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**Yasin ASLAN**

**A TURNING POINT IN  
THE HISTORY OF ARMENIA**

The collapse of the Soviet Union ushered a chain of highly significant strategic developments in the northern hemisphere from the Central Europe to the Pacific seaboard, to the Caucasus, and to the Middle East. The developments, among other things, led to reassessment of *higher national interests* of states, and intensified political and economic competition world-wide. Likewise the regional problems began receiving significantly higher priority in the foreign policies of a number of states, and induced them to adjust their globalization policies to commensurate with their interest in the region. The Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia may be considered as two examples of such states.

The present study is intended to assess the situation relevant to Turkey and Armenia. A sound analysis of the relations between Turkey and Armenia, however, warrants a study of the relations between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. For these relations are co-relative: so much so that one is necessarily the function of the other. The disputes that influence the relations between these countries originate from the same sources. For instance, Armenia maintains territorial claims against both the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Georgia at the same time.

Early in the Twentieth Century certain Armenian scholars of history have claimed that Georgia was in fact Armenia. The Georgian writer Ilya Cavcavadze in his book "The Armenian Scholars and the Wailing Stones", which was published in 1902, rebuts those claims and remarks. *"Let God grant the Armenians power and capability so that they may unite on the places they had abandoned. But let them not to covet the territories that belong to others. Let them not aspire to deprive us from our own homeland. Be it large or be it small, undeniably we have accommodated you (the Armenians) oil own territories. We gave you protection and care, and have treated you as our brethren. So do not behave on our own land the way our enemies would"*

On February 13, 1988 the Armenians staged a demonstration in Khankendi (or Stepanakert as the Armenians call it), the administrative center of the Karabagh Highland. The demonstrators demanded annexation of Karabagh to Armenia. From then onwards there was no end to the chain-work of Armenian demands. The first batch of Azeri refugees from the area, displaced by the Armenians, arrived in Baku on February 18, 1988. They were boarded on busses and sent back to the Karabagh Highland. However, it did not take long before they returned. The

subsequent refugees from the area preferred to settle in Sumgayit rather than in Baku. There were a series of incidents related to the refugees issue.

About 180 to 200 thousand Azeris were forcibly evicted from their homes in Armenia. About an equal number of Armenians were deported from Azerbaijan. A total of more than one million Azeris were reduced to refugee status as a result of the incidents that began in 1988.

The incidents that began in 1988 in fact were the latest in the series of deportations. The Azeris living in Armenia have experienced deportation from their historical homeland on several occasions, including more than once during the Soviet regime.

Arutyunyan, leader of the Communist Party of Armenia, had sent a petition to Joseph Stalin in 1945 requesting him to sanction annexation of the Karabagh Highlands to Armenia. Stalin in turn had sent a memorandum to Mir Jafer Bagirov, leader of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan to the same effect. Bagirov, in reply to Stalin's memorandum had let it be known that Shusha should remain in Azerbaijan; because the area was entirely populated by the Azeris; and that the Azeris too had a significant territorial claim against Armenia. It proved helpful in closing the cases, which was based on concocted problems.

The Council of Ministers of the former Soviet Union vide its Degree No.4083, dated December 23, 1947 had designated the Turks of Armenian as Azeris, and had ordered their deportation to Kura-Aras Valley in Azerbaijan. The implementation of the provisions of the same Decree was ordered in the Decree Number 757, dated March .10,1948, which carried Stalin's signature. The process continued until Stalin's death. In the process 150 thousand Azeris were deported from their home in Armenia.

Earlier, at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, deportation of the Azeris from Armenia was carried out in several ways.

In 1927 the Azeris accounted for 70% of the population of Yerevan. About 130 thousand Azeris were deported from Armenia about the same time, as against 100 thousand Armenians were repatriated from the Middle East. The same process was sustained with added intensity during the subsequent period. According to Armenian historiographers, during early Nineteenth Century of the 2300 villages in Armenia 2000 villages were Azeri populated. After 1936 the Armenian authorities set out to replace the Azeri place names with Armenian ones. In 1991 the Armenian President Levon TerPetrosyan sanctioned replacement of the Azeri names of 90 villages with Armenian place names. During the decade from 1960 to 1970. The campaign of replacing place names was conducted under the auspices of Hovanes Bagdarasyan, the Deputy President of the Supreme Soviet of Armenia.

In the aftermath of a two centuries long process of deportation and banishment, 1.5 million Azeri Turks were displaced from their historical home in Armenia under various pretexts. The deportation process came to an end in 1988. Today not a single Azeri is left in Armenia. Consequently the Armenians accounted for 88.6 % of the population in 1988. At the beginning of the present century the area of Armenia was 9000 km sq. Now, with addition of the territories grabbed by force from Azerbaijan, it has expanded to 29.8 thousand km. sq. (The territories of Azerbaijan recently occupied by the Armenians are not included in this figure).

There is no denying that the growing relations between the Russian Federation and Armenia constitute increasing threat to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is virtually being *Lebanonized*. The threat of further dismemberment is still there. The Armenians retain control over the Lachin corridor between Karabagh and Armenia. Today as much as 20% of the territories of Azerbaijan is under occupation of Armenia. Furthermore; Armenia declared a so-called "*Republic (?J Kurdistan*" in Lachin and Kelbejer in May 1992.

The situation in Armenia itself however, is fraught with profound crisis. According to the weekly *Moscow News* commentator Vladimir Yemelyankov the present leadership is not strong enough to preserve the independence of the State. Armenia stands at the threshold of yet another era of colonialism. In the final analysis the point at issue for Armenia would be that which one of her neighbors, e.g. Turkey, Russia and Iran, would be receiving Armenia as a protectorate entity. Vladimir Yemelyankov contends that the Armenian politicians favorably entertain such ideas as merger with Russia in a confederate arrangement, or formation of a confederation of Caucasia, including Armenia. Political groups such as the Dashnaksutyun Party, which are afraid of the ascendancy of Turkey and Iran in the region, are particularly interested in a *Confederation of Caucasian States*. Azerbaijan and Georgia oppose the idea on the ground that it would pose a threat to their own territorial integrity. Because in the event of formation of a *Confederation (?J Caucasian States* such minority nationalities as the Karabagh Armenians, the Kurds, the Abhaz, the Lazgis, and the rest would then constitute components of the confederation with equal vested rights vis-a-vis Azerbaijan and Georgia. It would, therefore, be tantamount to granting statehood to those minority nationalities.

