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AN UNCERTAIN PLACE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES:
THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

by

NATHAN L. BURNS
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2007

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Political Science
in the College of Science
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to address how geopolitical factors influence the foreign policies of states in the South Caucasus. Due to the recent Russia-Georgia War, this region is central to contemporary foreign policy, fueling discussions of a New Cold War between the US and Russia. With the explicit goal to provide policy relevant research on this critical region, the South Caucasus states (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) are examined in three separate case studies.

Utilizing qualitative analysis of historical event data, each case examines the role of five different variables: energy resources, routes, demography, proximity, and state leadership. That research reveals several corollary relationships. First, demographic (ethnic/religious) cleavages are found to define the borders of separatist conflicts and to be positively correlated with state perceptions of threat that follow from the proximity of foreign powers to separatist regions. Energy resources and routes define economic conflict and are positively correlated with perceptions of threat resulting from the proximity of foreign powers to these strategic points. Finally, state leadership is correlated with the value placed on demographic groups, resources, and routes in the foreign policies of the South Caucasus states and the subsequent balance of threat behavior exhibited in each state's foreign policy orientation.

These findings are consequential for the discipline of International Relations, demonstrating the contemporary relevance of geopolitical variables. Specifically, the synthesis of these variables provides significant explanations of where, with whom, and why conflicts have emerged in the South Caucasus. Answering those questions is a vital step toward furthering the relevance of academic research for policy makers.

I would like to dedicate this work to all of those who have helped me along my way at UCF. I dedicate this work first to my family. Thank you for constantly urging me to pursue excellence and encouraging me along the way. As well, I would like to thank everyone in the division of University Relations. Thank you for your financial support of my graduate education, for encouraging me to put my courses first, and making me feel a part of the UCF family. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to Dr. Sadri. Thank you for your mentoring, your teaching, your encouraging, and your friendship.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD – Anno Domini
ADR – Azerbaijan Democratic Republic
AIOC – Azerbaijan International Operating Company
BAK – Baku-Achalkalaki-Kars railway
BC – Before Christ
bcf – billion cubic feet
bcf/y – billion cubic feet per year
BTC – Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline
BTE – Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline
BTK - Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway
CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO – Collective Security Treaty Organization
EC – European Council
ENP – European Neighborhood Policy
ESDP – European Security and Defense Policy
EU – European Union (don't include cause not included US?)
EUJUST THEMIS – EU Rule of Law Mission in Georgia
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GTEP – Georgia Train and Equip Program
GUAM – Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova
GUUAM – Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova
IPAP – Individual Partnership Action Plan
IR – International Relations
JPKF – Joint Peace Keeping Forces
MAP – Membership Action Plan
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
OPEC – Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCA – Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PfP – Partnership for Peace
SSOP – Sustainment and Stability Operations Program
SSR – Soviet Socialist Republic
tb/d – thousand barrels per day
TDFR – Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic
TNC – Trans-National Corporation
TSFSR – Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
UN – United Nations
US – United States
WTO – World Trade Organization
WWI – World War I
WWII – World War II

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2008, international attention was ripped from the Olympics in Beijing when war erupted between Russia and Georgia. As news reports spilled in, it became clear that the Georgian military had attempted to seize control of the separatist region of South Ossetia. Russia, having already deployed troops to maintain the independence of this enclave, responded with overwhelming military force. Russian troops streamed across the border, rapidly repulsing the Georgian military and cutting the country in half as Russian tanks drove deep into Georgian territory. Alarmed by the massive and prolonged Russian response, the West (particularly the US) clamored for a halt to the violence.

While refraining from direct intervention, the US response included sending warships to the Black Sea and mobilizing humanitarian aid in support of Georgia.¹ The crisis raised hackles in both Russia and the US, leading some to speculate on the emergence of a New Cold War between these two old foes. For now the crisis has decelerated, grinding to a halt as terms dictated by Russia impose a new equilibrium on the defeated Georgian state. Yet questions about the war's underlying causes and future implications remain, hanging in the air like the smoke of spent guns.

The gravest implications of this crisis are faced by the states of the South Caucasus. (See Appendix A for a political map.) Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia occupy an uncertain geographical space that has been the frontier of Iranian, Ottoman, Tsarist, and Soviet empires. Today the Caucasus is once again in uncertain times, and the purpose of this work is to address how this geopolitical environment may influence the foreign policy behavior of the South Caucasus states.

Thesis

The troubled history of the region reveals that the South Caucasus states occupy a singularly tenuous geographic space. Therefore, geopolitical analysis is particularly suited to explain policy making in the South Caucasus. While this work is designed to demonstrate the relevance of geopolitical factors for the practice and relevance of International Relations (IR) today, it bears stressing that this research is not an attempt to create a new theory of geopolitics or to reduce foreign policy to deterministic set of geopolitical laws. The developing literature on geopolitics has clearly demonstrated that geographic and spatial factors are generally limited to passive, constraining roles.² Still, to dismiss this role is to dismiss a significant explanation of where and with whom conflicts of interest are likely to occur in IR.

In order to investigate the role of geopolitical variables, the geopolitical approach to IR must be re-examined, its limitations clearly stated, and key geopolitical factors identified and defined. With these goals in mind, this work investigates the manner in which foreign policy formulation may be influenced by the intersection of geopolitical constraints and state leadership. Examining the interplay between these two sets of variables allows the significance of geopolitical factors to be tested while discarding the historical determinism of the geopolitical approach. The removal of determinism from geopolitical analysis is directly facilitated by the inclusion of the variable of state leadership, rendering the assumption of rational behavior unnecessary. Vis-à-vis this approach, a broader and deeper understanding of contemporary South Caucasus geopolitics may be grasped by IR scholars and policy makers alike.

Significance of Research

Geopolitical analysis of the Caucasus illuminates the role of historical patterns of conflict between great powers in the South Caucasus. There is a lengthy collection of literature on this topic, ranging from the era of the Great Game to the so-called “New Cold War,” to which this research may contribute. Furthermore, this project contributes to the literature on geopolitics – a theoretical approach that is experiencing a renaissance in IR.

The revival of geopolitics is not merely an attempt to reclaim basic geographic factors that influence international politics, but is also an attempt to return policy relevance to IR.³ Geopolitical concepts and terminology are readily received by policy makers, offering the means to bridge the growing vocabulary gap between academics and practitioners. However, geopolitical analysis should not merely be adopted on the merits that policy makers relish the color inherent in geopolitical jargon. Because of its spatial nature, geopolitical analysis is vital to identifying locations and actors with whom strategic interests coincide in international politics. Policy makers desperately require this sort of spatial information in order to know where to direct their activities, whether or not their purpose is to mitigate conflicts or to emerge victorious in a conflict.

Geopolitics also demands academic attention precisely because without it geopolitical jargon becomes solely the possession of politicians and the news media. Rigorous testing of the explanatory value of geopolitical variables and their definitions is necessary to prevent the abuse of geopolitical concepts. This research contributes to these goals via a comprehensive examination of significant geopolitical factors. Therefore, this work is positioned to simultaneously enrich existing literature on the Caucasus, the geopolitical approach in IR, and the relationship between academics and policy makers.

Research Question, Variables, & Hypotheses

Research Question

What specific geopolitical factors, taken into consideration with state leadership, demonstrate a significant constraining role in the formulation of the foreign policies of the South Caucasus states?

Variables

This research will examine five different variables. The first is the variable of state leadership. Each state leader of the South Caucasus states since their independence may be classified as pragmatic semi-authoritarians or idealistic nationalists. In addition to the variable of state leadership, four different geopolitical variables will be examined. These variables are: (1) energy resources, (2) routes, (3) demography, and (4) proximity of foreign powers. For the purposes of this research, energy resources are defined as oil and natural gas. The variable, routes, is a broad term that encompasses roads, railways, waterways, airways, and energy pipelines. Demography refers to the physical distribution and composition of ethnicities and religious groups among a state's population, while the "proximity of foreign powers" refers to the physical distance of other states from a given state's resources, routes, and demographic groups. Each of these variables will be further defined and defended in the literature review section of this research.

Hypotheses

This work argues that the distribution of energy resources, routes, and demography in the South Caucasus creates strategic points of interest for states, and that these strategic points of interest invite an overlap of international interests that indicate locations that are

likely to experience conflict. The proximity of foreign powers to these strategic points of interest contributes to an understanding of which actors those conflicts might involve. Still, these geopolitical factors only provide necessary, but not the sufficient, cause for the development of conflicts. They answer the questions of where and with who interests collide, but are generally insufficient answers for when, why, and how conflicting interests are handled. Thus, the variable of state leadership is necessary to include as it can explain why states may respond to similar geopolitical environments and overlapping interests in different ways.

The first hypothesis of this research is that, as the strategic importance of energy resources, routes, and demographic groups increases, these variables create locations where conflict is increasingly likely to develop. As a caveat to this, however, the coincidence of international interests in a strategic area should not be assumed to produce conflict by default. Conflict will result when one state perceives another to be a threat. There is a significant geographic component to the perception of threat, and that is the physical distance or proximity of a foreign power. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this research is that: as the proximity of a foreign power to a given state's strategic energy resources, routes, or demographic groups increases, that given state is increasingly likely to engage in balance of threat behavior. Finally, this research hypothesizes that state leadership is a significant variable for the explanation of how the South Caucasus state pursue foreign policies within their geopolitical environment. Idealistic nationalist leaders are believed to be more likely to engage in conflicts over energy resources, routes, and demographic groups than pragmatic semi-authoritarians. (After the following section on this work's methodology, a comprehensive description of these variables and the case for their inclusion in this model will be developed in the Literature Review.)

Methodology

This research employs a deductive method of qualitative research, testing the proposed hypotheses across three case studies. Each South Caucasus state will be examined in a case study, starting with Azerbaijan, proceeding to Armenia, and concluding with Georgia. That order was selected, not to favor one state over another, but in order to develop a natural flow of analysis. Beginning research with a case study of Azerbaijan allows the central importance of Azerbaijan's oil and natural gas resources to be immediately established. Since Azerbaijan is treated first, that case study is also the longest, not because Azerbaijan necessarily requires more attention, but because that case will establish elements of the region's history and geopolitical patterns that the subsequent cases will not have to re-address. In the chapter on Azerbaijan, the war between that state and Armenia will be discussed, so it is natural that the following chapter treat Armenia, as a discussion of the war between these two states has already begun. Finally, concluding with the Georgian case allows this research to return to the most current geopolitical events defining the South Caucasus – fallout from the Russia-Georgia War and new US-Russia tensions.

Each case study proceeds in a longitudinal fashion, utilizing historical event data analysis. An overview of each state's pre-Soviet history is provided first, in order to establish an understanding of the larger historical context of the South Caucasus. This is followed by a brief examination of the Soviet history of each state, as the Soviet legacy has proven to have enduring consequences for the region, particularly in regards to routes and demography. Immediately after independence, all three states were involved in ethnic/religious separatist conflicts, so each case study begins its examination of the South Caucasus states since their independence with an examination of demography's role in

separatism. This is followed by an examination of the economic conditions in each state (which specifically addresses energy resources and routes). In each case, a third section follows, in which different, state-specific trends are examined because of the importance of their relation to each state's key geopolitical variables and leadership in the literature of IR. For Azerbaijan, this state-specific trend is the resurgence of Islam. For Armenia, it is the role of the Armenian Diaspora. And for Georgia, it is the democratic "Rose Revolution."

After a complete overview of the South Caucasus states since independence, their contemporary geopolitical environment is examined, in order to cement an understanding of the proximity of foreign powers and the role of leaders in foreign affairs. This section takes into account each state's foreign policy orientations, with regional neighbors in the South Caucasus, the extra-regional powers of Iran and Turkey, and the global powers of the EU, US, and Russia. By moving from a local to a global perspective, examination of the geopolitical environment from the perspective of each South Caucasus state is encouraged and to emphasize the role of proximity.

Literature Review: Theoretical & Historical Foundations

Geopolitics & Policy Relevance

As previously noted, a worthy reason to re-examine the promise of geopolitical analysis in IR is the relevance it holds for policy making. On the topic of policy relevance, Alexander George and Richard Smoke are two notable theorists to have attempted to pursue usable knowledge in the field of IR.⁴ More recently, however, the standard of policy relevance has been taken up by Joseph Lepgold and Miroslav Nincic. Lepgold and Nincic argue that scholarship in IR is running the risk of becoming an insular discipline, irrelevant to the reality of international affairs.

Originally, this was not the case. Research in the discipline has long been driven by external sources, and this has contributed to policy relevant work in areas such as “deterrence, nuclear proliferation, arms control, and the use of coercive force.”⁵ The professionalization of IR, however, has weakened external influence, and caused research to be reordered to demands originating from within the academy. This is a trend that deserves moderating, as growing internal generation of research agendas may be continuing beyond its healthy bounds. Specifically, the proliferation of subfields within IR is threatening to compartmentalize IR scholars, leading them to lose sight of greater realities and of the advances made elsewhere in the discipline.⁶

Reacting to these developments, former US Ambassador David D. Newsom was quoted as saying that “...much of today’s scholarship is irrelevant or inaccessible to policy makers...much remains locked within the circle of esoteric scholarly discussion.”⁷ In large part, the gap that Newsom has decried can be explained by the different professional incentives and goals that exist for academics and practitioners. Policy makers are most interested in variables they can influence or research that clearly relates to the practice of policy, while scholars are freer to range over a broader topics and variables.⁸

This fact underpins one of the greatest objections made to the argument that IR should make policy relevance a goal. Policy makers operate on short deadlines and require quick solutions to contemporary international issues, which can incline them to favor research that fits their pre-existing paradigms, to ignore variables that they have no influence over, and to jump from correlations to conclusions of causation. Therefore, subjugation of IR research agendas to the demands of policy relevance is oft objected to as a threat to the independent and dispassionate analysis that makes IR a valuable social science.

Yet this is a weak, even isolationist position. IR does not need to abandon its dispassion in order to be policy relevant. It is precisely because of the discipline's dispassion and systematic approach to international problems that IR must engage in research of policy relevance. If academics do not engage in policy relevant research, policies will be solely influenced by research foundations, partisan think tanks, politicians, and the news media. In the geopolitical approach to international affairs, policy relevance and this need for scholarly rigor collide, providing an opportunity in which IR may reclaim policy relevance and while establishing the value of its objectivity and rigor.

In his book, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*, Jakob Grygiel makes the argument that geographic factors in IR are a vital component to policy relevant research.⁹ Because of its spatial nature, geopolitical analysis is vital to identifying locations and actors with whom strategic interests coincide in international politics. Policy makers desperately require this sort of spatial information in order to know where to direct their activities, whether or not their purpose is to mitigate conflict or to triumph in it. Such information addresses calls by Lepgold and Nincic for policy relevant research.

In addition, geopolitical analysis offers a possible solution to the growing vocabulary gap between policy makers and academics. The discipline of IR is full of technical language, jargon, and discipline specific terminology that policy makers find difficult. Lepgold and Nincic propose that one way to bridge the gap would be to develop a "common vocabulary."¹⁰ It is quite common to hear policy makers, and even journalists, use the terminology of geopolitics. Geopolitical concepts are understood and consistently discussed in these circles. This might be capitalized upon to construct a common language of geopolitics, allowing IR scholars to define geopolitical terminology that is often used in a dangerously loose manner in popular discourse.

In this regard, geopolitics has a notorious history. In the Vietnam era, the Domino Theory was an example of geopolitical logic that was overly simplistic and deterministic, but exerted significant influence on US foreign policy.¹¹ More recently, President George W. Bush's usage of geopolitical rhetoric has come under similar criticism.¹² If IR scholars would re-engage geopolitics, they would be positioned to define geopolitical terminology to curb such rhetoric and mitigate the loose application of geopolitical concepts.

Notorious History & Modern Evolution of Geopolitical Thought

The term “geopolitics” owes to Ruldolf Kjellen, a Swedish political scientist who coined the phrase in 1899. This term “has often been taken to signify a hard-nosed or more realistic approach to international politics that lays particular emphasis on the role of territory and natural resources in shaping the condition of states.”¹³ As geography is a physical “fact,” it constitutes an ever present variable with which states must reckon. Because of the natural basis that geopolitics, then, has on physical “facts”, it was conceptualized as “science” from which generalized “laws” might be derived.

Kjellen's science of geopolitics found a place among the imperial powers of Europe during the 19th century – the era of the Great Game. The Great Game, a phrase attributed to Arthur Conolly but popularized by Kipling, is a classic example of geopolitical power balancing.¹⁴ During that era, Central Asia was witness to power balancing between the British and Tsarist Russian empires in which Afghanistan served as a classic buffer state, separating these two powers. Since then, Eurasia has always been central to geopolitical conceptions.

Exemplifying the geopolitical thought that gripped Europe at the time are the writings of Sir Halford John Mackinder. In 1904, Mackinder wrote a classic paper on

geopolitics entitled “The Geographical Pivot of History.”¹⁵ In it, he expressed the view that the Eurasian core area could serve as the base for a continental power that would be invulnerable to naval powers. This core could serve as a Pivot Area from which that land-based power could dominate both Europe and Asia. Later, Mackinder would refer to the Pivot Area as the Heartland from which the globe might be dominated. Following this logic, he issued the classic dictum that:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland

Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island

Who rules the World-Island commands the World¹⁶

One of the most prominent critics of Mackinder’s theory was Nicholas Spykman. He objected that Mackinder had placed undue emphasis on the advantages of the heartland because internal, overland transportation was more difficult than Mackinder had assumed. Second, he disputed the assumption that conflict was a simple matter of sea versus land powers. Instead, Spykman called attention to what he would call the Rimland. He argued that the real potential of Eurasia lay within the Rimland, an area that was vulnerable to both land and sea powers. This led him to propose this counter to Mackinder:

Who controls the Rimland controls Eurasia

Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world¹⁷

Spykman would go on to argue that the Allies should direct their post-World War II (WWII) power to preventing one power from ever securing control of the Rimland. A similar line of thought shaped the containment policies of the Cold War.¹⁸ (See Appendix B for a map of the Pivot Area and the Rimland.) Despite his influence on American policy in the post-war era, however, geopolitical analysis largely fell out of favor with IR theorists after WWII. This was in some regards due to the Nazi adoption and abuse of geopolitics.

Kjellen's ideas had been quickly assimilated by German scholars and blended with concepts of Social Darwinism. Friedrich Ratzel exemplified this approach, arguing that the state was "super-organism," rooted in the natural environment, and requiring secure living space or "lebensraum."¹⁹ Germany's defeat in WWI crushed German dreams of that day but reinforced the assumption that Germany's geopolitical position in Europe required military strength to preserve the integrity of the German homeland. Under Hitler, Germany's military resurgence was coupled with the Ratzel's idea that Germany must carve out living space in Europe, contributing to Nazi ideology.

The manner in which Nazi Germany brought geopolitical thought together with Fascism and racism, led many American political scientists to denounce the discipline after the war.²⁰ However, there are other reasons for the decline of geopolitics as well. As scholarship in IR moved away from the natural sciences and deepened as a social science, focus shifted to human and political variables.²¹ This is an understandable, and even a positive trend. However, this trend and the tarnished reputation of geopolitics has produced the almost complete abandonment of geopolitics, which has contributed to the aforementioned decline in policy relevant research in IR.

The revival of geopolitics within the US is often accredited to Henry Kissinger. At the very least, he returned the term "geopolitics" to usage within the setting of American foreign policy.²² By the 1980s, geopolitics had become associated with American realist thought and discussions of great power rivalries. Stephen Walt and Robert Jervis re-introduced geographic variables in what has come to be referred to as "defensive realism."²³ Their brand of realism has been dubbed "defensive," because they argue that states seek to expand their power or to balance the power of other states only when they feel insecure. For Stephen Walt, the "proximity" or physical between the territories of two

states was the variable that influenced the perception of threat between states which resulted in power balancing.²⁴ For Robert Jervis, a much wider range of geographic variables were important, because he was focused primarily on how geography may mitigate the effects of anarchy in some areas (providing protection by mountain ranges and oceans, etc.) and emphasize the insecurities of an anarchic system in other areas (open, flat country).²⁵

While geopolitics is experiencing resurgence, it still retains its detractors. One of the greatest criticisms is that globalization has made geographic factors irrelevant. In Thomas Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*, he makes the argument that globalization is leveling the world's playing field. As communication technology has brought the world closer, Friedman argues that this integration is overriding geographic obstacles that once separated the world's people.²⁶

Friedman's argument is strongest when related to the economic sphere, where international markets are clearly becoming more interdependent. Yet, even in this sphere geography continues to play a role. The literature of International Political Economy speaks of the North-South divide – the development gap between the wealthy, industrialized states and the poor, agricultural states.²⁷ A country's climate and topography influences its agricultural product and even the distribution of production structures, including industry. Additionally, distribution of natural resources influences a state's economic structure, particularly in the case of those states endowed with oil and natural gas.²⁸

While communication technology has made geographic distance less salient than in previous ages, even the idea that the world is growing smaller has a vital spatial component. Globalization and the communication revolution have simultaneously released forces of localization and fragmentation, often along ethnic, cultural, and linguistic lines.²⁹

Quantitative research has demonstrated that “complex ethnic geography” is a significant factor in the occurrence of the sort of internal violence that has emerged in the South Caucasus.³⁰ Citing French Historian Fernand Braudel’s concept of “longue durée,” Christoph Zürcher notes that physical geography does not set events in motion but shapes the long-term historical structures that provide a constraining environment.³¹ Following this line of argument, one comes to the conclusion that even constructivists and institutionalists in IR should take another look at the role of geography. In his book, *Ethno-nationalism, Islam and the state in the Caucasus*, Moshe Gammer specifically argues institutions are not a sufficient basis for an understanding of Caucasus politics because factors like ethno-nationalism are so significant in shaping the political environment.³²

Today, geopolitics is an approach that can couple traditional geographical factors with the increasing complexities of a globalized world. If one refers to evolving French literature on geopolitics, it is clear that geopolitical analysis may take into account the influence of terrorist groups, corporations, languages, religions, ideologies, and other regional and local groupings.³³ At this point, then, it might be useful to provide a definition of geopolitics. For the purposes of this thesis, a definition provided by Yves Lacoste will be adopted. A recognized French scholar in the field of geopolitics, Lacoste defines geopolitics as simply the “rivalry of powers over territories” (les rivalités de pouvoirs sur des territoires).³⁴ This broad definition allows for the incorporation of various political actors who are exercising power in a specific geographic space.

At the same time that geopolitical analysis is becoming more nuanced in its perception of political actors, it is also shedding its previous determinism and its reliance on the logic of rational choice. Critical Geopolitics has emerged as a new school of thought that embraces the importance of non-state actors, stresses the possibility of cooperation

over conflict, while employing constructivism to explain how geopolitical perceptions may influence decision making. In order to illustrate this point, scholars of Critical Geopolitics have conceptualized three divisions of geopolitical culture.³⁵ These categories are formal, practical, and popular geopolitics. Each originates from academia, government, and the media respectively. The following figure illustrates the manner in which these three divisions of geopolitical thought emerge and conspire to shape perceptions and actions.

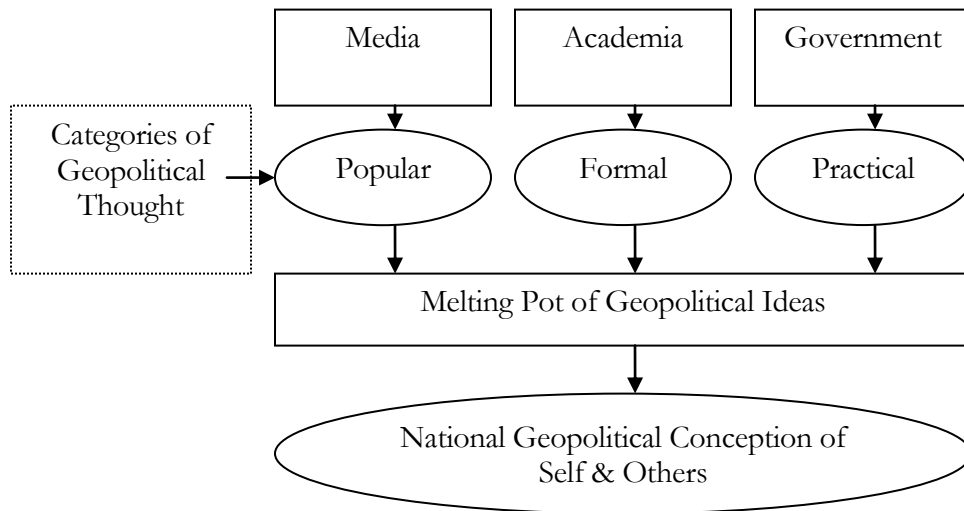


Figure 1: Construction of Geopolitical Conceptions

Synthesizing a New Geopolitical Approach in the South Caucasus

Following the arguments made in critical literature on geopolitics, this work proposes that by producing policy relevant research in the realm of formal geopolitics, one may influence the construction of practical geopolitics before it enters the greater “melting pot of geopolitical ideas.” Thereby, the academy may increase its influence on the final construction of national conceptions of self and other. The following figure demonstrates this point.

