

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TURCO-AMERICAN ALLIANCE IN THE CAUCASUS

Recent trends in the Black Sea region including: Ukraine's revolution, the impending start of Turkish-EU accession talks and changing policies among both local Caucasian governments and the major powers and security organizations, all suggest possibilities for launching a renewed, concerted, and multilateral initiative for the resolution of long standing disputes in the area. This essay suggests conditions necessary for beginning such an initiative and proposes that there might be ways to leverage these developments to secure their acceptance by Russia. Nevertheless, even if Russia refuses to join this process, the West, should take advantage of these opportunities anyway. Such initiatives must be holistic in nature and present solutions for dealing with the established "war economy" of the region. The initiative should aim at both conflict resolution and democratization of the area which entails putting all military organizations under effective and legitimate democratic control.

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Turkey's accession to negotiations for membership in the EU, Ukraine's orange revolution, the improvement of Russo-Turkish relations, Moscow's hints of a willingness to consider European initiatives on Chechnya, Georgian peace proposals to both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the UN's renewed push for negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh, signs of a new Armenian approach to the West, Moldova's appeal to the OSCE for action against what it calls Russian occupation, the first signs of a broader European interest in Moldova, the EU's and NATO's enlargement to the shores of the Black Sea, and the new emphasis placed by both of those organizations and the OSCE on conflict resolution offer real possibilities for substantially transforming regional security in the Caucasus.¹

These events possess enormous significance for European and Transcaucasian security. First, they signify the strength of the democratic tide sweeping out of Western and Central Europe. This includes the issue of control over the many uncontrolled, paramilitary, or hitherto incompletely controlled forces now operating in these areas.² The subjection of military forces who have escaped or dominated local conflicts and states to civilian, democratic, and even to some degree international control is an essential condition of peace, security, and democratization in Ukraine, Turkey or the Caucasus.³ Turkey's and Ukraine's own successes in this field merit careful study.⁴

Second, these events create possibilities for major advances in resolving existing conflicts and for providing stronger and more enduring security structures throughout these areas. The relationship between progress in conflict resolution and democratization, especially in regards to the defense and security sectors is essential. The Ukrainian and Turkish examples show how determined efforts at democratic reform reduce the salience of ethnic and other internal tensions

¹ Stephen Blank, "Does Armenia Face a Major Crisis?," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (January 26, 2005); Michael Ruhle, "Quo Vadis NATO?," *NATO's Sixteen Nations*, No. 5, 2004, pp.14-20; Mustafa Aydın, "Europe's Next Shore: the Black Sea Region After EU Enlargement, Occasional Paper of the European Union Institute for Security Studies and Defense," No. 53, 2004, p.15; "Istanbul Summit Communiqué," Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, *NATO Press Release (2004)096*, Istanbul, (June 28-29, 2004) available at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/p04-096e.htm>. Henceforth Istanbul Initiative; "Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia Included in the European Neighborhood Policy," available at: www.welcometoeurope.com/news, July 5, 2004; Ahto Lobjaskas, "Azerbaijan: EU Keen To Get Involved In Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Process," *Eurasia Insight*, available at: www.eurasianet.org, May 18, 2004; Vladimir Socor, "Kwasniewski, Tarasyuk Urge A European Solution in Transnistria," *Jamestown Daily Monitor*, (February 18, 2005); Vladimir Socor, "Moldova Decries 'Russian Occupation' Draws Mixed Western Response," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, (December 3, 2004) and Idem, "Russia Proves OSCE's Irrelevance on Moldova at Year-End meeting," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, (December 14, 2004).

² Benjamin Jensen, "Demilitarizing Demographics: US Policy Options for Strengthening Georgian Internal Security," *Journal of Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, Vol.12, No.1 (Spring 2004), pp.51-90; Mark Galeotti, "Insurgents and Traffickers Build Alliances in the Caucasus," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 1, 2005, available at: www.4janes.com/subscribe/jir/doc are only a few of the more recent accounts of these formations

³ Nicole Ball, "Reforming Security Sector Governance," *Conflict, Security, and Development*, Vol.4, No.3 (December, 2004), pp. 509-527; C.J. Chivers, "How Top Spies in Ukraine Changed the Nation's Path," *New York Times*, January 17, 2005

⁴ Ibid; Leonid Polyakov, *U.S.-Ukraine Military Relations and the Value of Interoperability*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, 2004); Graham Fuller, "Turkey's Strategic Model: Myths and Realities," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.27, No. 3 (Summer, 2004), pp.51-64.

