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**THE RUSSIAN "CHECKMATE"
IN THE CAUCASUS
(THE 2020 WAR IN ARTSACH)**



**NATIONAL AND CAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS
Laboratory of Geocultural Analysis of the Wider Middle East and Turkey
Department of Turkish Studies and Contemporary Asian Studies**



Athens, December 2020



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*For the Greek-Armenian friendship
based on the Truth...*

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Abstract

This text analyzes the main points of behavior of the Super-systemic (Russia, Turkey, Israel, EU, USA) and Systemic (Armenia, Artsakh, Azerbaijan) factors of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh following the Azeri attack, which was obviously supported in various means -both diplomatic and operational in the field- by Ankara, but also assisted by Israel in terms of armaments. An analysis follows of the self-proclaimed "Republic of Artsakh's international legal status, taking into account both the UN General Assembly's and Security Council's Resolutions.

Further to that, and on the basis of the above analysis, the diplomatic and operational behavior of the Russian Federation before, during and after the conflict is interpreted and conclusions are drawn about the current distribution of power in the South Caucasus, the winners and losers, and the future dynamics for super-systemic actors: Russia and Turkey. In the context of this analysis, the Greek geopolitical position is also considered, alongside policy proposals, which must be taken into account by Athens in order to face those important security issues marked by the redistribution of power in the Caucasus Complex.

A. Background

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (or Artsakh for the Armenians), of the 1,700-square-meter region in the South Caucasus, is the continuation or regional claim for self-determination, (culminating in the independence drive that led to the establishment of the controversial "Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" in 1988) by local Armenians, going back to 1917-8, i.e., the time of regime change in the Czarist Russian Empire to Bolshevik communist rule.

The initial plan for the integration of Caucasian "Republics" into the Soviet Union foresaw that the Karabakh region would make part of the then newly formed Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia (SSR). How-

ever, the new Commissioner of the Soviet regime (and later Lenin's successor in the USSR leadership), Joseph Stalin, schemed the conversion and annexation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region as an autonomous region in the neighboring Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan (SSR). An option that was obviously the result of petty political expediencies of internal and external balancing of the regime and its "divide-and-rule" policy towards minorities in the vast USSR (where, especially in its Stalinist version, national homogeneity of the Soviet Republics was to be avoided when involving minorities other than a purely Russian); said practice was destined to tragically mark the fate of both peoples of the region, who have since suffered countless dead, wounded and displaced people for over a century. For the Armenian people, however, the suffering caused by their eastern neighbor, should be counted and considered on top of the overshadowing genocidal persecution committed by their neighbor to the West this time, just a few years earlier, in 1915, i.e. the Kemalist -and nationally related to the Azeris- Turkey. Ankara's backing to the Azeris was justified by way of the latter's operational support during the Russo-Turkish War of 1914-1917.

The process of USSR's self-dissolution in the late 1980s, was seen as an opportunity for historic vindication of the long-suffering Armenian people, especially those living in Artsakh, in order to restore their national integration through its unification with the Metropolitan Republic of Armenia. The declaration of independence of both Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1991 sparked, as expected, the launch of firstly local and then extensive hostilities along the borderline. This was the beginning of a bloody armed conflict, which will carry on directly or not, and sometimes even in a latent state, to this day, thus including this area in the four so-called "frozen conflicts" of the wider region (Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno Karabakh).

In the then first phase of the armed conflict between Armenians and Azeris, where there were significant losses of 20-30,000 people¹, the Armenians finally managed to bring the area of Nagorno-Karabakh under their effective control. In January 1992, the Armenians in the region declared the Independent Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, which rekindled hostilities. Since the end of 1993, it appears that forces from Armenia, as

1. See "Nagorno-Karabakh profile", BBC News, Europe, 18 Nov. 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18270325>

well as other mainly individual fighters, have been involved in the hostilities, thus giving a more international dimension in this armed conflict².

On 16 May 1994, hostilities stopped (temporarily) following a final ceasefire accord between Armenia, Azerbaijan and the head of the Nagorno-Karabakh military, which was strongly supported by Russia and mediated by OSCE and Minsk Group.

On July 27, 1994, the Ministers of Defense of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Chief of the Armed Forces of Nagorno-Karabakh signed another Ceasefire Agreement, strengthening May Agreement's legally binding status. Consultations followed in Moscow on a major political peace treaty. However, the ceasefire agreement was violated by both sides, making it impossible to have the required peace treaty signed subsequently. In any case, the signing of ceasefire agreements with the participation of the representative of the Armenian Armed Forces of Nagorno Karabakh is important, and the fact itself makes -indirectly, but with no negligible elements- for a quasi-recognition by the other two agreeing parties (Armenia - Azerbaijan), and therefore elements of wider legitimacy (albeit flawed) in the de facto regime of Nagorno-Karabakh.

B. Critical remarks on the conflict

It is clear that the war that broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia in Artsakh (see Map 1) with Turkey's involvement and Russia's balancing approach between the fighting parties, is quite different from the previous ones (1988-1994: see Map 1a, that of 2016 and the skirmishes of July 2020). We believe that the current crisis in South Caucasus may lead to a wider escalation, which will have serious ramifications in the Middle East. So, we have to make some, rather interesting remarks on them in order to analyze objectively this very crucial case **for international se-**

2. Author's note: "Since late 1993, the conflict has also clearly become internationalized: in addition to Azerbaijani and Karabakh Armenian forces, troops from the Republic of Armenia participate on the Karabakh side in fighting inside Azerbaijan and in Karabakh. (Afghan "mujahideen" and Slavic mercenaries also take part in the fighting. The Slavs on both sides, the Afghans for Azerbaijan.)", "AZERBAIJAN: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh", Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 8 December 1994, available at https://www.hrw.org/reports/AZER%20Conflict%20in%20N-K%20Dec94_0.pdf.

curity. First of all, let's look at those moves by Armenia that signal its attempt to turn towards NATO and the West.

a. Armenia, under Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan, had already participated in NATO's "Noble Partner-2017" exercise in July 2017 in the territory of Georgia; he also served as caretaker Prime Minister after the "velvet revolution" of 2018, and a group of his party's deputies, the "Republican Party", voted for Nicole Pashinyan (who, after his release, was heavily funded by George Soros to rise to power).

b. The Armenian Armed Forces last participation in a NATO military exercises in the territory of Georgia is reported only in August 2018³. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was elected on May 8, 2018, just 4 months ago.

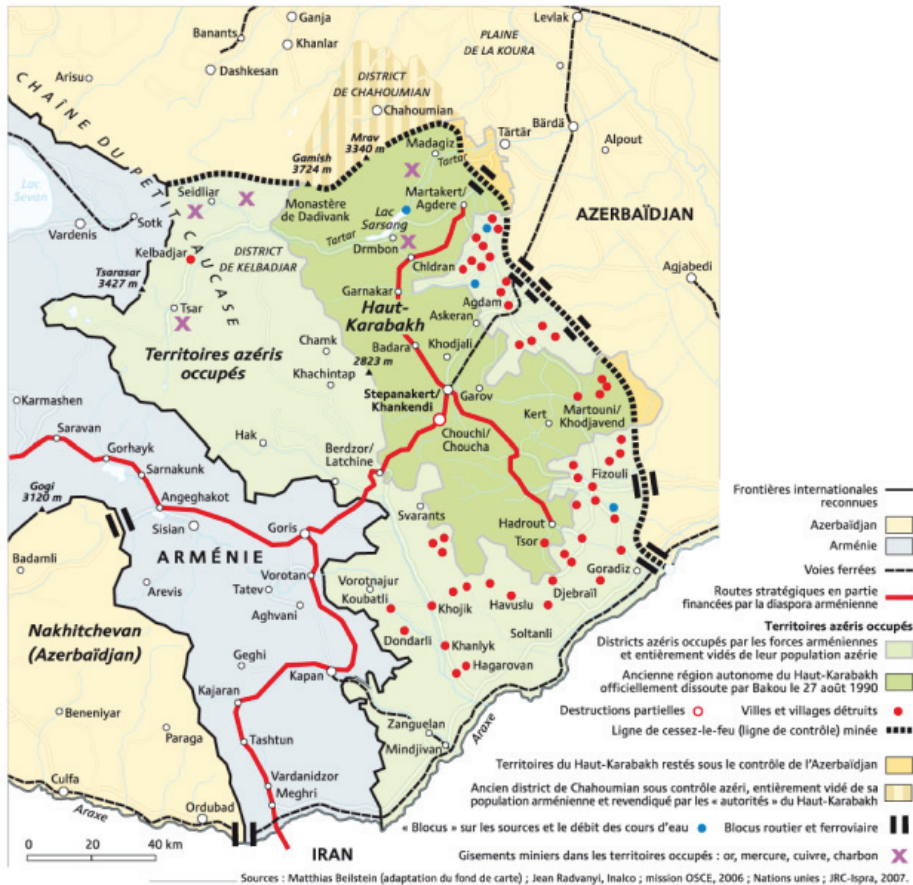
c. Also, on February 27 of 2020, on the occasion of the visit of Georgia's Minister of Defense Kharibashvili to Yerevan, he stressed that he accepts the participation of Armenia in these exercises but also the "commitment of his government for deeper strategic relations between Armenia and Georgia" and that "Defense and Security are one of the components of bilateral relations between the two countries."⁴ He specifically referred to Armenia's participation in NATO "Noble partner 2020" exercises, which would be held from 7/09 / to 18/09/2020.

How did Russia respond to this activity?

a. With the deployment of 13,000 Russian troops in military exercises of unprecedented magnitude on the shores of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, which were apparently a response to NATO's activity in the region. "It represented also a demonstration, on the part of

3. "NATO's expansion into Georgian territory is unacceptable to Russia. Medvedev made it clear during his tenure as head of the Russian government, saying: "I hope NATO leaders will be smart enough not to make any moves in this direction. "NATO's expansion is a clear threat to the Russian Federation." Georgia, although not a NATO member, maintains close relations with it, which go as far as participating in many NATO-led operations, such as in Afghanistan or Kosovo. Also, the Georgian armed forces take part regularly in exercises with Allied forces, such as e.g., in the case of the important "Noble Partner 2020" exercise".

4. See https://norharatch.com/l-armenie-participera-aux-exercices-militaires-de-lotan-en-georgie_679E5188407DBE.html

Map 1: The self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh (1991)

Russia, of a military 'aberration control mechanism' with regard to the front suddenly created by Mr. Erdogan with his direct and clear faning in the Artsakh explosion and occupation of certain provinces in the "perimeter Security Zone" around the mountainous part of Artsakh / Nagorno-Karabakh. To understand the results of the war that started on 09/27/2020 and ended with the relevant Agreement of 9/11/2020, we must ponder on Map 2.

b. The "Caucasus 2020" (21-26/09/2020) exercises took place after the previous Russian exercises: i) "**Zapad 2017**" in the West, near Belarus, ii) "**Vostok 2018**" in the east and iii) "**Tsentr 2019**" in the central parts of the country. This was followed by a series of exercises in the Cauca-

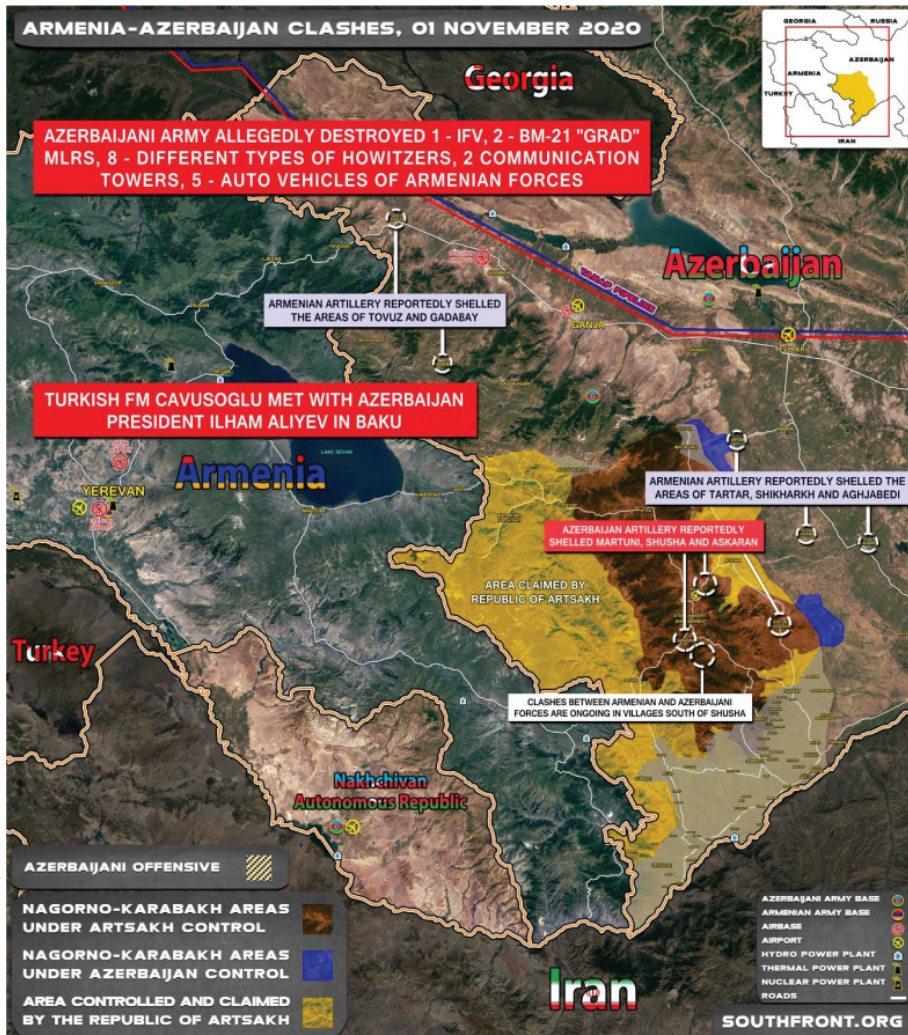
Map 1: The self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh (1991)

sus, close to the Russian Federation's southern areas up to the shores of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in cooperation with China, Armenia and Iran, among others. These exercises "*mainly represent a yearly confirmation of the Russian Armed Forces' ability to conduct combat operations along an extended frontline*" according to military analyst Vassili Kachine of the Moscow Higher School of Economics. They also "*aim to control the highest ranks of military administration*", according to the Russian Ministry of Defense. The exercises involved 12,900 soldiers, 250 tanks, 450 armored vehicles, 200 artillery systems and a number of rocket launchers such as the TOS-2.

c. Turkey appeared to be completely ignorant of this Russian show of force and did not even take it as a warning from Moscow. This, of course, unless it remains a question to be answered, it certainly stands as a confirmation of Ankara's knowledge of the "impeccable" Russian

stance and the use of its capabilities in the well-known "Syrian way". This evidences that Russia and Turkey were in consultation with respect to developments in Artsakh.