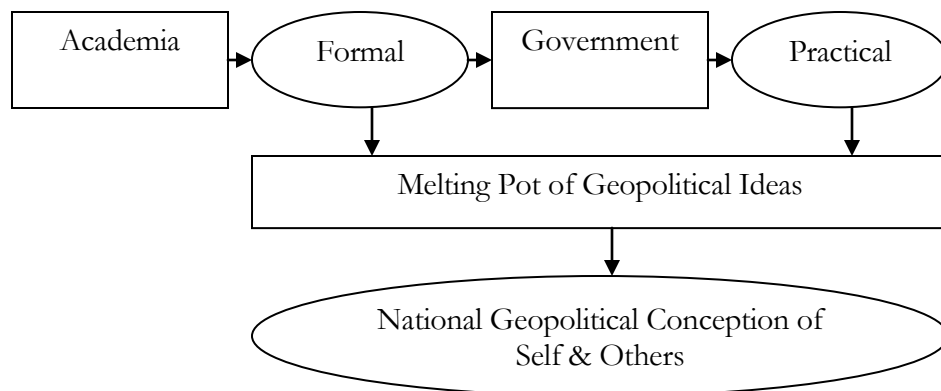


Figure 2: Academia & the Construction of Geopolitical Conceptions

As geopolitics has experienced its revival, other authors have made the argument for the relevance of geopolitical and spatial factors. Though he is not from the critical school of geopolitics, Grygiel’s previously mentioned book on geopolitics is a prominent piece of recent literature in this regard. In his attempt to remove ambiguity from the geopolitical approach, he narrows his focus to what he claims are the three most significant geopolitical variables. Recognizing that geopolitics is the combination of “geology and human activities,” he directs his focus to: (1) the layout of trade routes, (2) the location of resources, and (3) the nature of state border. He then tests the relevance of these three variables across three different case studies of historically great powers: (1) the Venetian Empire, (2) the Ottoman Empire, and (3) the Ming Dynasty in China.³⁶

This research project mirrors his model by proposing three case studies, but it differs in that it tests the relevance of geopolitical variables for modern states, not historical empires. Moreover, by studying the states of the Caucasus, this work focuses on small states, as opposed to great powers. This is important because geopolitical analysis has a habit of focusing on the world’s empires and superpowers, even though constraining effects

of geopolitical factors are most likely to be most accentuated for small states. Synthesizing a geopolitical approach in the South Caucasus, then, may serve the goal of policy relevance and the goal of contemporary theoretical relevance. Due to differences in focus, Grygiel's three variables provide a valuable starting point but are not completely suited to the purposes of this work. Instead, this research will utilize Grygiel's first two variables (resources and routes) and replace borders with an examination of demography and a modified concept of Walt's proximity.

Energy Resources

Resources have long been identified as an essential interest of states, since the mercantilist days of European empires until today.³⁷ The uneven distribution of natural resources around the globe makes some regions more strategic than others. As IR literature has evolved, it has also become clear that natural resources are not the only resources that matter. Both Hans Morgenthau and Robert Gilpin emphasize the importance of economic (e.g. industrial) resources, when they argue that resources are a key proxy for state power.³⁸ The manner in which states pursue resources has shifted from the days of colonialism, as states understand that they no longer have to conquer resource areas in order to derive power from them. Instead of conquering resource rich areas, states now attempt to access them through market forces while also deriving power through the potential to deny critical resources to others.³⁹ Small states are especially vulnerable to the denial of critical resources, as their small territories are less likely to provide self-sufficiency.⁴⁰

Today's energy politics offer a case in point. Oil and gas deposits are concentrated in only a few major regions of the world, making these areas and the states in them centers of international interest. A state's self-sufficiency in regard to critical resources like energy

is an important factor in a state's independence, and thus the exercise of its power.⁴¹ This research may compliment existing IR literature, and Grygiel's work specifically, by explicitly focusing on the role of energy resources in the geopolitics of the South Caucasus. Such an approach is in keeping with this work's attempt to narrow the scope of Grygiel's broad investigation of geopolitical variables.

Routes

Routes are another broadly accepted geopolitical variable. Mackinder's arguments for the strategic value of a Eurasian pivot were largely based upon the advent of the railroad, a technological change which added speed to land routes.⁴² Alfred Mahan is famous for his emphasis of the importance of sea lanes, a point which Spykman embraced in his counter to Mackinder's thesis.⁴³ Today, super highways, air corridors, and energy pipelines round out the list routes which facilitate trade, communication, and the deployment of military force. The number and geographic distribution of routes can restrict a state's trade, and influence its ability to project power. In particular, routes are closely related to the ability to deny resources, as the exploitation of resources usually requires routes. For instance, Russia's control over gas pipelines feeding Europe has given it significant political leverage.⁴⁴ The South Caucasus states have a limited number of routes and very few neighbors through which routes might pass, so this variable demands analysis (See Appendix I for a map of routes in the South Caucasus).

Demography

By focusing on demography, this research diverges from Grygiel's model. Grygiel argues that state borders are important because a state must secure its borders before it can begin to project its power effectively.⁴⁵ But in the case of the South Caucasus, the status of

borders is inextricably linked to separatist conflicts, and those conflicts are related to regional demography.⁴⁶ All three South Caucasus states have been involved in separatist conflicts since their independence, and in each instance, the separatist groups were defined by ethnicity and/or religion.

While the South Caucasus occupies a very small geographic space it possesses a startlingly heterogeneous demography. The territory occupied by these states is splintered between a diverse mix of ethnic and linguistic groups and split between Muslim and Christian populations. (Refer to Appendix G for a map of demography in the South Caucasus.) This mix has emerged from the historic overlap of empires in the region, and from the rugged geography of the Caucasus Mountains. (See Appendix C for a topographic map of the Caucasus.)

It is important to stress that demographic heterogeneity is not a sufficient condition to explain the cause(s) of ethnic, national, or religious violence. It merely provides the necessary condition for the emergence of such conflicts. Yet research has revealed that in cases of “complex ethnic geography,” where one ethnic group appears poised to become a majority, there is a greater likelihood of conflict than in societies that are either highly homogenous or so heterogeneous that it is impossible for one group to gain a majority.⁴⁷ Furthermore, demographic cleavages have been shown to play an important role in the pattern of conflict once violence has begun.⁴⁸ (See Appendix H for a map of demographic shifts produced by ethnic violence in the South Caucasus.) Because the separatist conflicts in the South Caucasus have invited international intervention and separatist conflicts often afford foreign powers leverage over the a concerned state, understanding the region’s demography is important to understanding how these conflicts may constrain foreign policy.

Proximity

The final geopolitical factor this research will consider is a nuanced conception of Walt's variable of proximity. While physical distance is an easily quantifiable geographic variable, it is too simplistic a variable to be much use. As Grygiel points out distance may vary in nature. In the 1930s, Britain and France differed in their perceptions of the threat of German power, even though they were roughly the same distance from Berlin. While France is located on the European continent, Britain's distance from Germany was accentuated by the geographic barrier of the English Channel. Additionally, Walt's conception of proximity only incorporated the distance between homelands. As Grygiel's analysis reveals, since states are not completely self-sufficient, they have interests that lie beyond their homelands, namely resources and routes.⁴⁹

The limitations of Walt's proximity, however, may be overcome by defining it as the distance of foreign powers from the three geopolitical variables that this work has identified as essential: (1) energy resources, (2) routes, and (3) demographic groups. It is premature to abandon the concept of proximity because it not only contributes to an understanding of what actors the foreign policies of the South Caucasus must be concerned with, but also why the foreign policies of the South Caucasus look the way they do.

Proximity may contribute to the "why" of conflict in foreign policy because of its link to perceptions of threat.⁵⁰ Routes, energy resources, and demographic cleavages all serve as strategic points of interest for foreign powers, which they may attempt to manipulate in pursuit of power. Research has also revealed that geographic proximity to an area of dispute is a significant predictor of war.⁵¹ Therefore, proximity appears to be a central geopolitical variable in the conflicts of the South Caucasus today.

State Leadership

While attempting to understand the influence of geopolitical variables, this paper is not proposing a new geopolitical theory. Its purposes are to test the significance of these variables in relation to foreign policy in order that they might be more broadly integrated into IR theory. Mindful of the dangers of determinism, geopolitical factors have thus far been primarily defined as constraining factors. They are not hypothesized to force state leaders to make certain decisions, but rather provide environmental constraints that may influence the goals that such actors pursue, the manner in which they pursue them, and the success of their policies.

In order to avoid the narrow perspective of classical geopolitics, this work does not assume a rational choice model, which has been increasingly challenged in IR literature.⁵² Stephen Walt has even argued that the lack of creativity in rational choice literature endangers its relevance to real world issues.⁵³ In lieu of rational choice, then, this paper proposes another variable, state leadership. It has been said, “geographical conditions determine largely where history is made but it is always man who makes it.”⁵⁴ State leadership, as defined by this work, is a state’s president. This is a defensible position, as each of the South Caucasus states has developed semi-authoritarian or hyper-presidential systems, meaning that the office of the president possesses significant influence over foreign policy.⁵⁵

This research notes the role of every president in the foreign policy orientation of his respective South Caucasus state. These presidents, despite their differences, may be classified within to broad categories similar to the pragmatic-Revolutionary and idealist-Revolutionary categories that Dr. Houman A. Sadri derived in his studies of revolutionary states.⁵⁶ The first category is that of what the author will refer to as the pragmatic semi-

authoritarians. These presidents were usually strong leaders in the communist party, except for Ilham Aliyev, who inherited the presidency from his pragmatic, semi-authoritarian father. As such, despite any nationalist feelings, leaders in this category generally have acted with deference toward Russia, have sought to end violence in separatist conflicts, behaving in a manner that tends to emphasize political and economic stability.

The other category of presidential leaders may be classified as idealistic nationalists. These leaders were often out of step with the communist party in pursuit of national independence and, except for the case of Armenian presidents, quick to part ways with Russia. They exhibit a greater tendency towards idealism, a greater commitment to military involvement in separatist movements, and often a willingness to sacrifice economically for national goals.

The variable of state leadership allows this work to more accurately test the explanatory power of geopolitical variables as constraints on foreign policy. If leaders from different categories pursue different foreign policies within the same set of geopolitical constraints, this may demonstrate the limits of geopolitical variables. The degree of success each leader has in implementing foreign policy in that environment also offers insight into geopolitical constraints, as is particularly evidenced in the following case of Azerbaijan.

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CHAPTER 2: AZERBAIJAN

Of the three South Caucasus states, Azerbaijan appears to have the brightest and most dynamic future. As Zbigniew Brzezinski stated in his 1997 *The Grand Chessboard*, Azerbaijan has become one of the world's strategic pivots.¹ It is the largest of all the Caucasus states, though it is a relatively small country of 86,100 square kilometers.² Thanks to its geographical position, Azerbaijan is the only state in the region to have direct access to the Caspian Sea and its hydrocarbon energy reserves, and according to the US Energy Information Administration, Azerbaijan possesses the world's 19th largest oil reserves, at an estimated 7 billion barrels. It also claims around 30,000 billion cubic feet of natural gas reserves.³ The scarcity of energy reserves and the world's economic dependency on oil, combine to make Azerbaijan a focal point of international interest. Indeed, if Azerbaijan did not possess these natural resources, it is questionable if the United States and the European Union would be as involved in the South Caucasus as they are currently.

While energy wealth may be a blessing for Azerbaijan, this and other geographic characteristics have constraining implications as well. (See Appendix D for a topographic map of Azerbaijan.) Azerbaijan is landlocked, and dependent on pipelines passing through Georgia to export its oil to international markets. Armenia and Azerbaijan have also remained locked in a territorial dispute over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. These circumstances demonstrate that even oil cannot allow Azerbaijan to escape its greater geopolitical environment, and oil itself is a valuable resource that invites foreign interest.

Geopolitical History of Azerbaijan in the Caucasus

Pre-Soviet Azerbaijan

The Azeri people have a long history in the South Caucasus.⁴ The earliest known state to occupy the geographical space of the modern state of Azerbaijan is Caucasian Albania. A German scholar, Johannes Rau has written that, “the Albanian’s language formed part of the north-eastern group of Caucasus languages,” and they “...are considered one of the ancestors of the modern Azerbaijani people.”⁵ Caucasian Albania incorporated tribes of Turkic origin, and in the pre-Islamic era, many were Christian.⁶ The Islamization of the area did not begin until 639-643 AD, as the Arabs expanded into the Caucasus.⁷

The Caucasus came under Seljuk rule in the 10th and 11th centuries, during which a great numbers of Turkic peoples migrated to the area, gaining a clear ethnic majority in what is now modern Azerbaijan and northern Iran. Despite the rise and fall of various dynasties, the Turkish people remained the ethnically unifying force in Azerbaijan.⁸ Sunni Islam was the dominant creed of the ruling Seljuks, but in Azerbaijan, Islam mixed with pre-Islamic beliefs. Shamanistic, Christian, and Zoroastrian traditions produced a syncretistic heritage in Azerbaijan, producing a mysticism that later facilitated the Azeri embrace of Shia Islam, which is more tolerant of mysticism than Sunni Islam.⁹

As mystical Sufi sects took root, one sect known as the Safaiya emerged in the 15th century. A “military brotherhood of Turkish nomads”, the Safavid dynasty established itself in the city of Tabriz. Though Turkic in origin, this dynasty came into territorial conflict with the Ottoman Empire, and although Sufism emerged from Sunni Islam, this dynasty also embraced Shia Islam and laid the foundation for the Iranian state in Persia.¹⁰ Under the Safavid dynasty, Turko-Persian tensions became a defining geopolitical force in

Azerbaijan. Yet, in battles with the Ottoman Empire there were few desertions of Turkish Safavids to the Ottoman-Turkish enemy. Only in northern Azerbaijan, where the population had remained Sunni, did the Safavid dynasty encounter popular opposition to its rule. The Shia faith of the Safavids provided a bond with the Persians that proved stronger than shared ethnicity with the Ottoman Turks.¹¹ The Safavids steadily embraced Persian culture, and in 1592, the Safavid court was relocated to the Persian city of Isfahan.¹²

In the 17th century, both the Safavid and Ottoman empires began to weaken. When the Safavid dynasty finally fell, it left a political void and the Azeri Khanates developed greater political autonomy. But another empire was emerging in the north. Russian expansion into the Caucasus had begun in the second half of the 16th century, following Tsar Ivan IV's capture of the Khanate of Astrakhan in 1556. After various advances and retreats, from that date forward, Russia solidified its hold on the Northern Caucasus in 1774. In that year, Kabarda and North Ossetia were annexed from the Ottomans after the Russian victories in the Russo-Turkish war.¹³

Russia's march across the Caucasus proved steady and irreversible. In 1801, Georgia was officially annexed to Russia. Georgia was then followed by: Mingrelia (1803); Imeretia and Guria (1804); the Khanates of Shirvan, Sheka, Shuragel, and Karabakh (1805); Ossetia, the khanates of Kuba, Derbet, and Baku (1806); Abkhazia (1810); the khanate of Talysh (1813); the south of Dagestan (1819); and the territory of eastern Armenia, Erivan (1828).¹⁴ As Russia advanced, it fought two wars with the Persian Qajar dynasty. Both wars (1804-1813 and 1826-1828) went badly for the Persians, and following defeat in 1828, Persia surrendered the whole of the South Caucasus in the Treaty of Turkmenchay. The Aras River became the border between Russia and Iran, leaving the

majority of ethnic Azeris on the Iranian side.¹⁵ This border is still in existence today, and has continued to complicate any conception of a cohesive Azeri nation.

Russia's dominance of northern Azerbaijan meant its steady integration into the Russian empire, and "a key element of this integration policy was the Christianization of Azerbaijan."¹⁶ The close relationship between the Christian Armenians and the Tsarist Russian Empire excited ethnic and religious tensions in the Caucasus that still persist. As Armenians settled in Azerbaijan, conflicts developed with the indigenous Muslim-Turkish population. This laid the foundation for the territorial conflict between the newly independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the 1990s and Azeri riots against Armenians in 1905, 1917, 1988, and 1990.¹⁷

Soviet Azerbaijan

It was not until the advent of WWI that the Russian imposed status quo in the Caucasus was seriously upset. Russia joined the Allies to confront the Ottoman Empire and the Central Powers. At first, Russia's military fared well against the Ottomans, but the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 produced internal chaos that forced Russia to withdraw from the war a year later. Following the collapse of the Tsarist Russian Empire, the Caucasus was open to the Ottomans. Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia were incorporated into the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR) in 1918, which was dissolved only months later as each sought their own independent political identity.¹⁸

In May of 1918, Azerbaijan declared itself the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR). Azerbaijan's independence was short-lived, however. The victorious Russian communists quickly turned to restoring order in Russia's former territories, and by 1920, the Communist Russian Red Army had retaken the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan became the

Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), and in 1922, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia were all reintegrated, this time into the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (TSFSR).¹⁹

Ultimately, however, the Caucasus was divided along ethno-political lines as the Soviets recognized these identities with various degrees of political autonomy.²⁰ The TSFSR was eventually abolished and separate Soviet Republics were created for each of the three South Caucasus states. For Azerbaijan, Soviet treatment of the Nakhichevan and Nagorno-Karabakh regions was momentous. Nakhichevan, “an Azerbaijani enclave between Armenia and northwestern Iran”, was declared to be an SSR in its own right. Because of territorial disputes already developing between Azerbaijan and Armenia, a referendum of the people in Nakhichevan was taken in 1921. That measure of public opinion revealed an overwhelming desire to be politically incorporated with Azerbaijan. Nakhichevan’s status was affirmed by the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Moscow and, again, by the Treaty of Kars which was signed in 1921 by the three Transcaucasian states and Turkey. Simultaneously, the Soviets granted similar autonomy to the Armenian populated Nagorno-Karabakh region within Azerbaijan, creating a complicated set of ethno-national political units that would lay the foundation for territorial conflict.²¹

As the Soviet Union engineered borders and demographics in the region, it also intervened in other aspects of life. Under Stalin, the people of the Caucasus were forced to learn Russian and the practice of religion was repressed. Azeris were relocated by the Soviets from Armenia to other parts of Azerbaijan.²² The exploitive economic relationship (a core-periphery relationship as dependency theorists would call it) began under Tsarist Russia was perpetuated by the Soviets. Transportation and communication structures were

all oriented around a North-South relationship between Moscow and Baku.²³ In Azerbaijan, specifically, oil infrastructure was oriented toward Russian needs. As a result, Russia has historically dominated Azerbaijan's oil export routes, and thereby its oil resources.

Under the Soviets, a foundation for distrust between Azerbaijan and Iran was also laid. During World War II, Iran had gambled for greater independence by collaborating with Nazi Germany, much as the Ottoman Empire had backed Germany against Britain and Russia in WWI. The Soviets responded by occupying Iranian Azerbaijan and encouraged Azeris in northern Iran to succeed. In 1942, however, the Allied Powers had agreed to respect Iran's territorial integrity. The resulting Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, in many ways, constituted the beginning of the Cold War.²⁴

In March of 1946, Soviet troops were to withdraw from Iran and restore its territory. Instead, the Soviets expanded their occupation of Iran. It was in the midst of this Soviet power play in the Caucasus that Churchill proclaimed that an "iron curtain" had fallen across Soviet occupied lands. Vigorous protests by British and Americans, as well as action by the newly created UN Security Council eventually convinced the Soviets to withdraw their troops, but in return, Russia demanded stakes in Iran's oil. Following the Soviet withdrawal, Azeri independence was quickly crushed by the Shah's forces, re-establishing the Aras River border and perpetuating the division of ethnic Azeris.²⁵

Azerbaijan & Independence

On August 30, 1991, Azerbaijan declared its independence from the Soviet Union. The new government was headed by Ayaz Mutalibov, a longtime party member who had been appointed communist party leader under Gorbachev. Elections were held in 1992, but were boycotted by the nationalist Azerbaijani Popular Front, allowing the more moderate

Mutalibov to maintain the presidency. Such political disunity weakened Azerbaijan internally as Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh began their war for independence, a disastrous conflict that would force Mutalibov to resign even before the year was out.

Nagorno-Karabakh

As previously noted, conflict between Armenians and Azeris, has its historical roots in demographic changes that began under the Tsars. Armenians were encouraged by Russia to immigrate into the South Caucasus and many settled in Nagorno-Karabakh. When Azerbaijan and Armenia first emerged as independent states in 1918, violent competition for territory erupted. After WWI, the Armenians had managed to secure control of Zangenur and Nagorno-Karabakh, although the British forced Armenians to return Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan. Still, the Azeris were losing the demographic battle for territorial control. In 1920, an Armenian rebellion drew Azeri forces away from their borders, allowing the Russian Red Army to easily recapture Azerbaijan.

Under the Soviets, ethnic tensions were somewhat mitigated when Nagorno-Karabakh was declared an autonomous region within Azerbaijan. From 1923 until the Soviet collapse, Nagorno-Karabakh would retain this autonomous but subordinate status. Armenian demands for greater political recognition were largely ignored by the Communist Party, leaving grievances to simmer. In 1988, the Armenian majority in Nagorno-Karabakh made two different bids to separate from Azerbaijan.²⁶ By that time, both Armenians and Azeris knew that tensions were getting out of hand. Between November and December of 1989, nearly 160,000 Azeris left Armenian territory and 180,000 Armenians left Azerbaijan.²⁷

In 1989, Armenia passed a resolution calling for the annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh, igniting anti-Armenian riots in Baku in what became known as Black January.²⁸ Soviet troops repressed these riots brutally, but after the Moscow *putsch* in August of 1991, Soviet military intervention on either side came to an end. Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence from Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan countered by dissolving the political autonomy of the region.²⁹

In January 1992, both Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to accept their Soviet borders in order to join the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Yet Karabakh Armenians were already in revolt with unofficial Armenian support. In February of 1992, Armenian forces attacked the town of Khojali with support from elements of the Soviet army's 366th Motorized Rifle Regiment, resulting in what the Human Rights Watch would call "the conflict's largest massacre."³⁰ This disaster contributed to the resignation of Azeri president Mutalibov.

By May of 1992, Armenian forces had captured the towns of Shusha and Lachin, opening a strategic roadway across the mountains to Armenia. By this time it was becoming evident that Armenia was supporting the war for Karabakh independence, and the newly elected Azeri president, Abulfaz Elchibey, who was a popular nationalist, declared this a "war of aggression against Azerbaijan."³¹ Elchibey's popularity did not translate into victories, however, and as the Armenians began to advance beyond Nagorno-Karabakh, it became clear that Azerbaijan needed external intervention to bring an end to the conflict.³² The West supported peace talks through the OSCE, but was unwilling to intervene militarily, leaving the security of South Caucasus to Russia. Negotiations with Russia were necessary, then, to bring an end to the conflict. Elchibey's stark nationalistic

attitude, however, led him to adopt anti-Russian rhetoric. During his 13 months in office, he showed a remarkable lack of “diplomatic tact” and even managed to anger Iran by discussing unification with Azeri’s in northern Azerbaijan.³³

Angering Russia and Iran was disastrous for Azerbaijan, leaving it with no allies among its immediate neighbors. (Turkey only shares a border with isolated Nakhichevan). Soon, 20 percent of Azerbaijani’s territory had been invaded by Armenian forces.³⁴ Each defeat degraded Elchibey’s popularity and threatened the integrity of the young Azeri state. In the internal chaos an Azeri colonel, Suret Husseinov, staged an insurrection. To avoid a coup, Elchibey turned over his legislative powers to Haydar Aliyev, Azerbaijan’s former communist party boss. On June 18, 1993, Elchibey fled Baku and Aliyev was elected the president shortly afterwards.³⁵

Aliyev quickly deferred to Russia, making a personal visit to Moscow in 1993 and returning Azerbaijan to membership in the Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS).³⁶ In return, Russia intervention brought Armenian forces to a halt. To counter Armenian claims to the right of self-determination, Aliyev turned to arguments based on international legitimacy and respect for territorial integrity. This stance simultaneously provided Azerbaijan a legal footing in the international dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh while allowing Aliyev to reconcile with Iran. By championing territorial integrity over self-determination, Aliyev, in effect, gave up claims to Iranian Azerbaijan.³⁷

The Russian designed Bishkek Protocol of May 1994 brought an end to fighting that had cost Azerbaijan an estimated 60 billion dollars in damage, nearly 30,000 dead, 1.3 million displaced, and 16 percent of its territory.³⁸ Since then, the conflict has remained largely frozen. Armenian forces continue to occupy a buffer zone around Nagorno-

Karabakh, Azerbaijan will not recognize Karabakh independence, and Armenia will not agree to anything less than Azerbaijan's surrender of the territory.