within society while simultaneously giving them legitimate outlets within a structured and legitimate political process. In this sense both Turkey and Ukraine are models for other post-Soviet states. Turkey in particular might serve more as a model for other Islamic states and a force for regional security. Ukraine is a potential model for other CIS members struggling with democratization and reform and has previously offered its services mediating conflict in the Caucasus. Certainly its recent moves towards a functioning democracy are seen by friend and foe alike as becoming a potential model for other CIS governments. Therefore Ukraine's experience and interests, as well as its good relations with Ankara, Tbilisi, and Washington, could help promote regional conflict resolution in and around the Black Sea.

These positive trends create momentum in the region and offer an opportunity to European security institutions to overcome the neglect or inattention that has too often characterized their relationship to the Black Sea and Transcaucasian region. This state has helped aggravate many threats to Eurasian security.⁵ Too often attention to local security challenges has been an "afterthought", not a real policy.⁶ In 1999 Yannis Valinakis wrote that,

Until recently, Europe seems to have underestimated what is at stake in the rivalries that have developed in the 1990s in this part of the world, thus inadvertently contributing to the rise of an unstable security environment in this region. The strategic importance of the Black Sea region therefore demands greater and more sustained priority within Europe's foreign relations and the CFSP; it calls for more planning and implementing a new, more proactive policy towards these areas; it calls for formulating its political role in the Black Sea area; to prevent or help resolve conflicts.⁷

And in 2002, R. Craig Nation of the US Army War College wrote,

Disappointments notwithstanding, the capacity to project forces into combat zones to enforce peace when diplomatic mechanisms fail, maintain peace in the wake of negotiated ceasefires, and ensure a safe and secure environment within which a process of post-conflict peace-building can go forward remain vital attributes of any effort to contain and reverse a proliferation of low and medium intensity conflicts in the Adriatic-Caspian corridor. What the poor track record of the past decade makes clear is that the means to carry out these tasks effectively are not yet in place.⁸

Thus recent events offer real prospects for concerted action by European security organizations and bilateral alliances like the Turco-American alliance. Turkey, as a member of NATO and

⁵ Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush -Tsintsadze (eds.), *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe and Co. Inc, 2004).

⁶ Robert E. Hunter, "NATO and Mediterranean Security," Bo Huldt, Mats Engman and Elisabeth Davidson (eds.), *Strategic Yearbook 2003: Euro-Mediterranean Security and the Barcelona Process* (Stockholm: Swedish National Defense College, 2002), p.298.

⁷ Yannis Valinakis, *The Black Sea Region: Challenges and Opportunities for Europe*, Chaillot Paper, No. 38, European Union Institute for Security Studies and Defense, Paris, 1999, p.36.

⁸ R. Craig Nation, "Military Contributions to Regional Stability," Stefano Bianchini and Susan L. Woodward (eds.), *From the Adriatic to the Caucasus: Viable Dynamics of Stabilization* (Ravenna: A. Longo Editore, 2003), p.33.

prospectively of the EU, is well placed to encourage these organizations and Washington to overcome their prior neglect of the Black Sea and Caucasus regions. Similarly, the entry of U.S. and NATO forces into Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, along with NATO's new emphasis on these areas offers the capabilities for achieving success in building regional security and stronger states in the Black Sea area. NATO recognized the Caucasus and Central Asia in its future activities as a priority at its Istanbul summit of 2004. The EU also considers the consolidation of stronger states and of regional stability, along with increased democratization and economic reform as prerequisites for enhanced security throughout this region.⁹ As part of this transformation of the regional status quo, a consensus has arisen that resolution of the many regional conflicts must be a priority undertaking for all interested parties.¹⁰

Finally, these new trends block the spread of Russian authoritarianism and neoimperialism which have contributed significantly to the freezing of many of the regional conflicts and keeping several local governments in a state of perpetual vulnerability to disintegration. Russian President Vladimir Putin has announced that Russia would be available for mediation but would not take any initiative on its own in the region. This new approach to the region by Russia might allow room for bolder Western initiatives. Given Russia's refusal to countenance an end to the conflicts tearing Georgia apart, this stance leaves it up to the West to take an initiative in regard to conflict resolution.¹¹ As part of these new trends, we should also include the restructuring of U.S. and NATO forces in Europe.¹²

This fact enhances Turkey's opportunities for unilateral and multilateral involvement in the Caucasus by virtue of its alliance with America, its improved ties to Moscow, membership in NATO and prospectively the EU.