Map 2: Controlled and claimed territories of Artsakh
by 1) Artsakh and 2) Azerbaijan



d. The "Caucasus 2020" exercise appeared as of much lower quantitative standards, regardless of the enormous firepower it developed, compared to the 128,000 troops of the 2019 exercises in central Rus-

sia and the 300,000 troops deployed in the Far East in the respective 2018 exercises. It is also interesting that the Azeri hostilities against Artsakh started exactly one day after the end of the "Caucasus 2020" exercises, i.e., on 27/09/2020. However, it is clear and accepted also by Moscow, that in this environment of state-of-the-art technology and top-class monitoring, as it was before these exercises by the Russian army and other forces, the Russians were aware of the Azeri Forces intentions **and related Turkish support, officially and loudly declared already. This fact clearly reinforces, once again, the conclusion of the above remark (c) concerning the coordination of Russia and Turkey.**

e. This exercise, although far from alarming for NATO, was of concern only to Ukraine that was particularly disturbed watching the Russian fleet being deployed in the Black Sea. And here a question arises: wouldn't it be possible for a complacent NATO to reassure Ukraine as well? And since this was possible, why didn't NATO do so? But the observation of paragraph (d) above is still valid and strengthened: if Ukraine was worried despite its numerous relations with the West (US, EU, NATO), then why were Turkey and particularly Azerbaijan not worried at all? What was the reason for their complacency? And these questions, after all, prove to be rhetorical. **Their answers once again support the assumption in favor of Russia-Turkey coordination.**

And the answer, according to the author, may be broken into three parts:

i) The White House, being aware of and fostering Turkish military involvement, considered and - probably, it will justly continue to do so- that, when time is right, Ankara -and to serve its own interests- will oppose Moscow and return to the Alliance. Ankara, once again, will react in a way trying to "serve both masters" **whilst asking for proper compensation in the Aegean, the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus from the US and NATO.** Therefore, under these painful conditions for the Greek-Cypriot Hellenism, Washington and London estimate that Turkey will accept to return to the North Atlantic Treaty while still undermining Russian influence in Moscow's "Near Abroad" to the benefit of its Pan-turanic plans and NATO, of course.

But what does this development mean for the Dipole of Hellenism of Greece and Cyprus?

It means that Athens should be alert, because the strategic goals of NATO, Washington and London in the region are huge, and should Turkey become the lever to secure them on behalf of NATO, **then in the mind of above centers of power, it will be "entitled" to demand huge returns along the trade route of the Aegean, the Eastern Mediterranean and on a newly divided Cyprus in the form of an official "Confederation" as planned by the Erdogan-Tatar duo under the "two independent states solution".** The Turkish duo brandishes the threat of division, so as to pretentiously "retreat from it" as a sign of goodwill and "consent" to the supposedly "commonly accepted" final "Confederated solution" in order **to acquire full control of entire Cyprus on the one hand and the EU on the other by means of inserting the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" in it with a right to vote and therefore veto on EU's decisions that require unanimity!** E.g., imposition of sanctions against "Motherland" Turkey!

This "remote" Turkish control of the EU –by means of a "pseudo-state" that through the "confederal solution" will have been recognized and become an EU member– calls for vigilance on behalf of Athens, Nicosia, Paris and Vienna and therefore signing-off of effective alliances with France and those powerful Arab countries in dispute with Turkey. Besides, it is France offering Greece reliable and high-tech military assistance and major military sub-strategic systems, which Greece... still scorns! With no explanation and to the detriment of Greek and Cypriot Hellenism's national interests! I hope that I made myself clear in this.

(ii) The US Pentagon, as an intermediate phase of the above planning, would see rather with satisfaction an explosion between Ukraine and Russia hoping it would lead to a chain reaction of conflicts between Georgia-Russia and Azerbaijan-Russia should Russia were to use all three military bases it has in Armenia; this would trigger fears of Azerbaijan and certainly Turkey's immediate military –large-scale– engagement in support of their "brother nation", which would lead to new massacres of Armenians under the responsibility of Turkey and, of course, the EU –too busy with the case of Belarus only! This last scenario would lead to Mr Erdogan's condemnation by the international community and the ensuing international trials on charges of war crimes resulting in his

ouster and regime change in Turkey, with a new and fully compatible with White House's new tenant, as the case of Mr. Biden will be.

iii) But this "intermediate phase" did not take place, simply **because Russia-Turkey-Azerbaijan were clearly in coordination**. However, this has turned Russia into a key military and strategic partner of Azerbaijan, through having control of its military equipment, significant rise in their energy exchanges and its inclusion in Russia's sphere of influence, away from its pro-West shift. This reversal of Baku's pro-West drive is now ensured by Armenia, protecting communication routes between Yerevan and Stepanakert, both old and those new planned to be built. A similar case is the road axis that Turkey wants to build (Meghri corridor) to connect with the hitherto isolated Nakhichevan, and that -through Artsakh's territories re-occupied by Azerbaijan- will accommodate Turkish Pan-turanian ambitions reaching all the way to Caspian and the rest of Central Asia (See Map 5).

C. Findings on the Russian Strategic Approach

a. Finally, Moscow managed to "diplomatically" contain the Baku-Yerevan-Stepanakert explosion since Russia re-emerged in a dominant and decisive way as a peacekeeping military and economic actor in the Armenia-Azerbaijan dipole. In fact, Russia stopped more bloodshed that as explained before, might drive it away from its "regular" ally, Turkey, and cut all ties with Azerbaijan handing it over to the West. Therefore, this explains Moscow's initiative to propose solutions to the Pashinyan government inclusive of a peaceful return of Azeri refugees from areas of Sushi, before its eventual handover to the Azeris, under the guarantee of Russia's own military presence in order to "ensure cohabitation between Armenian residents and Azeri repatriates". However, these proposals, which would have meant Artsakh's "losing" of a single province (Sushi), were not accepted by Pashinyan, precisely because of his effort to avoid all Russian presence in the region. After all, his Government's members (quite a few of them, as we will see below), who were aligned with the "Soros line", also pushed in this direction. His mistake, however, proved to be huge and the price was paid by the unfortunate Armenians of Artsakh.

b. Armenia, too, like the Pashinyan government, as mentioned above,

had never recognized the self-proclaimed "Republic of Artsakh." Let us therefore not forget that:

i) Azerbaijan is an independent state and does not belong to any regional Organization or Security Pact (e.g., CSTO / OTSC), which, on the contrary, Armenia is a member of.

ii) We must also consider the fact that the Artsakh enclave is part of Azeri territories, regardless of its factual Armenian population that characterizes it in terms of national identity and of its "self-declaration" as the "Republic of Artsakh" (see Map 6). At this point, it must be noted that Armenia, in particular, has not officially recognized so far -and therefore *de jure*- the independent status of its compatriot Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh / Artsakh; so, the region, although *de facto* autonomous, is considered even by the Armenian state itself as belonging – formally at least – to the territory of Azerbaijan.

As the starting point of our analysis, we mark the landmark date of December 12, 1994, when Azerbaijan concluded the "*contract of the century*" with a consortium of multinational oil companies for the exploration and exploitation of three underwater deposits. This Consortium (Azerbaijan International Operating Company / AIOC) is under the operatorship of British Petroleum and its portfolio is composed as follows: BP (30,37%), SOCAR (25,0%) Chevron (9,57 %), INPEX (9,31%), Equinor (7,27%), ExxonMobil (6,79%), TPAO (5,73%), ITOCHU (3,65%), ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) (2,31%). This happened immediately after local Armenians took effective control of the Artsakh territories, and hurtful displacement of most Azeris living in enclaves of the area (approximately 20-25% of the total population of Nagorno-Karabakh), turning them into internal refugees in Azerbaijan.

However, no later than 1993, the issue was included in the agenda and considered by the UN Security Council (hereinafter: SA), resulting in four relevant Resolutions being issued as follows: i) UN SC Resolutions 822/30 April 1993⁵, ii) 853/29 July 1993⁶, iii) 874/14 October 1993⁷ and iv) 884/12 November 1993⁸. It is important to emphasize that the wording of all four of these SA Resolutions includes the Organization's critical legal evaluation, i.e., "*this situation endangers peace and secu-*

5. See <http://unscr.com/files/1993/00822.pdf>

6. See <http://unscr.com/files/1993/00853.pdf>

7. See <http://unscr.com/files/1993/00884.pdf>

8. See <http://unscr.com/files/1993/00874.pdf>

ity in the region", but not internationally. This is important, but not exactly what would be required to trigger the procedure provided for in Chapter VII of the UN Charter (hereinafter: UNC), especially in Article 39 thereof, as a *sine qua non* criterion for coercive measures, which may even include the use of force against a state whose conduct is considered to be "a threat to international (and not regional) peace and security". This means that the wording of SA Resolutions provides a –politically imperceptible, yet legally clear– margin for the Organization to distance itself from all immediate, indivisible and massive condemnation of the state (let alone a substantially enforced pressure to "discipline" it) that is considered responsible for the crisis, as in this specific case of the Republic of Armenia.

A careful examination of these SA Resolutions wording enlightens things as to the UN Security Council's identification of the warring parties in this armed conflict. Thus, in the first Resolution 822/1993, the text refers to an "invasion", not by Armenian military forces, but by local armed Armenians of the region, ("*...the latest invasion of the Kelbadjar district of the Republic of Azerbaijan by local Armenian forces*"). It calls for immediate withdrawal of all forces exercising effective control over areas of Azerbaijan, but without specifying them in particular ("*1. Demands... immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from the Kelbadjar district and other recently occupied areas of Azerbaijan*"). The above understanding is maintained in all SA Resolutions that followed.

Moreover, the second Resolution 853 (1993) also emphasizes the issue of the principle of "respect for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan", but also of other states in the region, as well as inviolability of their borders (see the principle "*uti possidetis juris*"⁹). Also importantly, it does not target the Armenian state as responsible for "anti-international behavior", but instead urges it to continue to exert its influence on the Armenians in Karabakh, which it considers to be part of the territory of Azerbaijan, in order to attain compliance with the provisions of previous Decision 822 (1993) ("*Urges the Government of the Republic of Armenia to continue to exert its influence to achieve compliance by the Armenians of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic...*"). Correspondingly, clear and urging reference is made to Armenia

9. The principle "*uti possidetis juris*" comes from the Latin phrase of Roman law "*uti possidetis, ita possideatis*" and means: "possess what you have already possessed".

to exert influence on the local Armenians of Karabakh to comply with previous Decisions, which explicitly states that the region was part of the Azerbaijani territory, as mentioned also in both SA Resolutions 874 and 884/1993 that followed.

On the contrary, in respective Decision/Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly (UN GA Res 62/243 / 25 Apr. 2008)^{10,11} the wording in relation to legal characterization of the situation, presents marginal yet substantial differences from the previously examined SA resolutions. This observation should also be assessed in the light of the major difference in the binding nature of the Resolutions of these two UN Bodies, since the General Assembly one is not binding *per se* for the UN Member States, at least in so far as the UN SA Resolutions. Having said that, it is noted that the General Assembly in its Decision 243 (25 Apr. 2008) considered, by majority, as useful to rule the situation of this armed conflict as a "*threat to international peace and security*" ("*Seriously concerned that the armed conflict in and around the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan continues to endanger international peace and security*"), thus including it fully and unreservedly in the context of UNC Article 39¹¹. It is, however, stressed that this is the sole responsibility of the SA and not the UN General Assembly. Especially should the SA have intervened and properly addressed the whole issue, deciding otherwise. Also, the GA expressed its strong demand for Armenian forces to withdraw from all occupied territories of

10. See Article 39. "The Security Council **shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.**" And also: Article 41. "The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations. Article 42 "Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. "Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations".

11. Author's note: Mig-29, Sukhoi, Mi-24, and Mi-8 helicopters.

Azerbaijan. Of course, this wording does not address the definitive legal characterization of "occupying forces" to the Armenian Armed Forces in the Karabakh region, but it clearly constitutes a step towards attributing a political characterization of co-responsibility for their involvement in the exercise of effective (aka "occupying") control over the disputed area.

However, this distance, from the point of view of International Law at least, should be considered anything but negligible. This was also judicially pointed out by the Hague Tribunal in the famous case "*Nicaragua v. USA*" (1986), which set a particularly strict criterion of necessary involvement of third state forces (in this case of the US, in favor of the Contras and against the Sandinistas) in support of local forces, being the "involved party" of an ongoing 'non-international armed conflict', in order for the Tribunal to consider their involvement so decisive as to make them an essential part of the 'control process' over an area (under Contras control in that case), and therefore inductively "Part of the conflict", but also by the Powers exercising Occupation on said area.