Haydar Aliyev's pragmatic rhetoric on Nagorno-Karabakh has been repeated by his son, Ilham Aliyev, who Haydar nominated as a presidential candidate in 2003. Ilham won the election and continues to serve as president today, despite charges of electoral fraud and intimidation of the media.³⁹ Though the pragmatic approach of the Aliyevs reconciled Azerbaijan with Russia and Iran, time appears to be on the side of the Armenians. For nearly two decades, Nagorno-Karabakh has maintained de facto independence. Still, no state in the international system has officially granted Nagorno-Karabakh recognition, and when Nagorno-Karabakh issued its first constitution in 2006, it was condemned by the EU, OSCE, and European Council.⁴⁰

Azerbaijan & Caspian Energy

For another newly independent state, a similar conflict might have been utterly crippling. But Azerbaijan is blessed with large energy deposits, both onshore and offshore in the Caspian Sea. These energy resources have allowed Azerbaijan to make the greatest economic progress of the three South Caucasus states. Azerbaijan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown by an average of 21 percent over the past five years, and achieved the world's largest GDP growth rate – 34.5 percent – in 2006. Combined, oil and gas account for around 60 percent of Azerbaijan's total GDP.⁴¹

Azerbaijan is the only major energy exporter in the South Caucasus. In 2007, it exported 733 thousand barrels of oil per day (tb/d), which is the majority of the roughly 848 tb/d it produced that year. Azerbaijan also has great potential to expand its oil industry, with estimated oil reserves of 7 billion barrels and current refining capacity of only 399

tb/d. Azerbaijan's natural gas reserves are relatively smaller, at 30,000 billion cubic feet (bcf). In 2006, 241 bcf of gas was produced, but this fell short of Azerbaijan's domestic consumption (399 bcf).⁴² To meet this shortfall, Azerbaijan must import gas from both Russia and Iran. However, with sufficient investment, Azerbaijan's gas production could surpass its domestic needs in the future and allow for export of natural gas.⁴³

Heydar Aliyev was the first president to harness the promise that energy resources hold for Azerbaijan. At first, the energy sector faced rocky times as oil production declined every year until 1997. Aliyev temporarily suspended negotiations with foreign companies and granted Russia's LUKoil an energy partnership in order to patch up relations with Russia.⁴⁴ He then re-opened international negotiations, and forged a consortium deal with numerous foreign energy companies that has been called the Deal of the Century. Agreements with Western companies also led to the construction of a new pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC). Finished in 2005, the BTC runs 1,040 miles from Baku, through Georgian Tbilisi, to the Turkish port of Ceyhan. It bypasses the crowded Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and provides an east-west route to counter the traditional northern flow to Russia. Since then, incredible production growth has originated in the Azeri Chirag Guneshli oil field, and in 2006 and 2007, Azeri supplied the largest growth in oil production outside of the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC).⁴⁵

When Azerbaijan opened up its energy sector for investment, it excited international interest. To date, Azerbaijan has signed "over 20 major field agreements with approximately 30 companies from 15 countries." In 2007, the major consumers of Azerbaijan's oil were Russia, Italy, Turkey, and Germany, though the US also purchased 50,000 bb/d.⁴⁶ A new era of pipeline politics has commenced in the Caspian basin as a

result, leading to an international competition for routes by which Azerbaijan's energy resources may be accessed or controlled.

When the BTC pipeline was agreed on in 1999, it was without Russian participation – Russian negotiators had left discussions in opposition to any pipeline outside of Russian territory. Before its opening, the AIOC (Azerbaijan International Operating Company) was shipping oil to European markets via a Russian pipeline to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk.⁴⁷ Now the majority of Azerbaijan's oil exports pass through the BTC. Smaller amounts are also exported by railway to the Georgian coast. In addition to allowing Azerbaijan to export oil without Russia, the BTC has also opened the same opportunity for Kazakhstan, which may deliver exports to Baku by barges crossing the Caspian Sea. Construction of a trans-Caspian pipeline route would further expand the ability of the Central Asian states to export without Russia.

Azerbaijan's choice of energy routes, however, is not the only political aspect of its energy industry. Disputes with Turkmenistan over ownership of fields in the middle of the Caspian have slowed Azerbaijan's development of these resources.⁴⁸ Turkmenistan's disagreements with Azerbaijan are also an obstacle to plans for any trans-Caspian pipeline. At the heart of this dispute is the continued legal ambiguity of the Caspian Sea's division. Though Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan have all agreed to classify the Caspian as a sea and divide it according to international laws regulating seas, Turkmenistan and Iran have favored the division of the Caspian as a lake. In this dispute, each state has taken the position which would allow it the greatest access to Caspian energy resources.⁴⁹

Azerbaijan's gas sector is subject to similar geopolitical considerations. Almost all of Azerbaijan's electrical production facilities operate on gas, and Russia has been the

primary supplier for Azerbaijan's gas imports. As with most of the its former republics, though, Russia has been raising gas prices. At independence, Gazprom was charging Azerbaijan around 110 dollars for every roughly 35.3 bcf. In late 2006, Gazprom raised this to 235 dollars. Azeri leaders derided the hike as "commercial blackmail," accusing Russia was using its gas resources as a coercive political tool. Azerbaijan's initial reaction was to sign a different gas contract with Iran. Neither side could agree on prices, however, and Azerbaijan began to refine oil for substitution in electrical production.⁵⁰ This has provided Azerbaijan incentive to increase its natural gas production.⁵¹

Demographic Trends & the Resurgence of Islam

Years of atheism under the Soviets significantly undercut the role of Islam in Azerbaijan. Though 90 percent of the population is officially Muslim, Islam has become largely a cultural heritage. Shia Azeris have much more liberal attitudes toward alcohol, pork, and women than Iranian Shia now living in Azerbaijan. While 65-70 percent of the population is Shia and 30-35 Sunni, Svante Cornell argues that the distinction between these two sects has actually become blurred in Azerbaijan, and many Azeris are not knowledgeable about the differences between the two sects.⁵²

Following by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, however, one of the most momentous demographic transitions experienced by Azerbaijan has been the resurgence of Islam. The resurgence of Islam may be a positive occurrence, as Azeris return to cultural and religious roots that they were forced to abandon. It is certainly a trend that Azerbaijan shares with the other post-Soviet republics in the Muslim world. Yet the return to Islam may not just be a return to a cultural heritage, but also a backlash against globalization and Westernization. As Western media and culture poured into the country after independence,

it produced a conservative backlash in rural areas as liberalization spread unevenly, concentrating in urban populations.⁵³

Coupled with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, such conditions appear ripe for radicalization. Thousands of Muslim Azerbaijani's were displaced and impoverished by the Christian-Armenian military. As the Palestinian-Israeli crisis has demonstrated, poverty-stricken refugee camps are potentially dangerous breeding grounds for radical religious doctrine, and both Sunni and Shia militant groups are now operating in Azerbaijan.⁵⁴ Yet so far the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not produced any significant Islamic militancy. This fact may speak to the degree of moderation Islam in Azerbaijan has experienced.

If militant, radical Islam has not taken deep root in Azerbaijan, however, political Islam appears to be growing – a trend shared in neighboring Turkey. Various surveys conducted from 2001-2005 have demonstrated that political Islam is gaining approval.⁵⁵ One 2003-2005 comparative study conducted by a local firm PULS-S found that the “Islamic model of state-building and public life is drawing more interest, and the number of supporters of Azerbaijan's strengthened relations with the Islamic nations is also rising.”⁵⁶ Still, thus far, Azerbaijan's political leadership, dominated by the semi-authoritarian governance of Aliyev, has rejected fundamental and political Islam. In 2001, Aliyev created a state committee for relations with religious organizations. That committee monitors all religious activities but keeps a close eye on Saudi and Iranian missionaries.⁵⁷

While Azerbaijan's Soviet history is a major factor in the revival of Islam, the politicization and radicalization of Islam is primarily due to external forces. Azerbaijan is geographically embedded in a region full of blossoming radical Islamic movements. Most radical Islamist groups operating in Azerbaijan are trained and/or supported from abroad.

Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, Turkey, and the Russian Northern Caucasus (Chechnya and Dagestan) are sources with the proximity to influence on Azeri Islam. Saudi Arabia and Dagestan have been important sources of radical Sunni influence, but because of Azerbaijan's Shiite heritage, Iranian supported Shiite movements are potentially more threatening to Azerbaijan.⁵⁸ As a result, the age old dichotomy between Azerbaijan's Turkish and Iranian heritage is re-emerging. Both Turkey and Iran have sponsored religious foundations in Azerbaijan, espousing moderate Sunni Islam and conservative Shia Islam respectively. Further implications of this geopolitical factor will be provided in the following discussion of Azerbaijan's greater geopolitical environment.

Azerbaijan & Its Geopolitical Environment

Intra-Regional Neighbors: Armenia & Georgia

Armenia

Armenia's participation in Nagorno-Karabakh's separation from Azerbaijan has understandably created an antagonistic relationship between these two states. Because there has been no resolution to the issue, it continues to separate these two states politically, economically, and militarily. More recent developments in the conflict have included Nagorno-Karabakh's 2006 referendum declaring its existence as a sovereign state.⁵⁹ This has only persevered Nagorno-Karabakh as a roadblock for relations, and on two separate occasions in 2006 and 2007, brief firefights have erupted along on the border.⁶⁰

For Azerbaijan, conflict with Armenia has had several foreign policy implications. Azerbaijan's nationalistic turn toward Turkey was only made stronger in the face of Russian and Iranian support for Armenia. Ties with the most Western oriented Muslim

state in the Middle East, facilitated Azerbaijan's efforts to reach out to Europe and US. Initially, however, Armenians were a better organized political force in the US. The Armenian lobby successfully backed a ban on US aid to Azerbaijan, creating a roadblock to Azerbaijan's relationship with the US that is still a political problem today.⁶¹ As a result of tensions, Azerbaijan has turned to its other neighbor, Georgia, for partnership.

Georgia

Due to their divergent religious backgrounds and histories, Georgia and Azerbaijan would appear to be mismatched partners. But the geopolitical realities of energy resources and routes in the South Caucasus demanded pragmatism from Azerbaijan's leaders, not the nationalistic idealisms of Elchibey. Troubled relationships with Armenia, Russia, and Iran left Georgia as the best option for an energy export partner. The BTC pipeline purposefully avoided Russia, Iran, and Armenia, and cemented an economic relationship between Georgia and Azerbaijan. Any lethargy in Azerbaijan's political embrace of Georgia may be seen primarily as stemming from a desire to maintain a pragmatic balance in its relationship with Russia – something that Georgia has proven unable or unwilling to do. When the Russia-Georgia War erupted in 2008, a Russian pipeline supplying gas to Georgia was blown up. Azerbaijan responded with emergency supplies, which were ended after a reported problem with a compressor on the pipeline.⁶² Otherwise, Azerbaijan has remained rather silent on the war, a foreign policy stance that will be further discussed in relation to Azeri-Russian relations.

Extra-Regional Rivalry: Iran & Turkey

Iran

Soon after independence, it became clear that Azerbaijan's common ties with Iran would be a double edge sword, offering the opportunity for both cooperation and subversion. Elchibey's desire for the reunification of Azeri nation understandably alarmed the Iranians and damaged Iranian-Azeri relations. But the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict distracted Azerbaijan's political and military attention, preventing concentration on a second territorial conflict. By reaching out to Armenia, then, Iran perpetuated this distraction and communicated that it could threaten Azerbaijan's territorial integrity too.⁶³

Under Haydar Aliyev, Azerbaijan's reversal of its rhetoric on Southern Azerbaijan opened the door for rapprochement. It was not only a pragmatic decision, but also very likely a realistically measured one. Though Iran has suppressed the freedoms of Azeris, it appears to be increasingly unlikely that southern Azerbaijan might ever join with northern Azerbaijan. Not only does Iran possess the military might and will to prevent such a move, but many Azeris in Iran have come to identify as Iranians. Pinar Ipek, a professor at Bilkent University in Turkey, has noted that, "In fact, the Azeri minority in Iran is well integrated into the country's economic life, and there are some famous religious leaders as well as post-Iranian Revolution leaders like Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, who are Iranian Azeris."⁶⁴

Just as Azerbaijan has ethnic ties to populations in northern Iran that it might use to stir up trouble, Iran possesses religious ties to the conservative Shia of Azerbaijan. Iran can use sub-state forces to great effect, as it has demonstrated with its successful manipulation of Hamas and Hezbollah.⁶⁵ Iranian supported Shia movements may be used as leverage against secularism and Westernism in Azerbaijan or Azeri foreign policy that runs counter

to Iranian interests. In the late 1990s, Haydar Aliyev attempted to counter Iranian religious influence by outlawing the presence of Iranian mullahs in Azerbaijan. Then, in 2002, Azerbaijan closed 22 different madrasas. Iran has responded by focusing its efforts on sympathetic Azeri clergy, providing them with education and financial support. The conservative Shia teachings of these Iranian backed teachers is a growing threat to secularism in Azerbaijan and a survey conducted by the Baku-based Foundation for Azerbaijan Studies found that, “Nearly 37 percent of the surveyed population in the south of Azerbaijan favored Shari’a governance.”⁶⁶

In addition to demographic tensions between Azerbaijan and Iran, tension between these two states in the Caspian energy sector is based on conflicting priorities in regard to resources. While Azerbaijan has joined Russia and Kazakhstan in calling for the Caspian to be divided as a sea, Iran has opposed this. When Aliyev framed his Deal of the Century in 1994, he pragmatically attempted to pacify Iran by offering a role in the agreement. The problem was that the US would not cooperate in any project with Iran. As US companies held almost a 40 percent share in the AIOC, Azerbaijan had little choice but to exclude Tehran. Iran’s foreign minister expressed displeasure by saying that “nullification of the Azerbaijan-Iranian treaty concerning Iran’s participation in the consortium contradicts Azerbaijan’s national interests and its previous statements. The consortium treaty may not come into force... unless the status of the Caspian Sea is decided.”⁶⁷ To which the Azeri foreign minister retorted that “it is not legal to draw parallels between the issue of the Caspian Sea’s status and Azerbaijan’s right to exploit its oil resources. Moreover, when Iran was party to debates in the international consortium, it never raised the issue...”⁶⁸

In the summer of 2001, disputes over the division of the Caspian threatened to spill over into military conflict. On July 23, Azeri research vessels, Geofizik-3 and Alif Hajiyev, were exploring energy field approximately 93 miles southeast of Baku. Iranian military aircraft flew over their position several times and then an Iranian warship approached and demanded both ships move 8 miles north. When the Azeris replied that they had legal rights to be there, the ship trained its guns on them. The Azeri ships retreated, and Azerbaijan responded with diplomatic denunciations of Iranian behavior.⁶⁹

It is in light of such demographic and energy resource tensions that friendly overtures between Azerbaijan and Iran should be analyzed. While both appear to desire deeper economic ties, shaky political and military relations have resulted in seesawing diplomatic relations. This perspective may be extrapolated from statements made by Azeri President Ilham Aliyev in 2004. Referring to recent dialogue between Azerbaijan and Iran, he said that normal relations are possible if both countries would not interfere in one another's internal affairs. He asserted that Azerbaijan was not intervening in Iran's domestic affairs and insinuated that Iran should behave in the same manner saying, "We adhere to this principle and I am happy that Iranian-Azeri relations are being created on this basis."⁷⁰ In 2005, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki expressed the desire for wider and more diversified relations with Azerbaijan, and discussed several concrete areas for cooperation. One such project would be the construction of a railway to link Azerbaijan to the Persian Gulf.⁷¹ Another was an agreement for Iran to supply natural gas to Nakhichevan in return for Azeri gas in northern Iran.⁷² Because of the proximity of these two states, they share demographic groups and histories, resources, and routes. It is

interesting to note that the first two geopolitical factors have been subject to conflict while the second has tended to be subject to cooperative efforts.

Turkey

While Turkey is separated by a greater geographical distance from Azerbaijan than Iran (Armenia and Georgia separate it from all but a 6.2 mile border with Nakhichevan), this may benefit friendly relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Today, there is no longer a great question about Azerbaijan's autonomy from Turkey. To be sure, a shared Turkic identity with people in Azerbaijan and Central Asia has offered Turkey a unique opportunity to exert influence in the post-Soviet vacuum. Yet, dreams of pan-Turkic unity have been largely fruitless, as the former Soviet republics have proven keen to develop separate identities in order to defend their autonomy. Only with Azerbaijan has Turkey had great success in forging an alliance on the foundation of a shared ethno-cultural heritage.

Realizing the potential for a close relationship with Azerbaijan, Turkey was the first state to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan. Turkey's shared ethnic history with Azerbaijan and historical tensions with Armenian made it a likely ally for Azerbaijan. Since at least the last days of the Ottoman Empire, Turks and Armenians have shared an antagonistic relationship. It is a conflict that even crops up in American domestic politics from time to time, when the US Congress considers officially recognizing Ottoman treatment of Armenians as genocide.⁷³

Under the idealistic, nationalist leadership of Elchibey, Azerbaijan played up its ethno-cultural ties to Turkey. This sort of rhetoric disappeared when Heydar Aliyev became president.⁷⁴ His pragmatic reconciliation with Russia and Iran entailed a temporary cooling of the Turkish-Azeri relationship, but he never allowed it to lapse. Turkey has

remained a steadfast supporter of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and Turkey's diplomatic relationship with Armenia has been icy. Azeris have expressed the belief that Turkey is the only states that truly understands its situation with Armenia.⁷⁵

While shared ethnicity and tension with Armenia provide a basis for political cooperation, Sunni-Shia differences have historically hampered ties between Turks and Azeris. Azerbaijan's Soviet years and Turkey's secularist turn under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, however, appear to have reduced the importance of religious identity. Both governments remain secular and generally opposed to the idea of Islamic rule. As Azerbaijan has attempted to mitigate Islamic resurgence, moderate Turkish Sunni groups have been allowed to operate in the country. Some experts have even speculated that the influence of these Sunni movements may now be greater than Shia Iranian organizations.⁷⁶

Azerbaijan has achieved greater energy cooperation with Turkey than Iran. Positive American and Turkish relations have led to the US to support such cooperation and the construction of the BTC. Another factor influencing the westward flow of Azeri oil is that Turkey itself is an energy consumer. Turkey is an open market pulling oil towards itself, while Iran is an oil exporter that is only interested in the profit it might make as a middleman for Azeri oil. If Heydar Aliyev's election initially led to a cooling of Turkish relations, a great foundation for a long-term Turkish-Azeri partnership was found in the mutually beneficial BTC route.

Global Powers & the Region

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the greatest shift in the proximity of foreign powers took place as Western states began to realize their interests in the region. These ranged from security, to trade and energy, and the promotion of democratic development.

After the Soviet collapse, Western countries generally continued to recognize Russia's political dominance of the region and largely abstained from interfering in the developing conflicts in Azerbaijan and Georgia. Instead, the West encouraged economic liberalization, Western flowing energy pipelines, transportation infrastructure projects, and an "east-west communication axis" that would wean the region off of its dependency on Russia.⁷⁷ In other words, the West focused primarily on routes and resources. Since the opening of the Caspian Sea region Western energy companies have rushed in and secured contracts for production of around 70 percent of the region's energy reserves.⁷⁸

United States, NATO, & Azerbaijan

While US companies are interested in contracts in the Caspian, the US does not need Caspian Sea energy to supply domestic demand. It does, however, have strategic, geopolitical interests in the region's energy. The US has an interest in preventing the Russian monopolization of energy resources that might allow OPEC-like manipulation of prices, as well as a policy of economically isolating Iran from Caspian energy profits. The US has pursued both of these goals via Azerbaijan, facilitating the BTC pipeline and convincing Azerbaijan to limit its cooperation with Iran.

Though US interest in Azerbaijan's energy sector has grown steadily, US-Azerbaijan relations have not always been as steady. Initially, the US backed Armenian independence in Nagorno-Karabakh. Large numbers of Armenians immigrated to the US during and after WWI, and this population now constitutes a strong political lobby within the US. Senator John Kerry, motivated by the Armenian lobby in his state of Massachusetts, backed the sanctioning of Azerbaijan under Section 907 of the Freedom

Support Act passed by the US Congress in 1992. At the time, Azerbaijan did not even have diplomatic representation in the US.⁷⁹

Subsequently, the administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton all urged the repeal of Section 907, but neither administration was able to convince the US Congress to act.⁸⁰ Section 907 continued to hamper US-Azeri relations until January 2002, when George W. Bush managed to secure a temporary suspension of the ban on US aid. In the previous year, US-Azeri relations had come to a critical turning point. Following the September 11th attacks, Azerbaijan became a new partner in the War on Terror. Over flight permission was sought by the US, to support its mission in Afghanistan.⁸¹ Azerbaijan approved US over flight, and in return, the Bush administration suspended the aid ban.

Such Azeri cooperation might not have been as forthcoming from if it had not been for two other factors, however. Russia's initial cooperation with US operations created a permissive environment for US-Azeri security cooperation that might have otherwise been considered a security threat due to the new proximity of US troops. Furthermore, Azerbaijan may have perceived this as a timely opportunity to find an ally in the face of Iranian threats, as it was earlier in 2001 that Iran had intimidated the Azeri ships.

Post-9/11 cooperation established a great deal of momentum in US-Azeri relations. While anti-Americanism was rising around the world following US action in Iraq, a 2006 survey revealed that a majority of Azeris still viewed the US positively. Azerbaijan even sent troops to Iraq, the only other state with a Muslim majority population to send troops besides Kazakhstan. All this is not to say that US-Azeri relations are stellar, however, or uncompromisingly established. The temporary waiver of US sanctions, far from patching differences with Azerbaijan, has been perceived by some to be a method of blackmailing

the Azeri government every time the waiver is up for renewal. It is difficult for Azeris to understand why the US government will not completely repeal this ban and continues to send aid directly to Nagorno-Karabakh. In addition, Ilham Aliyev has also not forgotten that Azerbaijan's foreign policy must take Russian into account, and as the Russia-Georgia War have produced new US-Russia tensions, Azerbaijan must tread carefully.⁸²

Azeri participation in North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace (PfP) is an example of security cooperation with the West that Russia distrusts.⁸³ Though the PfP program does not make Azerbaijan a NATO member, it has facilitated "military cooperation, defense modernization, democratic control of the armed forces, political consultations on security issues, peace support operations, security sector reform, civil emergency planning, security related scientific, economic and environmental cooperation."⁸⁴ NATO, though not a sovereign state, is an actor that any contemporary geopolitical approach to International Relations must take into account. It is because of NATO that one may speak of a semi-cohesive Western security orientation.

The EU, OSCE, & Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan's relationships with the European states, international and regional organizations have played a critical role. As NATO has been important for bringing the US and Europe together in security cooperation with Azerbaijan, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also been instrumental in Europe's security relationship with Azerbaijan. The OSCE has served as the primary forum for negotiations between Armenian and Azerbaijan.⁸⁵ As such, the OSCE provided the opportunity for some of the first coordination with the European states.