The *Azatomart*, an opposition press organ in Armenia, has published a sensational statement made by Eduard Oganisyan. He is a former Director of the Armenian Section of the Radio Liberty (Azadliq), Chairman of the Organization for Promotion of Russo-Armenian Relations, and a leader of the Dashnaksutyun Party. According to Oganisyan's statement the Government of Armenia has concluded a secret agreement with the Russian Federation relevant to merger of Armenia with Russia.

The proposition of forming a confederation with the Russian Federation presents conformity with the Russian national interests. The Russian Parliament

has appealed the component republics of the former Soviet Union to re-integrate with Russia. Further developments in same direction might endanger the sovereignty of the Armenian State, and might lend force to the attempts for revival of the defunct Union. There exist no common borders between Russia and Armenia. Nevertheless such ingenious relationship is taking shape between the two countries. Russia, in compliance with the terms of the existing treaties maintains a strong military presence in Armenia. The Armenian efforts to ameliorate relations with Turkey and Iran, however, are undertaken seeking an entirely different foreign policy orientation. It is motivated by the precept that "it is better to develop relations with multiple powerful states rather than being dependent on a single superpower". It represents "a *new variant of Armenian independence*"

The scope of Armenia's maneuverability is quite narrow indeed. She is absolutely dependent on the assistance of her powerful neighbors to fully build her own institutions of statehood. According to the conclusion arrived at by Vladimir Yemelyankov Armenia would have to pay the cost of it to the *Eider Brother* she would choose, in terms of her economic and political freedom.

Notwithstanding all that; Armenia seek a specific role to play in the region. To have an idea as to the nature of the role she intends to ~ play it would suffice to have a glance at some of the relevant articles that have appeared in the Russian and Armenian press.

For instance the essay captioned "*Should Armenia Choose Turan in Place of Soviet Union?*" is of interest on several accounts. The writer, Artur Gevorkyan, born in 1963, is a faculty member at the Department of Philosophy and Politology of the Institute of Pedagogy of Armenia. It was published in *Nash Sovremennik*; issue number 4, 1993. Gevorkyan, who advocates revival of the "Third Rome" more enthusiastically than a Russian, makes his point on the question briefly in the following excerpt: "*Armenia is the supporter, and the natural 'and historical ally of Russia in the Caucasus. The Armenians form the stumbling bloc on the path (leading to Turan) of the Pan-Turkists of the terrible trio composed of the Anglo-Saxons, the Zionists and the Pan-Turkists. The only means of salvation left for Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Serbia and other Christian nations is to revive the 'Third Rome'*"

Some of the Russian authorities advocate that Caucasia need to be held within a *cordon of fire* to safeguard it from the influence of foreign forces. In that event the States closely interested in the region, such as Turkey and Iran, shall not be able to penetrate the region through the *cordon of fire*. Another example to the point is Vadim Simburski's article published in the newspaper *Sevodniva* of April 1994. A sum up of his views is excerpted as follows: "*Caucasia is the only region where the Russian interests are directly at stake. Presence of such minor empires as Azerbaijani and Georgia, who persist in the region as nation states are compatible with Russian interests. There exist revolutionary forces that would*

*devote themselves in defending Russia's interests in the region. To this end a 'sustained instability' in the region need to be maintained. Such a situation has been building up for many years. As a result arbitrary dispositions on the part of Turkey and Iran have been effectively checked. The continuance of low intensity disputes in the region serves the interests of Russia. For such circumstances would contribute towards formation of a 'cordon of fire' which would serve as a deterrence against Turkey's infiltration in to the region.*

*"Russia, while maintaining such a (destabilizing) policy in the west Of the Caspian should help preserving stability in the regions to the east of the Caspian. Because Kazakhstan is a half-Russian territory, which must be transformed in to a security zone safeguarding Russia's southern borders.*

*"Orenburg, being vulnerable to Central Asian expansion. Russia must do whatever she can to turn Kazakhstan other Central Asian countries in to a domestic security zone."*

Vazgen Manukyan, Defense Minister of Armenia in 1992-93, and currently an unofficial leader of the parliamentary opposition, stated in his interview with a correspondent of Nezavisimaya Gazeta in April 1994 that time was ripe for Karabagh highland to form a federation with Azerbaijan

Andranik Migranyan, a personal political advisor of President Yeltsin and a member of the Russian Presidential Council, has an interesting proposition to offer. In an article he wrote for Nezavisimaya Gazeta in January 1994 Migranyan proposes that Azerbaijan and Georgia be molded in to a federal state, and argues that a federation of Georgia and Azerbaijan would not be viable without Moscow's support.. He contends that Armenia ought to be transformed to an element of stability and balance of power on the southern borders of the Russian Federation.

Levon Shirinyan had advanced a similar suggestion in his commentary published earlier in the Armenian newspaper *Azatomart*. In another article published in the same paper Shirinyan underlined that Nakhchivan should be 'restored' to Armenia. There are too many examples of such assertions

The above excerpts clearly lay bare the centers where from the incidents are manipulated.

The anachronistic Dashnaksityun and its offshoots, and the Presidential advisors and senior bureaucrats of Armenian descent in the Russian Federation (e.g., Ambatsumov or Ambartsumyan, Migranyan, and Kurginyan, who clustered then around Gorbachev and now around Yeltsin); and the Turcophobs in the Armenian Diaspora have been, and are, responsible for lack of progress in the amelioration of relation between Turkey and Armenia. Their relentless irrational anti – Turkish propaganda since decades indeed had disruptive consequences.