This view, of course, legally delimits any involvement of Armenia in the conflict, distinguishing it from that easily considered -but also lacking legitimacy- characterization of a "genuine Occupying Power" on the territory of Karabakh, but with no disregard to its direct and indirect contribution to domestic Armenian Armed Forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. This fact raises the question of the principle (which is also described in UNC Article 2.7) of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

At the same time, however, we must emphasize that all UN SA and General Assembly Resolutions underline the unacceptable state of occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh, urging states in the international community to refrain from recognizing this *de facto* regime which affects the sovereignty of Azerbaijan, which Nagorno-Karabakh is a part of.

c. From all the above, the explanation, mainly in terms of international law, arises from the explanation of Armenia's choice not to proceed so far with officially recognizing the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh. Such a move, after all, during the narrow or even wider conflict (even as a frozen conflict) in the region, would expose Armenia internationally, as alleged to be directly involved in the internal affairs of a neighboring state (Azerbaijan) and officially inciting any separatist tendencies against it. This, in turn, would bring closer the possibility of an investigation to activate Article 39 and accompanying Articles 41

and 42, in the context of the UN General Assembly. Although the prospect of a positive vote is realistically unlikely, this would nevertheless place a heavy burden on Russia, which, as one of the five permanent UN SA members, would have to inevitably spend some diplomatic capital to prevent that by its veto. Reasonably, and in accordance with the above Resolutions and Decisions, not even Moscow, which participated in the "Minsk Group", could have done otherwise, that is, to proceed with a recognition on its part. Thus, Moscow did not, in any case, have the legal basis to support a war caused by the irrational Armenian attack on Tovuz, while from an operational point of view it would be possible to do so using both its powerful bases in the Armenian territories: 1) Base "102", 2) the 426th Abovian air base near Yerevan where Mig-29 and Sukhoi fighter jets, alongside Mi-24 and Mi-8 helicopters, are stationed.

Currently, however, Moscow is legally entitled to claim that Vladimir Putin was not given –not even ostensibly– the right to intervene using the provisions of the CSTO Pact, headed by Moscow. Of course, Pashinyan was not willing to do that since the "velvet Soros line" was in no way to strengthen Moscow by having its troops stationed in Azerbaijani territories and then more strategic sub-systems deployed in the South Caucasus, as it was the case in the Central, greater Caspian Asia Sub-system. To corroborate this, we recall that, in a recent interview, the Russian President underlined that Armenia has never recognized the self-proclaimed "Republic of Artsakh", implying that Russia much less could not intervene, in the sense that there was no legal obligation to do so under the provisions of the CSTO Agreement.

d. Of course, it would be naive not to note that from the point of view of "power management policy" this argument was entirely pretentious, because Moscow did not feel the need for any legal basis, e.g., in the case of the annexation of Crimea, or the recognition of the self-proclaimed Republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. They annexed Crimea and recognized the two self-proclaimed Republics because, according to the Thucydides-based view, Russia had i) the military strength; ii) the will to do so; and iii) the ability to support them. It is evidenced, therefore, following a legal analysis of the Artsakh situation, that the Kremlin had only one issue in mind: to preserve its tactical alliance with Ankara and restore its influence over the Caucasus-Azerbaijan sub-system.

After all, in the face of growing escalation since July 2020, Moscow had already settled on how to deal with this challenge in the Cauca-

sus and the kind of "appeasement-based" diplomatic containment should the Pashinyan government agreed. It is therefore estimated that this tacticism-driven criterion prevailed when Russia decided their ultimate stance in the Artsakh case. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that Mr. Pashinyan's now western-oriented Yerevan has forced Moscow to deviate from its declared geostrategic principles regarding its stance on Baku. These were relatively recent -yet crucial for Artsakh's security-choices in the context of the Russian geostrategic conception towards a potentially "activist" behavior of Azerbaijan. Choices that provided notable insights, such as the following:

i) the fact that, in a November 2013 interview in the Russian military newspaper "*Krasnaya Zvezda*"¹², the commander of Russia's 102nd military base [Author's note: in Gyumri] in Armenia, [Author's note: Colonel Andrey Ruzinsky] said that *"if Azerbaijan uses violence in Nagorno-Karabakh, its base could be included in the armed conflict, in accordance with the Russian Federation's obligations under the CSTO."* *"Russian intervention would frighten and drive away regional investors, thus causing a major blow to the life-giving power of Azerbaijan's economy: its energy sector."*¹³

So, the very interesting element in this journalistic report by Russian Army's trustworthy newspaper "*Krasnaya Zvezda*", is the clarity in the Army's view that Russian forces based in Armenia could take action in case of a new Armenia-Azerbaijan war for Nagorno-Karabakh, according to their leader.

Ruzinsky clarified precisely one of the missions of the Russian base, which is located in the second largest city of Armenia, Gyumri, next to the border with Turkey (about 15km, see Map 3).

ii) The mission was upgraded following a defense agreement signed in 2010 that extended Russia's rights on this base in Armenia until 2044 and contained Moscow's commitment to provide more weapons and military equipment to Armenia.

The Russian base, which numbers 4,000-5,000 troops and is the largest Russian military base abroad, is reinforced with modern weapons, including tactical Iskander-M ballistic missiles and modern attack helicopters. Also, 1) an armored battalion, 2) the 988th Anti-Aircraft De-

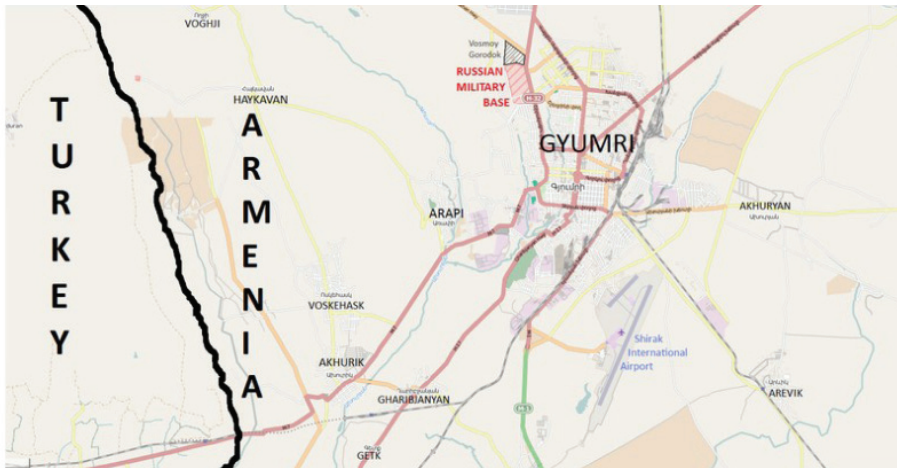
12. See <https://bit.ly/3ILb4ji>

13. See James Yan, "Between hammer and anvil. The precarious position of foreign policy of Azerbaijan", <https://foreignaffairs.gr/print/69974>

fense Regiment with: S-300 V SAM / S-125 Neva / Krug SAM systems as well as 3) the 3624th Air Base: One Squadron (16) MiG29¹⁴. The Russian Air Force unit in Armenia currently has 16 MiG-29s.

Interestingly, prior to this interview in 2013, Armenian officials and pro-government politicians had noted that **"the 2010 defense agreement provides for Russian military involvement in Karabakh if Azerbaijan realizes its threats to retake the region"**.¹⁵ However, this did not happen during the current conflict.

Map 3: 102nd military base of Russia



e. It is therefore reasonable that Moscow, dissatisfied with the rise to power of Mr. Pashinyan, funded by the organizations of Mr. George Soros, through the well-known method of "velvet revolutions", should have already made its geostrategic choices. It was also reasonable for Mr. Putin to be deeply concerned about the possibility of new "Ukrainian-style" fronts being formed in its "soft underbelly". It is also clear that had Moscow decided to intervene, even militarily, to quell the crisis, it would have risked a severe diplomatic confrontation with Turkey and losing its influence - currently also military - in Azerbaijan; this would have been of use for the US and NATO, which would have seen

14. See <https://bit.ly/33cn8mv>

15. See <https://bit.ly/2J5Y4qb>

in this conflict the long-awaited end of the tactical alliance between Turkey and Russia and Ankara's towing in the "embrace" of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Kremlin wanted nothing of this sort at all costs.

i) This view is reinforced by other analysts such as Al Quds University Assistant Professor and Hebrew University researcher Dr Seth Franzman who considers that¹⁶ *"Iran supported Azerbaijan under the guise of international law and Russia shares a similar view since it identifies Caucasus as part of its historical sphere of influence, but does not perceive Azerbaijan's victory as a blow to said influence. Russia believes they can mediate an agreement through peacekeeping forces and remain the main actor, whilst Baku and Yerevan depend on Moscow."*

ii) The same Hebrew University researcher continues¹⁷: *"Moscow was dissatisfied with Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan, calling to mind that he came to power as a result of the 2018 "velvet revolution" and he was critical of Moscow's role in Armenia. Being under the pressure from hostile Turkey and Azerbaijan - and with no help from Iran, its arm twisted by sanctions, nor any genuine support from Georgia - Armenia had no real choice. It could not rely on the West because the era of Western expansion has ended and the United States were no longer interested in protecting countries like Armenia".*

D. The Russian discomfort towards Nicole Pashinyan's "velvet" government

Our approach also converges to this point, i.e. Moscow wanted to demonstrate to Yerevan how painful the results of its overture to the United States were, as deployed via the control exercised by Armenian political figures befriended with G. Soros and involved in the "Open Society Foundation / OSF" activities, who as classified as "Persons affiliated with the Foundation "Open Society-Armenia Institute", such as: Davit Sanassar-

16. Seth Frantzman, November 19, 2020 "Did Russia miscalculate in recent Azerbaijan-Armenia clashes?", <https://bit.ly/35QaNGm>

17. Ibid.

ian, Armen Grigorian¹⁸, Hovhannes Hovhannissian¹⁹, Sos Avetissian²⁰, or former Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Mane Tandilyan²¹ and current Head of the Parliamentary Budget Committee, Deputy Prime Minister **Mher Grigoryan²², President of the Armenian Parliament Ararat Mirzoyan²³, the Secretary of Mr. Pashinyan's Parliamentary Group Eduard Aghajany²⁴ Minister of Education Arayik Harutyunyan²⁵, Minister of Health Arsen Torosyan²⁶, Minister of Regional Administration and Infrastructure Suren Papikyan²⁷**, as well as many other government executives. OSF began operations in Armenia in 1997.

18. Author's note: Babken Ter-Grigorian is the "Election Program of Transparency International" Coordinator and has been appointed by Mr. Pashinyan as Head of the National Security Council. It is known that **"Transparency International" is funded by the "Soros Foundation"**, which has repeatedly financed "color revolutions" across the world. George Soros considers Russia to be his most dangerous enemy and has set up about 70 NGOs and organizations in Armenia. Many of these organizations try to undermine Armenian-Russian relations and damage Russian prestige in Armenia. "[...] "... was the Program Coordinator of the Soros Foundation and at the same time, was appointed Advisor to the Deputy Minister of Finance" See: <https://bit.ly/3kZqvTX> and <https://bit.ly/393wPr6>

19. Author's note: **Hovhannes Hovhannissian was Deputy Minister of Education** and belongs to the *"Persons affiliated with the Open Society Foundation in Armenia"* See: <https://bit.ly/3kZqvTX> and <https://bit.ly/334X24I>

20. Author's note: **Lena Gyulkhasyan**, *Revue de la presse arménienne du 30 novembre 2018* and is also mentioned as a permanent member of the staff of the **"Open Society-Armenia Institute"** at: <https://bit.ly/334X24I> file:///home/mazis/Downloads/revue_de_la_presse_armenienne_du_30_novembre_2018%20(1).pdf

21. Author's note: Mane Tandilyan worked for a long time in US Synopsys Inc. financial department. Tandilyan represents the pro-Western alliance of Armenian parties "Yelq Bloc" which both the "Party of Blissful Armenia" and Mr. Pashinyan's party belong to. Tandilyan and her party are pushing for Armenia to leave the Eurasian Union (EAEU). **Mane Tandilyan is currently the Head of the Budget Committee of the Armenian Parliament.** See: <https://bit.ly/3kZqvTX> and also: <https://bit.ly/334X24I>

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

This situation, which certainly did not make Moscow happier, had already been reported by Artur Vanetsian, MP, former Commander of the National Security Services (2018-2019) who clearly stated that: "*G. Soros's economic activities in Armenia endangered national security.*"

Vanetsian was subsequently arrested twice: on November 11 and November 14, 2020 on charges of conspiracy against Nicole Pashinyan's life, and both times the Yerevan Court ruled that his arrest was illegal and he was released²⁸.

Unfortunately, however, Russia's "concerns" of an Open Society Foundation-sponsored "marionette government" were not taken into account by Mr. Pashinyan before the Azeri attack, and Moscow may therefore have considered that, in these circumstances, a both inevitable and imminent result of the 27/09/2020 war in Artsakh would be adequate enough to "chasten" Armenia accordingly.

It is also extremely attractive to look for analogies in this Moscow strategy, as Seth Franzman seems to do, who claims that it reminds him of "*the February 2020 period, when Russia allowed Turkey to punish Assad's forces, before finally Russia moves to areas near Aleppo and Idlib to stop fighting. This is the "Russian recipe". Moscow believes in the long-term game. For Moscow, Turkey is a bigger "prize" compared to Armenia. Russia wants to weaken Europe more than it is already and encourage American isolationism. Russia prefers its allies to be weak and manipulative. But that does not add to Russia's power: it simply gathers a group of poor countries around it. "Turkey preferred a strong Azerbaijan, while Russia preferred a weak Armenia."*"²⁹

28. **See For indicative purposes only:** 1) 20/10/2020: "Since 1997, the G. Soros organization "Open Society Foundation" has supported and financed with the amount of **48 million USD more than 200 Armenian companies and NGOs**, whereas lots of Armenian citizens enjoy these grants", reveals the Russian newspaper of Ekaterinbourg "Vechernié Vedomosti ". Even in the context of fighting **Covid-19, the daily declining Armenian economy** received about 600,000 USD offered by G. Soros (n <https://bitly/35MkFAS> 2) On August 6, 2020, the American analyst Peter Theis, who actually accuses the Armenian government and Nikol Pashinyan of "fascism and racism", does not hesitate to denounce G. Soros and his interventions in Armenia, that "*using his social and cultural influence and activities, [they] destroy the Armenian economy, prevent the country from achieving necessary social justice and reforms since they underpin corruption and organized crime*" and many more. In <https://bit.ly/3kJ6Ozu>

29. Seth Frantzman, November 19, 2020 "Did Russia miscalculate in recent Azer-

Of course, I will disagree on two points with Frantzman, for the reasons I have already outlined above: 1) in no case is Russia to place Armenia – a CSTO member in whose lands Russia has two powerful military bases and a third one of border guards, of which "102" is the largest of those maintained by Moscow abroad and which in fact constitutes part of its geostrategic "soft underbelly" (near abroad) –with its dubious "tactical" ally Turkey, a NATO member.

