of the April war. As follows, on April 2, Putin called the sides for stabilizing the situation and restoring the ceasefire. Even though the ceasefire violations did not stop, on 5 April, due to Putin's efforts, the Armenian and the Azerbaijani chiefs of staff agreed to finish the fighting. Hence, Vladimir Putin highlighted the significance of the Russian mediation mission by initiating the second ceasefire during the April violations.<sup>61</sup>

What is more, in June 2016, Putin organized a trilateral presidential meeting in Saint Petersburg in order to maintain the dialogue between the conflicting parties and to strengthen the termination of hostilities.<sup>62</sup> In addition, on 10 August 2016, in a joint press conference with Serzh Sargsyan, Vladimir Putin summarized the stance of Russia over NK, "Russia is interested in decreasing the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenia is looking for a way out of this conflict for the sake of its economic development. Azerbaijan seeks the same goals. However, it is necessary to find the appropriate approach to make sure that neither side feel themselves to be either 'losers' or 'winners'."<sup>63</sup> Hence, by this statement Putin supports the Russian "balanced relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan" doctrine by trying to reach towards a solution that will not harm any of the sides. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that when compared to Dmitry Medvedev, during his second presidential term, Vladimir Putin had taken a more neutral position towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. The April War was a signal that throughout time, the Russian mediation mission over Nagorno-Karabakh needed a push factor for taking the matters more seriously.

### 3. Analysis and Findings

With an aim to understand whether Russia mediated the conflict over NK or spoiled its peaceful resolution, it is important to understand the theoretical notions of "spoiling" and "mediation." On this subject, "spoilers" have a primary objective to hinder or extend the peaceful resolution of conflicts for the sake of their interests and desires. Accordingly,

<sup>61</sup> International Crisis Group, "Nagorno-Karabakh: New Opening or More Peril?" *Europe Report*, issue No. 239(4 July 2016): 3.

<sup>62</sup> "Trilateral presidential meeting ends in Saint Petersburg: Presidents issue joint statement," A1+, 20 June 2016, <http://en.a1plus.am/1239134.html> (accessed March 5, 2017).

<sup>63</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Putin: If the Karabakh problem is not solved, Armenia will not have a chance to develop," *Meydan.Tv*, 11 August 2016, <https://www.meydan.tv/en/site/politics/16619/> (accessed March 10, 2017).

they use violence and concentrate their efforts to impede the settlements of conflicts by delaying their peaceful resolution.<sup>64</sup> In its turn, mediation has positive significance by standing for an interactive and dynamic process where the third party helps conflicting sides to resolve the conflict by means of negotiation and communication mechanisms. Hence, when being a mediator, the third party is highly interested in the rapid conflict resolution.<sup>65</sup>

The examination of the Russian mediation missions between 1991 and 2016 illustrated that none of the three Russian presidents had an intention to instigate the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. In other words, Russia did not spoil the peaceful settlement of the NK conflict. In contrast, throughout years, Russia used various negotiation and communication mechanisms to help the conflicting sides to resolve the NK conflict. Nonetheless, Russia did not act as a mediator in the NK conflict resolution process as Russia benefited from the chronic insolvency of the conflict. This is to say, that the constant mediation of the NK conflict increased the Russian positive reputation both within the international and regional arena. What is more, the frozen format of the NK conflict stood as a good opportunity for Russia to preserve good relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, by selling weapons and by staying neutral towards the victory of either side. Nonetheless, even though when mediating the conflict over NK, Russia had an aim to establish a positive image and preserve balanced relations with the opposing sides, it still controlled the situation within the region and did not let NK conflict split into war. What is more, when comparing the three Russian presidential administrations it was evident that there were cases when NK conflict was standing on the edge of its resolution. Hence, the content analysis of presidential statements will give an opportunity to illustrate the differences between the presidential efforts to end the frozen conflict.

#### 3.1. Content Analysis

Table 1 presents the content analysis of six presidential statements, separately showing the intensity means for the three Russian presidents. When analyzing the statements of Boris Yeltsin, the table shows that the category of *regional stability* has the highest mean (3.75) when compared

<sup>64</sup> Stephen Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security* vol. 22, issue No. 2 (1997): 6.

<sup>65</sup> Jenonne Walker, "International mediation of Ethnic Conflicts," *Survival* vol. 35, issue No. 1 (1993): 106.



to the other two categories. Nonetheless, the intensity mean of the category of *direct contacts between the opposing sides* (1.75) indicates that Boris Yeltsin did not give much importance to the organization of mutual talks between the conflicting parties of the NK conflict. In addition, the high-intensity mean (3.25) of the *balanced relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan* category supports the previous argument by illustrating that Yeltsin was prone to military cooperation with both of the conflicting countries by not supporting the victory of any side.

Furthermore, the content analysis of Vladimir Putin's presidential statements demonstrates that compared to Boris Yeltsin, he gave importance to the category of *direct contacts between the opposing sides* (4.25) by stressing the significance of the establishment of an environment of trust between the conflicting sides. In addition, Putin was also interested in the category of *regional stability* (4) by encouraging long-term solutions and durable settlement for the conflict. Hence, it can be deduced that compared to Yeltsin, Putin was more engaged in resolving the NK conflict by arranging trilateral talks and making the sides agree upon similar viewpoints. Nonetheless, the category of *balanced relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan* (4.75) signifies that among the existing categories Putin prioritized the military cooperation with Armenia and Azerbaijan and did not want to see 'losers' and 'winners' in the NK conflict. Finally, when referring to the content analysis of Dmitry Medvedev's presidential statements, the point worth mentioning is that when compared to Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, he did not give much importance to the category of *balanced relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan* (2.5). What is more, he prioritized the category of *direct contacts between the opposing sides* (4.75) by stressing the significance of international arrangements and mutual talks between the conflicting parties. In addition, inasmuch as during his short presidency he initiated more than 10 meetings and came up with innovative approaches towards the conflict resolution, he was able to push the NK conflict on the edge of its resolution.

Hence, content analysis revealed that the NK conflict had real chances to escape from its frozen status and ensure stability and peace within the region. Even though, Russian cooperation with Armenia and Azerbaijan was also important for Medvedev, compared to Yeltsin and Putin, he made significant effort to escape the existing emotional statements of the parties by bringing the sides together and by approaching towards the conflict resolution.

Table 1 % Content Analysis of Presidential Statements

Category	Descriptors	Boris Yeltsin	Vladimir Putin	Dmitry Medvedev
<b>Regional Stability</b>	Security and Peace in Caucasus	5	5	5
	Observance of cease-fire	5	3	5
	Durable settlement	2	3	5
	Long-term solutions	3	5	3
	<i>Intensity mean</i>	<i>3.75</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4.5</i>
<b>Direct contacts between the opposing sides</b>	International Arrangements	2	5	5
	Similar viewpoints	1	4	5
	Emotional statements	3	3	5
	Environment of trust	1	5	4
	<i>Intensity mean</i>	<i>1.75</i>	<i>4.25</i>	<i>4.75</i>
<b>Balanced Relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan</b>	Military Cooperation	4	5	3
	Mutually acceptable solutions	3	5	3
	Full-fledged cooperation with the sides	4	4	2
	No 'losers' or 'winners'	2	5	2
	<i>Intensity mean</i>	<i>3.25</i>	<i>4.75</i>	<i>2.5</i>

Conclusion

The study revealed that Russia neither spoiled nor mediated the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh by being satisfied with the frozen status of conflict resolution. Throughout years, Russia did not want to deteriorate its good relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan by preserving neutrality towards the victory of the opposing sides. Following it further, even though Russia benefited from the frozen status of the NK struggle, Russian efforts towards the conflict resolution did not remain the same under different presidencies. The content analysis revealed that there were cases when the NK conflict had real chances of resolution due to Russian efforts. As such, among the three Russian presidents, the NK conflict gained increased chances of resolution and was on the edge of its settlement during Dmitry Medvedev's administration. Thus, the NK conflict did not have equal chances of resolution during the three Russian presidential administrations.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that the Russian role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution was influenced by several factors. Even though, the three Russian Presidents made significant efforts to resolve the NK conflict, they never betrayed their 'preservation of good relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan' and 'no losers' and 'no winners' foreign policy approaches towards the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

## CONFLICTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NATIONALISM: CASE OF GEORGIA<sup>1</sup>

Abstract

Georgia is a country, with two existing conflicts. The majority of the population thinks that conflicts emerged in the last century. It is believed, that the problem is only political and related to the geopolitical condition. We fully agree with the position according to which the current political conflicts between Georgians and Abkhazians and Georgians and Ossetians has been provoked by Russia in the beginning and moreover for the end of the twentieth century. But, now we try to observe these conflicts from the perspective of Nationalism. According to the current theories, development of such collective-cultural identities, like ethnic groups and moreover the nations depend on many sensitive aspects. Except for economic, political and territorial issues, the most important is faith of common myths and symbols. The birth of nationalism, on which the formation of nation is based, is closely related and even inspired by the cultural conceptualization. In such time the strong feeling of authenticity and therefore neediness of separating from the *other* ones becomes inevitable. In the 18th century, cultural movement, which aroused in the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti, contained important ethno-cultural messages, according to which the Georgian unity sharply was divided from the *others*. In 19th century Iliia Chavchavadze, the founder of Georgian Nation, tried to rethink and shape new identity perception. However, since 1921, after the sovietization Georgian nationalism entirely was concentrated on the ethnical and religious moments. In the presented paper, considering the historical past, we will try to understand the modern challenges faced Georgian society.

**Keywords:** *Nationalism, Nation, Identity and History of Georgia.*

Introduction

As we know, any type of community has a bouquet of values on which is their collective intellectual being is based. In case of nationalism, the sentiments like this covers with many different, but interconnected moments, which makes ideological fundament for the shaping of national

<sup>1</sup> The work is a part of the project (DO/351/1-10/14) Georgian Identity: Historical Aspects (18<sup>th</sup> century), sponsored by Shota Rustaveli National Foundation 2013-2014 Doctoral program grant.



feelings and any shifting or changing within can lead to significant fluctuations of national body and even destruction of the political system.<sup>3</sup> Especially, in those cases, when above-mentioned attachments have been formed *La longue durée*.

One of the strongest ideas in Georgian nationalism is the feeling and belief that during the many centuries Georgians lived together with others without any confrontation. The most extensive expression of this attitude is the unity of the Caucasian people, formed by Leonti Mroveli<sup>4</sup> in the 11th century.<sup>4</sup> In the Soviet time, that became the main stronghold for the Georgian national conception. After the controversy between the Georgian-Abkhazians and Georgian-Ossetians, the equilibrium based on this faith was broken. Today, the political crisis created by military actions threatens the idea of Georgian statehood.

In this paper, we would like to find some answers and clarify how and when the conflicts began in Georgia? What was the real reasons behind them? Does it truly have only political origins or we can find ethnical and cultural roots?

We are trying to do this by observing several notes preserved in Georgian texts about Abkhazian and Ossetian peoples, e.g. in *The Description of the Georgian Kingdom* by Vakhushti Bagrationi. This source is also interesting as it was created in the eighteenth century in parallel with the revival of the cultural movement.