A blatant provocation of the Armenian public opinion against Turkey, for instance, was contained in a press release dated December 7, 1993 circulated by the Information Center of the Dashnaksityun Party, quoting information it claimed to have obtained "from foreign sources, particularly from French intelligence sources, reported that the Turkish Armed Forces were going to launch a missile attack against multiple targets in Armenia, including the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant. The Dashnak press release further forecast that Turkey would use presence of the terrorist PKK in Armenia to justify the attacks.

Bagrat Sodoyiyan, the Director of the Dashnalsityun Information Center disclosed to the press correspondents that the Turkish attack in question was to come from Nakhchivan.

The amount of anti-Turkey material in the Armenian and Russia media is colossal indeed. All of them use the "*Turkish Factor*" to scare Armenian public opinion. Such expressions as "*the Sleeping Giant*", "*the Awakened Tiger*", "*the Angel of Death of the Soviet Union*", "*the Ottoman Spirit Resurrects*", and "*A Pillar of the Twin Pillared Empire of the Future*" common occur in those material. The Armenian Political scientist Andronik, mindful of such deliberately adverse material on Turkey, remarks. "Armenia, together with Russia and Iran could frustrate Turkish ambition to absorb Azerbaijan and Central Asia. Hence Armenia and Iran together should form a stumbling block against unification of the Turks."

For the last two centuries Armenia had been of pivotal significance in the Russian foreign policy. Armenia has been serving Russia as her advance guard vis-a-vis the Turkish-Muslim World. Nevertheless since the last few years a section Russian nationalists have been talking about the need for friendly relations with the Turkish world, condemning the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan. A part of the Russian nationalists now view Armenia as a burden on the Russia's shoulder.

According to press reports the Russian Federation subsidizes the budget of the Republic of Armenia at the rate of 57 % annually. It is just impossible for Armenia to sustain an all-out war without a massive foreign support. Resul Guliyev, the Speaker of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, in an interview with the Russia Television Network, has pointed out that it was impossible for Armenia to sustain her war against Azerbaijan in the next five years without foreign support. According to Guliyev, financially Armenia is not in position to purchase even a single battle tank. The Armenian war efforts are financed by the Diaspora Armenians, by certain governments in the West, and by certain members of the Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS).

A commentary of the *Moskovskaya Novosti*, issue number 1992, underlines that in the event of a Russian withdrawal from Caucasia Turkish influence would rapidly increase in the region.

The *Gorbachev Fund* Report on the Karabagh issue sheds light on the problem through a different angle, and infers that on several accounts a power of the magnitude of Russia could not be dependent on Armenia. As far Russia is concerned, Armenia is no more than a willful (self-imposed) ally. However, the following excerpt from the same report warrants interest:

*The historical background of the Russo-Armenian relations obliges Russia to support Armenia .the economic relations between Russia and Armenian are not so much important for Russia. In fact it is Armenia's willingness for unconditional cooperation with Russia that renders her an important ally in the eyes of the Russians. Given the influence of the lobbyists of this mini state in the West, one may safely assume that Armenia would remain as a good ally of the Russia so long as Russia does not take any action detrimental to Armenian interests.*

The Armenians are conscious of this fact, and exploit every means to derive maximum benefit out of the situation. Levon Shirinyan, in his commentary in the Armenian newspaper *Azatomari* contends, *There is no doubt that in the very near future Russia will re-emerge in Caucasia, with her supreme posit/oil restored. So far a number of countries, including the United States, have ventured to challenge Russias strategic interests in the south, together with the consequences of losing Eastern Europe, have made her maintain a closer posture towards Armenia. It is, therefore, incumbent upon Armenia to carefully follow' Russia's political maneuvers in the Caucasus, and to seek ways and means to make maximum benefit out of it Armenia should accept cooperation within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, on the basis of reciprocity. Otherwise a weak and complaint Armenia would be replaced by another country or partner. "*

In his commentary published in the November 1993 issue of the same paper Shirinyan dwells on Armenia as a function of balance and stability in the Caucasus.

At least for the last two centuries Armenia has been seeking Russian protection against Turkish threat. Armenia having regained her independence in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, can not afford to neglect, and does not neglect, her precarious location surrounded by Azerbaijan, with which she

is presently at war; by Turkey, which is her traditional enemy and by Georgia, whose territories are claimed to belong to ancient Armenia. Nevertheless, Armenia is increasingly aware that a Russia in the grip of economic, military and political problems, could hardly be a dependable shield against "Turkish menace".

During the early days of the independence movement, the leadership of the new Armenia presided by Levon Ter-Petrosyan was aware that they did not have solid policy alternatives for amelioration of relation with Turkey. Mutual efforts for restoration of peace between the two countries were sustained until the fighting in the Karabagh escalated. The initiatives for Turko - Armenian reconciliation were negatively influenced, and perhaps irreparably destroyed, by large scale offensive operations of the Armenian forces against Azerbaijan. In April 1991 the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow, Volkan Vural, visited Yerevan to discuss the question of reciprocal development of relation. It was the first visit ever made by such a senior Turkish diplomat. A draft agreement was prepared relevant to developing good neighborly relation between the two countries. Another agreement was drafted on overland transportation and on border trade between Turkey and Armenia. The two countries are convinced in the urgency of demolishing the artificial psychological barrier built on the myth of the so-called "Armenian Genocide". Nevertheless enmity against Turkey is much more stronger with the Armenians in 'Diaspora'. The realities with regard to Turkey, however, would force the Armenians in Armenia to put away the bygone enmities for the sake of solid and healthy future relations.