Turkey, as it negotiates with Brussels, will probably advocate greater EU attention to the entire Black Sea, not least the Caucasus. Brussels will undoubtedly try to use its leverage with Ankara to promote its burgeoning interests there too. Similarly, Russia's desire for greater political ties with Turkey establishes Turkey as a more credible interlocutor with Russia on Caucasian issues who can reassure Moscow that its legitimate equities in the area will not be placed at risk.¹³ We must note here that the facilitation of conflict resolution in the Caucasus, and of EU membership for Turkey remain high U.S. priorities. *While it is true that Turkey may be turning to Moscow out of unhappiness with Washington over Iraq. Regarding Iraq, Turkey's obsessions over the Kurds got the better of its considered judgement* rendering Turkey unable to see that the Kurds would not be allowed either by the other Iraqi groups or by Washington to secede and form their own state. This led Turkey to profound distrust of American motives in Iraq. On the other hand,

⁹ Ruhle (2004), pp.14-20; Aydın (2004), "Europe's Next Shore..." p. 15; "Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia Included in the European Neighborhood Policy," *Istanbul Initiative*; Lobjaskas.

¹⁰ Aydın (2004), "Europe's Next Shore..." p. 29.

¹¹ *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty* Newswire, January 28, 2005; Vladimir Socor, "Moscow Threatens Georgia as Bush-Putin Summit Nears," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol.2, No.13 (January 19, 2005).

¹² Federal News Service, *Testimony of General James Jones to the Senate Armed Services Committee*, March 24, 2004; General Charles F. Wald, Deputy Commander, US European Command (USEUCOM), *RUE Security Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities*, Briefing Presented to the IFPA Symposium on Security Cooperation with Russia, Ukraine, and the Caucasus, Washington, D.C. July 23, 2004 (Henceforth Wald, Briefing).

¹³ Lionel Martin, "Putin in Turkey: The Unending Quest for Multipolarity," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol.1, No.146 (December 14, 2004).

there are no real signs of major dissonance with Washington over the Caucasus.¹⁴ Consequently both Brussels and Washington should welcome Turkey's ability to play a key role in helping to resolve those conflicts.

Turkey currently crowns 2-3 years of sustained reform that have engendered overall democratization of civil-military relations, relations between the Kurds and the central state, "mosque-state" issues, and economic stabilization after what seemed to be a perennially inflated, bloated economy that was out of control and heavily politicized. The impending beginning of EU accession talks has led Turkish diplomats to become more active in pursuing regional peace in Turkey's various neighborhoods, including the Caucasus.¹⁵ Turkey has now effectuated new rapprochements with Israel, Syria, and Russia as both cause and effect of its efforts to enhance its value as a potential member of the EU. As a recent report on Turco-Syrian relations observed,

While Turkey is accustomed to balancing the chaotic Middle Eastern system and the peace and stability of Europe, it now appears to be moving closer to the European Union. It has succeeded in minimizing its problems with surrounding countries, even as Iran and Syria have made positive approaches to Turkey in the context of their possible future proximity with an EU state. More specifically, close relations between Turkey and Syria are highly meaningful from both commercial and security standpoints.¹⁶

Despite the very visible friction with Washington over Kurdish issues, State Department spokesman, Adam Ereli, also said that Ankara could play a positive and constructive role in facilitating Israeli-Palestinian engagement.¹⁷ Thus it is possible that Turkey can become a force for stability and reform in one or more more of its various neighborhoods. In turn, the improvement of Turco-Syrian relations has allowed Turkey to serve as a reliable interlocutor from Damascus to Jerusalem even as Turkey strives to overcome earlier tensions with Israel. Thus Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül met with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other officials to relay his and Prime Minister Erdoğan's belief that Syria's expressed willingness to resume unconditional negotiations with Israel is serious and well intentioned.¹⁸ Syria too may be moving to a deeper and more lasting rapprochement with Turkey that could include the shelving for a long time of its territorial claim on Iskenderun where Syria, in the words of Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, "agreed to having Europe on its border."¹⁹

¹⁴ Haroutiun Khatchatrian, "The Russian-Turkish Rapprochement Could Benefit Armenia," *Eurasia Insight*, February 1, 2005. It is argued that there is friction with America in the Caucasus, but it is based on interviews with Armenian diplomats, nothing overt has yet surfaced.