### Actuality

The main challenges to the modern Georgian society are conflicts in Abkhazia and Shida Kartli, so-called South Ossetia. The 1990s, when it escalated into an armed controversy, the conflict became a watershed in relationships between the Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians. However, the topics about history of Abkhazia and Shida Kartli/South Ossetia were not a novelty for the Georgian historiography. Important questions are still unanswered. From the view of traditional perspective historians and politicians simply could not explain the reasons of the conflict.

According to absolute majority of the assertions, the conflicts are artificially provoked, that was and is unambiguously associated with the de-

sire of Russia to create unstable environment in the region.<sup>5</sup> Any more or less cognizant person knows about negative traces of the northern neighbor in aggravation of the conflict. But, now we would like to know, was there particular ethno-cultural differences among Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian people, which had appeared earlier than the Russian factor would have a decisive significance.

However, after the confrontation, it became necessary reviewing the existing narratives. The works of the pre-conflict and post-conflict periods, differ from each other with their spirit. If before, the main goal of the researchers, despite several centuries of ethnical and political divisions, was to underline the sole of the people who lived in Georgia,<sup>6</sup> since 1990s, because of the desire to penetrate into the essence of the conflict, they started to acknowledge the conflicts as a historical fact.

### Ethno-cultural attitudes

Georgia is one of those countries that are distinguished from the others by its ethnical and cultural diversity. It is significant that despite the conflicts, this diversity is still considered as a strong side of Georgian society and culture. Thus, it turned out that the fact, which they consider as an expression of humanity, tolerance and solidarity of society is understood as violence by the ethnic minorities. From the retrospection of near past, it is difficult to say unequivocally, what provoked the conflicts: the third power, very specific and habitual view of the past by the historians, or ambitions of the politicians. The thing we can be sure in is that the abyss, developed between these peoples after the military conflicts in the 20th century becomes deeper. The above-mentioned reasons, which should not aggravate the conflict, were just the external factors and not the internal ones and without understanding the essence of the problem it will be impossible to solve the conflicts.

<sup>3</sup> Jemal Gamakharia, *From the history of Georgian-Abkhazian relations*, (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1991), 127; Gaprindashvili, M., Giorgadze, G., Giumashvili, J., Kacharava, I., Lomtatidze, K., Lominadze, B., Lortkipanidze, M., Melikishvili, G., Muskhelishvili, D., Nachkhebia, G., Zhordania, O., Sidamonidze, Q., Surguladze, A., Tsaishvili, S., Dzidziguri, Sh., Khoshtaria-Brosset, E., Jorbenadze, B., *For the distortion of the Georgian-Abkhazian relations (Answer "to authors of Abkhazian letter")*, (Tbilisi: Metsniereba 1, 1991.), 47-48; Teimuraz Mibchuan, *On the bloody footprint of Abkhazian separatism*, (Tbilisi: Publishing GPI 1994), 37, 58-59; Anzor Totadze, *The Ossets in Georgia: Myth and Reality* (Tbilisi: Universali, 2008), 3-5, 9-10, accessed at: [http://darbc.webs.com/OSSETI\\_Jatinuri.pdf](http://darbc.webs.com/OSSETI_Jatinuri.pdf); Lavrenti Janiashvili, "Historical writing - inspiration for the Ethnocentrism stereotypes" in *Occupied Akhagori district and Dynamics of Georgian-Ossetian relations*, ed. by Jalabadze, N., Burduli, M., Janiashvili, L., Mgebrishvili, L., and Pirckhalava, E. (Tbilisi: Publishing Geoprint 2015), 53, 56-59; Manuchar Guntadze, "Ossetian Rebellion in Shida Kartli in 1920 according to Georgian Press," *Georgian Source-Studies XV-XVI*, (Tbilisi: Universali, 2013/2014): 40-42, 55-57.

<sup>6</sup> Davit Darchiashvili, "Akhalsikhe Georgian Jerusalem," *Reconstructions of History* #1, 8-52. Tbilisi, (2015): 10.

<sup>1</sup> When we determining the nationalism, we rely upon A. D. Smith's interpretation. Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism. Theory, ideology, history*, (Polity Press, 2001), 5-35.

<sup>2</sup> Leonti Mroveli was 11<sup>th</sup> century Georgian chronicler.

<sup>4</sup> Simon Kaukhchishvili, *The Georgian Chronicles*. The text established on according to all main manuscripts by Simon Kaukhchishvili, volume, I. Sakhelgami, (1955), 3

Before we analyze the sources provided directly by Vakhushiti, we want to notice one circumstance, in particular, that absolute majority of historical sources, among them *Life of Kartli*,<sup>7</sup> acknowledges cohabitation, important military, political and cultural connections between the Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians. But, what does it mean? Maybe, this and other facts such as dynastic marriages and, that the rank of an Abkhazian king took the first honorable place among the titles of the Georgian kings, only prove, that keeping the balance and political conjuncture was important in the period of the Kingdom of Georgia too.

Thus, stating, that e.g. ethnical group living on the territory of Abkhazia was Georgian or on the contrary, was not ethnically Georgian, but they necessarily would become Georgians influenced by the domestic cultural environment;<sup>8</sup> also, giving a special importance and improper perception of migration processes, which could cause changing of demographic picture (much more on the territory Abkhazia than Shida Kartli) in the 17th and 18th centuries, while discussing about the illegitimacy of the demands of ethnical minorities,<sup>9</sup> sounds not serious and intensifies the conflicts.

The point is that, when the Georgian *we-group* had cultural and political hegemony and the attitude of the Abkhazian ruling elite and among them of the Ossetians in the North Caucasus were unambiguously loyal towards the Georgian king, they did not pose a problem. The ethnical issue has arisen since the disbandment of the Georgian Kingdom and was extremely aggravated in the 18th century. That is one of the reasons why we mainly find positive messages in the old versions of the *Life of Kartli*.

What was changed in the 18th century? It was the period when the Georgian cultural and in general, socio-economic life started to revive. The *learned men commission* was established whose duties were to gather Georgian historical documents and old versions of *Life of Kartli*, for correcting and editing them according to the modern standards. In 1709, Vakhtang VI (ruler of Kartli in 1703-1714, king in 1716-1723) founded printing-house, which should help propagation of these new ideas.

The work of this movement did not slow down in the following period too. On the contrary, it should be said that over time, the movement became more and more serious. It was obvious that the final goal of the leaders was to unite Georgia. An introduction in *The Description of the Georgian Kingdom* by Vakhushiti Bagrationi (1696-1739) is exactly evi-

dence of his goals, to create the *annals* in order to introduce a real history to the Georgians and thus develop allegiance, common memories and values system in the country population.<sup>10</sup>

In the second half of the 18th century, this movement had a wider scope in the united Kartli and Kakheti.<sup>11</sup> Erekle the Second (King of Kakheti in 1744-1762, king of the Kartli and Kakheti in 1762-1798) even aimed to set a system of common values in all strata of the society by developing the primary and secondary educational systems (also, by regulating the legislation and promotion of the socio-economic life), where the history of Georgia and the Georgian literature were taught together with other subjects. In 1790, signing the *Iverians*<sup>12</sup> *Union Treaty* points out that the political and cultural elite absolutely agreed with the main postulates adopted by Vakhtangi and Vakhushiti. It should be said, that in the *Treaty*, where the common origin of Georgians and a historical destiny are underlined, was signed by all the rulers of Georgian kingdoms and principalities with the exception of Abkhazia.

So, in the 18th century, the Georgian elite tried to revive the feeling of the common destiny and collective memory icons. They wanted to create a common valuable system between the Georgians.

In parallel to discussing the meaning of history and memory, Vakhushiti Bagrationi made his own definition of the Georgian unity. He specially underlined the fact that despite the breakdown into separate kingdoms and principalities, partitioned Georgia was and still remained united from the historical and cultural point of view. The mentioned fact is corroborated by the following:

If you ask any Georgian or Imerian, Meskhan, Heretian or Kakhetian: "what is your origins?", they answer "Georgian" immediately. They share a common book and the language, created by the king Parnavaz I and when asking the same people: "which language and book do you know?" – They answer immediately: the Georgian one. They will not say: "the origin, language and written language of Imerians, or Meskhians, Heretians and Kakhetians, but of the Georgians."<sup>13</sup>

As we see, Vakhushiti determinesthe initial and main feature of the Georgians. The most important markers are the ethnical origin, language and alphabet. It is evident from the text that Vakhushiti emphasizes the

<sup>7</sup> *Life of Kartli* is the name of principal compendium of medieval Georgian historical texts, natively known as *Kartlis Tskhovreba*.

<sup>8</sup> Mibchuaeni, *On the bloody footprint*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Mibchuaeni, *On the bloody footprint*, *Ibid.*, 12.; Janiashvili, "Historical writing – inspiration for the Ethnocentrism stereotypes," in 68-70.

<sup>10</sup> Vakhushiti Bagrationi, *The Description of the Georgian Kingdom*. The text established according to all main manuscripts by Simon Kauchchishvili. (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo), 2, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Kartli and Kakheti are the historical and ethnographic regions of the Georgia. After the decline Georgian Kingdom, fractured into several kingdoms and principalities, among them were kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti.

<sup>12</sup> *Iveria* is a self-name of the Georgians into the old Georgian language.

<sup>13</sup> Bagrationi, *The Description of the Georgian Kingdom*, 291-292.



issue of religious unity as well.<sup>14</sup> It is obvious that the main goal of the author is to identify those characteristics that will help to differentiate the Georgian ethno-cultural *we-group* from the *other* ones. That is why he uses the well-known and most sensitive markers, language and religion as well. The fact, that he exactly knew what he said, is testified by that he especially underlines the issue of the Mengrels and Svans,<sup>15</sup> and points out that they were the historical and inseparable family members of the united Georgia, when determining the meaning of a common language in order to avoid any misunderstanding.<sup>16</sup> As for the Abkhazians and Ossetians, Vakhushiti especially points out that none of these peoples have any ethnic or genetically relations to the Georgian community, unlike the Mengrels and Svans, and that they do not belong to the Georgian lingual and cultural group and do not have distinct religious unity with the Georgians. Here is what Vakhushiti says about the Abkhazians:

...thieves and robbers, they travel on the sea by the boats, meet the boats of the Ottomans and the Laz people, govern Odishi and Guria.<sup>17</sup> But rather they are in battle cowards. They are greater resistance and brave in the sea warriors.<sup>18</sup>

Also, he specially outlines the fact that "they have their own language, but rather Georgian language knows only nobility".<sup>19</sup> About Ossetians he writes the following:

They eat little food in their own country because they are satisfied with the food and water. But when paying a visit, they are greedy of food. They do not feel brave in the wars, as they are afraid of the armies. But rather they are brave and secretly creep to armies at night, ill-bred and fool, free and proud of their own country, they are modest and speak wisely, thieves, deceitful and greedy, acquisitive, libertine, captive buyers sell them abroad.<sup>20</sup>

As for the knowledge of the language: 'only the leaders and the walkers in Kartli and Racha,<sup>21</sup> are speaking Georgian language...' (Bagrationi, 1973, 639).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 25.

<sup>15</sup> Mengrels and Svans are Georgian subgroups. They speak the Svanian and Mingrelian language and are mostly bilingual. These languages belong to the Kartvelian language family too.