In the aftermath of declaration of independence of Armenia the border disputes between Turkey and Armenia should have been taken up. Armenia has overland access to the West only through Turkish highways and railways. The Azeris have surround the railway linking Armenia with Russia. Besides, Armenia is looking for a passage to the Black Sea, which necessary passes through the territories of either Turkey or Georgia. Turkey has not blocked Armenia's membership of the *Organization for Cooperation of the Black Sea Littoral States*. This organization can serve as a forum of regular discussions of Turko-Armenian relations as well. Besides; Turkey has committed construction of port facilities in Trabzon late in 1991, with road-link, which Armenia also could use. Such a development would not only contribute towards development of Turko-Armenian relations, but also would enhance Armenia's dependence on Turkey. Reasonable Armenians are aware that they stand to lose should they venture using the Black Sea regional groupings and organizations in promoting their vindictive campaign to tarnish the image of the Republic of Turkey. They are, therefore, also conscious of the fact that in the long run such a *tug of war* with Turkey would prove detrimental to the interests of Armenia. The Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan urged the American Armenians in 1991 to tone down their anti-Turkey activities in the US Congress. Parallel with the escalation of hostilities between Azarbaijan and Armenia in 1991-1992, the activities relevant to a Turko-Armenian rapprochement slowed down.

Should Turkey and Armenia succeed in terminating the genocide campaign against Turkey currently being conducted in the West, future Turko-Armenian relations would certainly unfold commensurate with the interest of both the countries; because their interests are complementary to one another rather than competitive.

Moreover; commonsense point at the wisdom of the Armenians being favorably disposed to cooperation with Turkey. Such a cooperation could be manifested in the transportation of the Caspian Oil through Armenia. The landlocked Armenia is desperately trying to find an out-let to the Black Sea across the Georgian territories, or to the West through the Russian Federation, while she has no common borders with the FR. It is presumed that Armenia would reckon, before it is too late, the fact that Turkey is the only outlet through which she can have access to the West; and that all the sea, land and air corridors, essential for her survival, are situated within the borders of Turkey. The policies based on rancor and animosity have always failed in the past, and are doomed to fail in the future too.

For more than seven decades Armenia's policy with respect to Turkey had been based on self-indoctrination in keeping with the propaganda stunt of the Allied Powers during the First World War to the effect the 1.5 million Armenians were massacred by the Turks. It has been also based on an ill advised campaign for restoration to Armenia of the territories Russia had ceded to Turkey according to the armistice of 1921. In addition; all the political parties in Armenia pledge in their charters to work for "restoration" to Armenia of the territories ceded to Turkey; and for forcing the Republic of Turkey to "apologize" for the Armenians alleged to have been murdered during the Ottoman period. It goes without saying that during the period from 1974 to 1987 the Armenian terrorist group "ASALA (the Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia)" assassinated 45 Turkish diplomats and their family members in pursuit of the same end.

A trend of significant changes in Armenia's policy towards Turkey was noticed with the assumption of power by the Pan National Movement under the leadership of Ter-Petrosyan in 1990. In the context of her initiatives for secession from the Soviet Union, Armenia then took steps to improve her economic and commercial relations with Turkey and Iran. The new trend was expressed in the *Declaration of Independence* published in August 1990. The Declaration, while provided for an international condemnation of the alleged genocide, did not carry reference to any territorial claim against Turkey.

The collapse of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) jeopardized the sensitive issue of Turko-Armenian rapprochement. Turkey's being the first state to accord diplomatic recognition to Azerbaijan as a sovereign state adversely influenced the developing relations.

A delegation representing the Government of Armenia arrived Ankara in November 1992 to negotiate bilateral relations. The Turkish side tabled the following four conditions as essential for development of relations between the two countries

- 1 – Armenia should formally accept the existing boundaries between Turkey and Armenia;
- 2- Armenia should stop the campaign seeking international recognition of "genocide" alleged to have taken place in 1915;
- 3- Armenia should renounce interference in Turkey's internal affairs (point of reference being Armenian support to the terrorist PKK); and
- 4- Armenia should accept reciprocal cease-fire on the terms proposed by Azerbaijan.

The two sides agreed on three out of the above four items. They had been so amenable that even a protocol was signed providing for sale of Turkish surplus electrical energy to Armenia. The Turkish Foreign Minister, however, could not convince the opposition group in the Grand National Assembly, and the leaders of Azerbaijan as to the constructive significance of the terms of the protocol. In view of the strong opposition, which obviously was provoked by renewed Armenian belligerency against Azerbaijan, Turkey rescinded implementation of the terms of the protocol. The development proved a severe blow on the Government of Armenia, which was then in grip with an acute shortage of power supply. It may be noted that Armenia imports 96% of her energy requirement. Before autumn of 1991, when Azerbaijan cut off supply of natural gas to Armenia, the former supplied 80% of the latter's gas requirement. Turkmenistan, however, substituted for Azerbaijan in supplying gas to Armenia. The Pipeline that carries Turkmen Gas to Armenia passes through the Azeri inhabited Borcali, lately called Marneuli region in Georgia. During 1995 there occurred at least 10 incidents of sabotage against the pipeline.

Turkey allows over- flights to Armenia through the Turkish air space. It is assessed as a move prompted by Turkey's sense of international understanding, while balancing the flow of her support to Azerbaijan.

While the international public opinion was engaged in Russia's military intervention in Chechnya, President Ter-Petrosyan undertook an extensive political cleansing campaign in Armenia. It was the first attempt at harnessing the recalcitrant Karabagh Committee since the purges ordered by Gorbachev in 1988, including the arrest of Ter-Petrosyan and ten other members of the Committee. It may be recalled that in the meantime the Pan National Movement, i.e. the present ruling group under Petrosyan's leadership, had already withdrawn from the Karabagh Committee.

On December 28, 1994, President Ter-Petrosyan ordered suspension of the activities of the Dashnaksyun Party, also called the "Revolutionary Federation". At

the same time several other organizations and newspapers affiliated to the Dashnaksityun were closed under presidential order.

