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## Turkey's 'Caucasus Alliance' Proposal : How Likely Is Its Success ? (2)

By Guner Ozkan

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The interdependent model, in this case an "alliance," so to speak, needs to be such that it will cover most, if not all, intra and extra-regional security issues and actors if it wants to produce fruitful results.

But how easy is it to bring them all together while they all have polarizing priorities and interests? As Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan hinted, the diversification of energy pipelines in the region is the backbone of the suggested "alliance." This entails that if those actors such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Armenia benefit from large existing or impending regional economic projects like energy lines and railways, ethno-territorial wars -- the most serious regional security issues -- can be prevented and even resolved totally.

Not going into too much detail, however, examples on the ground suggest otherwise. As many may recall, similar proposals were discussed and even offered to the conflicting sides to resolve their differences and reach permanent solutions in the mid-1990s. At that time, it was suggested that if Russia had joined energy projects and pipelines in Azerbaijan, this would have integrated not only the Caucasian states and ethnic republics but also neighboring countries. It was believed that the Chechen problem would be resolved peacefully in this way because Grozny would get transit fees from the Baku-Novorossiysk "early oil" pipeline crossing Chechen territory. Russia, however, was not very satisfied with the only early oil pipeline from Azerbaijan. Nor did the Chechens accept the amount of revenue that they would have received from the transport of Azerbaijani oil via their territory. As is well known, Russia pushed further for a main oil pipeline, later to be known as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, to cross its own territory. Not enough, the dispute between Moscow and Grozny forced Russia to change the direction of the Baku-Novorossiysk line from Chechnya to the Republic of Dagestan. Equally, neither the oil flowing through the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline nor Moscow's shares in the "contract of the century" -- Azerbaijan's implementation of some 20 contracts (requiring \$60 billion in investment) after gaining independence -- and Shah Deniz projects in Azerbaijan softened its pro-Armenian position in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute -- a dispute stemming from differences between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. Rather, Russia continued to supply large amount of arms to Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, ready to be used by Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians in an eventual war with Azerbaijan.

Similarly, the US negotiator in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, John Maresca, made public in the winter of 1995 that if an oil pipeline, termed a "peace pipeline," had followed the direction from the Azerbaijani capital of Baku to Ceyhan via Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenian territories, this would have encouraged like-minded Armenian politicians to capitalize on the situation and get involved in an honest effort to resolve the dispute. Obviously, the suggested "peace pipeline" was thought to have the potential that it would have resolved the still existing problems between Turkey and Armenia, too, and given the two a chance to normalize their political and economic relations. At the end, both sides ruled out the project from the outset and did not have any serious discussions on its potential benefits for interstate relations and regional security. While Azerbaijan concentrated on alternative roads for its oil, Yerevan followed a realist way of heavily arming itself with Russia's military hardware against Azerbaijan and intensified its effort

to get recognition of the so-called "Armenian genocide" by the international community against Turkey.

Intergovernmental organizations look for a solution: the OSCE

The interdependence model of the "alliance" regarding intergovernmental organizations is also unlikely to generate any positive results in the region. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is referred to as another important means in the "alliance," has already been involved in two of the three conflicts in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh for more than a decade. The organization had had no mandate in the conflict in Abkhazia, another separatist region of Georgia, while it has maintained a very limited role -- only eight observers for monitoring a cease-fire -- in South Ossetia in the Joint Control Commission -- a tri-lateral peacekeeping force and joint military command structure which operates in a buffer zone on the border between the Republic of Moldova and the disputed territory controlled by the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) -- alongside Russian, South Ossetian, North Ossetian and Georgian representatives. With such a limited number of observers and a weak mandate, the OSCE was unable to stop recently ended fire and Russia's heavy-handed behavior.

The OSCE's involvement in Nagorno-Karabakh is even more worrisome. The Minsk Group, established within the framework of the OSCE in 1992, has specifically been dealing with the Nagorno-Karabakh problem in the form of either bringing the sides to the negotiating table or proposing its own peace plans to Baku and Yerevan. Since then, it brought the sides together dozens of times for a possible breakthrough in the dispute. As this did not work, it prepared three different peace plans for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, but they were neither accepted by Azerbaijan nor Armenia due to a disagreement centered on the final status of the region. Most importantly, the Minsk Group has three permanent members -- Russia, the US and France -- each of which holds the chairmanship of the group in a rotating fashion. Russia has actively participated in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue since its inception with a pro-Armenian stance, similar to those of the conflicts between Georgia and the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Minsk Group -- in particular under Moscow's watch -- did not yield a permanent solution acceptable to both Baku and Yerevan. Hence if the "alliance" is to become successful and bring about the resolution of all three conflicts via inter-governmental involvement, the OSCE -- and as its sub-entity the Minsk Group, must be far more active on the ground and most importantly divorce themselves from being influenced by powerful members, such as Russia.

As far as the differing behavior and conduct of regional and extra-regional actors mentioned above are concerned, the Caucasus Alliance suggested by Turkey, boosted with the interdependence model of liberal thinking, rests on intensive economic relations and institutional involvement and is highly unlikely to generate any promising results in the establishment of permanent peace in the region. Indeed, Turkey suggested a very similar proposal with the same objectives in the 1990s. This met with an outright rejection from the Armenian side, which claimed that it was against the national interests of both Armenia and Russia and that it was nothing but an aim to resuscitate the "old Pan-Turkist dream" of uniting all Turks from the Caucasus to Central Asia. There is no reason now why Armenia should not think the same as it did a few years ago. In fact, Russia has come out of this latest war against Georgia much stronger and more domineering along its backyard than before and is now much more defiant against the more active involvement of international organizations (i.e., the OSCE) in the "near abroad." So, it can hardly be said that Moscow has genuinely believed in the formation and the success of the "alliance." If it is the case, why then is the Russian military bombing various economic sites, destroying railways and sinking ships and boats in

Poti in particular and in Georgia in general? After all, these are all important for Tbilisi as they are the backbone of the "alliance" to be built.

It is once again unfortunate to see that the old realist thinking of power maximization of states overwhelms the liberal model of complex interdependence and of the Turkish proposal to form a "Caucasus Alliance." It is unfortunate to see that this comes at the expense of peace and security in interstate relations. How this can be reversed does not and will not have an easy answer for many years to come. Indeed, the Caucasus is not a unique region in the world in that respect. This is the fact of the post-Cold War world order/disorder and it can easily be seen all around if one just looks at what is happening in Iraq today and asks him or herself why.

\*Assistant Professor Guner Ozkan is an expert on the Caucasus region at the Ankara-based International Strategic Research Organization (ISRO)/(USAK) and a lecturer at Mugla University.

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