¹⁵ Khatachatrian (2005).

¹⁶ Bülent Aras, "After the Threats, Syria and Turkey are Fast Friends," *The Daily Star*, January 4, 2005, available at: <http://www.dailystar.com>

¹⁷ International Crisis Group, *Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears over Kurdish Ambitions*, Middle East Report No. 35, January 2005; Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Turkey: Ankara Increasingly Preoccupied by Developments in Northern Iraq," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, Feature Article*, February 9, 2005; Mevlut Katik, "Turkey Turns Attention to Repairing Frayed Ties With the United States," *Eurasia Insight*, January 6, 2005, available at: www.eurasianet.org

¹⁸ "Turkey Rebuilds Ties With Israel," *BBC News World Edition*, January 4, 2005, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

¹⁹ Ehud Ya'ari, "Syrian Overture," *The Jerusalem Report*, January 24, 2005, p. 22.

Russo-Turkish relations have also greatly improved and deepened with both sides essentially burying the hatchet of past enmity in pursuit of mutual economic gains and an awareness of the shared threat of terrorism.²⁰ This friendship should help reassure both parties that the other does not seek to threaten its vital interests but rather to provide mutual security and stability in overlapping neighborhoods.²¹ Lastly Turkey has now acted proactively toward Armenia to allow semi-official historical organizations and the scholars to begin discussing the issue of the Armenian genocide of 1915. This could certainly facilitate the possible unfreezing of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.²² In 2003 Turkey almost opened the border with Armenia, so doing so now would not be impossible even though Turkey continues to tell Baku that it will not do so unless Armenia ends its occupation of territory in Nagorno-Karabakh.²³ Armenia's Defense Minister, Serzh Sarkisian welcomes the start of EU-Turkey talks over accession to the EU, believing that it will lead to pressure on Turkey to ease the border closing.²⁴

Finally, Turkey's linkage of democratization, domestic conflict resolution, and Europeanization, is also particularly visible with regard to the progress made on unblocking the issue of Cyprus and ending the centuries old hostility towards Greece. Turkey's forthcoming National Security Political Paper formally removes country specific threats from consideration and moves toward a terror-centric approach to security. Thus Turkish Chief of Staff, General Hilmi Özkök stated in November, 2004 that,

“Turkey no longer considers countries a threat to each other; the biggest threat to all countries is terrorism. We attribute the first priority to terrorism on the list of contemporary threats to peace and stability.”²⁵

Yiğit Alpogan, Secretary General of Turkey's National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu - MGK) said that Greece also would no longer be seen as a threat.

There is an understanding that Greece supports Turkey's EU membership bid. Separately, two-way trade between Turkey and Greece will surpass 2.5 billion USD this year. Each year 8000,000 Turks and Greeks travel across the Aegean. In addition to that, there are 76 Greek companies in Turkey with an investment portfolio of 642 million USD. All of that will be reflected in the new foreign threat concept.²⁶

Washington, Ankara, and the Caucasus

²⁰ Martin (2004), Khatchatrian (2005), and Mevlut Katik, “Turkey, Russia Celebrate Trade Ties While Probing an Expansion of Geopolitical Contacts,” *Eurasia Insight*, January 12, 2005.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Igor Torbakov, “Turkish Scholars Seek to Engage Armenian Counterparts in Historical Debate,” *Eurasia Insight*, February 1, 2005; Jon Gorvett, “Turkish Drive Towards EU Increases Possibilities for Change in the Caucasus,” *Eurasia Insight*, January 6, 2005.

²³ Gül Assures Azerbaijan on Armenia Policy,” *Turkish Daily News*, February 11, 2005; Eil Danielyan, “Turkey ‘Nearly Opened Armenian Border in 2003,’” *Eurasia Insight*, February 4, 2005.

²⁴ *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty Newslines*, February 17, 2005.

²⁵ Burak Ege Bekdil and Ümit Enginsoy, “New Turk Threat Paper Expected Soon,” *Defense News*, January 3, 2005, p.10.

²⁶ Ibid.