In a speech he made on the TV following the purges President Ter-Petrosyan charged that the Dashnaksityun Party had been involved in narcotics trafficking and political assassinations, and that it had allowed a group of 50 terrorists, called the DRO, to operate within its structure. Ter-Petrosyan also noted that the DRO had jeopardized national security and had been involved in espionage concerning the armed forces.

The measures taken by Ter-Petrosyan were not surprising. For he had been in conflict with the Dashnaksityun for some time. Deportation of Hrair Marukyan to Greece, a Dashnaksityun leader and a Diaspora activist, in June 1992 may be cited for instance.

Babken Ararktsyan, commenting on the political cleansing carried out by Ter-Petrosyan noted that the demonstrations and other incidents disrupting law and order had been organized on behest of the Dashnaksityun Party, and that those activities had been aimed at disrupting the political stability of Armenia.

The constitutional provisions to the effect that no political party could maintain chapters in foreign territories could have alien office bearers, were invoked; and thereby activities of the Dashnaksityun Party were suspended. It may be noted here that most of the Dashnaksityun leaders are foreign nationals of Armenian ethnicity; double nationality (i.e. a person being national of two different states at the same time is not permitted in Armenia); the Dashnaksityun Party has got chapters in the countries where ethnic Armenians exist in concentration; and the Headquarters of the Party is in Athens, Greece.

The Dashnaksityun was not the only political party to have repatriated to Armenia. For instance the "Ramkavar Azatakan" (Liberal Democrats), also a diaspora party, repatriated in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It espouses a moderate policy as compared to the hard-liner nationalist Dashnaksityun, which is at loggerheads with the government of Armenia in many respects.

The "temporarily proscribed" Dashnaksityun Party had been considering to contest in the next general elections as part of a bloc of left-wing political parties consisted of the Karabagh-Armenia Group, the Union of Intellectuals, the Union of Constitutional Rights, and the Heritage Movement. The Central Election Board, however, decided against participation of the left-wing bloc in the general elections. Apart from the Left-wing Bloc, the Monarchist Party and the Women's Party of Armenia were also excluded from the elections.

Ter-Petrosyan contested in the general elections in coalition with five other political parties, forming the "Republican Bloc". The participation ratio of the

electorates was at about 55 %. The Republican Bloc got the absolute majority in the parliament with 114 seats. The Shamiram Women's Organization returned as the second strongest group in the parliament. The Communist Party of Armenia, however, did not fare well contrary to expectations. Vice President Gagik Harutyunyan, assessing the outcome of the general elections attributed the failure of the radical nationalist bloc and the communists to lack of a workable program and selfish attitude on their part. Public opinion poles taken before the election, however, had forecast that at least 20 % of the votes cast would go to the Communists.

According to political observers the opposition parties showed a poor performance in the general elections mainly because they were unable to produce a consistent platform and were too late in forming a bloc.

The Constitution was endorsed by 86% of the electorates. There are conflicting opinions in this regard. The opposition contended that while drafting the Constitution the leadership had been more concerned with remaining in power at any cost rather than considering the higher interests of the state. The Dashnakssutyun Party alleged that the new Constitution equipped the President with unlimited authority, and by same token it was a "dictatorial constitution" that must be rejected.

Indications are that the GNM is likely to remain in power for more than one term in the future. Ter-Petrosyan too has expressed his intention to the same effect in his speech at the Congress of the General National Movement of Armenia in November 1994

So, being the state of affairs on the political front, the situation on the economic front has not been as bright, despite certain positive developments.

Armenia is passing through one of the most difficult periods in her history. She is negotiating a dangerous bottleneck. The people are poverty stricken. Minimum pension is less than one dollar. According the figures released by the State Statistics Institute average monthly wage is 2.5 dollars. The Central Election Board figures for 1991 and 1994 suggest that the population of Armenia has decreased by 30 % in the last 3 years. In another words about 1 million Armenians have left the country since the beginning of 1993, The Armenians of Karabagh tend to leave the area. A growing number of people are leaving Armenia for the West, to Russia, to Europe and beyond. Georg Pogosyan, the Chairman of the Sociological Research Department of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, tells that 70% of the population of Armenia are potential immigrants, that is, they are likely to depart from the country. Studies have revealed that cold and hunger were not the only reason for Armenians to leave their homeland. There were specific social and political reasons underlying the trend. Armenian newspapers have published the result of a sociological study on the Armenian immigrants, who have left their country as recently as 1993 and 1994. Of the individuals who have

responded the relevant questionnaires, 45 % attribute their departure to arbitrary behavior of the Police and similar institutions, and 24 % of them stated socio-economic factors being decisive. Absence of opportunities for private business accounted for 12 % of the departures.

The monetary reforms, which the government had pushed through prematurely without adequate groundwork, have disrupted the domestic market and condemned the people to starvation. The remittances effected by the expatriate Armenians have been to some extent helpful in alleviating the condition of the their relatives at home.

The war which Armenia sustains in the Karabagh Highlands and well inside the territories of Azerbaijan, and the embargo applied against Armenia by Azerbaijan and Turkey in retaliation to the Armenian belligerency, have been negatively influencing the life in Armenia. The official figures, however, suggest a gradual improvement in the situation after four hard years of austerity.

President Levon Ter-Petrosyan told the Armenian Parliament at the its extraordinary session on January 18, 1996, inter alia, *"the socio-economic conditions at home have begun to improve. The Government Of Armenia have succeeded in, securing assistance from international financial institutions to fund the reforms they have been implementing. The national currency has been stabilized, the budgetary deficits are shrinking, the rate of inflation has been cut down, and foreign trade has begun to recuperate.*

*"During the period from January through November 1994 GNP has increased by 103.8 %, industrial production by 103.2 %, and over all agricultural production by 103.2 %, as compared with the corresponding period in 1993. There has been a substantial increase in the volume of foreign trade as well. The rate of inflation at the moment is 488%.*

*"Of the 1185 slate owned enterprises planned to be privatized only 25 could so far be transferred to private ownership."*

The Ministry of Industries of the Republic of Armenia claims that all the industrial enterprises are operational. Assurance of regular gas supply from Russia and from Turkmenistan is believed to have contributed to the attainment of the level of performance claimed. It is since pretty long time that there has occurred no incident of sabotage on the pipelines passing through Georgia. This could be explained by the existing stability in the situations in the Borcali (Marneuli) area.