2) By no means may a rational strategic analysis conclude that Russia is indifferent to Azerbaijan! On the contrary, Russia did their best to restore its military presence in its territories! And they were successful! Moscow is well aware that it cannot allow an "Ukrainianization" of Azerbaijan, as well as Armenia. We shall return to that later. (See Maps 4 and 5). After all, Moscow would be able to carry out this peacebuilding intervention, as it did, not only within the framework of its "Minsk" responsibilities, but also -if forced to- under Article 8, para. h, i, j and subpara ja its Strategic Doctrine as it actually did and thus contained the crisis temporarily. After all, Mr. Putin has two reasons to be dissatisfied with Mr. Pashinyan:

i) Moscow has always provided the armaments required, when required, by the Republic of Armenia. But apparently, this "western turn" of Mr. Pashinyan's government did not allow him to ask –let alone use– the necessary quantity and quality of Russian armaments, nor to act appropriately so as not to upset his "Western" interlocutors "in the United States, whom he listened to and chose to delay and not take those decisions that were the only ones he could and were proposed by Russia to stop all this. But Mr. Pashinyan was dwindling and trying to serve two masters, so he ended up with the final outcome we witnessed".³⁰

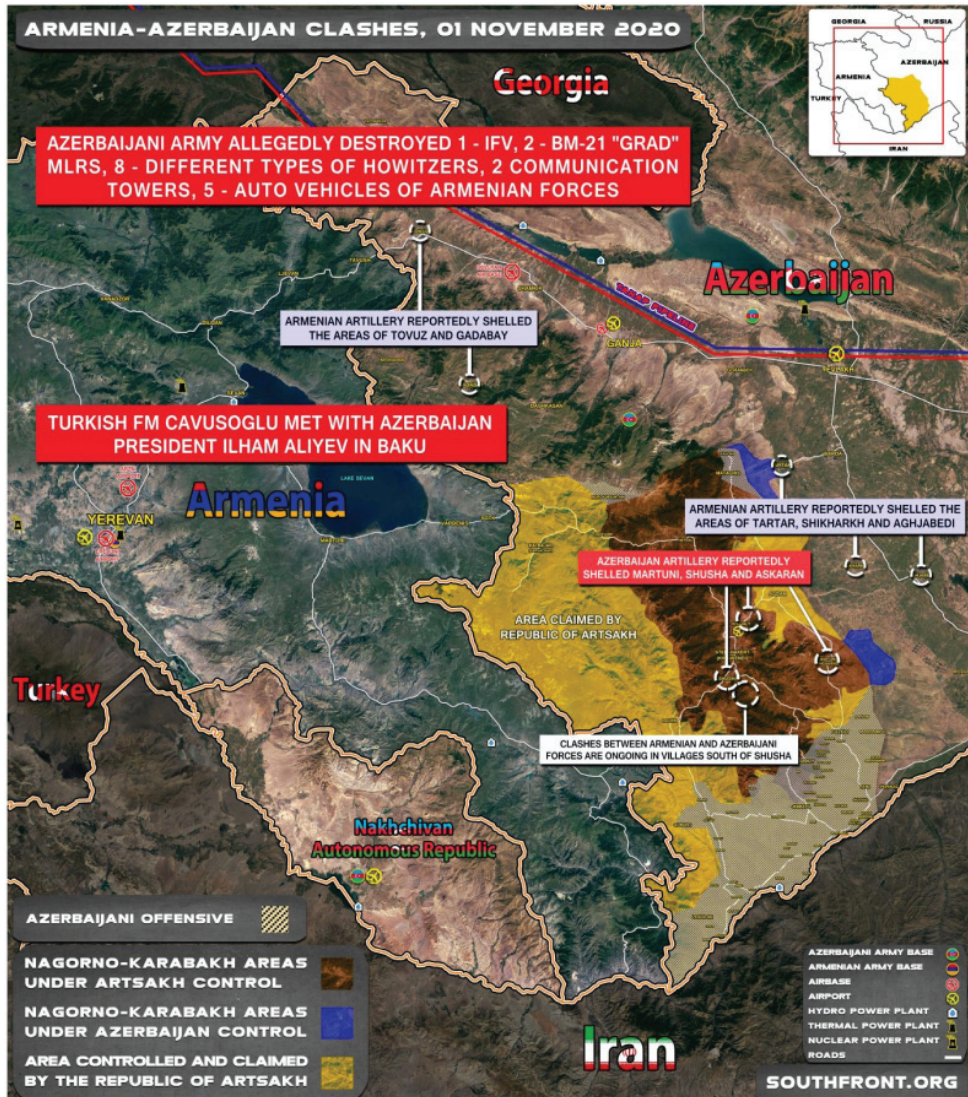
i.1) At this point, it should be mentioned that the Armenia's military circles, in their effort to point the finger at anyone but themselves, finally blamed it on the alleged... unsuitability of the Russian weapons systems! Of course, they also accuse Pashinyan not for his wrong political choices but for his mistake in the procurement of Russian armaments for the Armenian Armed Forces. The question is when those responsible and those who suggested the type of armament to the government realized

bajan-Armenia clashes?", <https://bit.ly/3fewByo>

30. See: Russia Today leader Margarita Simonyan. Show: "СВОЯ ПРАВДА" <https://kosmodromio.gr/2020/11/16/sth-fora-ta-apluta-tou-pasinian/>

this "mistake"? Remarks by Evgeny Krutikov on the factual suitability of Armenia's Russian equipment, as well as its correct use by the Armenian Armed Forces are quite interesting, and we quote it:

Map 4: War Fronts on November 1, 2020 in Nagorno-Karabakh



"Armenian society continues to look for those responsible for the defeat in the Karabakh war. Not only political mistakes and military miscalculations on the battlefield are now being examined, but also the wrong strategy in the arms market. Russian air defense systems and electronic warfare, as well as new warplanes, have come under fire. Why did the Armenian air defense lose the battle? As the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict escalated this autumn, Turkish and Israeli aircraft became the main strike force of the Azerbaijani army. They annihilated the Armenian firepower, causing damage to their defenses. At the same time, the Armenian air defense could not neutralize them. As a result, the sky above Karabakh belonged to the UAVs of Azerbaijan. When the fighting ended, Armenia was motivated to abandon the further use and purchase of Russian electronic warfare (EW) weapons and air defense systems. The reason is that these systems are said to have reduced efficiency against drones. There are proposals to consider options for purchasing military equipment from other manufacturers, such as Germany³¹. In addition, the recent purchase of Russian Su-30SM fighters is disputed. These aircraft did not operate during the war. Critics say the significant sums of money spent on buying them could be used more efficiently, including in defending Nagorno-Karabakh. These views began to multiply in Armenia almost immediately after the end of the war and the arrival of Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh. And this is not about gossip: this opinion is also expressed by retired senior Armenian officials. In other words, they prefer to pass on the responsibility for the defeat in the war to Russian weapons. Or to Pashinyan himself, but not for the systemic crisis he caused in the Armenian state, but for the purchase of the "wrong weapon"³².

To some extent, such views may be understood, as Armenia is in a state of shock. Consequently, the debate over the "ineffectiveness" of Russian weapons provided in Yerevan is not so much of military, but of psychological character. It is extremely difficult for Armenian military leaders to publicly regret this defeat - but it is very easy to spread speculations that Russian weapons have been ineffective. First, there are no reliable statistics on the outcome of hostilities during the second Karabakh war. In relation to air defense and e-warfare, in particular,

31. Highlighted by the author.

32. Highlighted by the author.

statistics are quite complex and only professionals may understand them (frequencies, jamming density, spectral power density, tuning results and many other indicators in the context of a highly specialized discussion). Such data, in a structured and systematic form, usually appear approximately six months after hostilities in the form of "reserved booklets" and stamped "for official use". When they appear, then the experts will be able to discuss them. Secondly, a fact was made clear: the Armenian air defense was proven really ineffective against Azerbaijan's UAVs. But the exact reasons "why this was so" is a separate question. The answer is now sought not only in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia or Turkey - all countries that are stand out somehow for their military capabilities are already studying and will scrutiny the teachings of the second Karabakh war. Third, electronic warfare systems do not work without coverage, (at least they should not). The same goes for radar stations. These systems must have their own air defense, otherwise they get targeted by respective weapons. The Armenian Armed Forces lacked such protection and the Armenian military command is solely responsible for this situation. Fourth, an abundance of evidence showed that assessments by Armenia's air defense reflected poor tactical training. To the point of digging a "pit"-typed ditch, in which the "Osa" missile defense system was buried and camouflaged with tree branches. This wheeled vehicle could only get out of there with the help of a tractor. That is, the principle of "variable firing position", which is taught to first-year students in air defense schools, was ignored. Losses of Armenian air defense systems by Azeri UAVs in similar locations were enormous during the war's first two weeks. Fifth, there were no Russian military advisers or specialists in Armenia who could maintain such high-tech equipment, or at least assist Armenian crews. None. In general, the volume of this kind of military-technical cooperation between Russia and Armenia under Pashinyan decreased sharply.

In Azerbaijan, they acted in a completely different way. [First]³³: It is clear that, initially, there were no experts in maintaining such a number of UAVs in the Azerbaijani army. This was also the case for the country's own electronic warfare and air defense systems while preparations for war continued at a rapid pace. Therefore, they did not hesitate to invite foreign consultants. [Second]: Many Turks were

33. Numbering in bracket by the author.

removed from their positions in the Azerbaijani army, but the Turkish equipment was still operated by Turkish experts. National pride of the people of Azerbaijan was not hurt, on the contrary, it was replaced by a resounding military victory and a new national holiday. Now, by decree of President Ilham Aliyev, November 10th (the end date of hostilities of the second Karabakh war) is the day of victory. A similar story has developed around the Su-30SM. 1)³⁴ When Armenia bought them from Russia a year ago, Defense Minister David Tonoyan made pompous remarks that the Armenian Air Force could "create chaos behind enemy lines" and strike "not just on point B, but also on points C, D, E". In addition to the Su-30SM, a TOR air defense missile system was also purchased, which interacted perfectly with them in Syria. But the TORs remained around Yerevan, and the SU-30SM in the Gyumri base (see Map 3)³⁵ never took off. 2) Some experts originally took decisions based on the actions of the Azerbaijani air defense, but, according to other sources, the Armenian leadership was even more afraid of Turkish intervention and thus decided not to use heavy warplanes due to the potential risk of a Turkish "revenge" in Gyumri. They failed to convince them that Turkey would not attack Armenia. And the quality of Russian weapons has nothing to do with it. 3) The story with the Su-30SM purchase is rather about the very development strategy of the Armenian Armed Forces, according to purchase of specific types of weapons is planned. First, a strategy is developed, and only then do we go into specific details. But the Pashinyan government has taken a path that can be roughly described as "narcissistic and self-righteous." And so, from the entire range of possible purchases of Russian weapons, it went no further than the Su-30SM. Pashinyan even promised to increase the number of these aircrafts to 12 units (full squad). Apparently, Armenia had a wrong idea of the enemy's capabilities and the kind of weapons it would need. At that time, Azerbaijan was systematically preparing for a specific operation with the participation of Turkish experts. In Baku (or Ankara), the Armenian defense's weak points were identified and a whole range of weapons was built for this project. What remains to add is a self-evident thing. Such gossip and "confidential talks" by some Armenian members of the military only work for

34. Arabic numerals by the author.

35. In-text map reference by the author.

Azerbaijan and Turkish propaganda, creating additional grounds for discontent in Moscow over Yerevan's actions."³⁶

ii) As mentioned above, as early as after the Azeri-Armenian skirmishes of July 2020, Moscow proposed to Mr. Pashinyan's Government a set of beneficial solutions to the dispute between Armenians and Azeris over the issue of Artsakh. "However, he first listened to them carefully and then denied them. He just denied them!"³⁷ The best that Moscow could do, in order to message Turkey on its interventionist Pan-turanian policy in the Caucasus, was to begin phase one of this process with a "demonstration of its power of deterrence" by means of the aforementioned "Caucasus 2020" exercise in which Armenia also took part. Of course, with the "cranky" government of Nikol Pashinyan, who, given the Russian reaction in July 2020, took –wrongly– almost for granted the "Russian" protection against Baku as a member of the "Collective Security Treaty Organization" (CSTO / OTSC) alliance³⁸ headed by Moscow.