These positive dynamics should play a key role in fostering conflict resolution and democratization, not least in the security sector, in the Caucasus. There is little doubt that American officials see Turkey's reforms as a model for other governments. Thus U.S. Ambassador to Baku, Reno Harnish openly cites America's desire for Azerbaijan to follow a Turkish model.²⁷ Likewise the coincidence with Ukraine's Orange Revolution, and its turn toward closer ties with the West open up major economic and security possibilities that Washington and Ankara support. Georgia has offered a new peace plan for South Ossetia that merits genuine consideration and Ukraine might conceivably restate its earlier willingness to serve as a mediator in Georgia's conflicts with Abkhazia or South Ossetia.²⁸ Transportation and trade routes, (i.e. the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline) should receive greater priority. The opportunity now exists to build on earlier Ukrainian suggestions for opening pipelines that could link to the Black Sea like the Odessa-Brody pipeline. This pipeline could connect under the Black Sea or through Russia's network to Baku-Ceyhan, thus tying regional commerce, including energy, more closely to the West.²⁹ Opening the Odessa-Brody line to pump Caspian energy to Europe could relieve pressure from energy shipments in the Straits, strengthen Ukraine's and the Caspian states' energy independence, and reduce Moscow's ability to subordinate Ukraine and thus other energy producers in the CIS to its energy policies. Moscow's earlier proposal to reverse the flow of this pipeline so that it carries Russian oil from Brody to Odessa was clearly aimed to undermine Ukraine's energy independence and induce Kyiv's adherence to a closed Russian economic bloc, not the EU.³⁰ Indeed, Russia now wants to reverse its previous stance on the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline as it realizes it has misread that project's viability.³¹ Therefore as economic relations between Moscow and Ankara flourish and Russia seeks enhanced political ties with Turkey, it might not view Turkish initiatives for conflict resolution in and around the Black Sea as being against its interests.³²

By the same token, the strengthening of Georgian-American ties will parallel invigorated ties between Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine. In return, Moscow will likely intensify pressure on Armenia and Azerbaijan to enhance its strategic partnership with these states even as it inhibits their resolving the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. In a possible sign of the pressure on Russia to move out of Georgian bases and live up to its 1999 pledge to the OSCE, South Ossetia has indicated that it would be willing to host Russia's bases.³³ The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh paralyzes Armenia and thus lies at the root of its dependence upon Moscow. The failure of the West to take conflict resolution seriously here has led Azerbaijan to raise this issue in every international venue, reinforcing Armenian isolation, stubbornness, and their dependence on Moscow, but it also leads Baku to look less to the West which it believes remains impotent or

²⁷ "Envoy to Azerbaijan Upholds USA's Regional policy," *Zerkalo* (Baku), September 11, 2004, Retrieved from Lexis-Nexis.

²⁸ *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, Newslines*, January 28, 2005; Vladimir Socor, "Georgian President Launches South Ossetia Peace Initiative," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, January 28, 2005.

²⁹ Moscow, Interfax Presidential Bulletin, in Russian, July 4, 2003, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia, (Henceforth FBIS SOV), July 4, 2003.

³⁰ Moscow, *ITAR-TASS*, in English, September 30, 2003, FBIS SOV, September 30, 2003.

³¹ "Analyst Links New Russian Interest in Ceyhan Pipeline to US Caucasus Expansion," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, December 24, 2004, Retrieved from BBC monitoring.

³² Martin (2004).

³³ *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty Feature News*, February 18, 2005.

unconcerned about its plight.³⁴ Unfreezing that conflict with the help of concerted diplomacy from Ankara, Washington, and Brussels would go far to open channels for a political resolution of the conflict as well as the further integration of both Armenia and Azerbaijan to the West.

Such an initiative is also timely for other reasons. While Baku now seeks to internationalize the conflict by going to the UN and EU for pressure on Armenia, the start of Brussels' talks with Turkey will bring this conflict into the discussion. This is due to Turkey's continuing closure of its border with Armenia which stems from its conquest of Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey has recognized that it has to engage the Caucasus more seriously than before. It is likely that the EU's decision to open negotiations with Ankara is tied to a realization that the EU must assert itself more strongly in the Caucasus and that Turkey could play a key role in facilitating this engagement. We can expect that the negotiations surrounding Turkey's entry into the EU will affect this region more than would otherwise be the case.

As Europe's energy supply increasingly depends on stability in the Caucasus, it is likely that Turkey will attempt to raise Brussels' consciousness of the security threats to Europe coming from the still unresolved conflicts there.³⁵ At the same time we can expect the Turkish government to emphasize the desirability of its membership given its proximity to the area and its influence upon Azerbaijan. In return, Brussels may insist upon a quid pro quo, namely opening the border with Armenia. Turkey will not make this concession gratuitously. Armenia too will have to pay a price for this major concession. And this requirement also tallies with both the EU's and NATO's rising interest in stabilizing the entire Black Sea and Caucasus areas as well as their interest in bringing Turkey into the EU.