The EU itself did not emerge until 1993, and it was not until 1999 that EU-Azerbaijan relations began to deepen seriously, when the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was adopted, establishing a legal framework for EU-Azerbaijan relations. This step was the first toward greater cooperation in politics, economics, and institutional reform. The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was the next step in Azerbaijan's relations with the EU, and a major step towards a EU foreign policy.⁸⁶ In June of 2004, the European Council decided to offer membership in the ENP to all three of the South Caucasus states.⁸⁷ The ENP is a preparatory step for EU membership, and sets goals for political, economic, and institutional reforms. It is also tied the EU's policy of minimizing the proximity of unstable states, however. "The European Security Strategy, adopted in December 2003, emphasizes the need for the EU to seek to build a belt of well-governed countries on its periphery."⁸⁸

Simultaneously, an important energy relationship is developing between Europe and Azerbaijan. Major energy projects worth billions of dollars have also contributed to the growing economic integration of Azerbaijan with the Westward oriented states of Turkey and Georgia. These projects include the Deal of the Century, the BTC, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) gas pipeline, and the Baku-Achalkalaki-Kars (BAK) railway. Unlike Russia and Iran, are primarily interested in Azerbaijan's energy resources in order to maximize their control of Caspian energy for wealth and power, the EU states have a long-term interest in establishing a consumer relationship with Azerbaijan. This is a strategic objective for the EU, and in December of 2006, the EU and Azerbaijan signed an agreement for such strategic energy cooperation.⁸⁹

The EU states are net energy importers, producing 2,394 tb/d of oil and 18.6 bcf/y of gas in 2007 while consuming 14,861 tb/d of oil and 47 bcf/y of gas.⁹⁰ Before even the end of the Cold War, Europe had become dependent upon Russia energy to satisfy domestic consumption. Now, as former Soviet republics are becoming EU members, that dependency is growing. By 2006, 33 percent of the EU's oil imports and 40 percent of its gas imports were supplied by Russia.⁹¹ While the BTC has opened the door for additional diversification of oil imports, energy partnership with Azerbaijan is the first step in making greater European diversification efforts possible. Of these possibilities, the Nabucco pipeline has emerged as the EU's greatest plan for continued energy diversification. Though there still a great many obstacles to be overcome, Nabucco plans call for a gas pipeline that would transit the Caspian seabed from Turkmenistan to Baku, where it would link up with the existing BTE route and provide gas to Turkey and Europe.⁹²

Russia, the CIS, & Azerbaijan

As should be quite clear, Russia is more than a foreign global power in the South Caucasus. It maintains the greatest geographic proximity of all the global powers and remains integrally tied to the politics, security, and economy of the region. It controls energy import and export routes, maintains military bases, and mediates territorial disputes. Moreover, significant populations of Russian citizens continue to reside in these former Soviet republics. In Azerbaijan, Russians account for 1.8 percent of the population, or roughly 148,000 people. Throughout history, the presence of one nation's people in another state's territory has been used to justify military and political interventions, and Russia has used the argument that it was protecting Russian citizens when it countered Georgian troops in South Ossetia during 2008.⁹³ Vladimir Putin, the man who may be credited with

Russia's resurgence in the 21st century, has referred to Russian citizens scatter abroad by the Soviet Union's collapse as a great disaster.

“...after the Soviet Union's disintegration, 25 million Russian people found themselves outside Russian territory. Twenty-five million! They had lived by tradition in other Soviet republics, had moved there some time in the past, or left Russia to work there after receiving a higher education. Isn't this a tragedy?”⁹⁴

When the Soviet Union fell apart, Russia did not intend to allow its former republics to operate completely independent of Russian interests. On December 8, 1991, Russia created the Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS), in an attempt to maintain a special relationship with these states. Azerbaijan joined the CIS on December 21, but terminated its membership under President Elchibey.⁹⁵ In those first years after the Union, Russia was consumed with its own problems as its economy crashed to half its previous size, but the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict soon provided Russia with leverage to counter Azerbaijan's nationalism.⁹⁶ Between 1992 and 1994, Russia unofficially supplied roughly a billion dollars in arms and ammunition to Armenia without charge.⁹⁷ Armenian victories ultimately drove Elchibey from office. Getting rid of Elchibey was only the first step bringing Azerbaijan in line, however, and only once Heydar Aliyev renewed Azerbaijan's membership in the CIS did Russia intervene to stop the advance of Armenian forces.

Membership in the CIS is important to Russia because it still considers the Caucasus to be its security sphere, an essential buffer between it and the Middle East. Though Russia no longer maintains any military bases in Azerbaijan (unlike Georgia and Armenia), it does still maintain a lease on Azerbaijan's Gabala radar station.⁹⁸ While

Russia was initially cooperative with US-led Western intrusion in its former republics following 9/11, its view of the West's new military proximity has grown steadily more negative. In particular, NATO's enlargement is perceived as a threat to Russian security.⁹⁹

Through the CIS, Russia is attempting to create a security alternative to NATO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Created in 2002, the CSTO has held military exercises in Armenia.¹⁰⁰ Azerbaijan has not yet joined this organization. The CIS, which is supposed to defend the national sovereignty of its member states, has come to be perceived by as a mechanism manipulated by Russia. As Putin strengthened Russia, some members of the CIS began to discuss the possible necessity of a "dignified divorce."¹⁰¹ In 2006, a CIS anniversary meeting was even canceled by Russia and Kazakhstan "without consulting the other members," and was perhaps indicative of the Kremlin's "inability to garner support from other members for a plan to revamp the organization."¹⁰²

Beyond security concerns, Russia also has strategic economic interests vis-à-vis Azerbaijan. Russia has historically been Azerbaijan's only energy export route and energy resource production partner. As western companies snatched up production contracts in the Caspian and supported East-West export routes, Russia has lost potential energy revenues and political leverage. Today, Russia stands to lose additional ground if it allows routes like Nabucco be completed. Russia's economic recovery has been primarily based on growth in the Russian energy sector. As world energy prices rose, Russian energy firms began to record profits. In 2003, LUKoil (a major oil exporting firm) reported that its revenues had risen by an amazing 38 percent. This explosive growth drove the Russian economy, boosting the Central Bank's currency levels by \$4.8 billion (10 percent).¹⁰³ The economic turnaround made also made President Putin immensely popular in Russia, facilitating to his

centralization of the Russian state and his vision of restoring Russia to a global power.¹⁰⁴ Energy resources and routes, then, have become essential for Russian national prosperity, the political popularity of its leaders, and international political power.

Due to the proximity of Russia, Azerbaijan's foreign policy must take into account the growing strength of Russia, Russian interest in its resources and routes, and its own limited ability to mitigate Russian influence through regional and international organizations. Azerbaijan, along with Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova attempted to create a separate organization for the pursuit of mutual political and economic cooperation in 1997. This organization is named GUAM (taking the first letter from each member country), and became GUUAM in 1999, when Uzbekistan joined. The organization has accomplished little since its inception. In 2004, only two member states attended a GUUAM meeting held in Yalta, and in 2005, Uzbekistan withdrew its membership. One of the boldest steps the organization has taken came in 2006, with an initiative to expand cooperation for the creation of a mutual security force that could replace Russian troops in separatist regions in Georgia. Such cooperation, however, has failed to materialize.¹⁰⁵

Even now, with Putin officially removed from the presidency, Russia's war with Georgia has demonstrated that the international community will do little to stand in the way of Russia's pursuit of its interests in the Caucasus. During that war Azerbaijan appeared to remain relatively neutral, some government officials even "voiced pro-Moscow statements." But in February of 2009, new reports of Russian weapon supplies to Armenia demonstrated that Azerbaijan and Russia have not completely reconciled their differences in Nagorno-Karabakh. It remains to be seen how Ilham Aliyev will respond, but he will likely continue to maintain a balanced, pragmatic position.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

In the case of Azerbaijan, the relevance of geopolitical analysis may clearly be seen. A return to Azerbaijan's pre-Soviet and Soviet history allows an understanding of cultural, religious, and ethnic variables that have laid a foundation for Azerbaijan's contemporary politics, economics, and security. As the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict illustrates, ethno-political struggles continue to define international politics. That territorial struggle has not only influenced Azerbaijan's relationship with Armenia, but has also contributed to Armenia's alignment with Russia and Iran and Azerbaijan's political distance from both of those states.

The interplay between domestic geopolitical factors and external geopolitical actors may also be seen in Azerbaijan's religious demography. The recession of Islam's influence in Azerbaijan is a historical trend that owes to Azerbaijan's central geography and, in particular, years of Soviet control. The waning of the Shia faith opened the opportunity for Azerbaijan and Turkey to establish an alliance based upon shared ethnicity that had been hitherto unrealized. At the same time, Islam's resurgence in Azerbaijan threatens to disrupt this Westward orientation and, perhaps, pull Azerbaijan back toward Iran. Recognizing this, both Turkey and Iran have acted to influence the religious thinking of Azeris. This is a continuation of the historical Turko-Persian tensions that characterized pre-Soviet Azerbaijan, and the proximity of these two regional powers to Azerbaijan's ethnic and religious demography continues to constrain its foreign policy orientation.

Perhaps the most important geopolitical characteristic of Azerbaijan, however, is its energy resources, which have invited international competition for export routes. This has geopolitical and geo-economic implications. The northward orientation of Azerbaijan's

Soviet pipeline routes is indicative of the history of economic dependency bred by Russian empire. In order to break this dependency, politics and geography allow Azerbaijan few choices. Since Armenia and Iran were not viable options for additional export pipelines, Azerbaijan turned to Georgia. The result of energy competition in the Caspian basin has only served to reinforce Azerbaijan's westward orientation in alliances, as Iran has militarily blustered toward Azerbaijan and Russia has demonstrated that it will manipulate energy dependence for political gain.

The external geopolitical environment of Azerbaijan has also constrained Azerbaijan's foreign policy explicitly. Because of US isolation of Iran, Azerbaijan has chosen to pursue a less cooperative relationship with Iran than it might have otherwise, in order to realize greater political and economic gains from US backing. Analysis of Azerbaijan's geopolitical position makes this choice appear quite rational. However, it would be hasty and overly deterministic to argue that Azerbaijan's geopolitical position in the South Caucasus has decided the course of its foreign policy orientation. Decision makers may come to different conclusions within the same geopolitical context.

This is starkly evident in the contrast between the presidencies of Elchibey and Heydar Aliyev. Elchibey's idealistic nationalism may be criticized for producing an irrational policy approach, given the realities of Azerbaijan's geopolitical position. Yet, in the same geopolitical context both men made very different decisions. Thus the limits of geopolitical variables in foreign policy are demonstrated while the contrast between the presidencies of these two men still reveals the constraining effects of geopolitical circumstances. For example, by defying Russia and Iran with his foreign policy, Elchibey exacerbated Azerbaijan's geopolitical isolation. Only when Heydar Aliyev demonstrated

deference toward Russia did the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict come to an end. Thus, Azerbaijan's demography, routes, and resources all are interwoven to create a geopolitical environment that the leaders of small states may not always be able to escape.

Chapter 2 Endnotes

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CHAPTER 3: ARMENIA

Of the three Caucasus states, Armenia occupies the most geographically challenging location. (See Appendix E for a topographic map of Armenia.) It is landlocked in the heart of the South Caucasus, without access to even the Caspian Sea. To its east, Armenia shares a disputed border with Azerbaijan, and to the west, it shares a border with Azerbaijan's close ally, Turkey. The only other two states to border Armenia are Iran in the south and Georgia in the north. The scholar Anahide Ter Minassian has argued that Armenia's geography has been the single greatest determinant of its troubled history.¹ It has historically occupied a central and isolated geographic position – albeit as a larger territorial entity. Today, Armenia officially is the smallest state of the South Caucasus, occupying 29,743 square kilometers, though conflict with Azerbaijan has provided Armenians the opportunity to expand their territorial control.

Geopolitical History of Armenia in the Caucasus

Pre-Soviet Armenia

The Armenians have a long history in the Caucasus. These people emerged from a mix of indigenous Hurro-Urartean tribes and migrating Indo-Europeans. They established themselves in the rugged geographic space that spans Asia Minor and the Caucasus, where the rough terrain inhibited the emergence of a “strong central political power throughout much of Armenian history.”²

The first united Armenian dynasty was under the Yervandunis, who were appointed as regional governors by the Medes (6th century BC) and Persians (550-331 BC). This dynasty ruled Armenia with relative autonomy even after Alexander the Great defeated the

Persian Empire in 331 BC.³ That autonomy allowed the Armenians to develop into a distinctive people group, though they were heavily influenced by Persian culture and Zoastrianism.⁴

As Rome expanded into Asia Minor and the Parthians established themselves in Persia, Armenia became a buffer between these two empires. The political autonomy of Armenia, then governed by the Artashesian dynasty, depended on the balance of power between the Romans and Parthians. The Armenians allied themselves first with Persia, and then with Rome, in order to maintain their independence.⁵ Eventually, the Armenians came to permanently embrace a Westward orientation with their conversion to Christianity in 314-315.⁶ From that point on, the Armenians would remain distinct from the Muslim Arabs, Turks, and Persians that came to dominate the greater Middle East. Turkic invasions and the fall of the Byzantine Empire, however, ultimately cut Armenia off from the Christian West, ushering in what Armenians refer to as the 'dark centuries.'⁷ Mongol invasions and the marauding of Tamerlane in 1380 and 1390 destroyed Armenian lands and decimated Armenian society.⁸ This pressure led to the first dispersions of Armenians, driving merchants and nobles to flee to Europe.⁹

When a new set of Armenian elite began to emerge, they were mostly affiliated with the Christian Georgian kingdom that attained its height of power in the 12th and 13th Centuries. As a result, Tbilisi (the capital of Georgia) became a major center for Armenians.¹⁰ The lands of the Armenians were torn between empires once again in the 16th century as Ottoman Turks and Safavid Persians struggled for power. Caught between these Muslim empires, Armenians turned to Christian Europe and Russia as external powers which might be used to counterbalance Islamic might.¹¹

When the Russian empire began to press into the South Caucasus, such an alliance became more realistic. The Treaty of Turkmenchay granted Russia control of eastern portions of Armenian lands, and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1888 brought Armenian populations in Kars and Ardahan into the empire. Yet many Armenians remained to the West, within the Ottoman Empire. Armenia had become a regional fault line once more.¹² Though Russia would not tolerate Armenian independence, it was perceived as the protector of the Armenian people, liberating them from the Muslims. This history, Panossian argues, engrained a reliance on foreign powers in the Armenian psyche.¹³

The relationship between Armenians and Russians excited ethnic and religious tensions with Azeris. Between 1828 and 1830, approximately 130,000 Armenians were encouraged by Russia to immigrate into the South Caucasus, at least 18,000 of whom settled in the Karabakh province.¹⁴ This historical demographic dislocation laid foundation for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

While there were tensions between Armenia and Russia due to attempts to ‘Russify’ the Armenian population, the greater enemy was always the Muslims Turks.¹⁵ Armenians under the Ottoman Turks faced oppression and sporadic violence. Their hope for independence resulted in Armenian revolts during the late 19th century. From the Ottoman perspective, the Armenians were a threat to their unstable border with Russia. On the decline and defensive, the Ottomans realized that the Armenians afforded Russia and Europe a constant political excuse for interventions/invasions in Ottoman territory. As a result, Ottoman oppression of Armenians escalated and peaked during WWI. While Russia and the Ottoman Empire warred, Armenians were forcibly relocated from their traditional homes or attacked and massacred in what has been referred to as the Armenian Genocide

of 1915. Though there is much vehement debate over whether or not this constitutes a genocide, and what blame the modern state of Turkey bears, it is estimated that as many as 1.5 million Armenians were killed in 1915 (one third to one half of the total Armenian population).¹⁶

Armenian populations beyond Russia's borders were decimated, and the Bolshevik revolution led to the retreat of Russian forces, which left eastern Armenia open to Ottoman troops. Furthermore, when the TDFR fell apart, both Azerbaijan and Georgia claimed control of territories with large Armenian populations. Georgia and Armenia fought briefly over the border regions of Lori and Akhalkalak, but fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territories of Nakhichevan, Zangenu, and Karabakh was the most intense.¹⁷ Armenian forces in Zangenu destroyed nearly 115 Azeri settlements, killed 7,000 Azeris, and displaced 50,000 others.¹⁸ Fighting in Nakhichevan and Karabakh was not as decisive and would not be resolved until the end of the Soviet Union.

Soviet Armenia

The allied defeat of the Ottoman Turks at the end of WWI promised an opportunity for Armenians to reclaim lands they had historically inhabited, but Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Turkish national forces were quick to consolidate the new Turkish state. Trapped between advancing Turkish and Bolshevik Russian troops, Armenian independence could not be preserved. Russia was the better of two evils, and Armenia submitted to the Soviet Union. Soviet mediation of the territorial disputes between Armenia and its neighbors meant that even though Nagorno-Karabakh possessed a predominantly Armenian population, the Soviets included it within Azerbaijan because of its geographical separation from the Armenian republic by a line of mountains.

This decision left most Armenians unhappy and Karabakh-Armenians worried about their future in a Muslim-Turkic Azeri state. Soviet decision makers ignored Armenian pleas for the unification of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, a desire for territorial integrity that was made more acute by a historical sense of territorial loss. By some estimates, Armenian territory was once six times larger than the territory that the Soviets granted to the Armenian republic.¹⁹ Indeed, Armenia became the smallest of all the Soviet Republics.²⁰ When the Soviets made Nagorno-Karabakh an autonomous region within Azerbaijan, its borders were defined without any physical connection to the Armenian republic, placing the Armenian population in a precarious position when the Soviet Union began to collapse. At the same time, the Soviet system encouraged the strengthening of Armenian nationalism and did little to resolve the historical animosity between Armenians and the Turkic Azeris. The Soviets relocated Azeris from Armenia, strengthening the dominance of Armenians in what was already the most ethnically homogenous of all the Soviet Republics.²¹

In the years following Khrushchev, public debate over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh began to boil openly. Armenian protestors took to the streets of Yerevan on April 24, 1965, to mark the “50th anniversary of the deportations of the Armenians by the Ottomans” and to demand the “re-establishment” of Armenian control over Nagorno-Karabakh.²² Armenian demands for recognition were largely ignored by the Communist Party and discontent was left to simmer. So when Gorbachev announced reforms, promoting *glasnost* and *perestroika*, this discontent burst forth anew. In 1988, the Armenian majority in Nagorno-Karabakh made two different bids to separate from Azerbaijan, submitting an application for incorporation with Armenia and voting to

withdraw from Azerbaijan. Moscow rejected these actions and, instead, responded by taking steps to pacify the region, providing economic aid, firing several high ranking officials, and deploying Soviet troops in the area.²³

Armenian attempts to secure autonomy in Nagorno-Karabakh excited violence, and anti-Armenian *pogroms* rocked Azerbaijan.²⁴ Though both sides perpetrated violence against each other, Azeri violence further served to entrench the Armenian belief that Azeris were Turks, and that Turks were the enemies of the Armenian people. Azeris and Armenians fled from their homes in the hundreds of thousands as ethnic fighting mounted.²⁵ After the Moscow *putsch* in August of 1991, Soviet military support for Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh terminated and Karabakh-Armenians found their opportunity for freedom had arrived. Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence and prepared to confront Azerbaijan.²⁶

Armenia & Independence

On August 23, 1990, Armenia declared its independence, and in October of that year, Levon Ter-Petrosian was elected the first Armenian president. Ter-Petrosian is a little more difficult to classify as a pragmatic semi-authoritarian, because at the time of his election, he was a nationalist that was elected to a hyper-presidential system. However, as time would reveal, his presidency came to be characterized by a Soviet-esque authoritarianism and a pragmatic approach to Azerbaijan that was quite moderate when measured against the current of Armenian nationalism.²⁷ To start, however, Armenia's election proved unifying. Armenian attention immediately turned to the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, and soon the Armenian state was unofficially backing the Karabakhis in their war for independence from Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan received international recognition of their independence in 1992, and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh quickly began to turn into an inter-state war. Yet, Armenia originally attempted to conceal its role in Nagorno-Karabakh under Ter-Petrosian's cautious leadership. Armenia had agreed to accept its Soviet borders in January of 1992, and since Nagorno-Karabakh had been internationally recognized as a part of Azeri territory, Armenia was open to international criticism if it had officially tried to claim Nagorno-Karabakh. Instead, the government of Ter-Petrosian decided to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's 1991 declaration of independence, in order to portray the conflict as a civil war rather than an inter-state war.²⁸

The reality, however, was that Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia were inextricably linked. Ter-Petrosian had been involved in the Armenian Karabakh movement himself, an issue that was central for all Armenians.²⁹ Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh constituted roughly three fourths of the region's population, and thus had a numerical advantage over Azeris who lived there.³⁰ Yet, the conflict was far from determined because Azerbaijan had inherited a strong military force from the Soviet Union.³¹ For their part, the Karabakhis were joined in their struggle by troops from Armenia and former Soviet military units.³²

The importance of Armenia for Karabakhis was underscored by the fact that the first major objective of their forces was to open a transportation route to Armenia. Once the towns of Shusha and Lachin were captured, Nagorno-Karabakh had a supply route to support its war effort. Having secured this objective, Armenian forces took the offensive and "between July and October further regions such as Aghdara (July 7, 1993), Aghdam (July 23, 1993), Jabrayil (August 23, 1993), Fizuli (August 23, 1993), Gubadley (August

31, 1993), and Zangilan (October 23, 1993) were occupied by Armenia.”³³ Karabakhi forces took full advantage of Azerbaijan domestic chaos and carved out a defensive buffer around Nagorno-Karabakh, occupying 20 percent of Azerbaijan.³⁴

By 1993, evidence that Armenian troops were fighting alongside the Karabakhis was undeniable, and military expansion beyond Nagorno-Karabakh’s borders met with international condemnation.³⁵ International opinion began to turn against Armenia, and after Azerbaijan’s president, Heydar Aliyev, reconciled with Russia, Russian pressure led the Armenians to halt their advance. In May 1994, the Russian-backed Bishkek Protocol brought an end to hostilities. By that time, Armenian forces had secured most of their strategic objectives, physically uniting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and establishing a defensive buffer.

While Azerbaijan will not recognize the independence of the region, Armenia maintains effective control. Time appears to be on the side of the Armenians as Nagorno-Karabakh has maintained de facto independence for nearly two decades. Yet, no state in the international system has officially granted Nagorno-Karabakh recognition. When Nagorno-Karabakh issued its first constitution in 2006, it was condemned by the EU, OSCE, and European Council (EC).³⁶ Still, the possibility that the Armenians might surrender ground on this position is unlikely, as any leader proposing negotiations runs the risk of being perceived as a traitor.

This is one of the factors that contributed to the eventual ousting of Ter-Petrosian. Not only did his willingness to compromise run against the current of national feeling in Armenia, but his slide into authoritarianism undermined his legitimacy. His attempt to manipulate the presidential election results in 1996 created a crisis which forced his

resignation. As a result, Robert Kocharian, Ter-Petrosian's nationalist prime minister found political opportunity to gain the presidency.³⁷

Armenia & Economic Isolation

While the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a military success, it had severe economic ramifications for Armenia. Azerbaijan and Turkey both closed their borders with Armenia, suspending trade. During the Soviet era, 85 percent of Armenia's rail traffic had originated in Azerbaijan.³⁸ Such isolation compounded the economic crash that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the size of the Armenian economy declined by 60 percent between 1991 and 1993.³⁹

In order to foster international trade, Armenia had to turn to routes left with Georgia in the north and Iran in the south, but there is only a single road connecting Armenia to Iran. Therefore, routes with Georgia became critical for Armenia's economy, particularly because those routes also connected Armenia to Russia. Despite the fact that rail lines and roadways with Georgia have consistently remained in poor condition, these routes now carry around 70 percent of all Armenia's international trade.⁴⁰

The Azeri trade embargo also severed pipelines that supplied Armenia's access to natural gas, creating a national heating crisis. For energy, Armenia became reliant on its hydropower generators and fuel trucked in through Georgia. An alternative gas route with Georgia was established in 1993, but that route proved quite vulnerable to Azeri saboteurs and interruptions induced by Georgia's own domestic turbulence as it contended with separatism in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Even after fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh ground to a halt, the energy sector remained in dire straits, and in 1998, a major earthquake

shut down Armenia's only nuclear plant, which had been supplying one third of Armenia's electricity.⁴¹

While Azerbaijan's energy wealth allowed its economy to rebound, the Armenian economy struggled without the hydrocarbon resources necessary to keep it running. Armenia attempted to reform its energy sector through privatization, which opened the door for Russian companies. In 2002, ownership of the Hrazdan thermal power plant, the Sevan-Hrazdan hydropower cascade, and financial control of the Madzamor nuclear plant were transferred to Russian companies in return for 96 million dollars of debt forgiveness.⁴² In 2002, a Russian-Armenia Treaty was concluded, exchanging Armenian debt for Russian holdings in Armenian equity. And then in 2006, Russia gained additional control of Armenian assets in return for not increasing Armenia's gas prices.⁴³ Due to the routes available, Armenia has had little choice but to pursue a greater energy relationship with Russia, though some energy may be obtained via Iran. Of the 48 tb/d of oil and 72 bcf of gas that Armenia consumed in 2008, 100 percent had to be imported.⁴⁴

Armenia's privatizing reforms, while surrendering significant economic influence to Russian companies resulted in the stabilization of its energy sector, which contributed to its economic revival. Additionally, Armenia received "high levels of remittances and private transfers from diaspora Armenians," which provided funds for the rebuilding of the economy.⁴⁵ Between 1994 and 2000, average GDP growth was 5 percent. That growth has accelerated to around 11 percent since 2001.⁴⁶ Both Kocharian and his presidential successor, Serzh Sarksyian (Kocharian's former prime minister), have found this economic success a vital component to their electoral success.⁴⁷

Despite Armenia's recent economic success, geopolitical realities continue to constrain this growth. In order to succeed, Armenia has had to embrace significant Russian dominance in its economy. The Armenian economy has also become dependent on international aid and remittances for its large diaspora.⁴⁸ These sources of funding are spent by the central Armenian government, which has proven reluctant to surrender its economic control, causing it to prefer foreign aid to privately directed foreign investment.⁴⁹

Demographic Turmoil & the Armenian Diaspora

War and economically dark times have produced a great deal of poverty in Armenia and have prompted more than 25 percent of Armenia's population to emigrate since 1991.⁵⁰ This has created a dangerous drain on the young and skilled population, complicating Armenia's economic difficulties. Yet this trend is a part of a historical pattern of dispersion, and the Armenian Diaspora has become a vital factor in Armenia's history.

