
Turkey, Azerbaijan And Georgia Join In A Military Ecstasy?

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The process of formation of the military alliance between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia (this possibility has been widely discussed in the context of protection of regional oil- and gas pipelines) has recently emerged in the context of Azerbaijan's possible accession to NATO.

This week Baku-based Zerkalo newspaper wrote, referring to diplomatic sources, that Azerbaijan is in principle ready to address Brussels with an official request for joining NATO but does not do so because there are no security guarantees. NATO gives no security guarantees to applicant countries in the 3-5 year period when membership in the organization is being negotiated. Baku is afraid that the "unfriendly countries" surrounding Azerbaijan - Russia, Armenia and Iran - will exert additional mechanisms to pressure Azerbaijan.

In such cases, the issue of security guarantees for NATO applicant states is usually solved through a bilateral treaty for military and political cooperation with USA. However, USA has limited possibilities for such a treaty with Azerbaijan. "Article 907 of the Freedom Support Act does not allow violating the parity between military assistance to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Today US can provide military assistance to Azerbaijan indirectly through various NATO programs. However, this will not be sufficient in case a crisis situation arises," Zerkalo's source stated. This is why several alternatives for settling this issue are currently under discussion.

The first option is connected with Washington's expectations of settling the Karabagh conflict in the first half of 2007, an option that is not likely to take place.

The second option would be signing a treaty that would allow temporary dislocation of "foreign primarily American troops" in Azerbaijan in case of "threats to the pipelines and oil fields". However, this option is not 100% viable either.

The third option is that another NATO member state, for instance Turkey, could be the guarantor of Azerbaijan's security. Zerkalo's source indicated that active negotiations are underway in this direction. A package of treaties is under development to regulate military and political cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey on the one hand, and Turkey and Georgia on the other.

The recent exchange of high-ranking military delegations between Baku and Ankara is connected with preparation of these treaties. However, this option has its drawbacks as well. Turkey's increased military presence in Azerbaijan can result in aggravation of relations between Turkey and Russia on the one hand, and Turkey and Iran on the other. This goes against Turkey's interests because the latter depends on the energy resources of Russia and Iran. Besides, not all western countries are interested in increased Turkish presence in the South Caucasus. Armenia would be the first country not to be happy with Turkey's increased military presence in the region because the latter's policies pose a direct threat to Armenia's national security.

The possible consequences of military actions against Iran are equally disturbing for Armenia and the region in general. The Russian experts comment on Pentagon's plans to explode Iran from within in a book titled "Introduction to the Future. The World in 2020." Commenting on Pentagon's plans to use 25-30 million Azeris living in Iran to divide the country the Russian experts assume that if something like this takes place, Turkey will emerge as the only stabilizing force in the region. At the same time, the Turks will not be able to avoid interference in a conflict in which their kin nation is involved.

They would have to take up the military control of Southern Azerbaijan.

Therefore, irrespective of how this will be formulated in terms of treaties, a united military and political space involving Turkey, Northern Cyprus, Southern Azerbaijan and the Republic of Azerbaijan will emerge with a population of 110 million people. Turkmenistan, including Turk-populated regions of Iran and Azerbaijan, as well as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbek-populated Mazari-Shariff region of Afghanistan will inevitably join such an alliance. In other words, Turkey's foreign policy vector will change its European direction and move towards the Caspian region, Caucasus and the Central Asia.

There is no need to speak about the consequences of such developments.