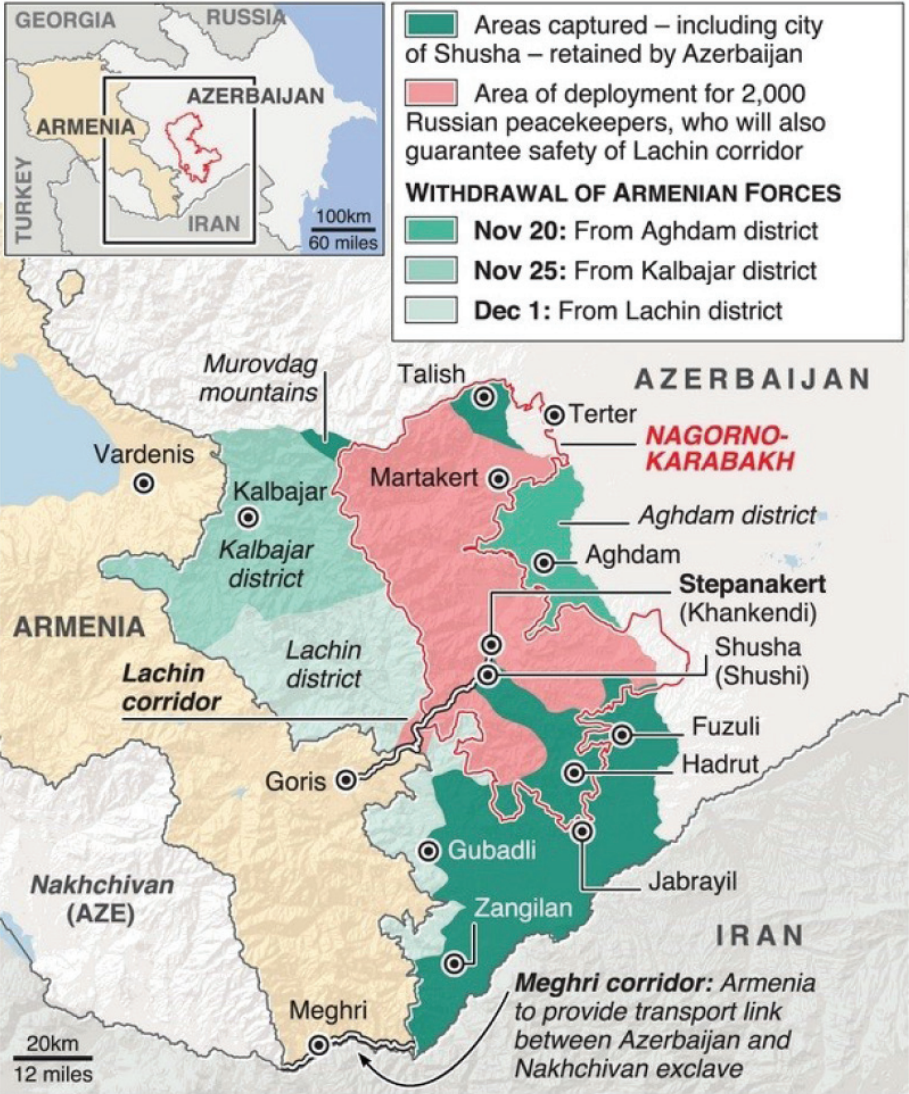
At the same time, however, he increasingly kept turning his country's interest to the West. The July 2020 teachings probably disoriented him and failed to make him wiser. The Pashinyan government did not take into account the geopolitical dynamics of Transcaucasia, nor the resulting geostrategic reality and by deviating from the concrete western directions, as analyzed and demonstrated above, interpreted poorly the Caucasian geopolitical reality and carried out an even worse geostrategic planning. Russia's intervention in the ceasefire and the prevention of a new genocide was also a "lesson" to the pro-Western government of Pashinyan with regard to how "effective" its alleged "supporters" were and made an example of how similar behaviors by CSTO / OTSC states will be dealt with in the future.

36. See: Евгений Крутиков, " L'Arménie a décidé de s'offusquer des armes russes", <https://bit.ly/33J3kHl>

37. See Roman Babayan, Show: "СБОЯ PRABDA", <https://bit.ly/3kDYKju>

38. The Organization for Collective Safety Agreement (CSTO) is a civil-military Collective Security System whose current form was established on October 7, 2002 and currently holds six (6) regular members and two (2) observers. Its regular member-states are: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan. The observer-states are: Afghanistan and Serbia. It is based in Moscow.

Map 5: The post-November 10 situation following the September 2020 War in Nagorno-Karabakh



Source: BBC, Reuters, International Crisis Group.

It has become absolutely clear to the international community that Mr. Pashinyan's "Western" allies have not lived up to their responsibilities. But of course, as Rémy Ourdan notes for the French *"Le Monde"*, the Pashinyan government opted for domestic political communication based on misrepresentations, providing a false picture of operations, since *"during 44 days of warfare they lied to their people about with the reality on the battlefield: incomprehension and anger flooded Yerevan on the night between Monday 9th and Tuesday 10th of November (...). In their attempt to publish daily bulletins of military success, they did not prepare the people for a possible military defeat or for the prospect of a political agreement, and, hopelessly, the Armenian government lost all credibility"*³⁹. Eventually they allowed Turkey to act in a revisionist manner on the one hand, by its military intervention in Artsakh and, on the other hand, both effectively and formally, by allowing, as the "Minsk Group", Moscow's strong military forces to enter in the areas granted by the Security Zone of Artsakh, into Azerbaijan, to stop the bloodshed, along with the undoubted new genocide of innocent Armenian citizens.

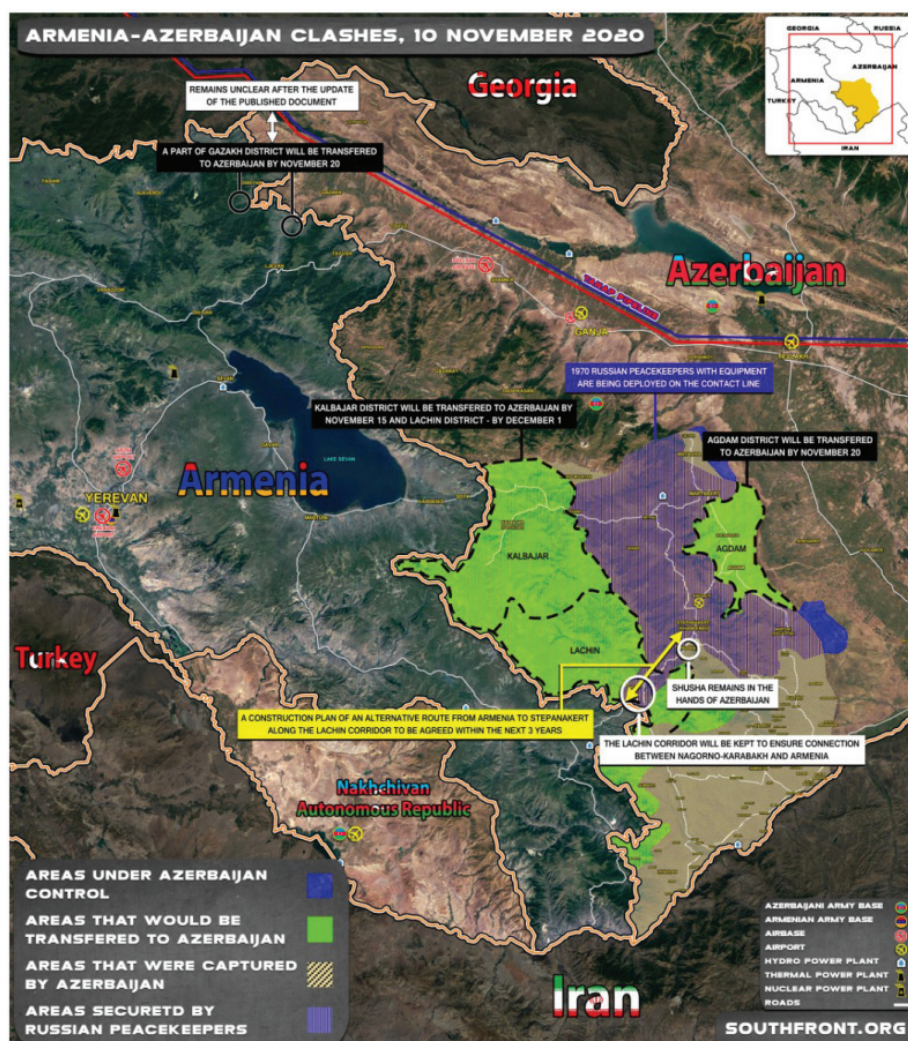
Ultimately, it is certain that Moscow had gains in terms of territorial security and restoring its military presence in the region. As Vladimir Putin clarified, *"both sides would hold their positions while the Russian forces would be deployed in the region"*. We are talking about *"1960 soldiers, 90 TOMPs and 380 vehicles and specially equipped units"*. While announcing the entry of Russian forces into the city of Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh, the Russian Ministry of Defense spokesman made clear that: *"ten outposts were set up along the Lachin axis"* (see Map 5a) and as Rémy Ourdan⁴⁰ states in the French *"Le Monde"*: *"from now on there is only one arbiter in the mountains of Karabakh and this is Russian"*. Of course, it claimed the sacrifice of about 1,300 soldiers, the destruction of hospitals, bridges and other infrastructure, and the displacement of approximately 600,000 people. It also took three unsuccessful attempts by Russia to cease fire, before we finally end up with Russia's absolute domination in the Armenia-Azerbaijan dipole. It is now clear that the aforementioned presence of Russian military forces in the territories of Azerbaijan, around Nagorno-Karabakh, allows it to control the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Caspian

39. *Le Monde*, 12 November 2020, Rémy Ourdan, "Poutine scelle la défaite de l'Arménie après l'accord de "cessez-le-feu total" avec l'Azerbaïdjan [<https://bit.ly/33oSm9Q>].

40. *"Le Monde"*, 12 November 2020, *ibid.*

route, which Ankara particularly longs for. The case is largely evoking that of Athenians and Milians, as Thucydides passed it down. But it was ill-fated Armenians people who, once more, paid the price, in bloodshed and displacement, of the Pashinyan government's recklessness and the Russia-Turkey competing chess game, with Baku serving as the "Bishop".

Map 5a: The post-November 10 situation following the September 2020 War in Nagorno-Karabakh



Source: Southfront.org

Map 6: Christian Orthodox footprint in the Armenia-Karabakh region



E. Absolute need for a "strategic re-adjustment" of Russian's "Syrian type" tactics in the South Caucasus

But whether the "Turkish prize" for Moscow is certain or not, is a matter of meticulous analysis, which may prove it to be more of "poisonous honey" for Russian national security and by no means a "prize".

a. I therefore believe that the "fullness of time" has come for the Russian strategists now to reflect on the adjustment of Moscow's slack attitude towards the Turkish-Azerbaijani Dipole's offensive dynamics, as well as the extremely fragile balance in the geopolitical complex of Transcaucasia.

b. Current Russian strategic planning suggest that it was made clear to Armenia that it should stick to its role as Russia's "advanced outpost" in the South Caucasus region. If, however, Moscow continues to "teach lessons of good behavior" to Armenia and the Armenians through the

"Turkish educator", this will not ultimately serve the Russian influence in the "near abroad". The only side that will make profits in the long run –maintaining the current Russian strategic conception– will be the Islamic-fascist neo-Ottoman Ankara and its Turkish Pan-turanian cause.

c. It is obvious that, should the current Russian approach to Turkish revisionism in the region remains, it will hopelessly be to the detriment of the Russian Federation and will even enable it to "pierce through its soft underbelly", creating thus conditions for US involvement –through Turkey– in the region and therefore trigger a chain of hotbeds in the Central Asian geopolitical complex. Said explosions may even set out a global conflict. Because it is certain that Turkey, after consolidating its power and influence in the Russian "near abroad", will not miss the opportunity to get rid of its permanent and historical threat, i.e., the Russian Federation; if it "disappears" as a competitive pole of power in Central Asia, this will allow Ankara / Istanbul to grow into an Islamic-Turkish Pan-turanian Empire.

d. May they not fool themselves –which, in the end, is not the case, I believe– in the Kremlin: The Pan-turanian views of at least 70% of Ankara's political and military elites have never ceased to consider Azerbaijan –like the rest of Central Asia– as objects of Turkish Islamic-pan-turanian nationalist policy. In this case of Artsakh, Ankara's diplomatic activities have created the conditions to upgrade into a policy of fast and effective exports and supply of high-tech equipment to Baku.

e. The purpose of this policy has been and still is for Turkey to gain control, through the Azeri territories, of the Transcaucasian energy and trade routes to the Caspian Sea (e.g., the Ordubad [Nakhits.] -Horadiz [Az.] - Imishli [Az.] - Ali Bairamli [Az.] - Alat [Az.] - Caspian Sea] railway line) but also through the Meghri Corridor that, unobstructed, will now connect Nakhichevan with Azerbaijan (see Map 5) and therefore the Turkish projection of power towards the Central Asian Turkish-speaking complex of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan. I do not think that particularly complex and sophisticated forecasting mechanisms are needed to understand that Turkey –after it consolidates influence on the "Great Turan", due to Moscow's miscalculations– will not continue this balancing game with Russia, but will turn its recently acquired influence on Russian "near abroad" of Muslim background to the detriment of Russian national security at the behest of the new US administration under Mr. Biden.

f. *Ex ungue leonem*: For the sake of example and to prove this Turkish and, more widely, Central Asian strategy, we must point out that Turkey hastened, since last March 2020, to conclude a production and supply agreement for Turkish offensive drones Bairaktar TB2 with Ukraine⁴¹. Currently, Kiev is ready to acquire and produce 48 (!) tactical Turkish Bairaktar TB2 drones, while it had already put into operation, since March 2019, this specific Turkish weapon always targeting the Russian-speaking area of Dobas, with Ankara's undivided aid... Thus, Mr Brzezinski's agenda of the 1990s now appears to be feasible in the near future to the detriment of the Russian Federation and international peace and security.

An observation about domestic affairs: We, as Greece, in the field of drone and UAV production, have been asleep for the last... twelve years!