Armenia's difficult history has compelled successive waves of Armenians to flee from their homeland. As a result, the Armenian people have become scattered internationally. Today that population is of significant strength and size. While the total population of modern Armenia is between 3.5 and 4 million, almost twice that number (7 to 8 million) reside abroad.⁵¹ Around 1 million Armenians now live in the United States, roughly 1.5 million in Russia, and at least another million in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America.⁵² These populations have become representatives for Armenia abroad and have gained influence in the foreign policies of their new home states, particularly democratic states like the US.⁵³

For centuries, Armenians have pled for the attention of Europe and Russia, seeking external support for the constantly overrun Armenian nation. The existence of the

Armenian Diaspora may be traced back to the 14th century, although some claim that the Diaspora may be traced even further back.⁵⁴ The Armenian Diaspora, however, became most consequential after Ottoman violence during WWI. This prompted a massive exodus of Armenian people from their traditional homes.

Yossi Shain defines diasporas as, “a people with common national origin who reside outside a claimed or an independent home territory. They regard themselves or are regarded by others as members or potential members of their country of origin (claimed or already existing) a status held regardless of their geographical location and citizen status outside their home country.”⁵⁵ As such, diasporas are often very committed to preserving or restoring their ‘nation.’⁵⁶ In particular, conflict-generated diasporas like that of the Armenians are most likely to maintain attachment to their historic homeland or nation.⁵⁷

The violent events of 1915 have proven to be the most galvanizing events in Armenian consciousness. Today, the main political focus of the Armenian Diaspora is seeking international recognition of Ottoman brutality as a genocidal event. Armenian diaspora groups have supported Karabakhi independence and Armenian democracy, and backed foreign aid to both Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.⁵⁸ Diasporas are also an important source of remittances, which are often used to support conflicts.⁵⁹ The Diaspora’s financial support for Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh, and its general unwillingness to compromise with Turkey and Armenia, have been identified as important factors in preserving Armenia’s conflicts with its neighbors.⁶⁰ Funds from the Diaspora were utilized in the construction of highway infrastructure to connect Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as to facilitate rebuilding in the Karabakh.⁶¹

Still, while the Armenian Diaspora has been important for the Armenian state, the two are actually not always unified. The Soviet Iron Curtain separated Armenians from the Western Diaspora for 70 years, producing differences between Western and Eastern Armenians as each developed independently.⁶² While the Western Diaspora may favor Armenia over Western allies like Turkey and Azerbaijan, these Armenians generally support the establishment of democracy in Armenia and view dependency on Russia negatively.⁶³

Armenia & Its Geopolitical Environment

Intra-Regional Neighbors: Azerbaijan & Georgia

Azerbaijan

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the central issue separating Azerbaijan and Armenia. In their diplomatic struggle for international attention, Armenia's Diaspora has proven to be a formidable political force. Indeed, Azeri officials cite the Armenian lobby in the US as the primary obstacle to peace in the South Caucasus and to the development of US-Azeri ties.⁶⁴ The Diaspora certainly succeeded in erecting a significant roadblock to Azeri-US relations when it backed the Section 907 ban on US aid to Azerbaijan in the Freedom Support Act. In addition to successfully limiting Azerbaijan's aid, the Freedom Support Act made Armenia the highest per capita aid recipient of US aid in the former Soviet Union.⁶⁵

Armenia's initial success in winning the international support made Azerbaijan's alliance with Turkey all the more essential. This, in turn, cemented Armenian perceptions of the Azeris as their historic Turkish enemies, despite the fact that Azeri Turks have long

been differentiated by their Shia faith and Persian ties. More recently, the West has assumed a more neutral stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, refusing to recognize the region as independent until both sides can agree on a settlement. From the Western perspective, resolution of the conflict could serve not only the goal of peace, but it might also free Armenia from its current orientation toward Russia and Iran.

There has been some recent progress made toward an agreement. For example, the current presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev and Serzh Sargsyan, met in June of 2008 during a CIS summit.⁶⁶ Meeting and rumors of progress in negotiations has continued into 2009, but little visible, substantive progress has been made thus far.⁶⁷

Georgia

At first blush, Armenia and Georgia appear to share some very basic commonalities. Both possess an ancient Christian heritage, and both historically chose, when push came to shove, to side with Christian Russia in the face of Muslim forces. However, nationalism has produced territorial conflict between both states. Furthermore, both have taken different stands in relation to Russia since independence. This is what creates the most tension in Georgia-Armenian relations.

Despite these differences, Armenia has pursued friendly relations with Georgia. This is because Georgia is critical to Armenia's economic survival. Without use of Georgian territory, Armenia is separated from Russia, Europe, and the Black Sea. It is hemmed in by Turkey and Azerbaijan, with only Iran as an outlet in the south. As the majority of Armenia's international trade passes through Georgia, positive relations are a necessity. Thus, while Armenia has aggressively pursued independence for Nagorno-Karabakh, it has attempted to downplay tensions over Georgian territory in which major Armenian groups

reside. Instead of seeking the annexation of Georgia's Javakheti region, Armenia has actually attempted to silence calls for unification in order to secure its economic relationship with Georgia.⁶⁸ In an attempt to mitigate conflicts, Armenia has pursued the diplomatic talks to delaminate their shared border.⁶⁹

In the pursuit of an economic relationship, Armenia also offers routes that interest Georgia. The Armenian-Iran pipeline that was completed in 2007 offers Georgia the possibility to mitigate its energy dependency on Russia. That is a possibility Iran also favors, as a pipeline to Georgia offers to opportunity to connect Iran to Europe.⁷⁰ Both states benefit from transportation routes which increase trade for their economies.⁷¹ In 2004, Saakashvili expressed that, "...Armenia can be of help to us, insofar as she maintains close ties of friendship with Russia."⁷² There may be some hope in this regard, as Armenia has maintained a very balanced approach to Georgia in the midst of the recent Russia-Georgia War. Russian transportation blockades of Georgia threatened to cut Armenia's trade with Russia as well. Therefore, Armenia has a stake in the resolution of that conflict.⁷³

Extra-Regional Rivalry: Iran & Turkey

Iran

Historically, the Muslim Persians were Armenia's southern enemy. Today, however, that has changed. Relations between Iran and Armenia have become very friendly. Armenia has had economic motivations to seek this relationship, while Iran has had both economic and security motivations to welcome Armenia. As noted in the chapter on Azerbaijan, backing Armenia has allowed Iran political leverage in its attempts to quash discussions of Azerbaijan's unification with Azeris in northern Iran.

In 2000, there were discussions of a three-way union between Armenia, Turkmenistan and Iran. The Armenian presidential spokesman Vage Gabrielian said that “We are very interested in creating an economic union with Turkmenistan and Iran.”⁷⁴ Friendly diplomatic and economic relations have also trickled into security cooperation. On December 26, 2001, presidents Mohammad Khatami of Iran and Robert Kocharyan of Armenia said Iran and Armenia have agreed to build up bilateral cooperation in the sphere of regional security and stability.⁷⁵

Perhaps to minimize the threat of an Armenian-Iranian alliance, Armenian President Robert Kocharyan was quoted in 2002 as saying, ‘There is no serious military aspect in our relations.’⁷⁶ He asserted that Armenia maintains good-neighborly relations with Iran and both were working to strengthen trade and economic cooperation. And at that same time he added that both countries are also working on plans to build a gas pipeline. This pipeline is one of the best examples of Iranian-Armenian cooperation on economic issues. The pipeline, completed in 2007, called for 100 kilometers of the pipeline across Iran and 41 kilometers across Armenia.⁷⁷ Through this pipe Armenia was projected to receive 1.5 million cubic meters of gas annually.⁷⁸

Turkey

Armenia has almost as troubled a relationship with Turkey as it does with Azerbaijan. Turkish-Armenian relations have been frozen by three issues: (1) territorial disputes, (2) Armenian genocide allegations, and (3) differences over the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Turkey has been a steadfast supporter of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity, and leaders in Azerbaijan have expressed the belief that Turkey is the only state that truly understands its situation with Armenia.⁷⁹ Turkish support for Azerbaijan has been

perceived by Armenians (in the homeland and among the Diaspora) as the continuation of historical conflicts with the Turkish people and an attempt to “keep Armenia helpless and vulnerable.”⁸⁰

Just as with Azerbaijan, Armenia’s Diaspora has played an important role in this relationship. In particular, it has pushed foreign governments to recognize the events of 1915 as genocide. This is a dispute that even crops up in American domestic politics from time to time, when the US Congress considers officially recognizing Ottoman treatment of Armenians as genocide.⁸¹ The Turkish government has refused to acknowledge massacres of Armenians as genocide, and Armenian accusations have evoked angry protests from the Turks, creating an impasse to rapprochement.⁸²

Yet Armenians are not all united on this stance. Turkish Armenians are the largest Christian community in Turkey, with a population of approximately 70,000. Turkish Armenians have often found themselves at odds with both Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, as they generally favor rapid resolution of Turkish-Armenian disputes, which make their lives difficult in Turkey. Mesrob the II, the 84th patriarch of Turkey’s Armenian Orthodox community, has expressed the view that relations between Armenia and Turkey have been crippled by the constant return to the issue of genocide.⁸³

If Armenian economic dependency on Russia is ever to be broken, ties with Turkey must be established in order to open Armenia’s trade routes. Efforts to achieve rapprochement, however, have been fitful. In 2002, the Armenians agreed to open relations with Turkey without any preconditions, but Turkey remained aloof, demanding that Armenia halt fighting with Azerbaijan and drop claims to Turkish territory.⁸⁴ In 2003, renewed effort to create peace emerged as Armenia began to consider such concessions to

Turkey.⁸⁵ Later that year, Turkey announced it would consider reopening relations with Armenia.⁸⁶ When Armenia appeared in 2004 to have failed to honor these concessions, the Turkish government announced that it would suspend relations.⁸⁷

In 2005, the IMF emphasized that it is critical that Armenia normalize relations with Turkey.⁸⁸ Turkey, too, has incentive to reopen its relations with Armenia. For example, the EU has suggested it wants to see their conflict resolved.⁸⁹ In 2006, however, progress has stalled again, with Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan saying that Turkey does not appear willing to open diplomatic relations.⁹⁰

Still, the shakeup caused by the Russia-Georgia War may offer opportunity for a new round of negotiations. Improving the relationship with Armenia appears to be an objective of the AKP government, and on September 6, 2008, Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Armenia to watch a football match between the two country's national teams.⁹¹ News reports indicate that both sides are also preparing for the possible re-opening of roads across their borders.⁹² Additionally, there has been some talk of reopening the Kars-Gümri railway, a possibility that appears unlikely anytime soon, but one that could restore Armenia's ability to facilitate East-West trade⁹³

Global Powers & the Region

United States, NATO, & Armenia

In the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, Armenia initially appeared to be in a good political position vis-à-vis the US. The US initially backed the right of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh to self-determination. This US orientation was facilitated by the political influence of the Armenian Diaspora within the US. The openness of the American political system allows ethnic political groups or diaspora groups like the Armenians to

influence US foreign policy toward their homeland.⁹⁴ For example, Senator John Kerry was backed by a large Massachusetts Armenian lobby when he proposed the sanctioning of Azerbaijan under Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act in 1992. At the time, Azerbaijan did not even have diplomatic representation in the US.⁹⁵

While Armenia succeeded in this first round of diplomatic battles with Azerbaijan, receiving a great deal of US aid, its position weakened somewhat as the US came to understand that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was not a one sided case of ethnic hostility and realized the strategic value of Azerbaijan. Those strategic interests include Azerbaijan's energy wealth and Azerbaijan's strategic location in regards to the War on Terror.

Armenia's close relationship with Iran and its difficulties with Turkey also complicate the US-Armenian relationship. Even recently elected US President Barack Obama, who had previously argued that the events of 1915 should be recognized as an instance of genocide, has refused to use the word in order to maintain strategic ties with Turkey. Instead, he said asserted that this is an issue that Turkey and Armenia must resolve themselves.⁹⁶

Still the US has encouraged Armenia's participation within NATO's PfP program. Since Armenia joined the PfP program in 1994, it has sent a contingent of troops to Kosovo. In 2005, Armenia also received its first approved Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). Despite the possibility this cooperation might hold for mitigating Armenia's security reliance on Russia, Armenia has been clear that is not seeking permanent NATO membership.⁹⁷

The EU, OSCE, & Armenia

The EU and multi-lateral European organizations hold economic and political promise for Armenia. As in the US, the Armenian Diaspora created a great deal of initial European sympathy for the Armenia. In 1999, the EU-Armenia PCA first went into effect, and in 2004, Armenia was offered ENP membership along with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Its ENP action plan was approved in 2006, and Armenia has been pursuing the objectives of that plan with vigor.⁹⁸

In Europe, the Armenian Diaspora has used its leverage to oppose Turkey's membership into the EU.⁹⁹ However, Armenia has less strategic importance for the EU than Azerbaijan, due to European energy demands. Instead, EU encouragement of Armenia's participation in the ENP may be perceived as a part of the EU's long-term strategy to create a stable belt of neighboring states.

In this regard, OSCE mediation of Nagorno-Karabakh has been an important aspect of the European-Armenian relationship. The OSCE has been encouraging negotiations and debunking accusations that might derail the peace process.¹⁰⁰ Yet, progress has been limited, and the OSCE has criticized Nagorno-Karabakh's attempts to achieve international recognition of its de-facto independence.

Russia, the CIS, & Armenia

As Russia is the historical protector of the Armenians, it would be easy to characterize the relationship between Armenia and Russia as friendly and mutually beneficial. The relationship is, in fact, quite complicated. Armenians have historically desired autonomy, and in return for Russia's friendship, Armenia has been forced to surrender significant autonomy.

Due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the first concern of Armenia was security. In order to secure itself, Armenia agreed to allow Russia to maintain military bases within its borders, and Russian troops have even patrolled its borders.¹⁰¹ Armenia is the only state in the South Caucasus to have steadily maintained its membership in the CIS, and it has embraced Russia's creation of the CSTO, hosting war games.¹⁰² Armenian's security cooperation has allowed Russia to maintain a significant military presence in the region, facilitating its ability to act a regional security manager.

After security concerns, the issue of energy has been salient for Armenia. Until the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline was finished in 2007, Armenia had only Russia to supply its energy needs. Russia obliged, supplying energy and investing in the Armenian energy sector as it privatized. However, this has allowed Russia to dominate the Armenian energy sector, and it tighten its hold on this sector by trading Armenian debt for shares in Armenian companies. This relationship is likely to be long-term, and on June 8, 2009, Gazprom announced that by the end of 2009 it would invest more than 200 million dollars in the construction of the Iran-Armenian gas pipeline.¹⁰³

The Russia-Georgia War may yet shake the Armenian-Russian relationship, providing a warning of Russia's desire to permanently maintain its dominance in the region. Yet considering the historical ties of Armenia and Russia, and the importance of Russian routes and resources for Armenia, this appears unlikely any time soon under the Sarkisyan, who appears likely to continue in Kocharian's nationalist path. Thus far, Russia-Armenian security cooperation appears to be unshaken.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

From this chapter, it should be obvious that geography has played a defining role in shaping Armenian history. Consistently in close proximity to various empires, Armenia has had to ally itself with great powers in order to preserve its independence. This pattern in Armenian foreign policy still holds true today.

After independence the state that was the greatest threat was Azerbaijan. The Soviet borders between these two states were convoluted, creating demographic overlap that invited ethnic disputes. So, borders certainly mattered, but they mattered because they did not reflect the realities of ethnic distributions, groups which had found the necessary conditions for ethnic conflict in their troubled history and the threat of political loss.

Despite Azerbaijan's control of energy resources and major routes to Armenia, war erupted along demographic lines. However, once Armenia suffered the additional loss of routes with Turkey, it found itself in a situation that provided great incentive to pursue friendly relations with Georgia. As a result, even nationalist leaders Kocharian and Sarkisyan have attempted to prevent ethnic conflict from developing with Georgia. So, while demography has trumped borders, it appears that if routes and resources are scarce enough, they may trump ethnicity as a geopolitical constraint on foreign policy.

By pursuing relations with Georgia, Armenia could secure access to greater energy resources and routes with relation to Russia. It is intriguing that unlike Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenian nationalism has not led it to reject Russia. Both Azerbaijan and Armenia have been compelled to seek external support for their war, and Armenia's choice to return to Russia may appear a historically natural choice, since that state has long been

Armenia's protector against Turkic enemies. But there is a geopolitical pattern, if one compares the Armenia-Russia and Azerbaijan-Turkey alliances.

In order to understand this pattern, one must return to proximity and Walt's concept of relative threat perceptions. First, both states chose to ally themselves with powers with which they are not in immediate proximity. Armenia is separated from Russia by Georgia, and Azerbaijan is separated from Turkey by Georgia and Armenia. The buffer between these two states and their respective allies reduces threat perceptions, since it would be difficult for either power to absorb Azerbaijan or Armenia. Furthermore, demography, routes, and energy resources created an environment favorable to such an alignment. Armenia shares demographic ties to the large Armenian population in Russia, just as Azerbaijan shares demographic ties to Turkey. Azerbaijan's economy depends on the Western consumption of its energy resources, and in the reverse manner, Armenia's economy depended on energy from Russia. So, both states found it essential to maintain routes to those powers. In the end, these geopolitical constraints meant that both alliances were focused on routes running through Georgia, as is demonstrated in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 4: GEORGIA

Of the three South Caucasus states, Georgia is most critical to the region's geoeconomics. Adjacent to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia has the opportunity to serve as a regional hub for trade and transportation routes. Georgia stands between the South Caucasus and Europe, is the only South Caucasus state to have access to the Black Sea, offers routes between the allies of Azerbaijan and Turkey, and also offers routes between Russia and Armenia. (See Appendix F for a topographic map of Georgia.) If energy resources have made Azerbaijan the most geopolitically strategic state in the region, then Georgia's routes make it the most central. Through Georgia, Azerbaijan may reach out to Turkey and the West, and through Georgia, Russia may be pinch off the West's tenuous link to Caspian basin. The recent war between Russia and Georgia, then, holds significant consequences for the geopolitical future of the region.

Geopolitical History of Georgia in the Caucasus

Pre-Soviet Georgia

It is difficult to speak of a single Georgian state until 1918, when all three South Caucasus states gained their independence after the collapse of the Tsarist empire. The territory of modern Georgia is the historical crossroads between the North and South Caucasus. Georgia has experienced repeated invasions, the movements of various peoples, and a legacy conflict between Christianity and Islam, between East and West. As a part of the Byzantine Empire, Georgians became Christians. This heritage has persisted, although Georgians have also experienced periods of Islamic control. Like the rest of the Caucasus, the Muslims swept over Georgian territory in the 7th century. Following the Islamic

invasion, the core of Georgia territory “was almost always divided into two primarily princely states (Kartli/Tbilisi in the east and Ergesi/Kutaisi in the west) that were as often at each other’s throats over issues of royal succession as they were revolting against their feudal overlords (Arabs, Persians, Mongols, and first Seljuk and then Ottoman Turks).”¹

As such, the identity of the Georgian people took longer to develop than that of the Armenians or Azeris. As Thomas Goltz has written:

“Indeed, what collective consciousness there existed of “Georgianness” is open to question. The first time the word “Sakartvelo,” or “place of the Georgians,” appears in the chronicles is 1008, during a brief and almost coincidental unification of western and eastern Georgia under Bagrat III and his mixed Armeno-Georgian-Abkhazian family line. That state’s capital was at Kutaisi; Tbilisi remained a Muslim garrison town, as it had been for almost 400 years.”²

Christianity, then, has been one of the most defining demographic characteristics of Georgians. As the Russian empire gained strength in the north, it offered the promise of Christian protection against Muslim rulers, and just like Armenians, Georgians sought to ally themselves with this new power. During the mid to late 18th century, the two primary Georgian principalities turned to Catherine the Great at various times, seeking support against the Persians, Turks, and even each other. In 1783, the Orthodox-Christian people of Georgia decisively chose to embrace Russian rule, rather than submit to the Turks or the Persians. Georgia’s incorporation into the Russian empire, while not undisputed, would position Russia to dominate the rest of the Southern Caucasus.³

Georgia was completely absorbed by the Tsarist Russian Empire by 1801. From that year onward, Russia would remain the most influential power over Georgia until the end of the Cold War, or arguably even today. Georgia briefly gained its independence between 1918 and 1921, as the Russian empire was torn apart in the Bolshevik revolution. As Georgia attempted to pull away from Russia, it faced internal disunity, a peasant rebellion among the Ossetian people who supported the Bolshevik Russians.⁴ This was an early indicator of the ethnic heterogeneity in Georgia that would undermine attempts to create a unified Georgian state in the 1990s. But when the Bolshevik army forcefully brought Georgia back under Russian domination in 1921, the weight of the Soviet empire forestalled such conflict.⁵

Soviet Georgia

When Georgia was absorbed into the Soviet Union, it was joined by the Soviets with three different ethno/religious/political entities. The largest of these regions was Abkhazia. The Abkhaz were not Georgian, and Abkhazia was a historically distinct region that only became a part of Russian territory in 1864. After it was conquered by the Russians, over half the Muslim Abkhaz population fled to Ottoman Turkey, which opened the region for new Georgian and Russian settlers. Under Soviet reordering, which was directed by Lenin's principles of national self-determination, Abkhazia was originally federated with Georgia. To the south of Abkhazia, another Muslim region, Adjara was incorporated into Georgia as an autonomous region. Adjara was an old Ottoman province that remains heavily Muslim, and was ceded to the Tsars in 1877. Despite their Muslim faith, Adjarians are actually Georgian by ethnicity. The third region to be granted autonomy in Georgia was South Ossetia. Originating from Persian peoples, Ossetians

intermarried with Georgians, Chechens, Russians, and Circassians. They settled on both sides of the Caucasus Mountains (hence the current existence of North Ossetia on the Russian side). Those in Georgia were granted an autonomous district, as opposed to the autonomous republic of North Ossetia.⁶

Ten years after Georgia's incorporation into the Soviet Union, Soviet authorities made Abkhazia an autonomous republic in Georgia, with similar status to Adjara. Political integration with Georgia and an influx of Georgian settlers caused anxiety for the Abkhaz. In 1978, Abkhazia sought to be removed from Georgia and joined directly to the Russian Republic. Yet, Abkhazian pleas fell on deaf ears in Moscow, and by 1991, Abkhazians accounted for only 17 percent of the population in Abkhazian territory.⁷

Soviet encouragement of ethno-national identities during this time was crucial to the separatist problems that Georgia would face upon its independence. The Abkhazians, Adjarians, and Ossetians were given significant political autonomy, some of the greatest they ever had. The political autonomy and nationalist identities that were encouraged under the Soviets made it difficult for Georgia to create a new unified state. Nationalist tensions only intensified in as the Soviet Union began to collapse.⁸

By 1989, tensions were on the rise in the Soviet Union and nationalist, but peaceful, demonstrations in Georgia's capital city of Tbilisi were put down by Soviet paratroops.⁹ The leader of the Georgian nationalist movement was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a political dissident who had spent time in prison under the Soviets. In the Georgian parliamentary elections of 1990, Gamsakhurdia's Roundtable/Free Georgia coalition won 155 of 250 seats in the parliament.¹⁰ That year, fearing absorption into Georgia and separation from

their northern brethren, the South Ossetians declared independence from Georgia and sought unification with Russia and North Ossetia.¹¹

Georgia & Independence

Despite these complications, Georgian independence continued to gain steam and, on April 9, 1991, the parliament of Georgia declared itself independent. A month later, Gamsakhurdia was elected president with 86 percent of the vote. His election slogan was “Georgia for Georgians!,” which did little to calm the fears of Abkhaz and Ossets.¹² In early 1991, the Abkhaz, like the Ossets, had expressed their desire to remain a part of Russia.¹³ For their part, the Adjarians also proved reluctant to surrender political autonomy. Adjarian President Aslan Abashidze refused to pay taxes to Georgia or to allow Adjarians to be recruited for the national army.¹⁴

Ethno-Nationalism & Separatism

Gamsakhurdia’s first order of business was to consolidate Georgia. For the most part, he allowed Adjaria to maintain its autonomy while he focused on the South Ossetian bid for independence. He terminated South Ossetia’s political autonomy and moved to halt Osset independence with force. The first round of conflict in South Ossetia was well underway by October of 1991. But Gamsakhurdia’s ardent Georgian nationalism alienated not only domestic minorities but also Russia. He refused to join the CIS, perceiving it to be a means of continued Russian domination, and he openly despised Mikhail Gorbachev and his foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze (a native Georgian). This did little to endear him to the West as well, which viewed both of these Soviet reformers with hope and admiration. As Georgia began to disintegrate so did Gamsakhurdia’s political control, and a Georgian opposition movement led by several warlords forced him out.¹⁵

Gamsakhurdia fled Tbilisi on January 5, 1992, but he did not give up his fight for Georgia immediately. After fleeing to Azerbaijan, then Armenia, and finally to Chechnya, he and his supporters organized a rebellion against the new president, Eduard Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze had returned to Georgia following Gamsakhurdia's removal, and was elected president on October 11, 1992. That election, however, was boycotted by the Abkhazians, Ossetians, and Gamsakhurdia's supporters, and rumors swirled that Russia was behind the recent change in leadership.

