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Georgia and the Caucasus

Search for the Principles for the Regional Security Concept

The question of foreign orientation has always been a subject of acute discussions in Georgia. Being a part of the national self-identification problem, it concerns almost all strata of the Georgian community. What country is to be a guarantor of Georgia's security—Russia or the West? Does the way to the West lay on Turkey? Is the Caucasian co-operation capable to guarantee the national security? These are the questions the Georgians and their foreign partners are concerned for.

Russia, Turkey and Iran have always been interested in the Caucasus and affected its stability. In its turn, each Caucasian nation used to apply to any of these countries in search of security and an ally. For instance, Azerbaijan preferred Turkey; Armenia chose Iran and Russia, the North Caucasus – Turkey and Iran, whereas Georgia applied to Russia. It was a historically developed security system of the Caucasus, though with some faults: tensions between the big regional countries sparked discords between their Caucasian allies, and vice versa, disagreements between the Caucasian countries provoked tensions between the regional countries. After the break up of the Soviet Union, the Caucasians reverted to their traditional allies. This is proved by pro-Turkey period in Azerbaijan, the Armenia-Russia military co-operation, developing connections between the North Caucasian nations and South Islamic countries, and Georgia's reverse to Russia after the collapse in Abkhazia.

The concept of unity of the Caucasian nations has always existed as an alternative to the above-depicted security system, however, it has never been brought into being. Nowadays, Caucasian co-operation in search of regional and national security is uppermost again, though some principles of such co-operation have to be specified. For instance, the fact that at the present time the North Caucasus straightly affects Georgia's stability makes Georgia conduct a direct dialogue with the North Caucasians. From the other hand, the North Caucasus is a part of the Russian Federation - that makes it complicated problem to deal with. Or let us take the issue of simultaneous development of relations of the Caucasian countries with the West and any of the regional countries (Russia, for instance), that many foreign and local experts regard as contradictory.

The present article analyses formation of political orientations in the Caucasus, features attempts to shape the Caucasian regional and national security systems, stresses the great importance of co-operation between the Caucasian nations and the role of Russia, Turkey and Iran in the regional security system, and suggests principles of relations between the Caucasus and non-regional (the western) countries.

Historical Review

Events that brought the Caucasus to the present day political situations are accepted to regard since the 18th century. At that time Iran and Turkey constantly struggled for the sphere of influence in the South Caucasus (Georgia was a bone of contention between Iran and Ottoman Empire), while Russia, gradually strengthening its positions advanced in the direction of the North Caucasus. This circumstance brought into question the problem of security for the North Caucasian nations that had got rather uncertain place on the political picture of the region for that time.

Strengthening of Islam in this period among North Caucasians seems to be strongly motivated by political reasons – the North Caucasians endeavoured to distinguish themselves from Russia ideologically and reinforce relations with the South Islamic countries. (It was like the Georgians that admitted Christianity as the state religion in AD 333 to wrest the country from Zoroastrian Iran's influence and strengthen links with Bizantium.)

Later, urged by their Southern (Muslim) allies, the North Caucasians began to invade Georgia kidnapping and selling the Georgians on the markets of Turkey and Iran. In a subsequent difficult situation, when Georgia was seized not only by Iran and Osman-Turks from the South, but by North Caucasians from North as well, the Georgian kings had to seek allies farther in the North - in Russia calculating to balance this double pressure. It is important to comprehend that the Georgian kings (King George XI for example) also contacted certain European monarchs, hoping to find allies, but vainly. Finally, Georgia accepted the protection of Russia, which created a kind of balance between Christian and Muslim forces in the Caucasus, making the Caucasus not a mere junction of the Islamic South and Christian North geopolitical areas, but a kind of transversal zone comprising the Christian South and the Muslim North (see pic.1)

Armenia and Azerbaijan also served for a point of intersection to Iran and Turkey. Armenia is situated straight between Turkey and Azerbaijan, ethnically related to Turkey. The small isthmus, which joins Armenia to Iran, separates Azerbaijan from Turkey (see pic. 2). It is most amazing, how Armenia could survive in such a complicated political situation. But Iran, trying to safeguard its northern boundaries supported security of Armenia in order to protect it from being incorporated by the Turks. Besides, Iran used to be invaded by the Turkmens from the Northeast. These circumstances made Iran to guarantee Armenia's security. (More, than that Armenia's Monophysitism is a testimony to its traditional alliance with Iran. It was Iran that in the 6th century encouraged Monophysitism in the South Caucasus to estrange it from Byzantium).