F. Azerbaijan's Strategic Significance for the West, Turkey and Russia

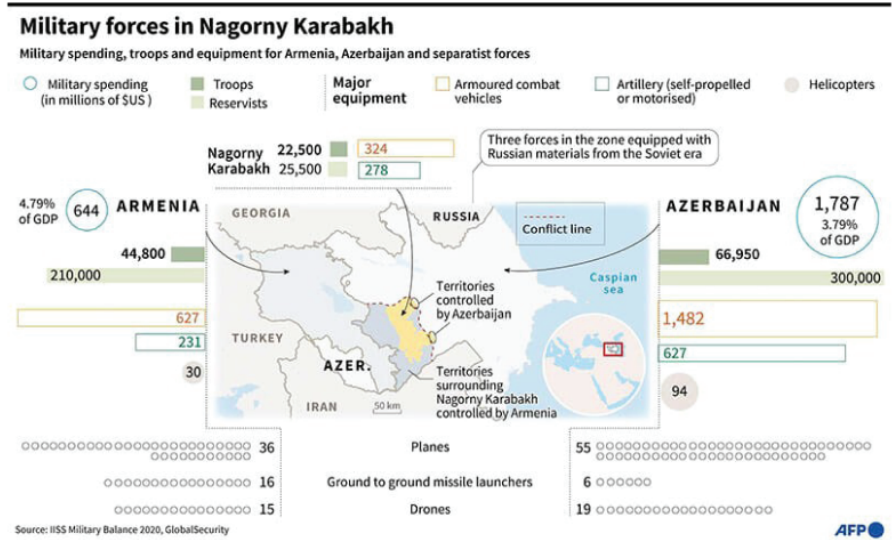
a. If we look at the balance of power and alliances between Armenia and Azerbaijan, we will see that this is overwhelmingly in favor of Baku. Armenia, of course, has no naval forces –being a land-locked state– and only 44,000 regular troops and 210,000 in reserve forces, while the autonomous republic of Artsakh has 22,500 regular and 25,000 troops in reserve (see Table 1 [SIPRI] also for other weapons). Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has about 67,000 regular ground forces and 300,000 reserve forces. Comparison between the two countries in terms of Air Force is overwhelming in favor of the Azeri side, which has three times as many air forces as Armenia and more than twice as many armored forces. (See Table 1).

b. Azerbaijan, a smaller and weaker country than Russia, has 7 billion bb of crude oil reserves and about 4 trillion m³ of natural gas reserves, which makes it a desirable prey for Turkish neo-Ottoman adventurism and Russian perceptions of "Near abroad". Of course, Mr. Aliyev considers only the second possibility, not the first. Pointing out these fears,

41. See <https://bit.ly/35McoNa>

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said in March 2020 that countries' territorial integrity could not be changed "without their consent", hinting thus at Russia.

Table 1. Military Forces in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 (source: SIPRI, 2020, afp)



c. In this context, we must therefore consider Azerbaijan's search for strong alliances and armaments that, apart from "Mother Turkey", also includes Israel, which imports about 40% of its required natural gas from Azerbaijan. But this is something that may not go on for long, due to the huge gas fields that Israel has discovered in the Levantine Basin. However, Baku receives direct military assistance from Israel, which supplies it with "Barak 8" defense systems, drones, electronic warfare equipment, as well as numerous Defense and Security Advisers, who assess Azeri defense infrastructure and Azeri Security Services. As for Ankara, they provide military support to Baku with expert advisers who, in cooperation with trainers of the Israeli "Golani" brigade, have undertaken training of the Azerbaijani Army Special Forces. In addition, Ankara supplies armored personnel carriers, war vehicles, tanks, drones, etc. which are not recorded in the SIPRI table below since its 2020 publication includes 2019 data.

d. Also important is the contribution of Azerbaijan in supplying EU's

powerful industrial countries, Turkey and Israel with hydrocarbons (Natural Gas and Oil). It is also important that Russia continues importing natural gas from Azerbaijan for reasons of strategic relations on the one hand, but also to support its own exports to the EU on the other hand, which, apart from their economic side, never cease to have a strategic dimension. This is what the US used to do, but in view of their intentions to enhance exports of their own shale gas through the northbound TANAP branches, they discontinued imports since 2019. (See tables below Tables 2 to 10).

e. Baku, due to i) its energy relations with the EU and ii) EU's strategy, as imposed by the US to diversify its markets' energy supply sources away from Moscow's strong involvement, maintains balanced relations between Moscow and the EU; Baku has been supplying EU member states (Italy, Germany, France) since 2018 with 9 billion m³ of natural gas as delivered every year already, and intends to add another 10 billion m³ of gas sent every year to European markets from the Shah Deniz gas field. It should be noted that Azerbaijan produced 37.5 billion m³ of NG in 2019. The EU-28 is Baku's main customer representing 38.8% of its total exports in 2018 (about 7.5 billion USD), with hydrocarbons being its main exported commodity⁴².

The most important partner of Azerbaijan is USD 6.0 billion-worth Italy, mainly due to its imports of hydrocarbons, and stands ahead of Turkey which is close to 4.5 billion (4,5 Mds/USD 4.5), Russia (3.0 billion USD) and Germany. France ranks 11th among the importing countries with 787 billion USD and the "Minsk Group" (USA, Russia, France).

42. See <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Pays/AZ/le-commerce-exterieur-de-l-azerbaïdjan-en-2019>

Table 2

Azerbaijan-Italy relations (in million US\$)		
Year	Azeri Oil & Natural Gas Exports to Italy	Total Imports from Italy to Azerbaijan
2015	2,213	587
2016	4,290	332
2017	5,926	318
2018	5,854	335
2019	5,596	363

Table 3

Azerbaijan-Germany relations (in million US\$)		
Year	Azeri Oil & Natural Gas Exports to Germany	Total Imports from Germany to Azerbaijan
2015	1,190	677
2016	583	388
2017	429	442
2018	768	659
2019	909	709

Table 4

Azerbaijan-Turkey relations (in million US\$)		
Year	Azeri Oil & Natural Gas Exports to Turkey	Total Imports from Turkey to Azerbaijan
2015	1,328	1,164
2016	987	1,181
2017	1,136	1,274
2018	1,521	1,577
2019	2,503	1,647

Table 5

Azerbaijan-Russia relations (in million US\$)		
Year	Azeri Oil & Natural Gas Exports to Russia	Total Imports from Russia to Azerbaijan
2015	27	1,436
2016	20	1,641
2017	34	1,533
2018	47	1,884
2019	34	2,287

Table 6

Azerbaijan-Israel relations (in million US\$)		
Year	Azeri Oil & Natural Gas Exports to Israel	Total Imports from Israel to Azerbaijan
2015	800	25
2016	663	16
2017	637	33
2018	1,309	24
2019	1,329	44

Table 7

Azerbaijan-Spain relations (in million US\$)		
Year	Azeri Oil & Natural Gas Exports to Spain	Total Imports from Spain to Azerbaijan
2015	311	62
2016	492	50
2017	383	61
2018	394	83
2019	702	67

Table 8

Azerbaijan-USA relations (in million US\$)		
Year	Azeri Oil & Natural Gas Exports to USA	Total Imports from USA to Azerbaijan
2015	207	845
2016	76	472
2017	55	721
2018	310	527
2019	0	769

Table 9

Azerbaijan-France relations (in million US\$)		
Year	Azeri Oil & Natural Gas Exports to France	Total Imports from France to Azerbaijan
2015	860	212
2016	623	150
2017	458	155
2018	434	184
2019	528	251

Table 10

EDI * of countries on Azeri oil & natural gas for the years 2015-19				
S/N	State	Value of Imports from Azerbaijan (in billion US\$)	Value of Total Imports (in billion US\$)	EDI
1	Israel	3.41	3.64	9.37
2	Turkey	4.97	5.87	8.47
3	Italy	18.28	253.4	7.22
4	Russia	0.13	7.7	1.66
5	France	2.38	292.2	0.81
6	Spain	1.58	215.3	0.73
7	Germany	2.97	448.1	0.66
8	USA	0.65	1,002.50	0.06

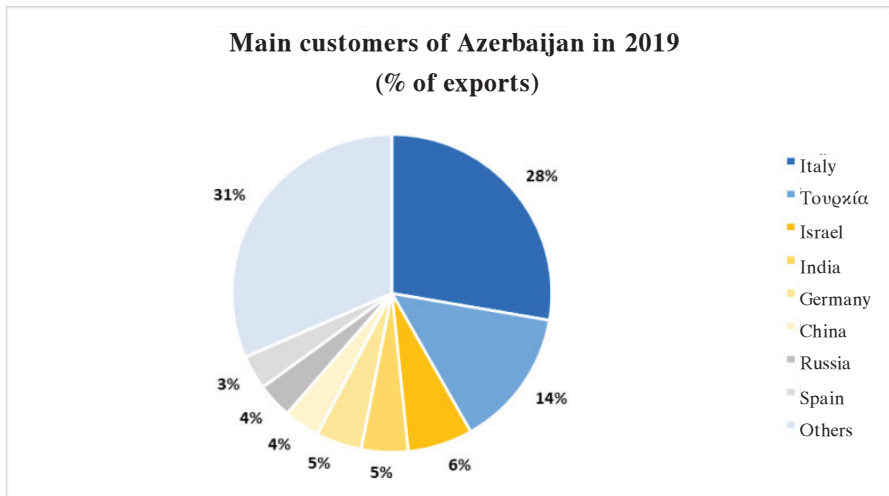
* *The Extractives Dependence Index of States on Azeri Oil and Gas for the period 2015-19 was calculated as the result of dividing the total Value of Imports from Azerbaijan by one country (column 2), by the Value of Total Imports for that country (of column 3), multiplied by 100.*

Source: *United Nations Comtrade Database, 2020 (UN Comtrade is a repository of official international trade statistics). Edited by I.Th. Mazis.*

However, Baku's energy dependence on Moscow, strange as it may be, has been a reality since 2017. That year, Baku was forced to sign a gas import contract with GAZPROM in order to meet its own domestic consumption needs. Indicatively, we mention that in 2019 their domestic gas consumption requirements were of 11.5 billion m³, i.e., an increase of + 8.7% compared to 2018⁴³. This fact also results in dependence on Moscow, which definitely wants to keep its own high level of gas exports, given Western policies aim to reduce the gas volumes imported from Russia and strengthen diversification of its supply sources away from Russian deposits.

An overview of the main importers from Azerbaijan is given in Table 11 below.

43. <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/2020/03/11/le-secteur-des-hydrocarbures-en-azerbaidjan-une-lente-transition-du-petrole-vers-le-gaz-et-la-petrochimie>

Table 11: Main importers from Azerbaijan in the year 2019

Source: <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Pays/AZ/le-commerce-exterieur-de-lazerbaidjan-en-2019>

The size of Baku's major customers also explains the balance it tries to keep with European countries, Turkey and Israel from an economic point of view. By examining all three pipeline routes starting from Baku, we may also understand the importance of Artsakh for Azeri energy strategic planning. Azerbaijan exports its crude oil via five pipelines:

1) **The 1776 km long Bakou-Tbilissi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC / Main Export Oil Pipeline)**⁴⁴, which started operations in 2005 and ends in the Eastern Mediterranean. (See Map 6). This pipeline is a purely "political" routing and generates losses in terms of revenues for Turkey, which is protesting against it. This is due to malfunctions and its under-performance. Said malfunctions were expected yet ignored by the pipeline's "transatlantic" designers since it aimed to 1) "politically" satisfy Turkey and 2) bypass routing Azeri hydrocarbons through Russian territory all the way to the Russian port of Novorossisk. Turkey hoped to collect USA 170m annually although it delivers 57-79% of its capacity, which costs Turkey an annual loss of transit fees of US\$165 mil.

2) **The Bakou-Novorossisk**⁴⁵ pipeline, 1335km long, which started

44. See https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/who-we-are/operationsprojects/pipelines/btc.html

45. See <https://www.hisour.com/pipelines-in-azerbaijan-37387/>

operation in 1977, terminates at the Black Sea crossing Russian soil. A part of 231km of its length lies in the territory of Azerbaijan. The President of the State Hydrocarbons Company announced that in 2016 this pipeline carried 1.5 million tons to the Port of Novorossiysk, and finally (see Map 7),

3) **The Bakou-Supsa pipeline** (Western Export Pipeline)⁴⁶, 835 km long, which has been a link with the Black Sea since 1999. It transports oil from the Azeri-Chirag-Günesli field with a supply of 145,000 b/d (see Map 7).

4) **The Hajiqabul (Kazi-Magomed) -Astara-Abadan pipeline** to Iran with a length of 1,475 km which was put into operation in 2006. In the same year, Azerbaijan agreed on an exchange system with Iran that ensures gas supply to Iran, which in turn supplies Nakhichevan. On November 11, 2009, the Azeri State Hydrocarbon Company (SOCAR) and the Iranian State Hydrocarbons Company N.I.G.C signed a Memorandum of Understanding, according to which, from 2010, the former Soviet Republic would start supplying Iran with 500 mil. m³/ year⁴⁷.

5) **Again, the section of the Hajiqabul pipeline (Gazi-Magomed)** with a 680 km long branch to **Mozdok** (Russia) that started operating in 2009 (with reverse flow capabilities).