As Shevardnadze's forces moved against Gamsakhurdia's loyalists, Abkhazia made its bid for independence. Shevardnadze opposed this move, and by August of 1992, his forces were engaged with Abkhaz separatists. Despite the divisions between Georgian's loyal to Shevardnadze and those loyal to Gamsakhurdia, Georgian forces initially gained the upper hand and pushed Abkhaz forces back to the cities of Gudauta and Tkvarcheli. The Abkhaz, however, received support from other Caucasus peoples, including fighters from Chechnya, and soon regrouped. Though Russia denies having any involvement in the conflict, there were also signs that the Russian military provided support to the Abkhazians. There were reports of fighter/bomber attacks on Georgian positions, though the Abkhazians had no air force, and even when Georgians downed a Russian MIG 29 with a fully uniformed Russian pilot, Russia continued to deny its involvement.¹⁶

Finally, Abkhazian forces and their allies managed to surround the major city of Sukhumi. Though Shevardnadze (who had been personally leading Georgian troops) managed to escape, the city fell to Abkhazian forces. The Abkhazians then recaptured all Abkhazian territory and drove Georgian civilians out. Between 1992 and 1993, 10,000-15,000 soldiers and civilians died and roughly 250,000 people were forced from their

homes. Shevardnadze's defeat also gave Gamsakhurdia an opportunity to seize power. It was only by turning to Moscow and requesting Georgian membership in the CIS that Shevardnadze was able to cling to power. In return, he received Russian tanks with which to suppress the Gamsakhurdia's supporters. When the dust settled, Georgian nationalism had been dealt a heavy blow. Shevardnadze's power was consolidated and Gamsakhurdia mysteriously turned up dead (shot in the head in an act of suicide or assassination). Georgia was returned to Russia's orbit, and Russian troops or "peacekeepers" enforced the disputed Abkhazian and South Ossetian borders, freezing the conflict.¹⁷

After these early disputes, little headway would be made toward a resolution. Russian intervention only succeeded in preserving the separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, resulting in de facto independence. OSCE mediation efforts have also failed to bear significant fruit. In 1998, Georgian militias operating within Abkhazia again stirred up violence, provoking Abkhazian forces to a military response in which around 200 Georgian guerillas were killed and perhaps as many as another 50,000 Georgians were forced from their homes inside Abkhazian territory.¹⁸ Skirmishing again flared up in 2001, and Shevardnadze's apparent inability to protect Georgians in Abkhazia took a toll on his domestic approval as a leader.¹⁹

Shevardnadze, who had come to power on the backs of Georgian warlords, also appeared incapable of bringing an end to the rampant corruption and crime that had spread through Georgia. Shevardnadze generally maintained the status quo, refusing to militarily re-engage the separatists, staying on Russia's good side, and attempting to realize modest economic gains without upsetting too many of Georgia's powerful warlords and criminals.

These factors contributed to Shevardnadze's growing unpopularity among the poverty stricken Georgian people.²⁰

The ousting of Shevardnadze and the election of Mikheil Saakashvili in the Rose Revolution of 2003, brought new attention to the separatist issue. In 2004, the nationalist Saakashvili demonstrated his assertiveness, engaging in a "serious skirmish" with South Ossetian separatists as Georgia cracked down on smuggling and the drug trade. Saakashvili also managed to apply political pressure to bring Abkhazia back into the Georgian fold. President Abashidze opposed Saakashvili, just as he had opposed the power of all previous Georgian presidents, but Saakashvili managed to enlist the political aid of Turkey, which has possessed special political influence in Abkhazia due to that region's Ottoman history, to peacefully remove Abashidze from office on May 6, 2004.²¹ In 2006, Georgia also regained control of the Kodori Gorge in upper Abkhazia after defeating a local warlord. Under Saakashvili, however, Georgia also reversed its policy of isolating Abkhazia and South Ossetia and began to seek economic engagement in order to bring them back into consideration of federation with the Georgian state.²²

In 2005 and 2006, the Georgian government also began to pressure Russian forces to leave Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, Russia showed no interest in removing its troops and both Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained hostile toward Georgia. In both 2006 and 2007, there were several reports of violence between Abkhaz and Georgian forces along the border, including several rocket attacks by Abkhazians. Both Putin and leaders of the separatist republics compared their situation to the Kosovars in Serbia, essentially warning that Kosovo's independence would be perceived as international legal precedent for their own right to self-determination.²³

By 2008, Abkhazia and South Ossetia had experienced de facto independence for roughly a decade and a half, and their bid for internationally recognized independence only appeared to be growing stronger. Not only did Abkhazia reiterate its call for the UN, EU, and OSCE to recognize its independence, but Russia appeared to be prepared to strengthen its support for both of these republics. Russia withdrew CIS sanctions which had been placed on Abkhazia and the Russian Duma encouraged the Russian government to recognize both republics as independent. Additional Russian troops were deployed in Abkhazia, including a unit or units specifically tasked with the repair the Russian railway with Abkhazia.²⁴ Ultimately, Russia's decision to intervene in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia meant that when Saakashvili attempted to take the offensive against separatists in August of 2008 that these internal conflicts would blossom into an international war with Russia.

Georgia, Economic Dependency, & East-West Routes

Torn by separatism and rebellion, Georgia's economy quickly disintegrated in the early 1990s. The Georgian economy was built on Black Sea tourism; cultivation of citrus fruit, tea, and grapes; as well as some mining.²⁵ All of these sectors were interrupted, and particularly tourism disappeared. Between 1992 and 1993, Georgia's GDP shrank by a dramatic and crippling 80 percent.²⁶ Once Shevardnadze consolidated power, Georgia stabilized and the economy slowly began to recover. However, in the chaos of post-Soviet Georgia, a shadow economy developed. Warlords and criminals undermined both the economy and the government's legitimacy.

From 1994 to 1998, Shevardnadze began to take serious steps to reform the economy according to the stabilizing and liberalizing policies advocated under the

“Washington Consensus.” By 1997, these reforms had allowed the economy to gain some momentum, reaching a 10-11 percent growth rate. The Baku-Sups oil pipeline with Azerbaijan was a significant piece of this rise in economic activity. But Georgia’s economic recovery stagnated between 1998 and 2003, buffeted by the international currencies crises in both Russia (1998) and Turkey (2000). By 2003, Georgia had “attained only 73 percent of its 1990 economic growth.”²⁷ This economic stagnation, combined with Shevardnadze’s failures with Abkhazia and his inability or unwillingness to counter corruption in the country’s politics and economy eventually contributed to his ousting.

Surprisingly, the Rose Revolution did not cause significant economic dislocation. Economic growth reached 8.6 percent, and construction of the BTC pipeline continued unabated.²⁸ The new government under Saakashvili moved quickly to cement economic reform, taking steps toward economic integration with the EU. At the same time, however, Georgia began privatization in earnest. Russian companies moved in quickly and began to buy up Georgian assets in the summer of 2003.²⁹ Gazprom began negotiations with Georgia for the gas pipeline that connects Russia to Armenia. These negotiations were only stopped by political intervention by the US.³⁰ In 2006, when Gazprom moved to raise energy prices on Georgia, it offered to exchange lower prices for holdings in Georgia’s energy assets, as it had done with Armenia, and elicited accusations of economic blackmail.³¹

Energy is a resource that is vital to Georgia and must be imported, creating the opportunity for dependency. Practically all of Georgia’s 14 tb/d oil consumption (2007) and 52 bcf of gas consumption (2006) must be imported. About 60 percent of Georgia’s gas imports are supplied by Russia, while the other 40 percent is met by Azerbaijan.³²

While Georgia has resisted complete Russian domination of its energy sector (at the prompting of the West, which fears Russian domination of this East-West route), Georgia's economy remains highly vulnerable to external influence. Black Sea tourism catered largely to northern Russian populations, and not only did separatist conflict disrupt that industry, but Abkhazia's independence removed a significant amount of Black Sea territory from Georgia's economy. Tensions with Russia have also resulted in trade sanctions on Georgian wine and a ban on Georgian guest workers, which has strangled the flow of remittances to Georgia.³³

The most promising opportunity to escape economic dependency on Russia is by increasing trade with along its East-West routes (primarily pipelines, roads, and rail). Georgia's geopolitical position suits it ideally to provide an East-West corridor for energy flowing out of the Caspian via Azerbaijan, as well as to tie the economies of Turkey and Azerbaijan together. The BTC and BTE pipelines have opened the Caspian basin to the West, and if trans-Caspian lines are ever completed to Central Asia, their oil and gas would flow through Georgia as well. If Georgia can maximize its East-West economic orientation while retaining its role as a hub for North-South trade routes, it has a greater opportunity to diversify its economy. As noted, Georgia is already serving as a transit route for the majority of Armenia's international trade, and if Georgia could pipe gas in from Iran, it might further diversify its energy consumption.

The Rose Revolution

The greatest social/political shifts in Georgian domestic politics after the development of separatism was the pro-democracy "Rose Revolution" of 2003. As noted in the previous sections, Shevardnadze's popularity declined over his 11 year presidency

because a combination of perceived failures in the handling of Georgia's separatist conflicts, economic and security dependency on Russia, corruption, and economic poverty. Most of the power in the Georgian state resided in the hands of a few elite gathered around Shevardnadze.³⁴ As Shevardnadze's popularity declined, he began to crack down on dissent, attempting to control of the Georgian media. This further undermined Shevardnadze's legitimacy and support for opposition parties began to harden.³⁵

The opposition grew in such strength that when parliamentary elections were held in 2003, Shevardnadze's party appeared poised for a major loss. Some electoral fraud had occurred in previous elections, but in the face of almost certain defeat, Shevardnadze and his party blatantly attempted to manipulate the election.³⁶ This sparked national outrage and tens of thousands of Georgians organized in peaceful demonstrations, rallied by the Georgian media and supported by finances provided by Western donors.³⁷ When confronted by soldiers called up by Shevardnadze, the people presented them with roses, greeting the threat of force with friendliness extended to fellow patriots. Many soldiers laid down their arms, and the protesters were not broken up.³⁸ When Shevardnadze attempted to call his new, skewed parliament into session on November 22, demonstrators broke into the parliament and forced Shevardnadze to flee. The very next day he resigned.³⁹

Mikheil Saakashvili, the opposition leader who had led demonstrators into parliament on the 22nd, was elected president in January of 2004.⁴⁰ The results were hailed throughout the West as a victory for liberty, re-invigorating Georgia's ties with the EU and NATO. Soon similar democratic revolutions swept Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005). At least in Georgia and Ukraine, these revolutions brought pro-Western governments to power, a trend which Russia has eyed with unease.

The Russian reaction to the Rose Revolution will be fleshed out further in the section on Georgia-Russian relations, but it is important to note just what bearing democracy in Georgia has on this geopolitical analysis. The spread of democracy is important to Russian threat perceptions because it is a part of a larger trend of Western institutions encroaching (NATO and EU expansion) on post-Soviet space. This is an increase in Western proximity to Russia and it appears to be accompanied by rising Russian threat perceptions.

Georgia & Its Geopolitical Environment

Intra-Regional Neighbors: Armenia & Azerbaijan

Armenia

Separatism and ethno-nationalism are demographic issues that have had a significant role in the Armenia-Georgia relationship. Georgia has worried about the sizable Armenian minority that lives within its borders, as there has been a history of Armenian attempts to unite with the predominantly Armenian region of Javakheti. When Georgia's war with Abkhazia began, Georgia also accused Armenia, along with Russia, of backing that separatist movement.⁴¹ More recently, however, Armenia has attempted to ease these tensions in pursuit of a greater economic relationship with Georgia.

Georgia is essential to north-south trade routes between Armenia and Russia, which has made it key to alleviating Armenia's economic isolation by Azerbaijan and Turkey. But a relationship with Armenia would also be mutually advantageous for Georgia. First, it would bring more trade to Georgia's rocky economy, and second, it could open a way for the importation of Iranian gas. By extending the current Armenia-Iran pipeline north,

Georgia could cement a trading relationship with Iran and reduce energy dependency on Russia. This is a possibility that Iran favors, as a pipeline to Georgia offers an opportunity to eventually connect Iran to Europe.⁴² As these two countries have realized a mutual interest in routes, roads between Georgia and Armenia have been improved for trade.⁴³

Since Saakashvili's government has come to power, relations with Armenia have not only been seen as a way to improve trade, but also as a step toward working out relations with Russia. In 2004, Saakashvili expressed this opinion, saying that, "...Armenia can be of help to us, insofar as she maintains close ties of friendship with Russia."⁴⁴ Today, there may be some hope in this regard. Armenia has maintained a very balanced approach to Georgia in light of the recent Russia-Georgia War, and Russian transportation blockades of Georgia have endangered Armenia's trade with Russia, providing a mutual interest in the cessation of such Russian blockades.⁴⁵

Azerbaijan

Whatever promise a greater relationship with Armenia might hold, ties with Azerbaijan have been much more critical for Georgia. Azerbaijan not only provides desperately needed energy resources, but the BTE and BTC pipelines also offer Georgia routes from which it may gain not only financial revenues (from transit fees) but international relevance. Serving as a transit state for these pipelines has certainly increased Georgia's geopolitical value with the West. As a result, economic ties have grown strong between Azerbaijan and Georgia. Georgia is now major a transit state for trade between Turkey and Azerbaijan, and a Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway will soon be the next addition to this trade corridor.⁴⁶

Azerbaijan and Georgia share also sympathy on the issue of ethno-nationalism and separatism, a problem that has cost them both territories. Together, they have adopted the rhetoric of territorial integrity over nationalist claims by ethnic minorities.⁴⁷ They share a wariness of Russian proximity and a general inclination toward orienting their routes towards the West. Yet, Georgia has found that Azerbaijan has its limits in partnership. While Georgia has been able to rely on Azerbaijan for emergency energy supplies when Russia has cut off supplies (in both 2006 and in August of 2008), Georgia has found that Azerbaijan is reluctant to take an overtly anti-Russian stance.⁴⁸ Azerbaijan was surprisingly mute on the war in 2008, and though it did allow US Vice President Cheney to make a visit in order to demonstrate the US support for its allies in the region, Azerbaijan has remained aloof.⁴⁹

Extra-Regional Rivalry: Iran & Turkey

Iran

The relationship between Georgia and Iran has been friendly, and relatively limited to the diplomatic and economic ties. The fact that neither state shares a border, has contributed to this relationship. At the same time, both states have mutual reasons to desire friendship. At a 2001 seminar entitled, “Georgia between Iran and Europe” (hosted in Tbilisi), it was noted that Georgia possesses a strategic location as a bridge between Iran and the West. Only days before, Georgian officials were in Tehran to discuss cooperation in trade, transport, and conflict resolution. Bernard Hourcade, head of the Iranian World department of France's National Center for Scientific Research, said that Georgia's economic difficulties and Iran's uncertain political future are the roadblocks to further economic and political cooperation. Agreements with Georgia are attractive because

Georgia is reportedly ready to grant access of Black Sea ports to Iran, opening a new route to Europe.⁵⁰ These discussions have continued and Georgia has expressed keen interest in becoming Iran's link to Europe in the Great Silk Road transportation project.⁵¹

A positive relationship between Georgia and Iran could offer Iran greater access to the international market and Georgia a chance to diversify its energy imports. Georgia has imported gas from Iran before. When Georgia's pipeline with Russia was damaged in January of 2006, it temporarily relied on Iran for natural gas.⁵² The Armenia-Iran pipeline could open Iranian gas resources to Georgia permanently.

Despite the angst that a relationship with Iran might cause the West, Georgia has not been bashful about its ties to Iran even in the midst of the crisis over the Iranian nuclear program. On May 30, 2003, Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Kakha Sikharulidze said about the US and Iran, "All the controversies between two states should be resolved through dialogue" and "the hope is that the controversial issue of Iran's possible links with international terrorism will be settled peacefully."⁵³

Although both states appear to have a positive relationship, during the Russia-Georgia War, Iran maintained diplomatic distance. It took no official stance on the conflict, except to express its desire that the conflict would conclude swiftly. This is because the war contained mixed results for Iran. It, like Russia, has felt threatened by the increasing proximity of NATO in the Caucasus, so the blow dealt to NATO's future in the region is a positive development from the Iranian perspective. However, Russia's resurgent power is a long term development that Iran will watch carefully as both states attempt to exert influence in the Caucasus.⁵⁴

Turkey

While Georgia and Turkey have historically strained relations due to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, that past was put aside in the 1990s. Newly independent Georgia developed political, economic, and security cooperation with Turkey. Turkey immediately supported Georgia's independence and even stepped in to mediate the first dispute between Georgia and South Ossetia. Both countries cooperated in the creation of an East-West energy corridor, which culminated in the BTE and BTC. Between 1991 and 2001, the US and Turkey donated at least 94 million and 13 million dollars respectively to fund Georgian forces, and since 2000, both militaries have engaged in joint training.⁵⁵ Turkey also demonstrated its strong support for Saakashvili's administration when it intervened to support the removal of Adjarian President Abashidze from power.⁵⁶ As a result, both states have issued much praise for the success of their relationship.⁵⁷

Relations between Turkey and Georgia, however, have recently entered a rockier phase. The impetus for this change is primarily Turkey's rapprochement with Russia. Turkey now receives more than 70 percent of its natural gas from Russia, which has been accompanied by growing trade and tourism. This resource dependency provides Turkey with incentive to be careful in its relations with Russia, but the growing relationship also appears to be based on a new convergence of political and security interests. Though Turkey remains an important NATO member, Turkey is obviously no longer bound to the US as it was during the Cold War. Both Turkey and Russia have opposed the war in Iraq and desire to develop trade with Iran.⁵⁸

More concerning to Georgia than an improvement in Turkey-Russian relations, however, trade between Turkey and Abkhazia has risen. The Georgian Navy has attempted

to intervene in this trade at various times, stopping Turkish merchant ships and making arrests. This has created tension.⁵⁹ The Russia-Georgia War also made it more difficult for Turkey to maintain ties with Georgia and Russia simultaneously. In August of 2008, Russia increased inspections of Turkish goods at Russian border crossings, which could cost Turkey almost 3 billion dollars in the short term. Some have taken this as warning that Turkey should be careful in pursuing a relationship with Georgia. While Turkey has called for Georgia's territory to be respected, its officials have avoided criticism of Russia, and have only generally aided Georgia passively, allowing US ships with Georgian aid to pass through the Dardanelles.⁶⁰

Global Powers & the Region

United States, NATO, & Georgia

Diplomatic relations between the US and Georgia were officially opened in 1992. Since that time, Georgia has come to view the US as “one of the main international guarantors of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.”⁶¹ The US has consistently backed Georgian efforts to settle its separatist disputes without loss of territory, and the US has provided Georgia with military training, economic aid, and diplomatic support in the international community.

Energy, security, and democracy constitute the three major US priorities in its relationship with Georgia. Georgia is a critical state for the establishment of East-West export routes from the energy-rich Caspian Sea basin. The BTC and BTE pipelines have opened this basin up to the West since the end of the Cold War. Following 9/11, though, security considerations assumed the greatest priority for the US. Together, Georgia and Azerbaijan form an air corridor through which NATO aircraft may reach Afghanistan, and

now, “practically all flights between NATO territory and Afghanistan cross Georgian and Azeri airspace.”⁶²

In addition, the US and Georgia have initiated two major programs to improve Georgian defense forces, the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) and the Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (SSOP). Established in 2002, GTEP invested 64 million dollars in developing Georgia’s military capabilities, primarily for counter-terrorism. That year, the US also sent 200 Special Forces to train Georgian troops.⁶³ For Georgians, it was another successful step toward escaping Russia’s long shadow. Eager to cooperate further with the US on security matters, Georgia reciprocated by participating in the US-led war in Iraq, committing the third contingent of foreign troops in that war.⁶⁴

The real watershed moment in US-Georgia relations, however, came with the democratic Rose Revolution, which swept President Shevardnadze from office. The 2003 election of Mikheil Saakashvili was hailed by the West as a great victory for democracy, presenting Saakashvili with an opportunity to further ties with the US and Europe. Security cooperation was soon joined by economic aid, and in 2005, the US initiated the Millennium Program to encourage international investment in Georgia, committing 295 million dollars to the development of infrastructure and the private sector.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the US increased support for Georgia politically, advocating Georgian membership in NATO.⁶⁶

When Saakashvili gained the presidency, Georgia had already been participating in NATO’s PfP program since 1994.⁶⁷ Though all three states of the Southern Caucasus have opted for some level of cooperation through NATO’s PfP program, Georgia has been the most fervently involved in NATO cooperation.⁶⁸ In Oct. 2004, NATO approved an IPAP

for Georgia. Georgia's progress, then led NATO to invite Georgia to an Intensification Dialogue in 2006.⁶⁹ In April of 2007, the US backed further integration of Georgia when it endorsed the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act, which proposed the admission of Albania, Croatia, Georgia, and Macedonia as member states.⁷⁰

On the doorstep of NATO membership, however, the issue of Georgia's separatist problem came to the fore. The disputes with Abkhazia and South Ossetia have involved Russian forces. Therefore, if granted NATO membership, Georgia would be able to call on Western military intervention in its disputes, and war with Russia is not a prospect that other NATO members desire to risk. As a result, Georgia's membership process stalled in 2007, while NATO sought the resolution of Georgian territorial disputes.⁷¹

Shortly after recognizing Kosovo's independence in early 2008, a NATO summit was held in Bucharest. Cognizant of Russia's displeasure over the possibility of NATO's expansion, Germany and several other European states opposed further integration, and debate over Membership Action Plans (MAPs) for Georgia and Ukraine stalled. Instead, NATO leaders made the weak pronouncement that Georgia would inevitably be admitted to NATO at some point in the future.⁷² This opened the door for Russia to cement its hold on Georgia while also providing incentive to act before that hypothetical point in the future.

The EU, OSCE, & Georgia

Like the US, the EU member states share an interest in Georgia because of energy, security, and democracy. Unlike the US, however, the EU states require Caspian energy for their domestic consumption. Even before the Soviet Union's collapse, Europe had become reliant on Russia energy. The BTC and BTE pipelines, then, are essential to Europe's energy security, providing non-Russian imports. Such diversification is a strategic objective

for the EU, and it is pursuing plans to extend the BTC and BTE pipeline network across the Caspian Sea, in order to access Central Asian oil and gas.⁷³

The first EU-Georgia pact was signed on April 22, 1996. That PCA addressed means to strengthen political and economic freedoms in Georgia, and was in force by July 1, 1999. Also in 1999, Georgia was admitted to the EC and the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the backing of the EU. In 2001, the EU Cooperation Coordination Council was created to guide the Georgia-EU relationship. Similarly to its NATO's membership, Georgia's EU integration process accelerated under Saakashvili, and Georgia became a member of the ENP in 2004. That year, the EU began a Rule of Law Mission in Georgia (EUJUST THEMIS), signaling a new phase of cooperation within the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) structure.⁷⁴

Once Georgia was an ENP member, the EU began to exert itself more in regard to Georgia's separatist problem. On February 21, 2006, the EU recognized the territorial integrity of the Georgian state and voiced support for Georgia's attempts to find a settlement for its disputes with South Ossetia. The next year, the EU launched a fact-finding mission to determine the feasibility of implementing the EU-Georgia ENP Action Plan in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This was seen as a step toward implementing effective border control, establishing mutual ties, and reaching a peaceful settlement.⁷⁵

In regard to security cooperation and dispute resolution outside of NATO, the OSCE has been central to European-Georgian relations. Since 1992, the OSCE has had a specific Mission to Georgia, committed to resolution of the separatist conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. From 1993 on, the OSCE has played a role in monitoring the Georgia-Abkhaz border under the UN led peace process. The Mission to Georgia also

monitors the Joint Peace Keeping Forces (JPKF) in the Georgia-Ossetian conflict area.⁷⁶ But the OSCE has had little influence over Russian intervention in those “frozen conflicts.” Political analyst, Vladimir Socor has stated that the OSCE “can either function as a ‘community’ in consensus with Russia and remain irrelevant, or give up on the consensus with Russia and risk ceasing to function at all.”⁷⁷ This limit to European influence was demonstrated in 2008 as, despite EU and OSCE efforts, the crisis in South Ossetia spiraled out of control.