<sup>16</sup> Bagrationi, *The Description of the Georgian Kingdom*, 783, 788.

<sup>17</sup> Odishi is the name of historical part of west Georgia and another name of the Mengrels principality. Guria is one of the historical and ethnographic regions of Georgia.

<sup>18</sup> Bagrationi, *The Description of the Georgian Kingdom*, 785-786.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 786.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 637.

<sup>21</sup> Racha is an old Georgian historical and geographical region.

<sup>22</sup> Bagrationi, *The Description of the Georgian Kingdom*, 639.

Naturally, Vakhushiti mentions the positive facts about the Abkhazians and Ossetians, but mostly about their external physical characteristics and not about the qualitative, cultural and ethnic characteristics, which could have a positive influence on formation of the mood of Georgian community.

It should be noted, that Vakhushiti was the representative of the Kartli ruling dynasty, whose avowed goal was to restore the united statehood of Georgia. In this period, many important and pragmatic steps were taken both in the foreign and internal affairs. *The Description of the Georgian Kingdom* by Vakhushiti was the text, which could and even should have become a textbook for the political leaders of the kingdoms and principalities of Georgia in the future.

When the author underlines his own task to develop unified consciousness, especially such emphasis about the issue of ethnic minorities, he makes us think that the goal of the author was to limit the Georgian ethno-cultural space, where as we can see did not leave the place for Abkhazians and Ossetians. Considering the above mentioned facts, we mean establishment of printing house, forming educational system and so on, we think, that the cultural movement, which has been developed during the 18th century, at least for the last decades of the century, overgrown to nationalism.

As for the next periods Ilia Chavchavadze, in his lifetime referred as father of Georgian nation, developed the concepts which were used in 18th century too. The difference was, that if in the 18th century elites were more faithful to these ideas, in the second half of 19th century, thanks to the printed media, they became public.<sup>23</sup> That time was distinguished by even the fact that, if in the early period, especially for the beginning of the genesis of the ideas of Georgian nationalism, this ideas were focused on the ethnic, religious and cultural unity (and it must be so at this time), later for balance, Ilia Chavchavadze installed the idea of the common historical past into the core of Georgian nationalism.<sup>24</sup>

On May 26, 1918 by establishing the Democratic Republic of Georgia, essentially a new stage started in the history of the Georgian nationalism. The existed situation was interesting from various points of view. By foundation of the state, the Georgian nationalistic project was put to the test. Also, it was interesting that the privilege of foundation the state fell to the Mensheviks wing of the social-democrats. Especially, on the background of the strained nationalistic sentiments and regional political con-

<sup>23</sup> Aleksandre Gabisonia, "Formation of the Georgian National Discourse," *Identity Studies* #4, (2012): 70-71.

<sup>24</sup> Mariam Kharthashvili, Ketevan Mania, *Coverage of the Process of the Georgian National Consolidation in print Media: Georgians as Readers of Iveria*, Volumes IV, part. I (Tbilisi: Universali, 2011), 539.

ditions, propagandizing international ideas by the leaders of a sovereign state would be at least politically disadvantageous. That is why the regulation of processes was made free. An irony of fate, even for the Menshevik government, the main goal became the independence and the maintenance of national unity.<sup>25</sup> Even in this case like the 1801, the forming process of Georgian nationalism canceled Russia's invasion.

Military attack with ethnic minorities in 1918-1921, and then sovietization of Georgia, the process of shifting from the ethnical concepts to the civic stopped. After the loss of independence, actualization of ethnical sentiments was expected.

The Georgian writer, who became a victim of repressions in 1937, by his novel *Jako's Lodgers*, published in 1924, responds to the events developed in Georgia in the twentieth century. In the novel *Jako's Lodgers*, the author demonstrated the two sores of the nation – the last offspring of the feudal aristocracy, the prince Teimuraz Khevisavi outcasted by the revolutionary Epoch and the Ossetian Jako, full of predator's energy and with an evil soul,<sup>26</sup> who stole his own property and even wife. Jako as a predator was not just a literary character, he represented the common image of an Ossetian settler with consciousness of a Georgian man. The novels by Aleksandre Kazbegi are also full of negative messages towards Ossetians. An Ossetian is represented as a dissembler and liar, a person who is an antagonist and can take liberties of doing things that are unacceptable to a Georgian person.<sup>27</sup> The same author enlivens the character of an Ossetian captive and kidnapper seller – Makhmeta, in his novel *Elguja*.<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting that in this period we find the literary compositions written about the Abkhazians and Abkhazia, where in contrast to the Ossetians, relatively positive messages are given. On the one hand, it should have been caused by that policy of the right of motion's to self-determination, which had a great scope in the Soviet period and excluded the ethno-national confrontation and on the other hand, by a long-term historical experience, propelled them peacefully solved inherent problems. As for the evidently negative attitudes towards Ossetians, it should have been caused by the especially complex migration processes in the 19th and 20th centuries.

<sup>25</sup> Zurab Targamadze, "Georgian Interpretation of a National Issue," *Georgian Source-Studies XVII-XVIII*, (2015/2016): 238.

<sup>26</sup> Mikheil Javakishvili, *Jako's Lodgers*, "Georgian soviet novel.", (Tbilisi: Merani, 1985), 9-10.

<sup>27</sup> Aleksandre Kazbegi, *Tsitsia*, "Stories and Novels", volumes 2, 2:67-163, (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1962 b), 125,127.

<sup>28</sup> Aleksandre Kazbegi, *Elguja*, "Stories and Novels", volumes 1:44-195, (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1962 a), 47.

### Conflicts and nationalism: pre-soviet and post-soviet period

Georgian nationalism is characterized by a lot of stigmas, understanding of which is impossible without realizing it. But the question is – Is it possible to answer the questions, contents of which are not dictated by the needs of a modern life, by reconstruction of the past? Probably no! At least, possible multitude answers often offer us completely new explanations, which are adjusted to the present tense, instead of describing past stories objectively. Especially, when the truth we are striving to gain is at odds with dormant ideas of our own imagination. Those imaginations are becoming real in parallel with this or that threat having a national character. After passing, it is lost back into a deep memory. The dialogue in the form of questions and answers, is determined by the content of the questions. For this reason, needed answers are impossible to find neither by historians and politicians nor by ordinary people.<sup>29</sup>

Although the 18th century is the period when the historically formed conceptions became bricks for developing of nationalism, the visions of modern Georgian regarding: *others, gender, age, traditions, ancestry, past, mourning, happiness, birth, death, the West, the East* are totally connected with a Soviet narrative and what they have in common with the same categories, historically shaped in Georgian's outlook, is only the fact that they are distorted copies of true ideas. Thus, this is a society with a bifurcated consciousness in the imagination of which there are actually confirmed memory-defined icons and symbols formed on Georgian historical grounds on the one hand and on the other hand, those symbols are parts of a Soviet history as well and accordingly, they dwell in Georgians consciousness as Soviet icons too. Twenty-five years of independence was not enough to overcome this resistance.

Reproduction of the nationalism ideas in Soviet Georgia, despite the fact, that the central government had announced the nationalism as a chauvinistic and a reactionary, did not stop. Reasons for that, with other factors as well, was strongly defined cultural identity of Georgian unity. During the Soviet times national ideas were transformed and unlike the concept, developed by Iliia Chavchavadze, which referred to ethnic and cultural movements, but eventually was directed towards the formation of a general social consensus:<sup>30</sup> feeling of the ethnic and cultural preferences has become central and uncontested.

<sup>29</sup> Georgian society, is still not released from Soviet mentality, has blurred visions about its own culture and history, which is becoming even more blurred by public efforts of collective reflection.

<sup>30</sup> Ckhartishvili, Mania, *Coverage of the Process*, 104.



In exchange to the party functionaries commitment to the Soviet policy, denationalization and plenty of practical examples of a particular progress in this regard, Georgians received a *myth* about their own elitism. Popularization of this *myth* especially helped unnatural mixing of the civil self-consciousness, which itself was due to the development of the *Media* opportunities at this period, with ethno-cultural conceptions. In reality, at the expense of those compromises, were carried out dismantle and falsification of Georgian national ideas.<sup>31</sup>

It should be noted that this process accidentally was helped by the Georgian historians. Despite the fact, that the majority of factual and chronological discussions regarding various issues of Georgian history in the Soviet Georgian historiography reflect historical reality, the context, where those ideas dominated and articulated, created and still creates artificial barriers for understanding historically established ideas of Georgian nationalism. In turn, neither Ossetian nor Abkhazian historians were distinguished with their balanced position.

The way, which stimulated Georgian ethnic nationalism in the Soviet period, as we have already mentioned, passed through belief of its cultural elitism and uniqueness. On the one hand, this fact comforted a human soul, who had lost independence and on the other hand, it played on its pride.<sup>32</sup> Soviet narrative reached the compatibility of multicultural and multiethnic environment with the principles of elitism, through marginalization of a national tradition of Georgian tolerance, hospitality and respect for foreigners. That is why Georgians stunned by the progress of processes today, cannot clarify its essence and absolutely sincerely cannot understand the reason of the 'ingratitude' Abkhazian and Ossetian people show in exchange for the favor they expressed over the centuries.

The fundamentals of the belief of Georgian ethnic group, as a sort of super-ethnic, shall be searched in a deep historical past, still in the 10th century. When term *Georgia* serves as a sort of social-cultural purpose together with its ethnic and political meanings.<sup>33</sup> However, during the Soviet era, attachment and faith with these ideas became much stronger and what is the most important, they were transformed into a new idea of the Soviet homeland and were perceived on an organic level. So much so, that the trauma caused by Russia's starting the invasion of Georgia in 1801 and collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, turned to be equally destructive for Georgians.

In 1990s the breakage of Soviet Union, the ideas of nationalism started to grow up in parallel to the national movement and gaining the inde-

pendence. Formation of a new national narrative was conducted in a form of patriotic spirit and protection of home territories, its historical borders, the idea of autochthony of Georgians and faith to it, including the claim that the others had not been there. The vast majority of these slogans were well known for a Soviet version of Georgian nationalism too, but now they came to life and started real action. In parallel, the Soviet myths about Georgian – Abkhazian and Georgian – Ossetian idyll, were still existing.<sup>34</sup> Keeping the faith, that they have nothing to fight with Abkhazians, Ossetians and anyone, has helped to overcome complex of late nations.

So, we should not be surprised that the conflicts are perceived differently in a modern Georgian community and that there are contradictory opinions parallel to each other. You can meet people, who categorically deny the basis of ethnic confrontation. They believe that those are the processes, which are clearly externally managed. However, it is interesting that when the same people are asked to characterize, for example, Ossetians, Abkhazians or even other ethnic minorities according to specific features that are salient only for those ethno-cultures, it becomes difficult to select positive evaluations, which will indicate the narrator's sincere benevolence. We can find controversial discussions in modern studies as well. For example, one of the Georgian authors, who discusses the history of Georgian – Abkhazian relationship, despite his claim that the controversy is inspired by the third force only, points out at the end of his book:

We cannot say that there were no conditions – political, social-economic, religious and others for the controversy of Georgians and Abkhazians, which became a fact at the beginning of this century and subsequently deepened.<sup>35</sup>

Today does not have any significance what kind of political, cultural and genetic transformations were experienced by Abkhazians and Ossetians really. The fact is that the political claims of Abkhazian and Ossetian people, though, in our opinion they do not have any objective basis, are established on such historical and ethno-cultural concepts.