Thus, the Caucasus is a complicated political unit, where the interests of three geopolitical forces – Russia, Turkey and Iran are realized. Confrontations taking place both between the big regional powers and the Caucasus has always had reciprocal affection.

Meanwhile, collision of interests between Russia and numerous European countries in Turkey and Iran brought into question so-called "Eastern Question", mainly concerning the

problem of the Ottoman Empire legacy. The European countries and Russia pursued contradictory policy in Turkey, trying to wrest the country from the central government's control from one hand and urge restoration of territorial unity from another.

In 1827 the European and Russian fleets defeated the Osman-Turks in the battle for independence of Greece. After some years the Egyptians followed the Greek example, threatening to invade Istanbul. The sultan Mahmud III appealed to Russia for assistance. The Russians began the landing operation at the Bosphorus Peninsula. Alarmed Europeans hastily managed the Egypt-Turkey problem and forced the Russian troops out of Turkey. By 1840 London Convention the Russian protection was replaced by the Common European Agreement.

During the 19th century the Caucasian section of the Russian-Turkey front had been reflecting contradictory policy of Russia and the West towards Turkey to a certain extent.

On one hand, the front lied through the South borders of Georgia, Azerbaijan and the present Armenia, on the other hand –the North Caucasus, by the side of the rivers Kuban and Terg.

In 1853-56 years the Shamil-headed North Caucasians at the same time with Turkey and Turkey's European allies (Britain and French) framed a front to make Russia abandon the Caucasus, but it was not to be, as far as for that time the Russians had gained a strong political foundation to their presence in the South-Caucasus. (More than that, this alliance had had strong foundation since the beginning of the 19th century, when Russia, being at war with Napoleon and Turkey at the same time could wrest the North provinces from Iran that was signed at the Goulistan Peace Treaty in 1813.)

In 1856, Russia's fleet collapsed in the Crimea battle and sustained heavy losses in the North Caucasus; it was about to abandon the Caucasus. But the Georgian generals Orbeliani and Baratoff played a significant part in changing this decision. These two and general Tsitsianoff (Tsitsihvili) headed Russian troops against the North Caucasians targeting at unification of Georgia with co-religious Russian Empire in order to protect Georgia from Iran and Osman-Turks.

Obviously, attitude towards the Russian administration greatly differed in Georgia. Numerous uprisings, sparked by introduction of the Russian administration, among them is the 1832 year conspiracy in Georgia where a lot of representatives of the Georgian aristocracy participated, in short, rightness of the Russian orientation - all these events have been topics of discussions for the Georgians since that times. Was this measure the only way out, when Turkey and Iran were gradually weakening? But there was a great but: Georgia's endeavour to unite with Russia was motivated by lack of its autonomous place in the "international policy" of that time. Paris Peace Treaty of 1856, concluded after the Crimea War that acknowledged unity and independence of the Ottoman Empire included Georgia or at least a part of it, sparking a dilemma – either Turkey or Russia. In such a difficult situation the Georgians seemed willing to bend for the European life-style rather than for the Islamic one. "The way to the West lies through Russia" was the main formula of the Georgian foreign policy in the 19th century. Despite some disadvantages of the Russian administration, significant changes took place in the country and during the early

nineteenth century Tbilisi gradually transformed from a medieval town into a modern European city. The earlier situation was alike when despite Georgia demonstrated its capacity for self-defence from weakened Iran and Turkey, The Georgian King Erekle II had to accept protection of Russia (the 1783 year Georgievsk Treaty) though without illusions concerning Russia's true targets in the Caucasus.

The Caucasus definitely differs from Russia, Turkey and Iran. But the World Politics of that time didn't reckon with natural interests of the region. The Caucasus was taken as a part of any of these three powers. Successively, such approach sparked great turmoil and disorientation in the Caucasus. Each nation had to take care of itself. Some of them hoped for support of Russia, the others rely on the Ottoman Empire and Iran.

Admission of the Caucasus as a part of Turkey or Iran accelerated unification of Georgia with Christian Russia. None of the political measures would stop this process because of its bilateral character – the Georgians also took part in it. Only straight interest of the European countries might urge the Caucasus to block expansion of Russia in the direction of the South.

The Modern Situation

After the break up of the Soviet Union there were created three independent states in the Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Numerous autonomous republics of Russian Federation are also situated in the North Caucasus. All of them are facing many problems sparked by steep change of the political climate. In a subsequent difficult situation the Caucasian nations are searching for reliable political partners to guarantee their security and accelerate integration in the World processes.