Russia, the CIS, & Georgia

Georgia’s persistent distain for the CIS and its pursuit of integration with the West, provoked negative reactions from Russia. Because of its geographic proximity, Georgian membership in NATO threatens to create a gap in Russia’s sphere of security, while westward flowing pipeline routes threaten Russia’s ability to monopolize Caspian energy resources. As has been established, the primary threat to Russia’s position as an energy superpower originates in the Western energy corridor formed by Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. This corridor even has the potential to be expanded by trans-Caspian pipelines to access additional energy resources in Central Asia.

In order to secure its future as a global energy superpower, Russia has reasserted its role in Central Asia and the Caucasus through investment in energy resources, security organizations like the SCO and CSTO, and political partnership in the CIS. For Russia, Georgia provides a critical chokepoint. If Georgia can be dominated, Russia can threaten to cut NATO’s air corridor into Central Asia, as well as Western energy routes. The problem for Russia is that Georgia has done anything but rollover, particularly under Saakashvili’s nationalist leadership. The Rose Revolution and other democratic color revolutions like it

(e.g. Ukraine's Orange Revolution) have unsettled Russia because of their pro-Western nature. These movements have brought leaders to power who have sought membership in the EU and NATO in a bid to escape Russia's historical domination. Georgia has spearheaded such movements, urging the creation of organizations like GUAM.

Energy resources are not only a source of economic wealth for Russia. Oil and gas can translate into political power. In 2006, Putin ordered a re-evaluation of the old Soviet energy distribution and pricing system. Under that system, former Soviet Republics were receiving gas prices significantly lower than the prices paid by European consumers. Austria's payments for natural gas at the time were priced around \$221 per thousand cubic meters of gas per year, while Germany was paying \$217, and Turkey \$243. Former Soviet republics, on the other hand, were paying only \$50-80 per thousand cubic meters. Subsequent adjustment of gas prices for former republics like Georgia might merely be seen as an attempt to develop even gas pricing that would deliver greater financial gain to Russia. However, the timing of Russia's price hikes raised suspicions that new prices were also designed to punish former republics for seeking greater autonomy from Russia. Gazprom announced these changes in price structure just before the beginning of winter, placing many consumer states in a budgetary crisis that threatened to leave their citizens in the cold.⁷⁸

In Georgia, however, Russia has another significant source of leverage that it has maintained since that country's independence. Having assumed responsibility for mediating Georgia's separatist conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia is able to manipulate these internal disputes for political gain. As has been noted, while Georgian nationalism may be blamed for the excitement of nationalist/separatist feeling among its

minorities, Russia appears to have played a role in prolonging and even exacerbating these ethnic conflicts.

When Saakashvili took a new, assertive stance toward Russia and the separatist regions, his actions threatened to upset Russia's foothold in Georgia. Georgia's admission into NATO would have raised the political costs of intervening in Georgia. Besides Russian displeasure, the primary issue holding back Georgia's NATO membership was the potential for future violence in the separatist regions. Thus, Russia began to tighten its hold on Abkhazia and South Ossetia, contributing to this roadblock.

While Russia imposed a discriminatory visa regime on Georgia, it began to distribute Russian passports to separatists. This strengthened Russia's ability to claim it was acting in the region to protect interests of its citizens, and today 80 percent of South Ossetians are now considered Russian citizens.⁷⁹ In 2004, Russia also began appointing Russian officials to serve as the heads of separatist security forces. Russian general Sultan Sosnaliev and Major General Vasily Lunev have served as the Abkhazian and South Ossetian defense ministers respectively.⁸⁰ The proximity of Russia to Georgia's separatist conflicts, then, is more than close; both separatist regions are now practically a part of Russia.

Through 2006 and 2007, both Russia and the separatist republics maintained pressure on Georgia. In both years, there were several reports of violence between Abkhaz and Georgian forces along the border, including several rocket attacks by Abkhazians. Together, Putin and leaders of the separatist republics compared the separatist situation to that of Kosovo, warning that Kosovo's independence would be perceived as international legal precedent for their own independence.⁸¹ In 2006, energy was also cut off to Georgia

by suspicious explosions that damaged gas pipelines and electrical power lines from Russia. Just months later, Russia declared a ban on Georgian wine (of which Russia imports 80 percent), and when Georgia arrested several alleged Russian spies in September of 2006, a full embargo was announced by Russia.⁸²

In 2007, Russian intimidation continued to ratchet up. On March 11, 2007, at least one unmarked Russian military helicopter (a Mi-24 HIND-E) launched an air-to-surface missile at a building in Chkhalt'a. Then, on August 6, at least one Russian airplane violated Georgian airspace near the village of Tsitelubani. That aircraft was identified as a Russian Su-24M fighter jet, and it fired off a surface-to-air missile before returning to Russian airspace. Though that missile failed to detonate, the event elicited angry reactions from Georgia. For its part, Russia dismissed both incidents as plots to excite the international community against Russia, claiming that these must have been Georgian aircraft. South Ossetia, in the meantime, used the incident as an opportunity to request additional Russian military support to defend against such Georgian air attacks. However, an international team from the OSCE and the JPKF has reported that the aircraft in question originated from and returned to Russian airspace and that the Georgian air force does not have Su-24M fighters or the capacity to launch that specific Kh-58 missile type.⁸³

In 2008, Abkhazia reiterated its call for the UN, EU, and OSCE to recognize its independence, and Russia continued to strengthen its support for the separatists. It withdrew CIS sanctions which had been placed on Abkhazia, and the Russian Duma encouraged the Russian government to recognize both republics as independent. Additional Russian troops were also deployed in Abkhazia, and a military unit was sent to repair the Russian railway with Abkhazia.⁸⁴

Slowly and inexorably the separatists were being drawn away from Georgia and into Russia in what has been described as a process of “creeping annexation.”⁸⁵ On April 16, 2008, Putin ordered his government to open direct trade, transportation, and political ties with both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This was followed by the deployment of Russian paratroops and artillery in Abkhazia, as well as the repair of the railway between Russia and Abkhazia by Russian troops. On July 15, 2008 Russia also began military exercises in the North Caucasus. When these exercises ended on August 2nd, the troops remained in North Ossetia, instead of returning to their bases in Pskov and Novorossiysk.⁸⁶

When, on the evening of August 7th, Georgian troops began an attack on the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali. Georgia claimed that it was responding to rocket attacks from Ossetia while Russia maintained that its “peacekeepers” had been fired upon. It is still not settled exactly what happened in those early moments, but the Russian response was a full-scale invasion of Georgia. It was Russia’s first invasion of another state since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In the course of 10 days, Russia secured South Ossetia and opened a second front in Abkhazia.⁸⁷ When the relatively short war concluded, the hope of Georgian NATO membership had effectively be quashed, as well as any Georgian ambitions to militarily retake its separatist regions.

Conclusion

Of three South Caucasus states, Georgia has the closest proximity to Russia and has experienced the most antagonistic relationship with that global power. The recent war with Georgia has underscored the hostility in this relationship, and opened discussions on the New Cold War because of Georgia’s centrality between the West and Russia. Yet the

conflict is not so much a replay of the Cold War as it is the culmination of historical geopolitical tensions in the region.

When Georgia's history is reviewed, it becomes clear that Georgia has long been defined by a high degree of demographic fragmentation. Now, this demographic fragmentation alone cannot explain the development of conflicts, but Georgia's Soviet history laid the foundation for separatism. The ethnic identities granted political autonomy within the Georgian republic by the Soviets would move towards separation once Georgian independence and Georgian nationalism threatened to degrade their autonomy. Once Abkhazia and South Ossetia attempted to secede from Georgia, Russia was a natural ally, due to its geographic proximity as the original grantor of their political identity.

In Georgia, as across the South Caucasus, borders have been a function of demography, and where borders have not conformed with major demographic distributions of ethnic groups in Georgia, there have been separatist conflicts. These conflicts have provided Russia with leverage that it could use against Georgia as first Gamsakhurdia and then Saakashvili have attempted to realize their nationalist ambition to shake off Russian dominance. This is not to say that Russia has had control of these conflicts since their onset, but Russia has obviously intervened in these conflicts and the result has usually been positive for Russia. Shevardnadze's defeat in Abkhazia left him with nowhere to turn but Russia. Thus, Georgia returned to the CIS under his presidency. Saakashvili's defeat in South Ossetia in August of 2008, has crushed Georgian ambitions for NATO membership and nearly obliterated hope that Abkhazia and South Ossetia will ever be reincorporated into the Georgian state.

The different foreign policy choices made by the nationalist idealists, Gamsakhurdia and Saakashvili, and the pragmatic semi-authoritarian, Shevardnadze, demonstrate that the geopolitical environment (specifically demographic distributions and the proximity of Russia) do not dictate foreign policy but only constrain it. As nationalist, Saakashvili, attempted to mitigate the Russian threat by pursuing integration into Western institutions and cementing trade ties through East-West routes, Russia became increasingly alarmed. This alarm may be seen as the function of proximity. Part of the reason that Georgia's democratic revolution contributed to Russia's threat perceptions was that democracy has gone hand in hand with the expansion of Western political, economic, and security institutions (the EU and NATO).

The other part of the reason for Russia's alarm is that Georgia threatens Russia's control of Caspian Sea energy resources by providing East-West routes for export to the Turkey and the EU. Indeed, Georgia's central position for routes in the region is the geopolitical factor that makes it critical for all of the states analyzed in this research. As analysis of Georgia's ties to its neighbors, regional powers, and global powers demonstrates, Georgia has been willing to pursue routes with anyone, which speaks to the critical economic position Georgia has been placed in, particularly the need to find access to non-Russian energy resources.

Chapter 4 Endnotes

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The previously conducted case studies have provided a thick description of historical context, geopolitical factors, and state leadership in the South Caucasus. Thus far, each state has been dealt with separately, revealing the specific history and geopolitical environment for each. Already common trends have begun to emerge, but now this research will compare and contrast the findings of each separate case study in order to more precisely define how geopolitical factors may influence the foreign policies of the South Caucasus states.

Analysis of Variables & Hypotheses

Demography, energy resources, and routes will be discussed first, followed by the variables of proximity and state leadership. Each of these geopolitical variables are valuable indicators of where and with whom conflicts occur. Specifically, this work proposes that the increasing strategic importance of these first three factors is correlated with greater levels of conflict between international actors. Because proximity is defined as dependent on these first three variables, as the physical distance of foreign powers from those geopolitical factors, it is treated last. Then, state leadership is addressed in order to test the explanatory power of geopolitical factors, as well as the proposed model of research.

Demography

The variable of demography is defined as the physical distribution and composition of ethnicities and religious groups in a state's population. Across all three case studies, ethnic and religious demography is vital to explanations of where and with whom the South

Caucasus states have engaged in conflict. All wars in the South Caucasus since the fall of the Soviet Union have involved separatist conflicts that have been defined by ethnic and/or religious cleavages.

The importance of demography in these conflicts is why Grygiel's broad use of borders as a variable is insufficient, at least in the South Caucasus. As a review of history demonstrates, borders in the South Caucasus have been long been defined by demography. Furthermore, when borders were established in the region that did not reflect the demographic distributions of ethnic/religious groups, separatist conflicts emerged in these areas. The South Caucasus states do not merely need to establish stable borders in order to project their power internationally. Georgia and Azerbaijan have both been faced with the greater challenge of establishing internal stability in the face of major ethnic/religious conflict.

Armenia's highly homogeneous population meant that it did not face similar domestic disruption. This ethnic/religious unity in Armenia, not the status of its borders, meant that Armenia was better positioned to project power in the early years after the Soviet Union. This facilitated the decision of Armenia's leaders to project military and economic power in support of separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh. It was also precisely because of ethnic/religious demography that the borders of the new Armenian republic were not acceptable to Armenians.

Azerbaijan was unable to pursue similar unification with southern Azerbaijan (northern Iran), despite the desires of its nationalist leadership under Elchibey, because of the internal crisis that separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh created. Leadership in Iran realized this geopolitical reality and took advantage of it. Indeed, one of the reasons demographic

cleavages are relevant to foreign policy analysis is the opportunity they afford for other international actors to gain leverage within another state's affairs. This is particularly evident in the case of Georgia. In Georgia, separatism was clearly defined along historical ethnic-religious cleavages, defined nationalist tensions, and allowed Russia the opportunity to gain leverage through the manipulation of those conflicts.

This research finds, then, that demography clearly offers an explanation of borders and explains spatial patterns of instability. It also offers a better explanation than borders for why states like Azerbaijan and Georgia have had difficulty projecting power internationally. Additionally, Azerbaijan's case demonstrates that high degrees of internal stability may be attained despite unstable borders. Under Heydar Aliyev's leadership energy resources provided wealth to stabilize the country.

Resources

For the purposes of this paper, energy resources are defined as oil and natural gas. Though Russia has invested in economic centers in the South Caucasus, it has been clear that the most important resource in the region is energy. Across all of the case studies conducted, energy is central to understanding where and with whom the South Caucasus states direct their foreign policy efforts, either to secure access to or utilize the benefits of energy resources. Natural gas and oil are vital to the South Caucasus states, as well as to all of the other states analyzed in the case studies.

As noted, Azerbaijan's energy wealth has allowed it to make the most remarkable economic recovery in the region and to stabilize its domestic situation despite unstable borders. In contrast, Armenia's complete lack of energy resources has made energy importation from Russia absolutely critical to that nation's survival. This has required

Armenia to maintain friendly ties to the Russian Federation. Even when under idealistic nationalist leaders, Armenia has not turned its back on Russia like Azerbaijan and Georgia did under their nationalist leaders. Georgia too has been dependant on energy imports, but because it was, unlike Armenia, free to pursue friendly relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. This allowed Georgia a greater opportunity to supplement its energy imports from Russia earlier and in larger quantities, decreasing the cost of offending Russia.

Energy resources are also a constraint on foreign policy because of the interest other foreign powers have in them. For example, Iran and Azerbaijan have come into conflict with each other over the rights to energy in the Caspian Sea, a disagreement that has come close to military confrontation. Energy resources have led the US, the EU, and Russia to make significant investments in Azerbaijan and the energy infrastructure of the South Caucasus, in order to gain influence in its exportation. This competition has spilled over into the orientation of pipeline routes.

Routes

For the purposes of this research, routes have been defined as roads, railways, waterways, airways, and energy pipelines. Just as with energy resources, this variable appears to contribute to explanations of where and with whom the South Caucasus states have directed their foreign policy. Routes are critical to securing access to resources like energy, to establishing trade for economic growth, and for projecting military force.

The case of Armenia decisively demonstrates that as the number of potential routes decrease, the possible foreign policy orientations of a small state decrease. Because of its conflict with Azerbaijan and tension with Turkey, Armenia has had its routes severed to the east and the west. This has straggled trade and cut off essential energy imports. As routes

with Iran were originally quite minimal, maintaining all available routes to Russia, its economy, and its energy resources became critical. Friendly relations with Georgia became a necessity, then, inducing Armenia to renounce its claims to concentrated populations of Armenians within Georgia's post-Soviet borders. That is a remarkable step that Armenia has been unwilling to take with its either two South Caucasus neighbors.

Georgia, on the other hand, demonstrates that as the number and possible directions of potential routes increases so do alternative foreign policy orientations. Georgia occupies a central geographic location in the region, offering the best geopolitical position for routes traveling north and south or east and west. This range of possibilities has facilitated the decision of nationalist Georgian leaders to move away from Russia by offering means to access non-Russian energy resources. Playing up its ability to connect Azerbaijan to its ally Turkey and on to the West, Georgia has made itself indispensable to a strong Western alliance in the region.

In this fashion, routes constrain foreign policy formulation by attracting the interests of international actors. As mentioned, energy resource competition has led to conflict over routes. Routes, however, are not only vital for just resources. Georgia has also become critical to creating an air corridor by which NATO may gain access to Central Asia and support its mission in Afghanistan. Westerward flowing pipelines and increasing NATO penetration of former Soviet space have contributed threat perceptions in Russia, which in turn has used leverage over Georgia's routes, energy resources, and demography in an attempt to balance against the West.

Proximity & Balance of Threat Behavior

This research's modified conception of Walt's proximity is the last and most nuanced geopolitical factor to be examined. Instead of the mere distance between two states (which relies solely on physical distance between borders), proximity is defined as the physical distance of other states from a given state's energy resources, routes, and demographic groups. Because the previously discussed geopolitical variables can only provide necessary conditions for conflict and constraints on the foreign policy, proximity is necessary to explain how the South Caucasus states react to international actors with whom they have overlapping interests geopolitical interests.

Proximity not only contributes to explanations of where and with whom conflicts of interest arise, but it also offers at least a partial explanation of why conflict has arisen. This is because, as Walt has demonstrated, as proximity increases, the perception of relative threat also increases. For example, NATO's PfP program, the interventions of the OSCE, westward flowing pipelines, and democratic revolutions in the South Caucasus all increase the West's proximity to Russia politically, economically, and militarily. This is an important reality to grasp when explaining new tensions between Russia and the West today.

Unlike the previous three geopolitical variables, proximity is completely focused on the role of foreign powers in constraining the foreign policy formulation of the South Caucasus states. First, this research demonstrates that proximity matters in regards to demography. In all of the separatist conflicts in the South Caucasus, there has been a correlation between the threat posed by external powers and proximity. For Azerbaijan, the most geographically proximate state to the Karabakh separatists was Armenia. For Georgia,

Russia was the greatest proximate state. In both cases, the geographic proximity of these states facilitated their ability to interfere in Azerbaijan and Georgia, and their intervention produced corresponding threat balancing behavior. This pattern can also be seen in Iran's response to Azerbaijan's proximity to its Azeri demographic.

In regard to energy resources, it is interesting to note the correlations of distance and threat perceptions. All of the South Caucasus states, regional powers, and global powers have some sort of interest in the energy resources of the Caspian Sea basin. It is not the overlap of interest, however, that has produced conflict. Instead, patterns of conflict are correlated with perceptions of threat based on geographic proximity. Because of the close proximity of Azerbaijan and Iran, these two states must confront tensions regarding the division of oil and gas fields. However, Azerbaijan's energy ties with Turkey, a regional power that is not in a geographic position to dispute Azerbaijan's energy resource rights, have been positive. It should also be noted that Turkey's interest in Azeri energy resources is driven by domestic consumption. Iran's interest is not driven by such a need. Rather, it is driven by the desire to expand its energy holdings for its own economic and political gain.

At the global level, a similar pattern holds. Russia has had a strained relationship with Azerbaijan in the energy sector because of the latter's deals with the West. On the other hand, the EU has had quite positive energy relations with Azerbaijan. So, at the global level, Azerbaijan has the most difficult relationship with the actor that possesses the greatest physical proximity to it, Russia. And like Iran, Russia also does not require Azeri energy resources to satisfy domestic demand, but rather has an interest in Azeri energy for economic and political gain. It appears that major energy producers, at least when in close

proximity to one another, are more likely to have conflicts of interest than with powers that are net energy consumers.

Routes are a significant part of international competition for resources in the South Caucasus, and here too, proximity appears to matter. Since Russian resurgence under Putin, Russia appears to perceive growing Western proximity in the South Caucasus as a threat and is responding with according balance of threat behavior. Certainly, balance of threat behavior has come to characterize the South Caucasus. The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict led each to balance the other, cementing Armenia-Russia and Azerbaijan-Turkey alignments. Georgia, because of its conflicts with Russia over the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, has been geopolitically inclined towards the Azerbaijan-Turkey alignment and the West. Similarly, tensions between Azerbaijan and Iran have inclined Iran towards the Armenia-Russia alliance.

State Leadership

Although proximity may provide some explanation of why certain foreign policy orientations are adopted by state leaders, examination of all three case studies indicates that geopolitical factors alone cannot explain foreign policy in the South Caucasus. Different leaders in the same geopolitical environments have repeatedly made different decisions, underlining the danger of adopting a deterministic, simple assumption of rationality on the part of state leaders. If this work had assumed rationality of actors, it would be hard pressed to offer an explanation of the different behaviors of Elchibey and Heydar Aliyev that were seen in the case of Azerbaijan.

Elchibey's idealistic nationalism may easily be derided as an irrational policy approach in light of the geopolitical realities that confronted newly independent Azerbaijan.

Yet it reveals clearly that geopolitical variables cannot be used to predict a state's foreign policy orientation without taking into account of the variable of state leadership. In the South Caucasus states, hyper-presidential or semi-authoritarian forms of government simplify the identification of the key state leader as the president. The short history of these states and their similar post-communist experiences with nationalism facilitate the simplifying of leadership types into two categories: pragmatic semi-authoritarians and idealistic nationalists.

This research hypothesized that nationalist leaders would be more likely to engage in conflicts over energy resources, routes, and demographics. Across all three case studies this appears to hold true. In Azerbaijan, the foreign policy of the nationalist Elchibey provoked tension with Russia and Iran. In Armenia, the nationalist leadership of Kocharian saw little movement toward resolution of conflicts with Turkey and Azerbaijan. And in Georgia, Gamsakhurdia and Saakashvili refused to defer to Russia despite the dire consequences of such a foreign policy orientation.

Implications for IR Theory

Taken together, these findings demonstrate the significance of geopolitical analysis as an evolving analytical tool within the discipline of IR. The geopolitical variables tested in this research provide valuable explanations of where and with whom conflicts have erupted. Further, proximity is relevant to explanations of why conflict occurs.

In the effort to integrate these findings into the body of IR theory, several important corollary relationships may be explicitly stated. Demographic cleavages define the borders of separatist conflict and are positively correlated with state perceptions of threat that follow from the increasing proximity of foreign powers to separatist regions. Energy

resources and routes define patterns of economic conflict and are positively correlated with perceptions of threat that are related to the increasing proximity of foreign powers to these strategic points. Finally, state leadership is correlated with the value placed on each of these variables and the subsequent balance of threat behavior exhibited in a state's foreign policy orientation.

This last point bears further explanation. Idealistic nationalist leaders in these case studies tend to place greater importance on demography, relative to energy resources and routes. This is particularly evident in the behavior of Gamsakhurdia, Elchibey, and Saakashvili. Pragmatic semi-authoritarian leaders, on the other hand, have tended to seek compromise with Russia in order to mitigate violence over demographic cleavages and/or pursue greater access to routes and resources. This is why Huntington's attempt to explain contemporary conflict through differences in civilizations (defined by ethnic and religious boundaries) falls short, as well as why the assumption of rationality is too simplistic to consistently explain patterns of conflict in the South Caucasus.

Considering this model of geopolitical analysis, a place for future research would be a deeper examination of the role of individual decision makers. Not only might the variable of state leadership offer a tie to political psychology, but this model might be further informed by pursuing the link between political psychology and constructivism. Already there is a growing movement in IR literature to synthesize constructivism and psychology.¹ The coupling of these approaches might provide fertile ground for future research and contribute to the goal of mitigating the deterministic nature of classical geopolitical approaches.

Perhaps one of the greatest criticisms that could be leveled against the relevance of this research is that the model is too narrowly focused on the South Caucasus. However, when taken as a part of the greater developing literature on geopolitics, this work may be seen as addressing an important gap in existing literature. Grygiel and others have already provided wide-ranging assessment of geopolitical variables at the global level and across history. This work should be seen as an attempt to refine the geopolitical approach for IR today, particularly in relation to small states. That is why this model diverges from Grygiel's work on borders, discusses demography and proximity, focuses primarily on energy resources, and adds the variable of state leadership.

As a final point, the relevance of borders may deserve more testing. Borders were abandoned by this model because of the greater explanatory value found in both demography and proximity. Future research utilizing similar methodology could test this point. In order to maintain a parsimonious approach, however, future research should attempt to provide categories of state leadership types that are tied to clear, generally predictable patterns of behavior. This would maximize the predictive power of the model, thereby increasing policy relevance.