Both these security organizations have expressed an increased interest in helping to stabilize the Caucasus. While they will probably not participate as such in direct negotiations for peace, it seems likely that they could easily be called upon and accept the responsibility for providing forces and resources to help guarantee any peace settlement that may issue out of the current frozen conflicts in and around the Black Sea. Pressure on Turkey to open the border may become the quid pro quo in return for pressure upon Armenia to make concessions to Azerbaijan to unblock the stalled negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh.

To the extent that both Washington and Brussels desire progress on this conflict and Washington advocates Turkish entry into the EU, it may be advantageous for all parties to come together on a program designed to open up this discussion and impel progress in conflict resolution. Such progress could also aid Armenia's desperate economic need for relief from Turkey's closure of the border as well as the West's desire to reduce Russian leverage on both Baku and Erevan. Since Russian leverage blocks conflict resolution and democratization in the region, a package that breaks the logjam on the "externalities" of the conflict can bring the two sides and the other interlocutors closer to an agreement on the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

³⁴ Stephen Blank, "Rumsfeld and the Caucasus: America's Deepening Involvement in the South Caucasus Conflicts," *Central Asia- Caucasus Analyst* (September 8, 2004); Fariz Ismailzade, "Azerbaijan Wrestles With Geopolitical Dilemma," *Eurasia Insight*, February 15, 2005; Alex Vatanka, "Azerbaijan Improves Relations With Iran," *Jane's intelligence Review*, (March 1, 2005), available at: www.4janes.com/subscribe/jir/doc_view.jsp.

³⁵ Pavliuk and Klympush-Tsintsadze (2004); Khachatryan (2005); Torbakov (2005).

Therefore we cannot exclude the possibility that either or both of these two Brussels-based organizations, NATO and the EU, may compel change in the “externalities” surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh issue as suggested above. These organizations’ continuing pressure for democratization, especially reinforced now by Kyiv’s and Tbilisi’s prior examples and by the fact that serious peace proposals are being advanced at a time when the advantages of democratization and integration with the West are stronger and more visible than before, may also come into play because those examples are known in Erevan as well as in Brussels.

But we may also see the West formulate economic and other incentives to advance conflict resolution here. In 2005 the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline should open and demonstrate ever more forcefully the importance to Europe of securing energy supplies from the Caucasus. European governments are beginning to see that defense of these mediums constitute a legitimate NATO mission.³⁶ Therefore, we should expect an increase in bilateral and multilateral assistance from Western to Transcaucasian governments to increase democratization, civilian control of the armed forces, and to generate better economic policies. All these programs, which could either be explicitly or implicitly tied to progress in conflict resolution in the Caucasus, can generate improved economic conditions and political reform. The point of such a multi-dimensional program is that it meets what security experts increasingly regard as the need for holistic approaches to the building of security in conflict-torn areas.³⁷

Ankara, Washington and Brussels in the Caucasus

Precisely because what we are proposing is such a holistic and multi-dimensional program, it requires extensive prior coordination with Washington, Brussels (both the EU and NATO) and Ankara. European security organizations along with Ankara and Washington now have a golden opportunity to take a major step towards promoting both conflict resolution and democratization in the Caucasus and thus take a major step to realize their professed goals of integrating the Caucasus with the West. The EU’s new neighborhood policy has not offered former Soviet republics an improved economic-political relationship as good as what NATO has offered in its Partnership for Peace program.

At the same time the evidence suggests that if an opportunity for EU and NATO membership is offered, no matter how strict the conditions are, as long as they are clear and upheld by the inviting organization, a public response of sufficient strength has often been forthcoming. This has been the response of Romania and Bulgaria for example.³⁸ Turkey’s own experience confirms this. Only after the EU finally admitted that Turkey did have a fair chance at membership, provided it adhered to the guidelines laid down in the 1993 Copenhagen criteria

³⁶ Wald, Briefing, Sevindzh Abdullayeva and Viktor Shulman, “NATO to Expand Cooperation with Azerbaijan,” *ITAR-TASS News Agency*, March 13, 2004, Retrieved from Lexis-Nexis; “Azeri Daily Says US Troops May Be Stationed in Karabakh,” *Yeni Musavat* (Baku), August 23, 2004, Retrieved from Lexis-Nexis.