In 1993, a significant part of Georgian society opposed the nostalgia of a *big Russian brother* and a better *life*, activated as a result of a coup, civil conflict and economic collapse, with a radical understanding of nationhood. In such conditions, the issue of ethnic minorities took on the role of society unifier again. We can say that all the variations forming the

<sup>31</sup> Targamadze, "Georgian Interpretation of a National Issue," 232.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 232, 237.

<sup>33</sup> George Anchabadze, "Principal Stages of Ethical Development of the Georgian Nation from Ancient Times to the Phase of National Formation," *Identity Studies* #1, (2009): 60.

<sup>34</sup> M. Gagrindashvili, et al., *For the distortion of the Georgian-Abkhazian relations* 3, 68; Gamakharia, *From the history of Georgian-Abkhazian relations*, 131; Totadze, *The Ossets in Georgia: Myth and Reality*, 5, 35. (accessed at: [http://darbr.webs.com/OSSETI\\_latnuri.pdf](http://darbr.webs.com/OSSETI_latnuri.pdf) and others.

<sup>35</sup> Gamakharia, *From the history of Georgian-Abkhazian relations*, 132.

Georgian nationalism were unsuccessful and even for the end of the 20th century, as it seems is not still enough near to its civil form. The Qualitatively new and the most important stage for the Georgian nationalism was the Rose Revolution in 2003, when nationalism as a political idea began to grow up. Processes, which began after this event, are still going.

Political line of the Georgian nationalism is examined by the Russia – Georgia war in 2008, after what completely different agenda has been formed. If Russia used to play the role of a neutral party formally, this time its overt military intervention in the sovereign territory of Georgia meant to enter into an open and direct confrontation.

However, in our opinion only now Georgia was given the chance to finish its establishing as a *state–nation*. Western political values and sharing of them on the civic level, its connection with the faith of our future, gave us the chance to solve and clarify our problems with peace of mind.

### Conclusion

As we have already mentioned, there are numerous literature on conflict issue: books and articles are still written, conferences and public meetings are conducted, and conflicts are discussed in everyday life. Nowadays the most important intellectual challenge is understanding of the basis of the confrontation. Clarification of the essence of the conflict is significantly related to the research of Georgian nationalism issues. As we have seen, its perception is entirely linked to historical challenges. Such research requires a careful and detail study of the issue; therefore the present article doesn't complete the deal with the theme. On the contrary, it may cause additional questions and interest, which requires to be newly researched more and more materials.

However, what we can say from our standpoint? It is obvious that since the nineteenth century Russia has played a negative role in the relation of ethnic groups, living in Georgia. However, belief of Georgian society that the problem is externally generated and it has only a political character is not entirely true. Vakhushti Bagrationi's Description of the Georgian Kingdom, also the revived characters through the literature and verbal icons among the people, shows that at least, since the last decades of the eighteenth century, when the postulates of cultural movement becomes as an ideas of nationalism, Georgian narrative due to some kind of ethno-cultural reasons absorbs negative messages towards Ossetian and Abkhazian population. Ethno-cultural authentication, which primarily aimed to highlight the unity of Georgians, continued in the 19th century,

but at this time more emphasis was on historical-cultural moments and has outlined to the civil ambitions.

For the 20th century, the issue of nationalism can be divided into several phases: 1. In the Soviet period Georgian ethnic nationalism was encouraged, connected with the sense of elitism; 2. In 1990s, after acquisition of independence and subsequent military conflict, ethno-cultural elitism is replaced by patriotic ideas and ideas of protection of homeland borders, in Georgian nationalism, which was prompted primarily by the wish of building a democratic society; 3. *Rose Revolution* became something like turning point for Georgian nationalism from the transforming the old Georgian nationalistic ideas to the new and strong feeling of political identity.

And finally, Russia's negative role in aggravation of Georgian conflicts cannot cover the fact that the Abkhazian and Ossetian people have shared their propaganda, and although, they were acting according to the Russian policy, today this choice is their national position. Although the aforementioned issues are studied on a continuous basis, the sooner the ethno-cultural prejudices are identified, the sooner Georgians will know what they want and where they are going.



KRISTINE MARGARYAN

## AZERBAIJAN'S INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

### Abstract

The Islamic revival in Azerbaijan gave a start to the processes of radicalization and the society's involvement in international terrorism. The radicalization was the result of both domestic and external factors. Under the domestic factors, the study examined the policy measures towards the religious belief and activities, and such external factors as Iranian, North Caucasian and Middle Eastern influences. What analysis has shown is the increased tendency of radicalization. Oppressive policy measures restricted freedoms of the society making them more radicalized. In addition, in line with having imposed restrictions people are becoming more vulnerable to external religious influence. A number of Azerbaijanis continue staying in the ranks of terrorist groups, while others leave the country for reviving the training and afterwards joining the terrorist groups. All those findings suggest that there are prospects of further radicalization, which push the society towards the involvement in international terrorism.

**Keywords:** *International terrorism, Azerbaijan, Salafism, Radicalization, Islamization.*

### Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century international terrorism became a buzzword for citizens, policy makers and for any student of international relations. One of the common conviction among them is that in the extensively interdependent world no country is immune to international terrorism. From this perspective, Azerbaijan is of particular interest, as it appears to be an example of a country with growing radical ideology despite the secular nature of the state. The collapse of the Soviet Union was a turning point as Azerbaijan started to witness Islamic revival, which was followed by further radicalization and involvement in international terrorism.

Religious radicalization in Azerbaijan is poised to become a significant security challenge not only to the country itself, but also to the whole region of the South Caucasus. The issue of religious radicalism was initially perceived by the government as an imported threat, which was in-

fluenced by such external factors as the Islamic Republic of Iran, insurgencies in the North Caucasus and the Middle East. In the course of time, the number of Azerbaijanis taking a more radical stance has increased. It urged the government to take decisive policy measures against rising terrorism. However, government's steps, which were mostly oppressive, proved to be counterproductive. Weak economic conditions and social dissatisfaction, on the other hand, have become domestic factors facilitating the homegrown radicalization process of society.

What the capstone project aims to examine is the role of foreign and domestic factors contributing to the radicalization of Azerbaijan's society, and the prospects of involvement in international terrorism. This is important nowadays, taking into account the possible consequences if radicals gain a strong ground in Azerbaijan. Become Azerbaijan a country with strong-based fundamentalists activities, the South Caucasus can face the threat of terrorism by becoming a transit region or even a target for terrorists. Moreover, Azerbaijan has already experienced the role of a transit country for Chechen terrorists during two Russo-Chechen wars in the 1990s. There were also reported cases, when Azerbaijan invited Afghan mujahedeen to fight in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in the early 1990s. Therefore, the issue poses a direct security threat also in case of large-scale war in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. And last but not least, the concerns over the radicalization of the society have already been on the rise in line with the growing number of Azerbaijani fighters in Syria and Iraq. In case those who fought in the ranks of terrorist groups return back to Azerbaijan, they can not only challenge the stability of the country, but also spread the radical ideology, contributing to the further involvement in international terrorism. Taking all these factors into consideration, this is relevant nowadays to understand what triggers the process of radicalization; especially, how potent the foreign influence is today and whether the policy measures used to contend radicalization serve their aim.

The study has the following structure. The first part introduces the case of Azerbaijan in terrorism, where the turning points are presented from independence to nowadays. The research will be finalized by presenting the collection of data and analyses.

## ***Islamic Revival in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan***

### *Historical background*

Azerbaijan rediscovered Islam after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In search of the new identity, Azerbaijanis appealed to Islam, which was suppressed under the Soviet legacy.<sup>1</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union pushed for the creation of power vacuum and the question of what kind of entity Azerbaijan should become arose. Tackling this question one of the options was the Iranian pattern; namely, the promotion of Islamic revolution and the development of theocratic state.<sup>2</sup> The other option was Turkey's scenario due to the "Azerbaijanis ethnic and language closeness to Turks".<sup>3</sup> While Azerbaijanis were more close to Iran from the religious perspective, they shared the same culture and history with Turkey.<sup>4</sup> Inspired by Turkey's secular legacy, the same pro-Western and pro-Turkic system<sup>5</sup> was embraced in Azerbaijan, which played the role of consolidating ideology.<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding the embracement of Turkey's secular ideology, other countries, such as Arab Gulf Countries and Iran, saw the independence of Azerbaijan as an opportunity to spread their religion and influence.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, not to lose its position, Iran started to strongly support Islamic revival of Shia population in Azerbaijan and their religious feeling with the aim to promote separatist trends in a newly independent state.<sup>8</sup>

One factor promoting Islamic Revival was Azerbaijanis response to enforced atheism by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union left Azerbaijanis with ideological gap, which prompted Azerbaijanis to refer to Islam.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, even the collapse of the Soviet Union did not stop the uncertain-

ty about Azerbaijanis identity, and the void was tried to be filled by Western legacy and culture. To infer, Islam can be considered as a reaction to both Communism and rapid Westernization.<sup>10</sup> Alstadt claims that some Azerbaijanis saw Islam as a means to bring back their historic identity and a matter of piety, while for the others Islam was a guide of morality.<sup>11</sup>

Some internal factors are also considered as reasons for Islamic Revival in Azerbaijan. Some scholars indicate that poverty, unemployment and social inequality more or less influenced on the Azerbaijanis appeal to Islam.<sup>12</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijanis found themselves in economic stagnation and social hardship. Therefore, religious people and mullahs in Azerbaijan started to promote "religion as alternative" to the corruption, nepotism, and socio-economic conditions.<sup>13</sup> Thus, religion was considered as a solution for domestic problems. Education was another source of Islamic revival. Lack of religious education resulted in more interest in religion, which used to be restricted during Soviet times. Therefore, it was not surprising that people of independent Azerbaijan then willingly welcomed missionaries and "experts on Islam".<sup>14</sup> The reasons why more radical patterns of Islam were absent in Azerbaijanis society that time were the Soviet's secular legacy, closeness towards Turkism, multi-ethnicism with its tolerant culture and local traditions,<sup>15</sup> the influence of oil industry and the expansion of western culture.<sup>16</sup> Later on, however, expansion of radicalism and fundamentalism started to be propagated by foreign influences and foreign missionaries.

### ***Factors influencing Islamization and radicalization of Azerbaijan***

In course of time, some radical patterns were noticed in Azerbaijan. Literature divides the factors influencing radicalization into domestic and external ones. As Salayeva and Baranick noted, Azerbaijan is vulnerable nowadays and "is not immune from radicalism".<sup>17</sup> Already in 1990s,

<sup>1</sup> Ansgar Jodick, "Shia Groups and Iranian religious Influence in Azerbaijan: the Impact of Trans-boundary Religious ties on national Religious Policy," *Eurasian Geography and Economic*, (2017); Arzu Geybullayeva, "Radical Islam or Government Paranoia in Azerbaijan?," *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, 93:1, (2017); 9-11; Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union: Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan compared," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways Toward Terrorism and genocide*, 3:1, (2010): 46-61.