Implications for Policy Makers

As stated in the introduction, this model of geopolitical analysis offers vital information that policy makers require to effectively carry out their work. By focusing attention on where interests overlap, with whom those interests overlap, and the relationship between proximity and threat perceptions, this model supplies critical information to policy makers about where to direct their attention. It also accomplishes this goal in a vocabulary that policy makers can digest. Such research provides our policy

makers with an explanation of how geopolitics provides incentive to pursue certain objectives while constraining the pursuit of other objectives.

Furthermore, integrating the variable of state leadership into geopolitical analysis warns policy makers against formulating deterministic models. By participating in geopolitical analysis, the academy can define the concepts used by policy makers and reveal their misuse as well. This is where critical geopolitics comes in, providing a critique of geopolitical analogies and theories in order to prevent bias. Where the utility of geopolitical analysis is limited, though, is in the prediction of how various regimes and individuals react in a given geopolitical environment. Collaboration between constructivists and political psychologists might contribute to the last part of this puzzle, providing a greater explanation of the human factor in decision-making.

Conclusions on South Caucasus & Implications for the Future

From a geopolitical perspective, the South Caucasus occupies a geographically uncertain space. It is a small region, comprised of small states, that has been surrounded by larger and more powerful foreign powers throughout its history. The future of the South Caucasus, therefore, depends heavily on shifts in this geopolitical environment.

In August of 2008, the Russia-Georgia War shook that status quo in the South Caucasus and offered the opportunity for such a shift. Russia's victory in that engagement tightened its hold on Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This increased Russia's proximity to East-West routes running through Georgia, routes upon which Azerbaijan's westward orientation depends. Only together can Georgia and Azerbaijan serve as a western route for energy exports from the Caspian. Continued instability in Georgia will undermine any additional efforts to strengthen the economic potential of this east-west corridor.

As recent coup attempts and political instability demonstrate, Georgia's independence also hangs in the balance.² The loss of Georgian autonomy to Russian backed actors would only increase the Russian ability to dominate the geopolitics of the region. Already, Russia appears to have succeeded in blocking the further intrusion of Western security institutions into the South Caucasus. Georgia was the only state realistically moving toward NATO membership, and that possibility was laid to rest by the war. European states will not allow Georgia into NATO for fear of further violence between Georgia and Russia. Georgia's exclusion from NATO also has made it geopolitically inconceivable that any other state, like Azerbaijan, might be granted membership.

Before the Russia-Georgia War, scholars and journalists were hailing competition between the EU, US, Russia, and China in the Caspian Sea region as a New Great Game.³ After the Russia-Georgia War, this paradigm was replaced in popular discourse with discussions of a New Cold War between the US and Russia. Yet today's geopolitical power balancing in the Caucasus is not merely the result of competition between external geopolitical powers. The roots of contemporary geopolitical balancing in the region are deeper, stemming from geopolitical considerations originating within the Caucasus states themselves, as their leaders seek to maintain the sovereignty of their states and grow in economic, political, and military power.

The analogy of a New Cold War also ignores older, more accurate parallels that may be derived from history. The conflict between Russia and the West is no longer about ideology, nor is it necessarily about bringing down free markets (though Russia appears to be taking a mercantilist approach toward energy). The conflict also does not appear to be as

bifurcated as the Cold War, with the free world facing Russia and its satellites. Rather, it appears to be a return to something more akin to the sort of competition for spheres of influence that Russia participated in during the era of the Great Game.

Applying historical analogies is difficult and a function of how societies construct both their history and contemporary international events.⁴ The Cold War is a natural paradigm for Americans at a time when tensions with Russia are on the rise. Americans have little other history of conflict with Russia. Europeans, in contrast, have a much longer history of conflict with Russia, and therefore, are more likely to perceive current events as merely the continuation of historical Russian insecurities. This can explain the differences in how the US and the EU states have reacted to Russian resurgence. Balanced, policy relevant research in IR, then, is more important than ever in regards to current events in the South Caucasus – an uncertain place that has once again found itself in uncertain times.

Chapter 5 Endnotes

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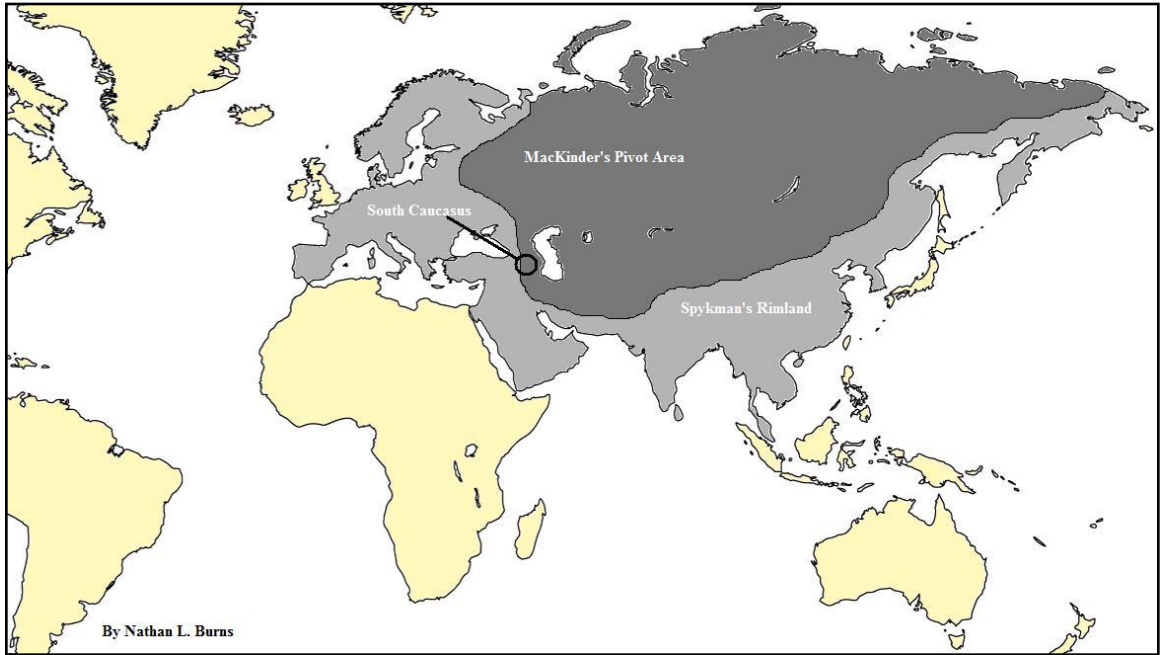
APPENDIX A: POLITICAL MAP OF THE CAUCASUS



Cartographer/Designer: Manana Kurtubadze

Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, The Caucasus Ecoregion, Administrative Units, *UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library*, <http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/the-caucasus-ecoregion-administrative-units> (accessed May 27, 2009).

APPENDIX B: MAP OF THE PIVOT AREA AND THE RIMLAND



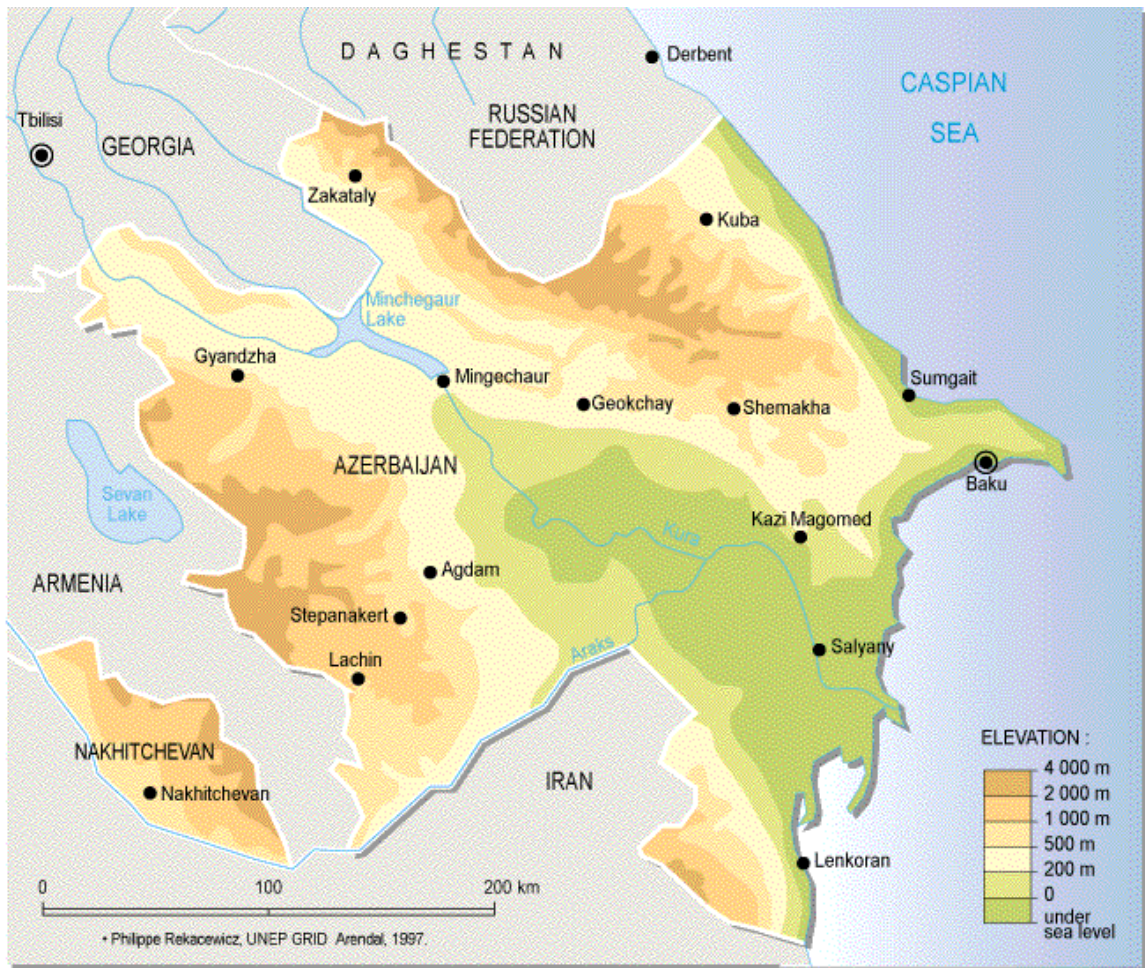
APPENDIX C: TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF THE CAUCASUS



Cartographer/Designer: Manana Kurtubadze

Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, The Caucasus Ecoregion, Topographic Map, *UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library*, <http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/the-caucasus-ecoregion-topographic-map> (accessed May 27, 2009).

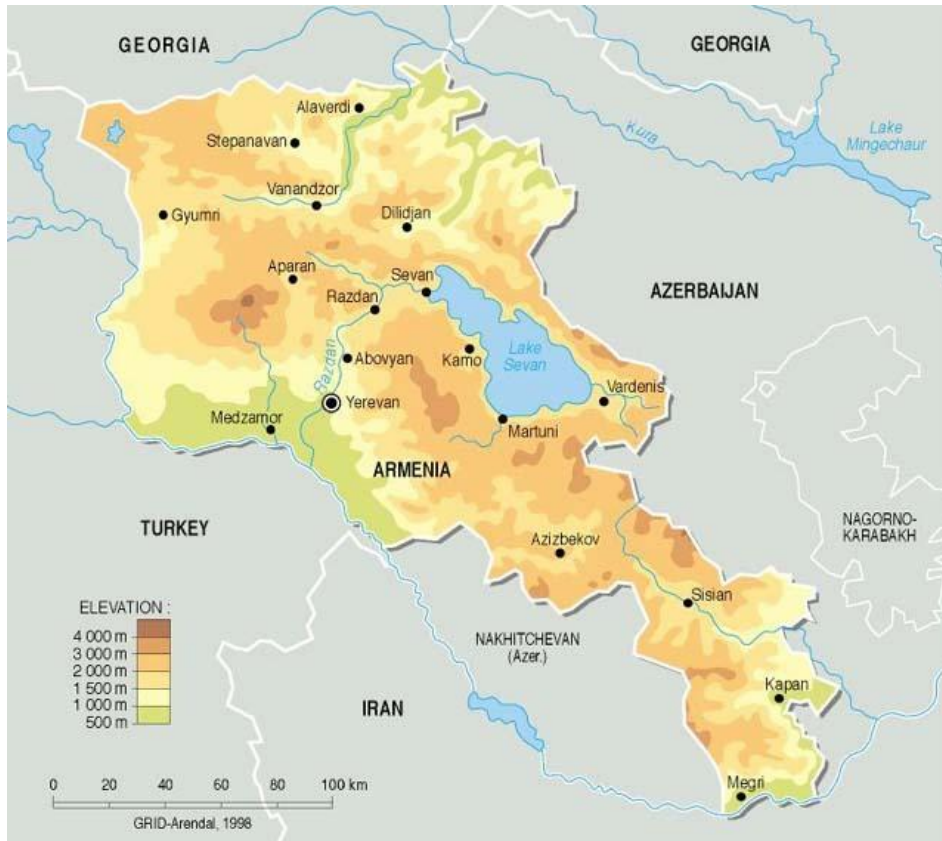
APPENDIX D: TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF AZERBAIJAN



Cartographer/Designer: Philippe Rekacewicz, Emmanuelle Bournay, UNEP/GRID-Arendal

Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, Azerbaijan, Topographic Map, *UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library*, http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/azerbaijan_topographic_map (accessed May 27, 2009).

APPENDIX E: TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF ARMENIA



Cartographer/Designer: Philippe Rekacewicz, Emmanuelle Bournay, UNEP/GRID-Arendal

Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, Armenia, Topographic Map, UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library, http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/armenia_topographic_map (accessed May 27, 2009).

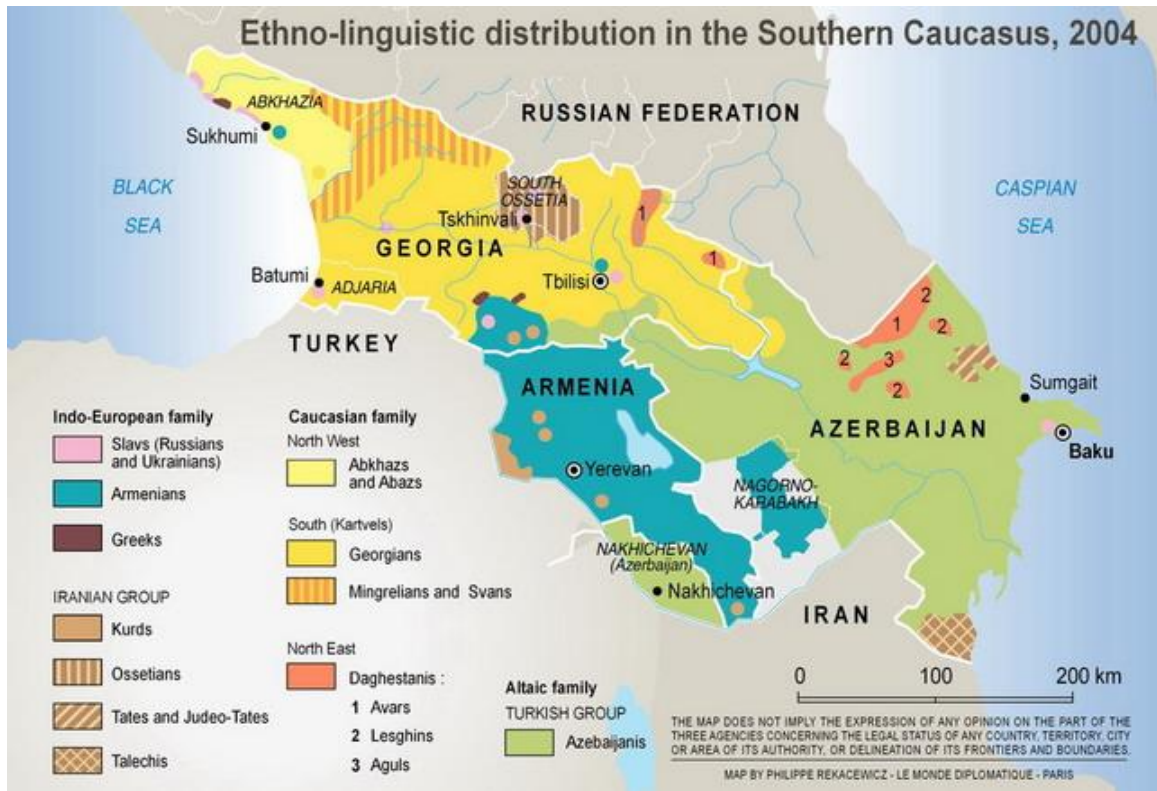
APPENDIX F: TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF GEORGIA



Cartographer/Designer: Philippe Rekacewicz, Emmanuelle Bournay, UNEP/GRID-Arendal

Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, Georgia, Topographic Map, *UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library*, http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/georgia_topographic_map (accessed May 27, 2009).

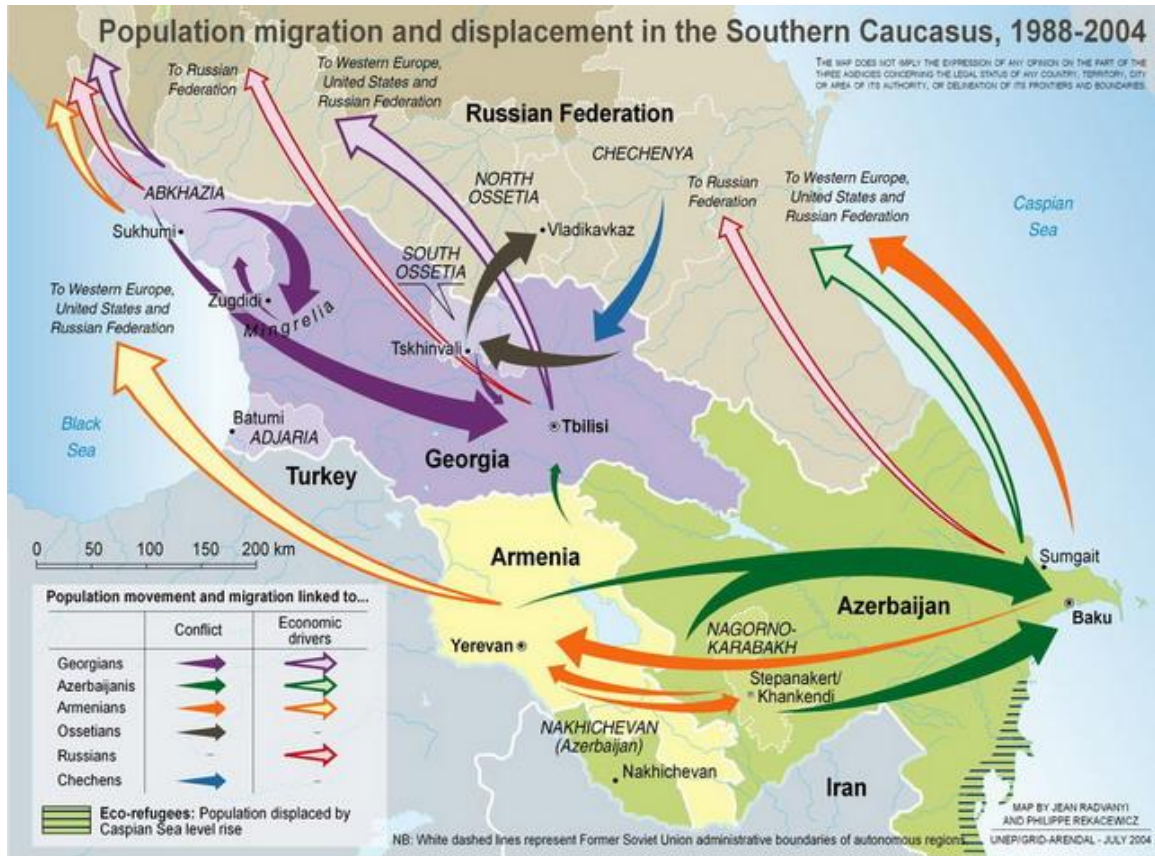
APPENDIX G: DEMOGRAPHIC MAP OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS



Cartographer/Designer: Philippe Rekacewicz, Le Monde Diplomatique

Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, Ethno-Linguistic Distribution in the Southern Caucasus, *UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library*, http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/ethno_linguistic_distribution_in_the_southern_caucasus (accessed May 27, 2009).

APPENDIX H: MAP OF DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS



Cartographer/Designer: Philippe Rekacewicz, UNEP/GRID-Arendal

Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, Population Migration and Displacement in the Southern Caucasus, 1988-2004, *UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library*, http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/population_migration_and_displacement_in_the_southern_caucasus_1988_2004 (accessed May 27, 2009)/

APPENDIX I: MAP OF ROUTES IN THE CAUCASUS



Cartographer/Designer: Manana Kurtubadze

Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, Transportation Network in the Caucasus Ecoregion, *UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library*, <http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/transportation-network-in-the-caucasus-ecoregion> (accessed May 27, 2009).

APPENDIX J: LETTERS OF PERMISSION FOR MAPS

Initial Permission Request

From: mapmaster@grida.no [mailto:mapmaster@grida.no]
Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2009 8:53 PM
To: Janet Fernandez Skaalvik
Subject: Maps feedback: About a specific page

FROM:
Nathan L. Burns, <NLBurns111@gmail.com>

ABOUT:
About a specific page

PAGE TITLE:
Azerbaijan, topographic map

PAGE URL:
<http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/azerbaijan_topographic_map>

IP ADDRESS:
132.170.100.189

USER AGENT:
Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 7.0; Windows NT 6.0; GTB6; SLCC1; .NET CLR 2.0.50727; .NET CLR 3.0.04506; .NET CLR 1.1.4322)

I would like to request permission to publish this image in the appendices of my Master's thesis. My topic is the geopolitics of the South Caucasus. Please respond if I have your permission to publish this image in my thesis, I will provide the whole citation. I am also planning to use several other images from this site. Do I need to individually request permission for each?

Initial Permission Consent

From: Janet Fernandez Skaalvik <Janet.F.Skaalvik@grida.no>
To: NLBurns111@gmail.com
Date: Wed, May 27, 2009 at 4:12 PM
Subject: RE: Maps feedback: About a specific page
Mailed-by: grida.no

Dear Nathan Burns

Permission to use the graphic in the manner stated in your message below is granted provided UNEP/GRID-Arendal is acknowledged as the source of the graphic.

As GRID-Arendal is not the sole copyright holder of the graphics in our collection, we would like you to specify the other graphics you need so we could advise you if additional permission is required.

Thank you and best wishes

Janet Fernandez Skaalvik
Head of Communications
UNEP/GRID-Arendal

Tel: +47 414 99 472
Fax: +47 37 03 50 50
E-mail: janet@grida.no
Skype: janet.skaalvik

Final Permission Request

From: Nathan Burns <nlburns111@gmail.com>
To: Janet Fernandez Skaalvik <Janet.F.Skaalvik@grida.no>
Date: Wed, May 27, 2009 at 4:52 PM
Subject: Re: Maps feedback: About a specific page
Mailed-by: gmail.com

Thank you very much for your prompt reply. If it is permissible, then, I would like to request permission to publish the following additional 7 maps in my Master's thesis:

#1 - Map Title: The Caucasus Ecoregion, Administrative Units

Link: <http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/the-caucasus-ecoregion-administrative-units>

#2 - Map Title: The Caucasus Ecoregion, Topographic Map

Link - <http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/the-caucasus-ecoregion-topographic-map>

#3 - Map Title: Armenia, Topographic Map

Link: http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/armenia_topographic_map

#4 - Map Title: Georgia, Topographic Map

Link: http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/georgia_topographic_map

#5 - Map Title: Ethno-Linguistic Distribution in the Southern Caucasus

Link:

http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/ethno_linguistic_distribution_in_the_southern_caucasus

#6 - Map Title: Population Migration and Displacement in the Southern Caucasus

Link:

http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/population_migration_and_displacement_in_the_southern_caucasus_1988_2004

#7 - Map Title: Transportation Network in the Caucasus Ecoregion

Link: <http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/transportation-network-in-the-caucasus-ecoregion>

Thank you for your help!

Nathan Burns

Final Permission Consent

From: Janet Fernandez Skaalvik <Janet.F.Skaalvik@grida.no>
To: Nathan Burns <nburns111@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jun 29, 2009 at 2:14 AM
Subject: RE: Permission to Use Maps
Mailed-by: grida.no

Dear Nathan Burns

Permission to use the 7 graphics you've requested for your thesis project is granted provided UNEP/GRID-Arendal is credited as the source of the graphics. Please also give credit to the cartographer and include the link to the page on the Maps and Graphics library where each graphic is accessible.

Best wishes
Janet

Janet Fernandez Skaalvik
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