³⁷ Max G. Manwaring, “The New Global Security Landscape: the Road Ahead,” *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, Vol.11, No. 2-3 (Winter, 2002), p. 205.

³⁸ Patrice C. McMahon, “Managing Ethnicity: The OSCE and Trans-National Networks in Romania,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.52, No. 1 (January-February, 2005), pp.15-28; Meglena Kuneva, Minister for European Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, “Bulgaria and the European Union: Preparing for Accession in January 2007,” presentation to the Center for Strategic and international Studies, Washington, D.C., January 28, 2005.

and ensuing documents, did the logjam of Turkish politics begin to break down, allowing a government openly dedicated to reform to come to power. The fact that it is a Muslim party-led government is perhaps all the more amazing to foreigners, but it still confirms the point that once Europe extends its hand, interested publics follow.³⁹

The same dynamic is now visible in Ukraine and the first point of President Viktor Yushchenko's foreign policy is to seek a clear road to EU membership. This does not mean that Kyiv or other states outside the EU insist on membership now, but as was and is the case with NATO, they should receive a clear and unequivocal statement of what they must do to qualify and how Brussels will respond to good faith reform efforts. The time for "virtual policies" [Kuzio's phrase depicting the EU-Ukraine relationship through 2004] both on their part and on Brussels' part regarding membership in the EU should be regarded as over.⁴⁰ Now, the Caucasian states need to hear from Brussels regarding what they must do to qualify for membership in Europe's security organizations. This does not mean that they must be granted immediate and unconditional membership or even that a deadline be set, but it does entail a process which is clear to both parties. Similarly it is also clear that conflict resolution must lie at the heart of that process, otherwise, no real progress is possible. It is clear that peace, democratization, and prosperity form a mutually reinforcing and virtuous circle that benefits all sides in these conflict zones as well as their neighbors, including Russia.

Russia remains the major obstacle to conflict resolution because its support for and covert efforts to merge the protostates that emerged in the wake of those conflicts with it are fundamental to a policy that regards the West as the hostile other and provides what a 19th century official called the lure of something erotic on the peripheries, i.e. the physical and psychological gratifications of empire to its officials. But, Russia pays an enormous price for this. While relatively few men enrich themselves or pursue an unsustainable imperial fantasy; they actually place Russia's own security at risk by supporting secession and open criminality in these regions that keep the Black Sea littoral and the Caucasus in a more or less permanent state of siege. We saw this again in 2004 at Beslan when Chechen terrorists captured a Russian school and killed hundreds of children and Russians who tried to storm the school and since no solution to the Chechen war is in sight and is spreading into the North Caucasus, we must point out the consequences of its misguided and dangerous policy to Russia.

Moscow cannot run with the hares and proclaim its fidelity to the integrity of state boundaries in the Caucasus while overtly and covertly hunting with the hounds by maintaining military forces or military assistance to secessionists who aim to carve ethnic fiefdoms out of them. Worse yet, Moscow refuses to acknowledge what support for these criminal protostates means for its own security.⁴¹ It refuses to see that by creating protostates whose political economy combines war,

³⁹ Ibidem.; Mustafa Aydın and Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe, "Waiting for December 2004: Turkish Blues for the EU," *The International Spectator*, Vol.39, No.3 (2004), pp.111-125.

⁴⁰ Taras Kuzio, "EU and Ukraine: A Turning Point in 2004?," Occasional Papers of the European Union Institute for Security Studies and Defense, No. 47, Paris, 2003.

⁴¹ Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia, and Tajikistan*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Russia and Eurasia Programme, (London and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000); Dov Lynch, "Euro-Asian Conflicts and Peacekeeping Dilemmas," in Dov Lynch and Yelena Kalyuzhnova (eds.), *The Euro-Asian World: A Period of Transition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp.17-22; Federal Document Clearing House, Assistant Secretary

racketeering, smuggling, trafficking in women and children, black market activities, large-scale gun running, drug trafficking, and official corruption as the glue that holds these regions together, it created the very conditions that facilitated Beslan and other such attacks like those which took place in Moscow in 2002. The continuing stabilization of this political economy also perpetuates weak states throughout the Caucasus that cannot enforce order or defend their territory. These weaknesses underscore the region's overall security deficit that makes Chechen incursions into Russia or neighboring states both thinkable and possible.⁴²