The authorities tend to assign priority to industrial sector in the supply of energy at the cost of domestic consumption. It may be noted that at one time domestic power supply was restricted to 4 hours daily, in general, and to 2 hours in specific areas.

The development may appear encouraging. There is, however, much to be done to restore the earlier production levels in Armenia. It would be not that easy to revive a bankrupt economy. While certain industrial enterprises have resumed production, demand for the goods produced is still to low. Only as much as 50 % of the industrial produce could be absorbed by the market. The rest is piled up in stock. The poor quality of industrial production is yet another problem.

Notwithstanding the multiple economic problems she grapples with, Armenia is considerably better off in terms of privatization and economic reforms, as compared with her neighbors, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Had Armenia been slow in the implementation of land reforms, the extensive economic reforms in particular, Armenia could be in a much more difficult situation then she is in today. Despite the existing embargo, Armenia has managed to become a self-sufficient state by virtue of the land reforms she has implemented. Foreign investment has been encouraged by offering a series of incentives. Nevertheless any substantial foreign investment in Armenia would depend on the settlement of the Karabagh issue.

Armenia, just out of a very serious bottleneck in the supply of energy, has reactivated the Unit Number 2 of the Metzamor Nuclear Power Plant after 6 years of recess on June 27. The opening ceremony was participated by President TerPetrosyan and other national dignitaries. Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Victor Chernomirdin, has sent a congratulatory message on the occasion to Petrosyan. According the Vigen Chitechyan, Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia, the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant `is no worse in terms of security than any other power plants of the same class, on the contrary it is superior then the others in certain respects." The Unit Number 2 has a power generating capacity of 2.5 billion kw/hr, which is equal to half of the total electrical energy produced in Armenia in 1994. Armenia's total annual power output, before closing down of the Metzamor Nuclear power plant in 1988, was 6 billion kw/hr, the energy produced by the hydroelectric and thermoelectric power plants operating in the country included. Armenia then exported a total 2.5 billion kw!hr power to Azerbaijan and Georgia annually.

Armenia as actively engaged in developing relations with her neighbors, particularly with Russia and Iran. She also seeks access to the Black Sea through Georgia. The Russo-Armenian cooperation is manifest in every walk of life. Intimate relations between the two countries may there fore be described as remarkable.

Notwithstanding termination of the *cold war* era, *geopolitical war* is still on. Parallel with the changes experienced in Russia, a new international system is taking shape in the Caspian basin, prompted by advent of the Western oil interests in the region, and with consolidation of regional nationalism.

There are certain specific factors which render the Caspian basin a lucrative object for the West as well as for Turkey, Russia and Iran. First of all; changing of the route of transporting the oil and natural gas better serves the Western interests. Secondly; the Caspian basin as a buffer zone, could serve as a link between the middle East and Russia. The Caspian basin, forged of politically independent and stable states, would assuage Turkish and Iranian concern over expansionist tendency of Russia. It might, therefore contribute to encourage Iran to reintegrate with world economy. Also it would help Azerbaijan emerge as a regional center of commercial intercourse.

The Western strategies relevant to the Middle East converge on creation of a security zone by means of influencing the regional political processes by promoting mechanisms of multinational regional cooperation. Azerbaijan occupies a special position as a factor of encouraging cooperation among Turkey, Iran, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

It was in the aftermath of conclusion of an agreement defining the routes to be followed in transporting the Azeri oil late in 1995 that the alignment in the context of the Caspian basin began taking shape. On one side were aligned the United States, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan. The powers aligned on the other side were Russia, Iran, Armenia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkmenistan. Iran, Armenia and Turkmenistan indeed form a tripartite alliance in this respect. A similar trio had been set up by Russia, Armenia and Turkmenistan earlier in the summer of 1995. Exclusion of Iran from the Caspian Consortium under US pressure encouraged closer ties between Iran and Russia. It is assessed that such developments would not serve consolidation of stability in the region.

Andranik Migranyan, a member of the Presidential Council of Russia speaking at the Second Meeting of the Russo-Iranian Cooperation Board, as the head of the Russian delegation, declared in October 1995 that Iran was the most important ally of his country. He further said. 'Although the Government of the Russian Federation does not approve certain countries entering in to the areas of economic interest of the former Soviet Union, they would not at all interfere with activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Central Asian Republics and in Caucasia.'

The visit of General Pavel Grachov to Armenia and Georgia rather than to Argun, Shah and Gudermes areas of the beleaguered Chechenia, at a time when the Russian forces had started a large scale offensive there, was not a mere coincidence. The Russian Defense Minister was reported to have discussed mutual military cooperation with the leaders of the two republics and inspected the Russian forces there. It may be noted here that Russia has been using the bases in Armenia and Georgia in her military operations against the Chechenia nationalists. The agreement between Armenia and Russia relevant to the Russian military bases was concluded in March 1995. A tacit agreement had already been

there though. A joint military exercise was carried out immediately after the signing of the agreement. The Russian air-strike units recently deployed in the region also took part in the exercise. Ter-Petrosyan and Pavel Grachov observed the exercise.

The Russian military bases, as a factor discouraging any change in the pro-Russian policy line of Armenia in the near future, also represent a domestic security assurance. On the other hand the tussle between the pro- Russia groups and the pro-West groups in Armenia continue. A governmental commission was appointed to study the state of Russo-Armenian relations in 1994, the work of which culminated in Russo-Armenian Cooperation Agreement of July 9, 1994.