Interests of the regional countries – Russia, Turkey and Iran in the Caucasus are often contradictory, however it is possible to spot out some basic tendencies:

Russia regards the Caucasus, as well as other former Soviet republics, as its “near abroad”, that creates so-called “security belt” around the country. Subsequently, Russia's attempts to keep up military and economic control in the former Soviet republics as well as its unwillingness to let other countries appear in the Caucasus is quite understandable. Russia is strongly against co-operation between the former Soviet republics and NATO, construction of the Caspian pipeline via the Caucasus, East-West transport corridor, etc. Still strong in Armenia, Russia had to withdraw the troops from Azerbaijan and restrict in Georgia. Taking into account shaky foundations of the Russian military presence in the country, their withdrawal is a matter of time. More than that, despite the North Caucasus is a part of the Russian Federation, in 1994-99 years the Russian troops have been turned out of Chechnya. As for the Russian feeble economic influence in the Caucasus, it is supposed to weaken even more.

Iran seems to benefit from newly established states of the Caucasus and Central Asia: serving for a buffer zone between Russia and Iran they have reduced Iran's traditional anxiety about possible Russian aggression against Iran; besides, Iran got new possibilities to reach China through Central Asia and Europe – through the Caucasus, though it failed to

influence the above-mentioned states ideologically. Yet possible expansion of Turkey and the western countries causes Iran's great anxiety as far as it may be hazardous not only for its economic position in these regions, but also for its inner stability urging separatists in Azeri-populated Northern provinces of Iran. It made attempt to back Armenia trying to mediate in the 1992 year Karabakh conflict. Iran, together with Russia makes attempts to impede exploitation of the Caspian oil fields by the western oil companies claiming that the Caspian Sea is a secluded reservoir.

Turkey's attitude towards such top issues as the Caspian Sea oil transportation, the East West transport corridor and the Karabakh conflict is quite different. Apart from Iran, Turkey has more developed economy and looks, therefore, more competitive. As a NATO member it enjoys steady positions in the region, carrying danger to Russian and Iran's interests in Central Asia, but Turkey's political and economic outlooks greatly depend on the Caucasus as far as the way to the Central Asia lays on the Caucasus. Turkey failed to revive its traditional idea of "The great Turan", that was supposed to unite peoples of the Turkish origin of newly established independent countries after disintegration of the Soviet Union.

On the face of it habitual orientations pertaining to the Caucasus are being gradually restored:

Azerbaijan tries to formulate pragmatic relations with Russia, though generally it may be regarded as Turkey-orientated. Azerbaijan-Iran relations may be specified as lukewarm because of lack of confidence.

Armenia is regarded as Russia's ally in the South Caucasus. Armenia has nice relations with Iran, whereas relations with Turkey are somewhat tensed.

Georgia has no precise orientation towards any of the regional country, trying to keep balance between them. The Russian-Georgian relations may be specified as unsteady, though developing, yet Georgia is very cautious with Turkey's initiative. Georgia has no common border with Iran, so, Georgia considers Iran extremely through its policy towards Russia, Turkey and western countries.

Being a part of the Russian Federation, the North Caucasus constantly struggles for independence gradually reducing Russian control from one hand and strengthening connections with Turkey, Iran and countries of Middle East from another.

Thus, Russian control is being reduced in the Caucasus, whereas links with Turkey and Iran, forbidden in the Soviet period, are being gradually renewed, that imply restoration of traditional balance in the Caucasus between Russia, Turkey, and Iran.

It is noteworthy to mention that decrease of Russian control in the Caucasus will not urge increase of Iran and Turkey's chances in the Caucasus.

Iran didn't succeed in its attempts to strengthen positions in Azerbaijan (correspondingly in the Caucasus), by erecting new mosques. Turkey's efforts to sustain the president of Azerbaijan Elchibey and his pro-Turkish policy caused increase of Russia's influence in Azerbaijan. This can be proved by painless replacement of Elchibey by relatively moderate politician Heidar Aliiev.

Despite the Russian-Georgian relations worsened, Georgia's attitude towards Turkey remains cautious due to the repercussions of the past relations with Turkey from one hand and events of the last few years from another. Participation of Russians in the Abkhazian conflict was widely expected by the Georgians taking into account Russian-Georgian tensed relations, but participation of citizens of Turkey and the North Caucasians alongside the separatists caused the Georgians anxiety and aroused suspicions concerning the interests of Turkey. Subsequently, Georgia, calculating to avert further violation of the regional balance, reverted to Russia.