Putin's regime seems unable to accept that it cannot promote Russian security by destabilizing all of its neighbors or that it can do so with impunity. Indeed, there are gathering forces who favor Russian recognition of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Moldova as sovereign states, a move that could trigger their future annexation or incorporation into Russia but cause an irretrievable break with all Russia's interlocutors.⁴³ Russian security cannot be had or attained by promoting insecurity all around its frontiers, especially if that insecurity is generated by Moscow's support for what amounts to racketeers and gangsters. This direct instigation and support of separatist and corrupt activities may reward high-ranking players in the Russian government and military who have a direct pecuniary interest at stake in the continuation of these states of siege and war. But it certainly does not redound to Russia's national interest, instead, it facilitates the spread of failing states and kleptocracies throughout the North Caucasus and the entire post-Soviet space. The continuation of these open black holes and their porosity allows every kind of corruption, including free passage of weapons and terrorists to occur unchecked. And the extent of this corruption and violence which merely begets more violence and lawlessness is well known to security analysts and observers in Russia, neighboring countries and the world. Indeed, Moscow is clearly feeling the pressure for action as it is making proposals for regional Black Sea organizations that would forestall the appearance of an organized NATO or EU presence, thus leaving it the predominant regional player. But it is unlikely anyone will accept these.⁴⁴

Russian support for these regimes and Putin's publicly expressed contempt for exporting democracy abroad only strengthens the hands of these gangsters and those post-Soviet rulers whose follies will soon endanger both their regimes and Russia.⁴⁵ Sooner or later an Ajarian scenario where the ruler loses control or dies will occur, leading to crises with a great likelihood of exploding into violence that could cross state lines. This possibility is not confined to the Caucasus. Turkmenistan and even possibly Uzbekistan could come apart in this way, authoritarian or weak governments susceptible to pressures for ethnic vengeance could veer out

of State "A. Elizabeth Jones Holds a Video conference with Bratislava, Moscow and Rome," January 13, 2005, Retrieved from Lexis-Nexis.

⁴² Robert Bruce Ware, "The Caucasian Vortex," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, Newslines*, August 26, 2004; Svante Cornell, "The Growing Threat of Transnational Crime," Dov Lynch (ed.), *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU, Chaillot Papers*, No. 65, December 2003, pp. 23-40 and Svante E. Cornell, Roger N. McDermott, William O'Malley, Vladimir Socor, and S. Frederick Starr, *Regional Security in the South Caucasus: The Role of NATO* (Washington, D.C.; Central Asia Caucasus Institute, Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2004), pp.4-15.

⁴³ Igor Torbakov, "Russia Mulls Recognition of Independence for Georgian Separatist Regimes," *Eurasia Insight*, October 4, 2004.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Socor, "Black Sea Watch," *Jamestown Daily Monitor*, February 17, 2005.

⁴⁵ "Putin Speaks Out Against "Exporting Capitalist Democracy," *ITAR-TASS News Agency*, April 11, 2003, retrieved from Lexis-Nexis.

of control and provoke a war.⁴⁶ The upsurge of bellicose rhetoric in Azerbaijan throughout 2004, stating that retrieval of Karabakh is a state priority including trying to have Armenia excluded from the Council of Europe, raises the real possibility that a renewal of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh could occur sooner than expected.⁴⁷

The acute nature of many of these crises and the danger of the eruption of a cascading chain of violence from the North Caucasus throughout the Transcaucasus suggests an overriding need for East-West cooperation to defuse the sources of tension and stabilize the existing conflicts in the Caucasus. Internationalizing these conflicts through effective intermediaries like the EU, NATO, the OSCE and the UN could, if the great powers were to collaborate, effect major positive changes throughout the area. Alternatively a multilateral diplomatic effort involving Turkey, Washington, and European security organizations as well as Russia and the local parties to each conflict could offer a viable plan of action. It is important that the West not to sit on its laurels or leave the issue of taking the initiative to local actors in the Caucasus. If that happens, they will be either unable or unwilling to do much. And that, as we know, is a course for war, not the peace that now lies in our sights.

⁴⁶ The likelihood of a crash in Turkmenistan after Niyazov is virtually accepted as a certainty by Western analysts, as for Uzbekistan, Stephen Blank, "Uzbekistan: A Strategic Challenge to American Policy," forthcoming from the Open Society Institute.

⁴⁷ *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty Newslines*, March 10, 2004; "Azerbaijan Demands Armenia's Exclusion From Council of Europe," *Interfax*, October 5, 2004, available at: www.interfax.eu/e/B/0/28html.