Parallel with the growth of antipathy in Russia against the peoples of Caucasia, certain racist and nationalist Russian groups, even the Russian government itself have begun regarding Armenia as a highly important ally. The extreme rightist Russian groups assess Armenia as a shield against "incursion by the Turks and other Muslim forces".

For the Russians Armenia is an instrument through which it exerts pressure on Azerbaijan in order to keep Turkey away from Caucasia.

Nevertheless there are indications to the effect that the relentless Russian pressure on Baku and Tbilisi have been counter-productive. For it was during the same period that Azerbaijan and Georgia reconciled and came closer to each other. As a result the Baku-Suspa Pipeline accord was realized.

On March 8, 1996 in Tbilisi, the Capital of Georgia, some very far reaching agreements were signed between Azerbaijan and Georgia. These included the *Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Enhancement of Security*, and a series agreements on the improvement of the available resources, and to create new facilities to transport the Azeri oil through the Georgian territories. In addition; the two countries have signed a declaration relevant to restoration of security in Caucasia.

The question of the pipeline through Georgia is widely debated in that country. All political sources agree on the significance of the pipeline for Georgia. For the revenue on that account would be several times more than the total budget revenue of the Republic of Georgia, which is equivalent of 250 million dollars according to the 1995 figures.

The assumption that Georgia's geopolitical position would be playing a vital role in relieving the country from Russian sphere of influence, has been often underlined by the Georgian statesmen and the national press, since declaration of independence. No one doubted the assertions. The Georgian nationalist went further to claim that NATO was interested in accepting her as an ally. According to

the Georgian nationalists NATO considered positioning medium range ballistic missiles in Georgia, locked on targets in the "north".

Though a considerable time has elapsed since such ideas were debated; yet there has been little change in the outlook of the Georgian nationalists. For instance Nodar Natadze, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Defense and National Security, and a celebrated opposition leader, once said. *"Under the present circumstances relieving Georgia from the Russian sphere of influence would be possible with the help of the concept of 'Eurasian Corridor' developed in the West. It seeks separation of Caucasia and Central Asia from Russia. The Western powers, the United States in particular, are endeavoring to construct 'an energy' highway' to carry the oil produced in Central Asian and Azerbaijan to the installations at the Turkish harbors on Mediterranean coast.*

President Eduard Shevardnadze also supports the idea of transforming Georgia in to a transit corridor connecting central Asian oil fields to Europe. In his speech on *national Radio- TV network* on October 16, 1995 the Georgian President underline<sup>4</sup> that the decision to carry the Azerbaijan oil through Georgia was an affirmation of Georgia's being a stable and a dependable partner.

Should the West, by means of "Eurasian Corridor" passing through Georgia, succeed in squeezing Russia out of the area in the near future, it would be tantamount to orientation of Armenia and Georgia to the West.

The assistance made available to Georgia by Turkey, the United States, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund has contributed towards the country's economic stability.

Senior officials of NATO and of the Defense and Foreign Ministries of Turkey, Germany and the United States frequently visit Tbilisi. Georgia has concluded military cooperation agreements with Turkey, Germany, and the United Kingdom. It, in a way, signifies downgrading military cooperation with Russia. These developments, while boosting up Georgia's ability to pursue an independent policy; do limit the possibilities of Russia's interference in the affairs of Georgia.

President Shevardnadze, with the leverage of the pipeline agreement, is engaged in consolidating the basis of Georgia's economic and political independence from Moscow.

The International Consortium wants the pipeline passes through Georgia, and Georgia on her part has let it be known that she is prepared to do whatever it could to safeguard her national interests.

Russia attempts to negate the' pipeline project. It was in the same context that Russia and Iran have issued a joint declaration to the effect that they would not concede to unilateral oil pumping by the Caspian littoral states.

The Iranian efforts to enhance her influence in Azerbaijan and Georgia did not fetch the results she anticipated. Baku and Tbilisi prefer to cooperate with Turkey, a partner economically better placed. Besides; the relationship between Azerbaijan and Georgia, by virtue of their respective long term interests, is a specially intimate one. Given that the Caucasian Republics share a common destiny, they must cooperate with one another. Armenia also should contribute to the cooperation. Russia being conscious of the consequences of the developing cooperation among the Caucasian states, has been trying to use every possible opportunity to impede the progress in the relation between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachov has recently disclosed that Moscow intended to station Tactical Nuclear Ballistic Missiles in Kaliningrad, Belorussia, Armenia and Georgia. It is unlikely that Georgia would agree to the proposition. Acceptance of the Russian proposal on the part of Georgia might result in deterioration of her relations with the West. Moreover it would endanger implementation of the pipeline project, to which Tbilisi is already committed purely on the grounds of national interests. President Shevardnadze sharply reacted against the proposal on November 7, 1995. Besides; the Georgian Parliament has yet to ratify the agreement relevant to Russian Military Bases in Georgia.

Georgia's recent initiatives in foreign affairs need to be evaluated in the light of the Western endeavors to transform Georgia in to a buffer zone to contain Russian expansion to the south. Russia has preferred to freeze rather than to solve the existing disputes in Caucasia, as she did in the case of the Dniester Basin.

Freezing of the disputes in Caucasia is by no means an alternative viable solutions. And the dangers inherent in those disputes would be smoldering. Restoration of law and order should be followed by economic recovery programs as a matter of top priority. Russia being the single power maintain control over the troubled area, she would not only be expected to perform as a peace keeping force, but also the one providing comfort. The people would demand more and more economic relief Russia possibly might prefer not to participate in the process of rebuilding the Caucasian economy. In that event Turkey and Iran might like to step in with economic assistance. As a result, Russia having secured stability, be it temporary, by virtue of her political influence, financial resources and military capability; would be rapidly losing influence in the region. Countries such as Turkey and Iran, who would contribute in the development of regional economy, would enhance their influence.