<sup>2</sup> Ruffat Sattarov, *Islam, State, and Society in Independent Azerbaijan: Between Historical Legacy and Post-Soviet Reality with Special Reference to Baku and its Environs*, (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2009), 97.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 98; Igor Rotar, "Under the Green Banner: Islamic Radicals in Russia and the Former Soviet Union," *Religion, State and Society*, 30:2, (2010), 89-153.

<sup>4</sup> Rena Salayeva and Michael Baranick, "Addressing Terrorist Threats in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan: Winning Hearts and Minds," *The Cornwallis Group*, (2018), [http://www.ismor.org/cornwallis/cornwallis\\_2005/CX\\_2005\\_11-Baranick-CX-July%2012.pdf](http://www.ismor.org/cornwallis/cornwallis_2005/CX_2005_11-Baranick-CX-July%2012.pdf) (accessed May 27, 2018)

<sup>5</sup> Jodick, *Shia Groups and Iranian religious Influence in Azerbaijan*.

<sup>6</sup> Arzu Geybullayeva, "Is Azerbaijan Becoming a Hub of Radical Islam?" *European Stability Initiative*, (2018); Salayeva and Baranick, *Addressing Terrorist Threats in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan*.

<sup>7</sup> Geybullayeva, "Is Azerbaijan Becoming a Hub of Radical Islam?"; Bogdan Nedea, Sahib Jafarov and Orhan Mamadov, "Radical Islam in Azerbaijan," *Researchgate*, (2012).

<sup>8</sup> Sattarov, *Islam, State, and Society in Independent Azerbaijan*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> William Maley, *The Potential for Terrorism within the Soviet Union in the 21st Century: Terrorism*, 13:1, (2008), 53-64; Jodick, *Shia Groups and Iranian religious Influence in Azerbaijan*; Geybullayeva, "Radical Islam or Government Paranoia in Azerbaijan", 9-11.

<sup>10</sup> Geybullayeva, "Is Azerbaijan Becoming a Hub of Radical Islam?"; Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union", 55; Nedea, Jafarov and Mamadov, "Radical Islam in Azerbaijan".

<sup>11</sup> Audrey Alstadt, *Frustrated Democracy in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*, (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Maya Ehrmann, "The Rise of Militant Salafism in Azerbaijan and its Regional Implications," *Middle East Policy*, 20:3, (2013); Geybullayeva, *Is Azerbaijan Becoming a Hub of Radical Islam?*; Hema Kotecha, "Islamic and Ethnic Identities in Azerbaijan: Emerging Trends and Tensions," OSCE, Baku, (2006).

<sup>13</sup> Vahram Ter-Matevosyan and Nelli Minsayan, "Praying Under Restrictions: Islam, Identity and Social Change in Azerbaijan," *Europe-Asia Studies*, (2017): 819-837.

<sup>14</sup> Geybullayeva, "Is Azerbaijan Becoming a Hub of Radical Islam?"

<sup>15</sup> Salayeva and Baranick, "Addressing Terrorist Threats in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan".

<sup>16</sup> Rotar, "Under the Green Banner," 94-96.

<sup>17</sup> Salayeva and Baranick, *Addressing Terrorist Threats in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan*.



some Azerbaijanis were noticed in various military confrontations taking place in the Caucasus, for instance, in training activities in Khatab camp in Chechnya and Dagestan.<sup>18</sup> Some Azerbaijani radical organizations are known in the country. Those are “al-Jihad”, created in 1995 by an Egyptian; “Hizb ut-Tahrir”, which cell was created in Azerbaijan in 2001; “Forest Brothers”, and “Karabakh Partisans”, involved in a war over Nagorno-Karabakh. Nevertheless, as Sargis Grigoryan noted, underground activities and continuous persecutions do not allow having a complete picture about roots and those, who hold radical Islamic fundamentalist ideas.<sup>19</sup> However, nowadays it is clear, that some external and internal factors, unresolved conflicts all facilitate the creation of fertile soil for radicalization.

### *Domestic factors*

#### *State response to radicalism*

When external influence became noticeable in independent Azerbaijan, the authorities adopted the “Law on Freedom of Religious Belief”, which was to control the activities of religious groups in 1992. Every following amendment imposed greater restrictions on religious groups. The image of Azerbaijani authorities trying to reduce the influence of religious radical groups looks like a justification to use counterterrorism activities and persecution.<sup>20</sup> Being suppressed by the authorities, religious groups take a more radical stance and strengthened their influence. According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom’s (USCIRF) annual report of 2017, “Increasing authoritarianism... and suppression... [have] fostered the emergence of a religious political opposition that the government has sought to discredit by linking it to terrorism....”<sup>21</sup> The repressions and restrictions became not only stricter after 9/11<sup>22</sup>, but also let the authorities legitimize their actions as counterterrorism.<sup>23</sup> The suppression only strengthened the thoroughness of reli-

giosity among people<sup>24</sup>, which then became a factor leading to the radicalization of the society, since “violence triggers violence”.<sup>25</sup> During the first influx of Salafists in Azerbaijan, the authorities of the country tolerated their presence, however, the period from 2001-2003 became a turning point, as the authorities started to persecute followers of Salafism.<sup>26</sup> As proof, in 2001 the state authorities initiated an unofficial campaign against the followers of Salafi group. As the majority of followers were Chechens, the government tried to suppress them by creating poor conditions for Chechen refugees. Moreover, regional police was ordered to shut down the mosques and oppress Salafists by any necessary means.<sup>27</sup> Those oppressive measures made Valiyev claim that Azerbaijan may soon be threatened by terrorism. Geybulla, in its turn, states that Azerbaijan will soon face the threat of domestically emerged militant radical Salafism. Wilhelmsen points out, that radical branch of Islamism seems to be “the most potent ideology of resistance.”

The deterioration of secularity stemmed from further amendments in 2009 over religious law, which regulated all religious activities in the country, which in its turn resulted in increase of arrests and sanctions on religious groups.<sup>28</sup> The restrictions even touched such Islamic manifestations as long beards, headscarves and the right of mosques to carry out call for prayers (*azan*).<sup>29</sup> Later on, some amendments were presented over control of religious books and materials.

State response has indiscriminate character, targeting all activists of a particular group, which resulted in further its radicalization.<sup>30</sup> Harsh treatment of security forces was an important factor in pushing the society towards extremism. Beating, burning and shaving the beards of Salafi followers was counter-productive, which created fertile ground for radicalization.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Sargis Grigoryan, *Islamakan armatakanutyuny Kovkasum*, (in Armenian) [Islamic Radicalism in the Caucasus], (Yerevan: Yerevan State University Publishing, 2017), 67.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 67-69

<sup>20</sup> Julie Wilhelmsen, “Islamism in Azerbaijan: How Potent?,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32:8, (2009): 726-742; Geybulla, *Radical Islam or Government Paranoia in Azerbaijan*, 9-11; Anar Valiyev, “Foreign Terrorist Groups and Rise of Home-grown Radicalism in Azerbaijan,” *Journal of Human Security*, (2008): 95-112.

<sup>21</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Annual Report 2017: Azerbaijan Chapter*, <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Azerbaijan.2017.pdf> (accessed December 7, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Souleimanov and Ehrmann, *The Rise of Militant Salafism in Azerbaijan and its Regional Implications*.

<sup>23</sup> Wilhelmsen, *Islamism in Azerbaijan*, 732.

<sup>24</sup> Ter-Matevosyan and Minsayan, *Praying Under Restrictions*; Valiyev, “Foreign Terrorist Groups and Rise of Home-grown Radicalism in Azerbaijan”; Grigoryan, *Radicalism in the Caucasus*, 67.

<sup>25</sup> Wilhelmsen, *Islamism in Azerbaijan*, 732-734; Karagiannis, “Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union,” 55; Geybulla, *Radical Islam or Government Paranoia in Azerbaijan*, 13-15.

<sup>26</sup> Anar Valiyev, “The Rise of Salafi Islam in Azerbaijan,” *Terrorism Monitor*, 3:13, (2005), <https://jamestown.org/program/the-rise-of-salafi-islam-in-azerbaijan/> (accessed December 7, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Geybulla, *Radical Islam or Government Paranoia in Azerbaijan*, 13-15.

<sup>29</sup> Ter-Matevosyan and Minsayan, *Praying Under Restrictions*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*; Salayeva and Baranick, *Addressing Terrorist Threats in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan*; Wilhelmsen, *Islamism in Azerbaijan*, 732-734.

<sup>31</sup> Geybulla, *Radical Islam or Government Paranoia in Azerbaijan*; Kotecha, *Islamic and Ethnic Identities in Azerbaijan*.

## External Influences

### *Iranian Influence*

Iranian influence posits a Shia “threat”. Many scholars consider Iranian factor as a reason for radicalization of Azerbaijani society. Shia Muslims comprise the majority of Azerbaijani society, living mostly in the south, Absheron peninsula with Nardaran village as its stronghold and the regions around Baku. Some slogans from Quran are even noticeable in Nardaran with content of “Muslims must become the soldiers of Islam and they should defend Islam”.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Lenkaran district, just on the Iranian border, get broadcasts of religious programs from Iran.<sup>33</sup>

One way Iran exerted radical patterns of Islam was by cultural representation, such as Organization of Islamic Propaganda, Ministry of Culture, embassies, the Khomeini Relief Committee, etc. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s many religious schools were opened, where mostly the literature about glorification of Islam and Iran was promoted.<sup>34</sup> Since the Southern part of the region is considered as the most religious one, one can find even Iranian books in the local markets. The increasing number of foreign, Iranian-trained missionaries were noticeable, who undertook their activities to propagate the Iranian model. Azerbaijanis were receiving scholarships, which let them attend seminars and universities in Iran.

Indoctrination of imams and humanitarian assistance were other ways of rooting radicalism in Azerbaijan’s society from Iran. One aspect of Iran’s strategy towards Azerbaijan was to place Iranian trained mullahs as heads of mosques in Azerbaijan, which would help to strengthen Iranian influence.<sup>35</sup> One example was Juma Mosque, which was considered as a center of Shia activism with Imam Ilgar Ibrahimoglu as a head of mosque. It should be mentioned that he, being an Iranian-educated cleric himself, was promoting Iran’s position and Islamic principles with the aim to imbed Iranian theocracy in Azerbaijan (European Foundation for Democracy, 2015). Many young people followed Ibrahimoglu due to his ability to connect Islamic roots and principles with modern democratic values and norms (Geybullayeva, 2018).

The Islamic Party of Azerbaijan (IPA) created in 1991, was also the result of Iranian influence and was seen as the main source of radical Shia

Islam. Its aim was, as other objects of Iranian influence, to export the Islamic revolution, its principles into neighboring Azerbaijan. Some members of IPA were even accused of spying for Iran, which led to declare the party unconstitutional, accusing it of mixing religion and politics, which contradicts the secular legacy of Azerbaijan.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, the party refused to get registration in 1995 and its leaders were arrested. Scholars claim that IPA explicitly called for the Islamic state’s establishment due to its promotion of the governance based on Sharia law and anti-Western ideology, and attempted to bring religion into politics of Azerbaijan. IPA usually used anti-Armenian rhetoric and even advocated for Nagorno-Karabagh conflict solution militarily.<sup>37</sup> Although IPA was considered as a strong means for promotion of Iranian revolution, it failed to mobilize the population and did not have mass followers.<sup>38</sup> However, besides party’s weaknesses it succeeded in a certain extent. Due to its activities and propaganda, Islamic ideology became more visible in the state and many women, for example, started to dress following Islamic traditions.