Map 7: Westbound Azeri oil pipelines from Baku



46. See <http://www.socar.az/socar/en/activities/transportation/baku-supsa-western-export-pipeline>

47. See <https://en.trend.az/business/energy/1578227.html>

G. Israel's Involvement: A Geopolitical Necessity of National Security: Armaments, Energy and Strategic Planning

a. The answer to recent and quite frequent question "How may Israel's involvement in Azerbaijan be explained?", is clear: Given Israel's ability to deploy serious intelligence operations through dense Azeri populations living in territories of Iranian Azerbaijan and ethnically and religiously linked (Shiites) with the Azeris of Azerbaijan! We recall that in 1813, with the Treaty of Gulistan signed after the Russo-Persian War, the Azeri nation was divided into two parts: the northern one which ended under the USSR and the southern one that became part of the Persian Empire, i.e., in current terms, of the Islamic Republic of Iran (see Map 7). Thus, there are about 15-20 million ethnic Azeris in Iran today! It is therefore logical for the Israeli services to have considered all four Azeri movements of self-determination launched in 1908-9, 1920, 1945-46, and 1979-1980), which –reasonably enough– create conditions within Iran that Jerusalem might exploit.

b. They are also seriously interested in the Jewish minority in Azerbaijan, which numbers about 20,000 people and may serve as a pool of liaisons between both states and their strategic interests in the region, which shares a common border with Israel's real enemy, Iran.

c. In view of the above, let us recall that the relations between the two countries, which began as early as April 1992, whilst in 1993 Israel opened its Embassy in Baku, stand to reason. Since then, these relations have deepened to the point of formalization by the visit of Prime Minister Netanyahu to Baku in 2016.

d. This was followed by a huge agreement for Baku's purchase of technologically advanced Israeli armaments in February 2012, worth 1.6 billion dollars. In 2016, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that Baku had bought weapons worth 5 billion. US \$ from Israeli industry, including drones and satellite systems. In 2017, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that Baku purchased Israeli military technology worth USA \$ 127 mil. It also commented that, in 2006 and 2019, Azerbaijan spent \$ 825 million on armaments, including drones, ammunition, anti-tank missiles and a surface-to-air missile system.

Map 8: Ethnic and religious composition of populations in Iran.

e. In 2016, Foreign Policy magazine claimed that the Jerusalem-Baku relationship had deepened to such an extent that an agreement between both countries was expected that would allow Israel to use Azeri airports in the event of Israel's decision to attack Iran's nuclear facilities⁴⁸. Of course, Baku denied this information. However, it should be noted that in May 2012, Iran revoked its ambassador from Baku for reasons of a religious insult, while in April 2013, Azerbaijani

48. <https://bit.ly/2HjtZTo>

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov visited Israel, causing new tensions.

f. Israel receives 40% of its supply in natural gas from Azerbaijan and is the main defense supplier to Baku, with amounts far exceeding Armenia's state budget, given which the country entered the war. And despite ostensible incongruities and shortcomings this relationship seems to have, it is a deeply strategic relationship that lies in Israel's need for "regional diplomacy" to contain Iran and "improve its image in the Islamic world" by building relations with non-Arab Muslim States. This has been a fundamental and theorized principle of Israeli diplomacy since the founding of the State of Israel. For Azerbaijan again, it was also a form of "diplomacy to contain Iran" but also "for Armenia to recover Artsakh" through arms.

g. It is therefore easily understandable that Armenia, an ally of Iran, maintains very low-level relations with Israel and has established an Embassy in Tel Aviv as late as in September 2020. However, the Armenian diplomat failed to stay there for a long time, since Yerevan revoked him, denouncing Israel's supply with "state-of-the-art weapons" to Azerbaijan as "unacceptable".

h. If it is true –and this is not a well-known misinformation tactic, common in such tense times– that Turkish MIT Chief Hakan Fidan is currently in contact with his Mossad counterpart to discuss more issues beyond the change of tenant in the White House. They may relate to other actions on Iranian territory, taking advantage of Turkey's close and fully-fledged ties with Azerbaijan's respective secret services.

H. The Ankara-Baku relationship: a clear anti-Russian Pan-Turanian Geostrategic Plan

Turkey has not promoted its Pan-Turanian policy in USSR's "soft underbelly" since 1991, when Baku formally declared its independence a few months before the official dissolution of the USSR in December of the same year. This state has an area of 86,660 km² and a population of 10,095,894 people⁴⁹ (estimate: 2020). In September 1991, the Armenian majority in the

49. See the official list of the state itself: <https://www.stat.gov.az/news/index.php?id=4673>

disputed Nagorno-Karabakh seceded to form the self-proclaimed "Republic of Artsakh"⁵⁰. The region and seven provinces within the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh became de facto independent following the 1994 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, but have not yet been recognized by Armenia and are the subject of international negotiations within the OSCE.

Ankara still worries about the Russian "pressure" suffered in Libya and Syria and therefore realizes that inevitable dissatisfaction caused to Moscow as a result of its Pan-turanian policy, with its starting point in the South Caucasus, will not allow its energy dependence from Russian gas.

It is therefore fateful to opt for rapidly reducing its energy dependence on Moscow since it is effectively undermining Russian influence in the Russian "near abroad" complex. NATO and the US lend an ear to this Turkish subversive policy against Russia in the Caucasus, among other things; the same also applies in several European countries which are completely aligned with the North Atlantic line and late Z. Brzezinsky's theoretical exhortations.

For the rest, Turkey is gradually implementing its plan to emerge in time as an energy hub for an "alternative supply of the EU" with non-Russian natural gas! Therefore, the alternative for Turkey is to become a privileged energy importer from Azerbaijan. So, reasonably enough, Ankara and Baku linked their mutual interests in the case of Artsakh on the basis: "Weapons / Security for Energy".

It is therefore easy to strategically explain why Turkey, in its desire for uninterrupted and increasing flow of Azeri gas into the Turkish market, *"is projecting itself as a champion of this network by political means or even limited use of military force, if deemed necessary. In H1 of 2020, Turkey imported 20.4% sq.m. of Azeri gas more in relation to the H1 of 2019. Gas imports from Russia, meanwhile, fell by about 62% compared to the same month of 2019"*⁵¹. Besides, as Emil Avdalani, Professor of History and International Relations at the Carat University of Tbilisi, continues to explain, "In May 2020, Azerbaijan has officially become Turkey's main gas supplier, especially after the launch of TANAP in 2020. The \$ 6.5 billion project is part of the \$ 40 billion Southern Gas Corridor, a pipeline

50. Zürcher, Christoph (2007). *The post-Soviet wars: rebellion, ethnic conflict, and nationhood in the Caucasus* New York: New York University Press, σ. 168

51. See also Emil Avdalani, "Turkey's Win-Win Strategy in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict", November 13, 2020 <https://bit.ly/37mk08V>

connecting Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz II⁵² field with the European market (See Maps 7 and 8)"⁵³.

TANAP⁵⁴ may deliver up to 24 bcm of Caspian gas per year. At present, it carries 16 bcm: 10 bcm to Europe and 6 bcm to Turkey. This explains Turkish aggression in July 2020 during the escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Violent acts took place in Azerbaijan's Tovuz province –far from Nagorno-Karabakh, which is usually the epicenter of large-scale operations (as in 2016).

What connects the Tovuz skirmishes with the geopolitics of gas is its location. Tovuz is a vital onshore corridor for regional transports and energy export corridors such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) and the BTK rail network (Baku-Tbilisi-Kars). This infrastructure is part of a larger trans-European East-West network, which has been supported by the West since the end of the USSR.

More importantly, however, the corridor allows Ankara to look for alternatives to Russian gas. Every military move close to strategic routings could provoke Turkey's harsh reaction. Indeed, the head of Turkey's defense industry said after the July conflict that *"the country was ready to help its eastern ally. Joint military operations followed in Baku, Nakhichevan, Ganja, Kurdamir and Yevlakh, and the message was clear: any threat to the pipelines may be followed by active Turkish military involvement in the region. [...]"*

Turkey's growing support for Azerbaijan was visible during the September-October war between Azerbaijan and Armenia: Turkish-made drones accompanied the Azeri attacks and Ankara provided both infrastructure and support for them. According to Mr. Erdogan, Ankara's support for

52. See: "Shah Deniz 2 marks starting point for the Southern Gas Corridor." The Shah Deniz consortium under BP's leadership, announced the launch of the **"Shah Deniz Stage 2 project" in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea on June 30, 2018**. The project's budget is US \$ 28 billion and is the first Caspian submarine project and the largest submarine infrastructure ever undertaken by BP internationally. It is also the starting point of the **"Southern Gas Corridor"** set of pipelines, which for the first time carry natural gas from the Caspian Sea directly to European markets. **(The Shah Deniz consortium consists of the following portfolio: BP, 28.8% - operator; Turkey's TPAO, 19%; Brazil's Petronas, 15.5%; Azerbaijan's AzSD, 10.0%; SGC Upstream, 6.7%; Russia's Lukoil, 10%; and the Iran's representative from Sweden NICO, 10%.**

53. Ibid.

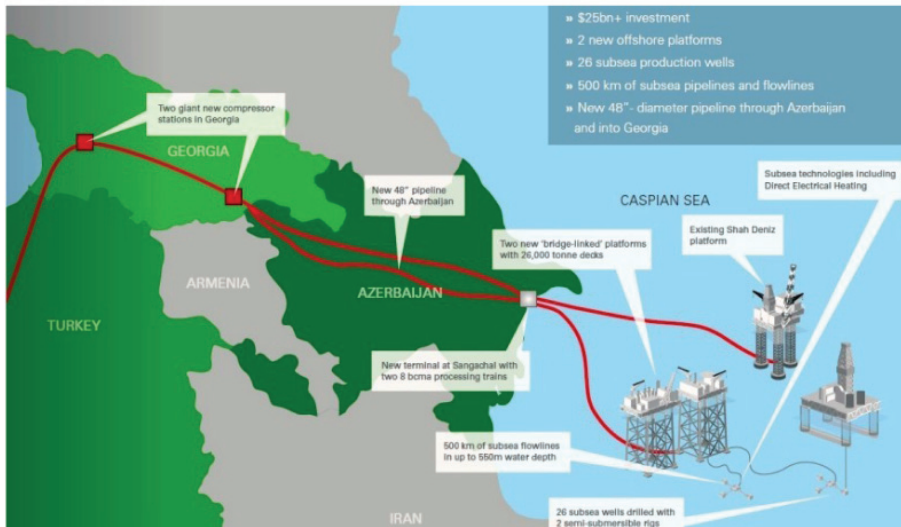
54. See <https://bit.ly/37g3neN>

Azerbaijan was part of Turkey's bid to gain "its rightful place in the world order". This relates to the overall trajectory of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East and the Mediterranean"⁵⁵.

Map 9: The TANAP pipeline



Map 10: The Shah Deniz II field and its upstream crossing through Georgia & Turkey



55. See also Emil Avdaliani, "Turkey's Win-Win Strategy in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict" November 13, 2020 <https://bit.ly/37mk08V>

H.1 Turkey's staff at the level of senior military personnel

Turkey's military involvement, but also incitement, in the Baku attack on Artsakh is documented by serious analysts who have used credible sources, such as reports following research by authoritative Russian newspaper "VZGLYAD"⁵⁶ and summed up in the fact that it was three Turkish generals who undertook war operations in Artsakh, both in terms of planning since August 2020 and of operational command and control, having placed under their command the Military Staff and Operational Mechanism of Azerbaijan. These are the following ones:

1) **Bahtiyar Ersay**, Lieutenant General, Head of Operations Directorate of the Turkish Land Forces, according to an official close to top heads of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense. According to this source, which reasonably requires to remain anonymous: "Ersay is in Baku. Following removal of the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan, Sadigov, he personally supervises the General Staff for the operation against Karabakh. It refers directly to the military-political leadership of Turkey for the course of the operation"⁵⁷. Also, another source in Baku - a former high-ranking diplomat states that "Ersay is the military leader of the whole operation in Karabakh"⁵⁸.



Major General Bahtiyar Ersay

Information about General **Ersay's** involvement in the conflict was confirmed following a recent investigation by newspaper "VZGLYAD": "In some way, instead of being sent to jail, [Ersay] he was promoted to Brigadier and dispatched to the "Kurdish front": he led the 2nd commandos brigade that took active part in military operations against the armed formations of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). He killed several hundred Kurdish fighters, and was considered one of the top experts in the anti-guerrilla war. Albert Barry, an activist of the Dutch radical left-wing Socialist Alternative Policy Party (SAP), who, along with many other Eu-

56. See Source: <https://vz.ru/world/2020/11/12/1069822.html> in <https://bit.ly/2IP8URs>

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid

ropeans, joined the PKK in mid-2010, said: "***All I know is that they were punitive. They acted very hard also to civilians sympathetic towards the PKK. They did not capture prisoners, which is generally the case for the Turkish army. (Author's note: In short, they executed them!) Among the soldiers were many volunteers as well as "Gray Wolves". The brigade has a bad reputation***"⁵⁹.

Also, according to *Hürriyet*, "*Ersay was involved in operations in Libya. In particular, he was responsible for evacuating Turkish citizens from the country, after the fall of the Gaddafi regime. He participated in training seminars at NATO's "Joint Warfare Center (JWC)" in Stavanger, Norway. In August 2019, media company "Haber" announced that the Supreme Military Council of Turkey (Yüksek Askeri Sura, YAS) promoted Ersay to the rank of lieutenant general*"⁶⁰.



Lieut. General Şeref Öngay

2) **Şeref Öngay, lieutenant general**, dissident and former member of the 2003 "Operation Sledgehammer", who after being sentenced to 16 years in prison for his involvement in the conspiracy, was pardoned (!) immediately after the verdict, as revealed by the Turkish newspaper "*Hürriyet*", which was explained, for some Turkish sources, as his reward for handing over his former collaborators to the authorities.

According to "VZGLYAD": "*He was commander of the 3rd Turkish Army Corps, based in the Erzincan region of eastern Anatolia, who also participated in planning and execution of the operation in Karabakh.*" A source, speaking on condition of anonymity, added: "*He came to Azerbaijan in September and October, but also before the summer. Ayngay and several other Turkish generals planned joint Turkish-Azerbaijani offensive operations*"⁶¹.

3) **Heksel Kahya, lieutenant colonel**, and head of the 1st Air Supply and Maintenance Center Command of the Turkish Air Force. "*Last Sunday, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met in Baku with Turkish For-*

59. Ibid

60. Source: <https://vz.ru/world/2020/11/12/1069822.html> in <https://bit.ly/2IP8URs>

61. Ibid.



Air Vice Marshal Heksel Kahya

eign and Defense Ministers Hulusi Akar and Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. Details were not disclosed. Heksel Kahya also took part in the negotiations. This was not officially announced, but the Armenian agency "Telegram Razm.info" recognized him from photos published from the meeting"⁶².