In the past few years there has been a substantial recession in the economic relations between Russia and the Caucasian Republics. To a great extent it was due to the disruption suffered by the railway transportation in Abkhazia and Chechnia. To sum up, the region once again seem to be at the verge of being dependent on Turkey and Iran, as it was two centuries earlier.

Notwithstanding all these adverse developments and subversive propaganda to disrupt improvement of relations with Turkey, common sense prevails in Armenia. Articles approaching the subject positively do appear in the Armenian press. Even there were articles which described Turkey as "*the life line of Armenia*". Indeed, the railway line connecting the Turkish town of Akyaka, by its earlier name Klzilcak9ak, of Arpa9ay City, with Armenia; as well as the "Eastern Gate" and the "Alican Gate" should be regarded as Armenia's life line. The fact that while the border gates still remain closed, the shops in the markets of Armenia are packed with goods manufactured in Turkey, sufficiently justifies the above assertion. Armenia has historic obligations to perform to regenerate the *life line*.

Armenia should, without delay, take step in solving the problems that disturb her neighbors, Turkey and Azerbaijan in particular. Armed Armenian band should vacate the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The question of Karabagh highland should be resolved within the framework of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The present status is far beyond the limits of exercising of the "right of self-determination". The Armenians not only claim Karabagh highland; they have also talk about a "*third Armenia*". A flagrant example of the provocation is available in the article written by Shinnyan and published in the Armenian newspaper *Azatomart*. Shirinyan, brags that in the "*Armenian pastures*" and in the adjacent areas 20 million Kurds were firmly dedicated to the ideal of a "*National State*", that no one could ignore their rights, and that the future had more tragic event in store. It should not be difficult to guess as to which source quenched Shrinnyan's thirst. It is totally absurd to expect to reach anywhere with such a nonsense. It is high time to wake up and listen to the call of reason to relieve the Armenian nation from the present distressing situation. The history tells us that policies based on rancor and vengeance have always failed in the past, and so they would fail in the future too. The recent developments in the region, and the over all situation in Armenia indicate that it is high time for the Yerevan government to act prudently, and to take bold steps towards ensuring regional stability. This may be perceived by listening to the voice of the common-man, and by going through the articles in the Armenian press media.

The following excerpt from a commentary that appeared in *Republic Armenia*, of August 3, 1993 is a brilliant example to the point: "*The routes that would take us to outside world lie in Turkey, Iran and Georgia. However, we have problems with each of them. In the course of our history we depended on one or the other of the states within this triangle. Yet we have been unable to cover any appreciable ground. Does this not explain the reasons of backwardness of our diplomacy? Let us take Turkey for a model. We have invested our hopes! oil pipe line, et cetera, are means of earning our bread.*"

Turkey, situated as she is on a crucial part of the world, is the factor of stability in the region. It is not an empty talk. The Russian daily *Pravda* while referring to the countries closely interested in Caucasia and Central Asia, and while underlining Iran's contribution to the region; discusses the *Turkish factor* with

particular emphasis. According to *Pravda* Turkey, with her investment capability, her modern technology, and secular system, is an appropriate model for Central Asia and Caucasia. Turkey's progress along the same lines would not only help consolidation of her own stability, but it would also contribute to the stability and peace beyond her own borders. Particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union several Western states have admitted that Turkey has been playing an important role in the new emerging geopolitical environment.

According to the Financial Times Western European countries regard Turkey as the commercial center of East Mediterranean; while Caucasia and Central Asia consider her a factor of peace and stability. The European countries and America together reckon Turkey as a "Regional Power" and as a "Secular Democratic Model State". The Financial Times underlines that Turkey is an important factor of stability in the region extending from the Balkans to Caucasia and Central Asia.

Raffi Hovanisyan, former Foreign Minister of Armenia, admitted certain facts relevant to Turkey at a news conference six months after his resignation. He remarked: "Contrary to Armenia. Turkey is capable of preserving her national interests and her principles."

A peaceful environment must be resorted in the Caucasus. It is essential for Turkey as much as it is for Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and the rest of the Caucasian peoples. None of the countries concerned are capable of or prepared to put up resistance to the Russian expansionist activities in the area by itself. In fact the expansionist trend recently exhibited in Russia is by no means conducive to her own consolidation. Conversely; the Russian imperialist aspirations would encourage the regional countries to get together. The conditions that have emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union have made it imperative for the regional countries to cooperate together. The same is true with other neighbors of Turkey. President Ter-Petrosyan of Armenia was reported to have told a *Los Angeles Times* correspondent that "*You can not change your country the way you would change your house, when you are not happy with your neighbor*"

Here I would like to bring to the attention of my readers a few sentences from "*An Open Letter to the then Turkish Prime Minister*" written by Aram-Simpad Hachoyan, an American Armenian. It was published in the "*Armenian Weekly*" of May 7, 1994.

In his highly sentimental letter Hachoyan admits that neither Turkey nor Armenia had earned anything out of "rancor and vengeance", and invites Prime Minister Ciller to extend "*olive branch*" to Armenia by visiting Armenia as she had so courageously visited the Bosnian capital Sarajevo in the midst of a shooting war. Hachoyan goes on: "*Difficult though it may be for us to gloss over the painful memories, the wounds and the distress we suffered in the past; I believe that cooperation between Turkey and Armenia to progress together in to the future is*

*imperative. Because Turkey is to exist in this region, next door to Armenia and the Armenians. I am convinced that repeating the fruitless policies, the intimidation and the repression of the past would earn nothing to either side. There have already been too many blood-pools, and grieving people around. Now the time has come to put an end to the mistaken policies of the past."*

*"It is my humble opinion that a prosperous and friendly Armenia should be transformed to a symbol of peace and stability in the region.. Armenia has got highly important constructive roles to play Turkey on the other hand, is a powerful state in terms of population, military prowess and economic resources. Therefore, Turkey should develop to a leader state and a guarantor of peaceful co-existence.*

*We, the Armenians, are looking forward for a genuine olive branch to be extended. 44*

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