Some claim that the dissolution of IPA party can be considered as an end to Iranian influence in Azerbaijan and nowadays “Iran has no significant religious influence in Azerbaijan”.<sup>39</sup> According to them, much greater danger comes from Salafism/Wahhabism movement. Geybullayeva states that although Salafism nowadays constitute significant danger, Iranian influence and Iranian version of radical Islam should not be underestimated.<sup>40</sup>

### *North Caucasus and Middle East influence: Salafism/Wahhabism*

Salafism posits a Sunni “threat” in Azerbaijan. According to Sargis Grigoryan, the increasing number of Sunnis is one of the reasons of radicalization of the society, as they are more inclined to fundamentalist radical ideas.<sup>41</sup> While the South of Azerbaijan is considered as a territory of Shia Muslims, Sunnis are mostly present in the North and Baku. Here concentrated Salafists/Wahhabis are seen as radical branch of Sunni Islam, which are supported by Gulf countries and North Caucasus. Although two notions are not very much the same, literature uses them in-

<sup>32</sup> Geybullayeva, “Is Azerbaijan Becoming a Hub of Radical Islam?”

<sup>33</sup> Kotecha, “Islamic and Ethnic Identities in Azerbaijan.”

<sup>34</sup> Anar Valiyev, “Azerbaijan: Islam in a Post-Soviet Republic,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 9:4, (2005): 1-13.

<sup>35</sup> European Foundation for Democracy, “Secularism in Azerbaijan and the Threat of Radicalization in the region,” (2015), [https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/Secularism\\_in\\_Azerbaijan\\_June%202015.pdf](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/Secularism_in_Azerbaijan_June%202015.pdf) (accessed December 7, 2018); Souleimanov and Ehrmann, “The Rise of Militant Salafism in Azerbaijan and its Regional Implications.”

<sup>36</sup> European Foundation for Democracy, “Secularism in Azerbaijan and the Threat of Radicalization in the region, 38; Rotar, “Under the Green Banner”; Salayeva and Baranick, “Addressing Terrorist Threats in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan”.

<sup>37</sup> Nedeia, Jafarov and Mamadov, “Radical Islam in Azerbaijan”.

<sup>38</sup> European Foundation for Democracy, “Secularism in Azerbaijan; Salayeva and Baranick, “Addressing Terrorist Threats in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.”

<sup>39</sup> Rotar, “Under the Green Banner,” 144-147.

<sup>40</sup> Geybullayeva, “Is Azerbaijan Becoming a Hub of Radical Islam?”

<sup>41</sup> Grigoryan, *Islamic Radicalism in the Caucasus*.



terchangeably. Salafism/Wahhabism is considered as a significant danger and a great reason of radicalization of Azerbaijanis society. As it was in Iranian scenario, here also charities played a major role in rooting and promoting Wahhabism.<sup>42</sup> The main charities came from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Interestingly, not all Salafists consider themselves as members of radical branch. Militant Salafists (*Kharijites*) advocate violence as a means of achieving Islamic state, while moderate Salafists limit their activities to preaching and discussions.<sup>43</sup>

Literature identifies three phases of Salafists influx to Azerbaijan. The first influx followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first Russo-Chechen war accompanied by penetration of missionaries from the Gulf countries and terrorists from North Caucasus in Azerbaijan. Salafists of first influx took an advantage from catastrophe created by the war over Nagorno-Karabakh, which allowed them to advance and strengthen their radical agenda.

The second wave of Salafists penetration took place after the second Russo-Chechen war by influx of jihadi fighters to the South Caucasus, mainly to Azerbaijan and Georgia. This time the main source of radicalism was Chechen refugees.<sup>44</sup> The significance of this phase was that the most refugees were warlords and wounded fighters, who developed among Azerbaijani society the image of "heroic Chechen warrior"<sup>45</sup>, which later became a facilitating source of radicalism.

The third phase gave a start to the phenomenon of radicalization of Azerbaijani society due to the 1997 construction of the Abu Bakr mosque with Suleymanov, Saudi Arabian educated man as its Imam. The construction of Abu Bakr mosque itself became the epicenter of recruitment. However, the mosque was closed in 2008 due to the terrorist attack there.<sup>46</sup> The strategy of the mosque was more delicate than that of Juma mosque of Shias. Their focus was not politics as in Juma mosque's case, rather they focused on morality and habits. Abu Bakr community promoted return to values and not dissolution of a government, at least in public discourse.

While during their first appearance in Azerbaijan Salafi followers were from ethnic minorities, recently it was found out that Azerbaijan-born

<sup>42</sup> David Lonardo, "The Islamic State and the Connections to historical Networks of Jihadism in Azerbaijan," *Caucasus Survey*, (2016): 239-260.; Souleimanov and Ehrmann, "The Rise of Militant Salafism in Azerbaijan and its Regional Implications".

<sup>43</sup> Valiyev, "Foreign Terrorist Groups"; Rovshan Ibrahimov, "The Participation of Azerbaijan Citizens in Conflicts in Syria and Iraq and its Potential radicalization Effect in Azerbaijan" in *Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism Among Youth to Prevent Terrorism*, ed. Marco Lombardi, Iman Ragab and Vivienne Chin, (IOS Press, 2018), 164-169.

<sup>44</sup> Nedea, Jafarov and Mamadov, "Radical Islam in Azerbaijan"; Souleimanov and Ehrmann, "The Rise of Militant Salafism in Azerbaijan and its Regional Implications", 118.

<sup>45</sup> Nedea, Jafarov and Mamadov, *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Ibrahimov, "The Participation of Azerbaijan Citizens in Conflicts," 165; Valiyev, "The Rise of Salafi Islam in Azerbaijan".

people also appeal to Salafism.<sup>47</sup> As the ways of recruitment to Salafism, the research done by OSCE showed that parents themselves sometimes send children to learn Islamic culture and religion as a counterweight to the Western behavior and Western culture introduced by the TV.

### Connections with terrorist networks as external influence

#### *State sponsored terrorism during Nagorno-Karabakh conflict*

During the 1992-1994 war in Nagorno-Karabakh many Chechen and Afghan terrorists were involved in military confrontation on Azerbaijan's side. Attempts were made by Azerbaijani authorities to recruit fighters and mercenaries from other states, mainly Islamic ones, to involve them in a war over Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>48</sup> As of 1992, around 300 Chechen fighters were noticed in a war. The first transportation of Chechen fighters in Baku took place in 1990s. Those fighters were paid 600-1000 Rubles every month.<sup>49</sup> According to Hayk Demoyan, the main pushing force of Chechens to Karabakh battlefield was the Islamic and Caucasian solidarity sentiment, and the proximity of the insurgency region to Chechnya. On the other hand, also noted by Demoyan, it is probable that recruitment of foreign mercenaries was a matter of cooperation, based on which Azerbaijan was to transfer weaponry to Chechnya.<sup>50</sup>

After the war waged between Chechnya and Russia, many Chechen fighters returned back. This time, Azerbaijan appealed to Afghan fighters. Involvement of Afghan mujahedeen in the war over Nagorno-Karabakh activated the spiral of terrorist organizations' presence in Azerbaijan. A claim of recruitment of Afghan mujahedeen was "in support of Muslim Azerbaijan".<sup>51</sup> Sources indicate different number of Afghan fighters ranging from 1500 to 3000. Azerbaijan was noted as a territory serving the international mujahedeen, having connections with terrorist groups.<sup>52</sup> Presence of so-called "Arab veterans" had been noticed in the battlefield. Being involved in a war and supported by Azerbaijani authorities, a number of terrorists and mercenaries took roots in the country, and created their own networks.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 50-53.

<sup>48</sup> Hayk Demoyan, *The Islamic Mercenaries in Karabakh War*, (Yerevan: 2004)

<sup>49</sup> Ioannis Charalampidis, *Sponsored to kill. Mercenaries and Terrorist Networks in Azerbaijan I*, (MIA Publishers, 2013) 4.

<sup>50</sup> Demoyan, *The Islamic Mercenaries in Karabakh War*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Charalampidis, *Sponsored to kill*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Grigoryan, *Islamic Radicalism in the Caucasus*, 66.

*Azerbaijanis in Syria and Iraq*

## ISIS

Lack of closeness and lack of common borders with Syria and Iraq did not prevent Azerbaijan from being affected by events. According to Sargis Grigoryan, Syrian events and the establishment of ISIS influenced Azerbaijanis' radicalization.<sup>54</sup> The number of Azerbaijanis involved in a conflict varies from different sources. Leonardo asserts that the first wave of Azerbaijani fighters had previously been connected with other jihadi networks. Some had been members of "Muhajirin Brigadem", "Karabakh Partisans", fighters in Chechnya, the "Tabuk jamaat", etc.<sup>55</sup>

Involvement of Azerbaijanis in Syrian conflict is an interesting phenomenon. First, radical Islam is becoming more visible in Azerbaijan due to their participation in the conflict. Second, it was the first time when Azerbaijanis participated in a military confrontation having a religious ground outside of their own country.<sup>56</sup> Azerbaijani Salafists were inspired by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's announcement about the creation of the Islamic State (ISIS)<sup>57</sup>, and their involvement in ISIS was a collective decision. Joining the ranks of ISIS was seen by Salafists as an opportunity to bring changes in their country.

One possible reason of Azerbaijanis involvement is the phenomenon of *sacred jihad* (holy war), which is explained as "elevation of a warrior to the status of *shahid* (martyr)".<sup>58</sup> Therefore, involvement in jihad was one reason of Azerbaijanis involvement. Another motivating reason was Azerbaijanis' desire to be part of ISIS and participation in the creation of *Caliphate*. Third reason regards financial opportunities, according to which foreign fighters were paid for fighting. Some believe that new members were recruited by radical, militant Salafists by offering financial support. Therefore, it should not be surprising why young uneducated and untrained people were noticed among militants. Joining terrorist group also gives this segment of population an opportunity of self-expression and improvement of social status.

Regarding geographical issues, the lack of common border was not such an issue. Azerbaijani citizens can reach Syria and Iraq only by crossing Georgia and Iran. In reality, citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan do not need to have entry visa to cross the borders when entering these countries, which means that they are free of legal obstacles.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.<sup>55</sup> Leonardo, *The Islamic State and the Connections*.<sup>56</sup> Ibrahimov, *The Participation of Azerbaijan Citizens*, 164-169.<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 166-167; Leonardo, *The Islamic State and the Connections*.<sup>58</sup> Ibrahimov, *The Participation of Azerbaijan Citizens*, 164-169.

Little information exists about sources of recruitment. However, it seems that ISIS recruitment was mainly done by the internet, especially when several new pages were created online in 2012, when its official website al-Hayat started its propaganda in Turkish language.<sup>59</sup> One domestic propagator of ISIS was Omar Abu Mucahid, whose lectures praised ISIS and its founders, and called for jihad. In 2014, Azerbaijanis themselves were posting photos in the Internet, where they destroy their passports and identification cards.<sup>60</sup> On 24 May of 2016 IS released video, which was directed specifically to Azerbaijanis. It was entitled as "Message From the Lands of the Ribat to Occupied Azerbaijan"<sup>61</sup>, with Abdulla Kavkazskiy as a speaker, who called for joining ISIS or conducting attacks in Azerbaijan.