"It is worth noting that this is the second meeting between Kahya and Aliyev. The first took place in August. All participants in that meeting were also mentioned, except Kahya. He was identified in a photograph by the Nagorno Karabakh observer team.

According to the VZGLYAD newspaper, Kahya has been in Azerbaijan since no later than July. Before coming to Azerbaijan, Heksel Kahya organized the work of the Global Center for Security and Operations (GSSO) in Libya last spring.

The center's role was to control Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones in support of National Accord (GNA) government troops opposed to Brigadier General Khalifa Haftar. Kahya's involvement was revealed when Haftar's army arrested several Turkish advisers and got hold of their correspondence, as well as passport copies of all Turkish specialists working for the GCSO.

As a result of negotiations between Ankara and Haftar, the detainees were released, but scanned passports, including that of Heksel Kahya, were published in the Al Marsad newspaper. The appearance of Kahya in Azerbaijan, where, as in Libya, drones were used en masse, is not a coincidence. "Undoubtedly, Kahya was managing all Bayraktar TB2 flights in the Nagorno-Karabakh war zone"⁶³.

"All the operational intelligence obtained with the help of Bayraktar TB2 was forwarded to him and he, in turn, reported this to Erdogan," said Denis Korkodinov, director of the International Center for Political Analysis and Forecasting (Center of political analysis and Prognosis / Центр Политического Анализа и Прогнеза), expert on the Transcaucasian countries.

The fact is that there are no official reports on the purchase of Bayrak-

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

tar TB2 from Azerbaijan. For the first time, **Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov** announced Baku's intention to buy drones from Ankara in June this year. However, no signed agreement was ever published. So how did the drones go to Baku? *"That is a very interesting question. There are two versions that are roughly equivalent. Either the deal was done secretly so as not to attract attention, which is a common practice; or the drones belong to the Turkish army. Equally, it should be understood that training of specialized pilots for drones lasts at least several months. My guess is that, in both cases, the drone pilots must have been Turks", as specified by Ruslan Pukhov, director of the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies*⁶⁴ (CAST/Центр анализа стратегий и технологий/Moscow".⁶⁵

H.1.2. Dispatchment of jihadists to Artsakh via -and in the care of- Turkey

Dispatchment of jihadi Islamists from Syria to the battlefield of Artsakh has been confirmed by various sources:

a. In an interview with Sputnik TV on October 9, 2020, Syrian President Assad said: *"Let's be honest: Erdogan supported terrorists in Syria, fostered them in Libya and has been the main instigator and a protagonist in the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. I therefore consider his behavior to be dangerous for various reasons: Primarily because it reflects the behavior of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is an extremist and terrorist organization. Secondly because it incites wars in various places to disorientate his country's public opinion and prevent it from focusing on his own behavior in Turkey and especially after his scandalous relations with Daesh in Syria. The whole world knows that Daesh sells Syrian oil –through Turkey– under the protection of the US Air Force and, of course, said Turkish involvement is publicly known." "So, objectively speaking, [Erdogan] is dangerous." He goes on: "In Syria, Turkey has used terrorists from different countries. He used Syrian terrorists in Libya, and possibly of various nationalities. It is therefore clear [...] that he used the same method in Nagorno-Karabakh, because, as I mentioned above, they are the ones who started [...] this war. They incited this conflict. They want*

64. Source: <https://vz.ru/world/2020/11/12/1069822.html> in <https://bit.ly/2IP8URs>

65. Ibid.

to accomplish something and use the same method. We can therefore state with certainty that they used terrorists of Syrian and other nationalities, in Nagorno-Karabakh"⁶⁶.

b. As stated by Omar Ahmed in the Middle East Monitor: *"Even in the midst of the war, civil flights flew between Baku, Turkey and Israel*"⁶⁷ *and it was widely understood that they carried military equipment for use in Nagorno-Karabakh*"⁶⁸.

c. At a press conference of French President E. Macron in Brussels on October 2, 2020, at the end of the Summit (October 1-2, 2020), the French President made it clear that: *"300 fighters have left Syria to reach Baku via Gaziantep [in Turkey]". "This information is based on our own intelligence. These fighters are known, traced, identified; they come from jihadist groups operating in the region of Aleppo [in Syria] [...] And other contingents are preparing, about the same size [...]. We have shared this information with the Russians. And the Russian side makes the same analysis as we do. It's very dangerous for the security of the region and Russia to find ourselves with terrorist fighters. It is important to have a "demanding discussion" with Turkey in order to resolve this problem as quickly as possible, for it is an additional problem in connection with Nagorno-Karabakh". The French President also stressed that "the red line has been "crossed" by Ankara and this is unacceptable." He stressed that "there must be an absolutely honest dialogue with Turkey. Therefore, I invite all NATO partners to sincerely face up to the behavior of a NATO member". He also stated strongly that "in the capacity of co-chair of the Minsk Group, he will call on Mr. Erdogan in the next few days to ask him for explanations of these facts"*⁶⁹.

66. See Bachar al-Assad: Erdogan est le principal instigateur du conflit dans le Nagorno-Karabakh. Interview with Bachar al-Assad at Sputnik TV on October 9, 2020. Syria News [<https://bit.ly/3fL7pzz>]

67. See <https://bit.ly/3li5Bzr>

68. See Omar Ahmed, Nagorno-Karabakh : les liens troubles entre l'Azerbaïdjan, la Turquie et Israël ("La proximité du gouvernement de l'Azerbaïdjan avec Israël explique l'alliance entre l'Iran et l'Arménie". in: October 8, 2020), Middle East Monitor <https://bit.ly/2VaYwGd>

69. See: Nicolas Gros-Verheyde., "Des combattants djihadistes syriens déployés par la Turquie au Haut Karabagh", for E. Macron's denunciation (Press conference of French President E. Macron, on October 2, 2020, at the end of the Summit 1-2 / 10/2020), <https://bit.ly/3o67wJ>

d. Reliable newspaper "Le Monde" in an article by Jean Pierre Filiu, states that *"1,500 jihadists from Syria were transferred from Turkey to Nagorno-Karabakh - until the 18th of October when the article was published. He notes that the speed of their transfer from Syria to Azerbaijan proves their excellent integration, which is much higher than that of Libya, in the method of military projection of Turkish power"*⁷⁰.

Based on all the above information, it is only possible to establish from reliable sources a clear Turkish military and operational intervention in the massacre and displacement of the Armenian people, from its prehistoric cradle in Artsakh, an issue which should be investigated by the International Criminal Tribunal for war crimes committed by Baku and Ankara.

J. Ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh: Main points of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan of November 9, 2020: impact analysis⁷¹

Yerevan decided to start negotiations with Baku when Azeri forces regained control of key areas of Nagorno-Karabakh, reaching close to the capital of the self-proclaimed republic.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Azeri President Ikhlam Aliyev and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have signed a joint statement calling for an end to a month-long bloody military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The deal took effect at 21:00 on November 9th.

In addition to the ceasefire, the statement includes a number of clauses that will determine further activities of the three nations in the region and intends to maintain peace. Here are the main points of the document:

- The ceasefire will be overseen by a Russian peacekeeping force of 1,960 men and a dedicated ceasefire control center. This Russian force will be deployed on the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor.

This clause has already been fulfilled by Moscow and Russian troops

70. Jean Pierre Filiu, Le Monde, October 18, 2020, "Les filières turques de mercenaires syriens en Azerbaïdjan", <https://bit.ly/2Vc0OVH>

71. <https://bit.ly/3lMn7g2>

are already in the positions provided for in the agreement.

- The statement does not provide for the participation of peacekeeping forces of another country⁷².

Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan yesterday (9/11/2020) adopted a joint statement on the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh and paved the way for a peacekeeping mission in the disputed region. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed in that day that Russian peacekeepers would be deployed in Karabakh.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that *"no agreement has been reached concerning deployment of Turkish peacekeepers in Karabakh."* He stressed that *"the joint statement of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan includes no reference about Turkey"*.

«This is what I can say: the statement doesn't mention a word about that. The three parties have not agreed on such a thing. "The stay of Turkish troops in Karabakh was not agreed," Peskov told reporters.

The Kremlin announcement came after Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu said *"Ankara would oversee disarmament in Nagorno-Karabakh"*.

The minister also said that seven provinces in Karabakh would be *"fully granted to Azerbaijan"*, adding that four of them were already under Baku control.

"We are now talking about monitoring and controlling the agreement, but the whole process will be monitored jointly [with Azerbaijan]," Çavuşoğlu told reporters, adding that *"Turkey will continue to support Baku."*

Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan have adopted a joint statement on a ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh, where heavy fighting has been raging since late September 2020. According to this statement, a full disarmament process will enter into force on 10 November 2020. Pursuant to the agreement, Russia will send a peacekeeping contingent of 1,960 men, 90 armored personnel carriers and 380 pieces of equipment.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has announced that only Russian peacekeepers will be deployed in the region.

- Deployment of Russian peacekeepers will take place at the same time as the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the disputed area.

- Russian peacekeepers will remain in their positions in Nagorno-Karabakh for a period of five years with automatic five-year extensions, unless one of the parties decides otherwise.

72. <https://bit.ly/3ff3drM>

Territorial concessions

- Both sides remain in their positions, but Armenia must cede the Agdam and Calbajar regions in eastern Karabakh, as well as the province of Lachin in the west of the region, within certain deadlines. The last province must be ceded by 1 December 2020. (Map 5 and 5a).
- To avoid potentially cutting off the capital of the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic from Armenia as a result of territorial concessions, the Russian peacekeeping forces will keep control of the Lachin corridor, which connects the two regions. (Map 5 and 5a)
- Russian peacekeepers take control of the Azeri-controlled town of Shushi (Shusha) on the road to Stepanakert, and the parties agree to build an alternative road connecting Armenia to the capital of the self-proclaimed republic within the next three years. (Map 5 and 5a)

Transport infrastructure and humanitarian issues

- Armenia is committed to building a safe transport corridor for citizens and public transport between Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan enclave. The transport corridor will be supervised by the Russian border forces, which are deployed there.
- In return, Baku is committed to securing the passage of citizens and public transport along the Lachin corridor.
- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees will oversee the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Armenia and Azerbaijan will exchange prisoners of war, hostages and the bodies of dead soldiers.

Commenting on the above, the Russian side claims that⁷³:

1) The Russian-Turkish center for monitoring the ceasefire will operate in Azerbaijan, outside the Karabakh region and at a distance from the "contact line", but the geographical presence of Turks will be limited within the limits of the center's infrastructure.

2) The Center will conduct inspections only by technical means, not by "peacekeeping forces". Therefore, the Turks will be trapped within the infrastructure of the Center. Of course, Moscow rules out the possibility of another "facility" being granted by the Azeris to Turkey on Azerbai-

73. Author's note: Author's interview with competent Russian diplomatic sources.

jani territory, which they consider undesirable, yet not improbable. For the time being, the Turks have full freedom of action in the Azeri territories.

3) It states that "*There are still details about the Center left to be agreed*". They also note that "*obviously, there are disagreements*". However, they re-assure that "*under these conditions, the center is the only solution to put some order in the presence of foreign forces*".

4) It interprets Azeris' invitation to Turkey on the basis of the return to Azerbaijan of those territories occupied by the Armenians as provided by the "legal procedures for resolving the conflict". This settlement had already been proposed by the Russian side to Pashinyan already when the crisis broke, but the Armenian Prime Minister did not accept it.

5) It is emphasized that Azerbaijan is neither a province of Russia, nor an ally of it, and therefore has jurisdiction to call on Turkey to send forces to its territories, with the exception of naval infrastructure in the coastal areas (Caspian Treaty, 12/08 / 2018).

6) It is meaningfully recalled that Azerbaijan is now a supplier of natural gas to Greece following the US contribution in promoting TANAP in the framework of a plan of to diversify sources and routes to the benefit of energy security.

7) As per the presence of peacekeeping forces, Moscow emphasizes -and this is reflected in the above text of the Agreement- that Russia is exclusively responsible for them and, in fact, Baku has fully and contractually accepted that.

8) Moscow accepts that "*the cost paid by Armenia is high. But it equates to the size of its mistakes and adventurism*". This confirms our own assessments above on Mr. Pashinyan's pro-NATO choices. He stresses that "the death of Russian soldiers to correct these mistakes of Yerevan is not justified, politically and morally."

9) Moscow believes (and rightly so) that if there had been an immediate Russian military intervention, Azerbaijan would have become a "Turkish province." However, this development was avoided thanks to Moscow's balanced stance, which, in any case, acted the way it did, purely on its own... The other sub-systemic factors just kept watching attentively, or not...!

10) The sequel will be very interesting ... and calls for a lot of attention on behalf of Athens, France and Nicosia...

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This text analyzes the key points of Behaviors by Super-systemic (Russia, Turkey, Israel, EU, USA) and Systemic (Armenia, Artsakh, Azerbaijan) factors of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh after the Azeri attack, which was clearly supported in all diplomatic and operational means, but also in terms of armaments, by Ankara and by Israel. The international legal status of the self-proclaimed "Republic of Artsakh" is also analyzed taking into account the Resolutions of UN Security Council and General Assembly. Following that and on the basis of the above analysis, the diplomatic and operational behavior of the Russian Federation before, during and after the conflict is interpreted, and conclusions are drawn about the current distribution of power in the South Caucasus, the winners and losers, and the future prospects for the super-systemic actors: Russia and Turkey. In the context of this analysis, a consideration of the Greek geopolitical position is also included, along with policy proposals, which should be taken into account by Athens in order to tackle those important security issues signaled by the redistribution of power in the Caucasus Complex.

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