*Al-Qaeda*

Some claim that al-Qaeda created its network in Azerbaijan; there is a belief that Azerbaijani mujahedeens were supported by al-Qaeda's office established in Baku during the war with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh from 1988-1994. For instance, Charalampidis indicates that one of al-Qaeda's cells was established in Baku in 1995.<sup>62</sup> However, there are no existing facts showing the presence of al-Qaeda in Azerbaijan; instead, Azerbaijan was used as an appropriate geographical territory for communication. After 9/11 neutralizing al-Qaeda's cells became a fashionable sign to show a country's importance to the anti-terrorism coalition. Azerbaijan also followed that scenario. Azerbaijani media posted information about al-Qaeda's intention to conduct attacks in Azerbaijan because of its involvement in anti-terrorism coalition. However, Azerbaijan is not so attractive for al-Qaeda, and will not bring much benefit. The only target that can be of interest is Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, the US and Israeli embassies.<sup>63</sup>

*The case of assassination attempt on Russia's president Vladimir Putin in Azerbaijan*

The first noted assassination attempt on Vladimir Putin was prepared in Azerbaijan in the end of 2000 during his trip to South Caucasus although the war in North Caucasus was going on. Being only six months in the office, Azerbaijan was considered as the first country for a visit. The mission towards the support of Chechnya has already been established in Azerbaijan, where terrorists have got a foothold. While envis-

<sup>59</sup> Leonardo, *"The Islamic State and the Connection's"*.<sup>60</sup> Ibid.<sup>61</sup> Ibid.<sup>62</sup> Charalampidis, *Sponsored to kill*, 4.<sup>63</sup> Valiyev, "Foreign Terrorist Groups"



aging the president's visit, the Alley of Heroes was supposed to become a place for assassination, which V. Putin would obviously have to visit.

A terrorist being in charge of the terrorist act was a citizen of Iraq born in 1974, so called Chanan Ahmed Rustam, also known as "Abdurrahman Bukhari, Abu Sayyid Al Kurdi, Magomedov Kanan Ahmedovich".<sup>64</sup> Being already noticed in May 2000 by the Azerbaijanis National Security Services, with the joined actions of Russian Intelligence Services Rustam was detected when making a call to Khattab. He was a professional terrorist with received trainings from al-Qaeda camps, being responsible for several terrorist acts in Pakistan and Afghanistan, who later on turned out to be a trainer of explosive acts. The assassination was planned to be through the one call: the newest bomb systems were imported in Azerbaijan, which were linked to a mobile phone SIM cards. It should be mentioned that the mobile phones in 2000 were considered as luxury items. As planned, the Alley of Heroes would have to be exploded by one phone call. This is the unique and a demonstrative example, which shows that already in 2000 Azerbaijan was a hub for terrorists. Probably this is not the only case, while the significant one, proving the statements of many scholars that Azerbaijan was a territory for communication between terrorists.

### *Analysis of domestic factors*

#### *Content analysis of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Freedom of Religious Belief"*

The law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Freedom of Religious Belief" was first introduced in 1992, and later been amended twenty times between 1992 and 2015. The year of 2009 can be considered as a turning point in government activities, as the authorities came to suppress the religion with more restrictions by adopting new amendments on 8 May 2009. The further restrictive amendments have been introduced also in October 2015 with new provisions.

There are some contradictions in the law itself. According to the law, the Muslim Caucasus Board (MCB) is the entity, which all mosques should belong to. This provision contradicts Article 5, which states "Religion and religious organizations are separate from the state in the Republic of Azerbaijan...".<sup>65</sup> Then, Article 6 states "the state educational system is separate from religion...religious philosophy and basis of sacred religious books

<sup>64</sup> "Assassination Attempt: How Muslim Terrorists Planned to Kill the Russian President in Azerbaijan," *Vesti.ru*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2997443> (accessed October 7, 2018).

<sup>65</sup> Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On Freedom of Religious Beliefs, (1992), [https://www.ecol.net/en/file/local/1399923/1226\\_1495184122\\_azerbaijan-law-freedom-religious-beliefs-1992-am2015-en.pdf](https://www.ecol.net/en/file/local/1399923/1226_1495184122_azerbaijan-law-freedom-religious-beliefs-1992-am2015-en.pdf) (accessed October 7, 2018).

may be included in the curricula of the state educational institutions".<sup>66</sup> However, no other option is available in case those teachings are against a person's and his/her parents' religion and beliefs, which contradicts Article 1, according to which "[parents] may educate their children in accordance with their religion or their attitude towards religion".<sup>67</sup> The religious literature, audio and video materials must be controlled under the religion law. The Article 22 claims that "organizations, and other natural and legal persons who are not religious organizations, may produce, import, export and freely disseminate religious literature, items and other information materials".<sup>68</sup> However, the right of distribution of literature is allowed only with the permission of a relevant state body (State Committee).

Much attention was devoted to the registration of the religious organizations under the 2009 amendments. This was illustrated in Article 12, which requires the registration of the religious organizations, otherwise they are considered as illegal. Any manifestation of freedom of religion by more than one person is seen illegal without state permission. The amendments of 2011 of Article 12 went further stating that only those religious organizations having 50 founding members (not 10 members as it used to be) could have a registration, meaning that those without this amount of members would not be considered eligible for applying for registration. While besides the submission of information about citizenship, dates of birth of founding members, copies of identity cards, Article 12 also requires the religious organization to present the information about the future activities and their methods and their objectives. However, the law does not indicate what are the indicators of making decisions to provide the registration or reject it. Moreover, no point about possibility to appeal the decision exists; what Article 12 only claims is "religious organizations denied state registration shall be informed of the reasons for this, citing relevant legislative provisions".<sup>69</sup> The time required for making the decision is not indicated also. Additionally, religious organizations can perform religious activities only at legally registered address, and would face punishment if build or reconstruct religious buildings without the consent of the State Committee.

There are also extra restrictions for Muslim community. According to 2015 amendments, Article 7 of the Law on Religion states that all Islamic communities must "present a report on their activity"<sup>70</sup> with details about their actions and finances. However, the law does not specify how often an organization should present the report. Article 21 claims that non-citizens of Azerbaijan and those citizens of the country who received foreign education are prohibited to perform Islamic activities and rituals.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

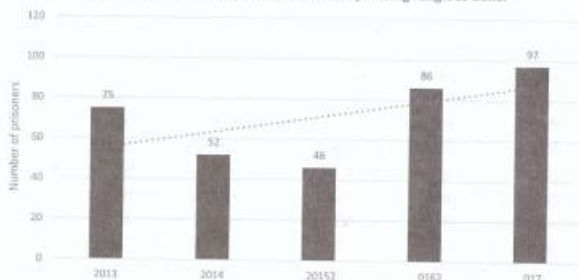
<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

### Measuring the religiosity of Azerbaijan's society

To understand the dynamics of the government repressive policies, Figure 1. is presented to show the number of imprisonments for religious belief by years. The numbers of prisoners of 2014, 2015, 2016 years are taken from "Azerbaijan 2014 International Religious Freedom Report"<sup>71</sup>, "Azerbaijan 2015 International Religious Freedom Report"<sup>72</sup>, "Azerbaijan 2016 International Religious Freedom Report"<sup>73</sup>, and from "The Working Group on Unified List of Political Prisoners Presents Updated List"<sup>74</sup> for the data of 2017, and "Azerbaijan: an Updated List of Political Prisoners" for the data of 2013.<sup>75</sup>

Figure 1. illustrates the deterioration of the situation in Azerbaijan, as the tendency of increased number of imprisonments for religious belief has been identified. While the number of prisoners decreased from 2014 to 2015, probably the amendments presented in 2015 triggered the increase of number of imprisonments. In addition, the press release of "The Working Group on Unified List of Political Prisoners Presents Updated List"<sup>76</sup> (2018) states that as of March 22, 2018, 83 people were imprisoned expressing freedom of religion.

Figure 1. Number of Imprisonments for expressing religious belief



<sup>71</sup> United States Department of State, "Azerbaijan 2014 International Religious Freedom Report," <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238568.pdf> (accessed May 7, 2018).

<sup>72</sup> United States Department of State, "Azerbaijan 2015 International Religious Freedom Report," <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/256377.pdf> (accessed May 8, 2018).

<sup>73</sup> United States Department of State, "Azerbaijan 2016 International Religious Freedom Report," <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/269034.pdf> (accessed May 12, 2018).

<sup>74</sup> "The Working Group on Unified List of Political Prisoners Presents Updated List 2018," *Smdaz.org*, August 27, 2017, <https://smdaz.org/en/the-working-group-on-unified-list-of-political-prisoners-presents-updated-list/> (accessed December 7, 2018).

<sup>75</sup> "Azerbaijan: an Updated List of Political Prisoners," *Civic Solidarity*, October 1, 2013, <http://www.civicsolidarity.org/article/800/azerbaijan-updated-list-political-prisoners> (accessed October 7, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> The Working Group on Unified List of Political Prisoners Presents Updated List 2018

While the above presented data illustrates the increase of restrictions and imprisonments for expressing religious belief, it does not show the extent to which the society is referring to religion. For that, the data is gathered from Caucasus Barometer<sup>77</sup> of the years from 2009 to 2013, which identifies the level of religiosity of the Azerbaijan's society. To measure the religiosity five variables – the importance of religion life in a daily life, importance of following traditions, attendance of religious services, the extent to which the respondents perceive themselves as religious people and trust towards religious institutions – have been chosen.

Figure 2. The level of religiosity of the society

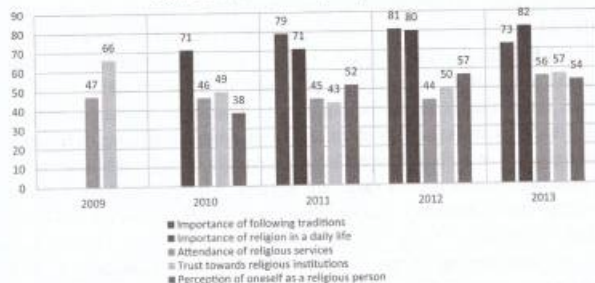


Figure 2. reveals that the religion among the society of Azerbaijan has become an important element in their life, as the number of respondents, who perceives the religion as an important element of their daily life has increased from 2010 (71%) to 2013 (82%). This fact has been accompanied by the increase of the level of attendance of religious services whether it is more than once a month or only on religious holidays, showing the rise from 47% as of 2009 to 56% as of 2013. The same tendency concerns the importance of following the traditions. This can be considered another proof of increased level of religiosity of Azerbaijan's society. The tendency of trust towards religious institutions is also an interesting phenomenon. The highest rate of trust towards religious institutions was in 2009 with 66%. Probably this number was dictated by the adoption of new 2009 amendments of the "Law on Freedom of Religious Belief". While the number dropped in 2010 (49%), there is still a tendency of increase as of 2013. Finally, the same tendency is observed regarding the society's perception of being religious. The number of those

<sup>77</sup> Caucasus Research Resource Centers, *Caucasus Barometer*, <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/> (accessed October 7, 2018).



perceiving themselves as religious ones rose systematically from 2010 to 2013, reaching 57% of those identifying themselves as religious people.

### *Analysis of external influences*

#### *Azerbaijanis in Syria and Iraq*

On 3 March of 2017 a conference "The role of youth in the fight against terrorism, extremism and radicalism" was held in Azerbaijan.<sup>78</sup> According to the State Security Service Lieutenant General Madat Guliyev, around 900 Azerbaijanis have been fighting in the ranks of ISIS. As he also reported, 85 people were condemned on terrorist activities, as of 2016, 54 Azerbaijani citizens were stripped of citizenship for joining the terrorist fight in Syria and Iraq.<sup>79</sup> In addition, he also admitted, that radicalism has becoming a widespread phenomenon in Azerbaijan.

An interesting trend is the significant number of women aiming to travel to Syria with their children and those women refusing to return to Azerbaijan even if their husbands had been killed. Although there is not an estimated number, such cases are not few. Many cases have been reported in 2014. Recently, Kavkaz Uzel media outlet reported about 300 killed Azerbaijani citizens and more than 100 Azerbaijani families with children still staying in the ranks of ISIS.<sup>80</sup> On 19 February of 2018, Azerbaijani media informed that 11 women were sentenced to life in jail for being in the ranks of ISIS, one of whom was an Azerbaijani woman.<sup>81</sup> As women claimed, they were forced to join ISIS by their husbands, who pretended to be wounded. As one of the women stated "I wanted to live in an Islamic state where sharia is the law of the land,"<sup>82</sup> According to media reports, ISIS pays money to those, who wants to bring his/her family in Syria and Iraq.<sup>83</sup> As noted, now Azerbaijani children replenish the ranks of ISIS.

Media also covers the cases of those, who received training outside of Azerbaijan within ISIS and were involved in the operations of creating

<sup>78</sup> "State Security Officer: More Than 900 Azerbaijanis in the Ranks of ISIS," *Meydan TV*, March 7, 2017, <https://www.meydan.tv/en/site/news/21656/> (accessed March 15, 2018).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> "Vlasti Obyavili o Gibeli na Blizhnem Vostoke Bolee 300 Azerbaizhancev," (in Russian) [The authorities announced the death of more than 300 Azerbaijanis in the Middle East], *Kavkaz Uzel*, January 29, 2018, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/315784/> (accessed May 7, 2018).

<sup>81</sup> "Turkish, Azerbaijani Women Sentenced to Life in Prison for Collaborating with ISIL," *News.az*, February 19, 2018, <https://news.az/articles/society/129135> (accessed April 28, 2018).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> "Uchyonie Nazvali Prichiny Radikalizatsii Molodyozhi Yuzhnogo Kavkaza," (in Russian), [The Scientists named the reasons of the youth radicalization in South Caucasus] *Kavkaz Uzel*, March 23, 2018, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/318200/> (accessed April 29, 2018).

new armed group.<sup>84</sup> After getting trained, they joined the battlefield, fighting in the ranks of terrorist groups. In June 2014, APA reported about Islamic passports that ISIS had started to distribute to its militant members. According to the report, there are also Azerbaijanis, who had already obtained Islamic passports.<sup>85</sup> It became clear when the photos of those passports started to appear on social networks. Moreover, in line with new Islamic passports, the ISIS members shared photos tearing their previous Azerbaijani passports, illustrating that they were not inclined to return to Azerbaijan.

Such cases when Azerbaijanis were noticed fighting or having links to terrorist groups are immense. Repeatedly the media in Azerbaijan reports and makes publications where Azerbaijani fighters, even being killed, had been identified. What above presented cases illustrate, is that no Azerbaijani citizen fought for the government, despite Shi'a being the majority in Azerbaijan. Rather, based on media reports, all Azerbaijanis fought in the ranks of rebel groups, particularly within ISIS.

Some Azerbaijani fighters appeared to find themselves in dire economic conditions before they joined terrorist groups. Not being able to provide a well-being to his/her family, people joined the ranks of terrorist groups. However, another phenomenon has also appeared in case of Azerbaijani fighters. It illustrates that some fighters had better economic conditions and good educational backgrounds, when left the country. In this case, the motivation differs from the previous case.

Azerbaijani citizens continue staying in the ranks of terrorist organizations. Those remaining constitute a danger in case they return to Azerbaijan. First, when combating military operations, Azerbaijanis, fighting in the ranks of terrorist organizations, have become indoctrinated about the ISIS ideology, established the networks with jihadists whom they met during military activities, know about training methods- all these may trigger further radicalization and the spread of jihadist ideology. Second, those, who may return to their homeland, would return with knowledge of use of military weapons and military expertise. This may become an open window for creating new terrorist cells. What is clear, is that while the impact of the rise of terrorist groups, such as ISIS, is evident, the motivating factors of joining the ranks of military groups stay not well-understood.

<sup>84</sup> *Turkish, Azerbaijani Women Sentenced to Life in Prison for Collaborating with ISIL.*

<sup>85</sup> "ISIS Issues Passports to Azerbaijani Fighters in Syria," *APA*, 2014, <http://en.apa.az/azerbajani-news/developments/isis-issues-passports-to-azerbajani-fighters-in-syria-photo.html> (accessed May 2, 2018).

*Iranian influence today*

As already mentioned after gaining independence in 1991, many Muslim countries tried to spread their influence over Azerbaijan. The Iranian influence nowadays worth to be examined. The religious activities sponsored by Iran are considered successful by many scholars. According to both official and nonofficial data, nowadays there are 150 madrassas, 22 of which are controlled by Iran.<sup>85</sup> Besides those, there are also 8 representative institutions of Iran.

The process of radicalization was more vivid during so called "Nardaran case". The rural region of Nardaran on the Absheron peninsula is considered as the most religious one, which is influenced by Iran. The data taken from Caucasus Barometer presented in Table 1. shows that the level of religiosity is more robust in rural areas, rather than in capital or in urban territories. Therefore, Nardaran is considered as a significant example of a region under the external influence, in this case, Iran.

Table 1. Importance of religion by types of settlement

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Capital	28%	30%	23%	22%
Urban	32%	36%	37%	29%
Rural	41%	34%	40%	49%

People of this region are often involved in clashes with authorities, out of which most notably one is the protest against the ban of headscarves, an action, which provoked conservative inhabitants. In response to this decision, and also because of repression of Shia community, the radical Salafi inhabitants organized mass demonstrations. On November 26 of 2015 Azerbaijani forces organized a raid in Nardaran, during which 5 inhabitants and 2 policemen were killed, and many protesters were put in a jail for 10-20 years. After the amendments had been adopted in 2009, many mosques in Nardaran did not get the registration, because of which were closed. However, after the raid of 2015, other mosques also were closed. The only one, which get the registration was Juma mosque.

In 2013 Azerbaijan eased off the restrictions over the preaching in public places. The actions aimed at limiting the flow of Azerbaijanis in Syria and Iraq. However, it also contributed to Iran's reaction and increase of its influence. According to Azerbaijan Iran is working towards recruiting Azerbaijani society to visit the holy city Karbala in Iraq. In ad-

dition, as estimated, the number of pilgrims increased by 33%, counting for around 30,000 Azerbaijanis during 2017<sup>87</sup>, although it cannot be stated that there were no any other intervening variables motivating people to visit Karbala.

In addition, children have been noticed participating in Ashura celebration and rituals such as self-flagellation. It is hardly likely that those children, wearing hijab, have a clear understanding of their religion. Such actions contribute to the radicalization of the society. The legislation was proposed over prohibiting the involvement of children in such ceremonies as Ashura. However, the idea has been criticized by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who commented "We should appreciate this great opportunity and the glorious mourning ceremonies of the Shiites in Azerbaijan, because they will strengthen the identity of Azerbaijan's nation and country".<sup>88</sup>

All these actions show the tendency of Iran's increased influence. What should be mentioned is that in line with having oppressive measures and indiscriminate persecution, people are becoming more vulnerable to external religious influence, which is proved both by the increased level of persecutions, religiosity and external influence in the face of Iran and Syria and Iraq. Therefore, the internal factor of oppressive policies push the Azerbaijani society towards looking for other means of expressing their religion, while the external influence fuels the willingness and involvement in international terrorism is seen as the best alternative for the Azerbaijani society.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the present study confirms that there are both domestic and external factors influencing the religiosity and radicalization of Azerbaijan's society. It seems that the stages of Islamization, radicalization and involvement in international terrorism are visible in case of Azerbaijan. The revival of Islam in the country was the result of ideological gap and suppressed religion under the Soviet legacy. Later on, being influenced by Iran, missionaries penetrated from Gulf countries and jihadi fighters from Chechnya after Russo-Chechen wars, Azerbaijani society witnessed the increase in radicalization, which later on pushed them towards the involvement in international terrorism.

<sup>87</sup> "Azerbaijan Wrestles with Rising Iranian Influence," *Eurasianet*, December 27, 2017, <https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-wrestles-with-rising-iranian-influence> (accessed May 4, 2018).

<sup>88</sup> "We Must Solemnly Oppose Disruption of Iran-Azerbaijan Fraternal Relations," *Khamenei.ir*, November 2, 2017, <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/5253/We-must-solemnly-oppose-disruption-of-Iran-Azerbaijan-fraternal> (accessed May 5, 2018).

<sup>86</sup> Ehsan Soltani Nezhad and Pahlevan Mohammedali, "The Madrasa at Iran: role of tradition and religious education," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3:2, (2018): 43-52.



The level of religiosity is increasing in Azerbaijan in line with increased oppressive measures, as shown in analysis. The content analysis of law on "On Freedom of Religious Belief" asserted that the policy imposes greater restrictions on religious groups and ability to perform religious activities. These restrictions only increase the disappointment of the society, pushing them towards the radicalization. Azerbaijan's restrictive law on religion seems to be used for justification of fines, punishments and police raids, while increasing the cases of legal restrictions. The vague wording and interpretations open the space for maneuvering among decisions over persecution and imprisonments.

The analysis of Iranian influence nowadays has shown that Iran continues to spread its influence by making the society more religious and advocating for strengthening their identity. What comes to Azerbaijanis involvement in terrorist groups, a number of them is still fighting for the ISIS, the fact which is proved my analysis of the news of different media outlets. As the analysis of tendency of involvement in ISIS showed, all Azerbaijani citizens fought for the terrorist group. Then, the cases of those leaving the country with the aim of receiving training for joining the ranks of terrorist groups also constitute a factor of increased tendency of radicalization.

To combine the findings – the tendency of increasing religiosity, the growing number of imprisonments for religious belief and restrictive policy measures, expanded Iranian religious influence and a number of those still involved in the ranks of terrorist groups – it can be inferred that there are prospects of increasing tendency of radicalization, which push the society towards involvement in international terrorism.

Based on analyses of domestic and external factors the hypothesis is accepted. The analysis of domestic policy measures proved that oppressive policy measures restricted freedoms of the society making them more radicalized. In addition, in line with having oppressive measures and indiscriminate persecution, people are becoming more vulnerable to external religious influence. Therefore, the relationship of religious external influence and oppressive domestic measures pushes the society towards international terrorism.

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