Thus, the Caucasus remains the hot geopolitical unit due to its involved pattern of historically developed orientations. Consideration of the Caucasus through any of the big regional countries (Turkey, Iran, and Russia) may spark violation of balance in the region; i.e. attempts of any of the regional countries to dominate in the Caucasus may strengthen an opposition. (This circumstance makes Elchibey's concepts of "Turkism" an extraneous doctrine). In this connection the Baltic republics have got better conditions – the East-or-West dilemma is certainly easier to solve.

In the last years of the Soviet period the Soviet republics hoped to be sustained by the western communities in their struggle for independence. They regard the western countries as guarantors of progressing democratic processes in the Soviet republics. The Baltic republics had far better conditions than the Caucasian ones due to more clear-cut position of the West in the Baltic republics.

Armed conflicts and shaky Russian-Georgian relations aroused Georgia's fear to be repeatedly abandoned by the West. The former foreign minister of Germany Mr. Gensher, during his visit in Georgia in 1992, was asked if the western countries would support Georgia to resist confrontation with Russia. Mr. Gensher assured the Georgian community that the western countries would sustain Georgia in search of independence.

In 1992 year Georgia found itself drawn not only into the deep economic crisis, but also into the military conflicts. Disintegration of the Soviet Union notwithstanding, Russia, unwilling to admit Georgia's independence, supported separatists both in Abkhazia and Tskinali regions. The Russian mass media intensely discussed Georgia's political status (what would suit Russia more: Georgia united or split into Abkhazian, Osetian, and Armenian states.) By that time, breaking a precedent, western countries Germany, France, Great Britain, and USA first admitted Georgia's independence that agitated Russia, including representatives of Russian democratic forces (Mrs. Staravoltova, Mrs. Bonner, etc). At last, Russia had to admit Georgia's independence.

Political, economic and humanitarian support of the West played a significant role in development of democratic processes in the South Caucasian countries. Hence, the Caucasian countries are open to further relations and co-operation with the West and try to reinforce connections with its countries. Apart from the past times nowadays the Caucasians regard the West as a major factor of stability in the Caucasus with a precise place in the system of forces of regional balance.

Geopolitical Survey

As it was stated above, the Caucasus is a political region with certain arrangement of geopolitical forces where all political processes are developing according to some logic. Here we make attempts to analyze results of such development and possible danger to security of the Caucasus in case of "natural" development of events, i.e. without interfering and demonstration of a certain political will that would change the habitual march of events. It would be interesting to discuss relations between the Caucasian nations that have been struggling for survival in different political teams, not from the point of view of confrontation with Iran, Russia or Turkey.

It is well known from the history that the North Caucasian nations, urged by Iran and Turkey used to invade Georgia (for inst. invasion of Eastern Georgia by Shamil in 1854). After Georgia had accepted protection of Russia, the Georgian militants of the Russian army used to revenge themselves on them and vice versa, the Russians often used the North Caucasians to suppress the Georgian rebels, as well as Armenians and Azeris. The Caucasian nations, facing similar problems, practically have been forced to fight against each other.

The present situation echoes the past events. In 1992-93 years Chechens took an active part in the Abkhazian conflict struggling alongside Russians against Georgians. But after Georgians quit fighting and reverted to Russia in 1993-94 years, they began to formulate close relations with Russia driving it to attack "separatists". When the Russian-Chechen Military conflict began in 1994-95 years the Russian aircrafts used the territory of Georgia bombing positions of the Chechen armed forces.

(It is worth mentioning that in 1992-93 years Georgia's policy was orientated at the executive branch of Russia ("democratic" Russia), whereas the North Caucasians searched for an ally in the parliament of Russia ("reactionary" Russia). Tensions between "two Russias" sparked disagreements between their allies in the Caucasus and vice versa: discords in the Caucasus mirror confrontations between above-mentioned opposing forces in Russia).

Thus, the Georgians and the North Caucasians found themselves in different political teams again.

The conclusion is as follows: Attempts of the Caucasians to protect their interests in the Caucasus by means of their big regional allies are absolutely pointless as far as they usually scale up confrontation making the situation uncontrollable that finally sparks strengthening of positions of the big regional powers and brings the Caucasus to the contrary result. (For instance, Armenia, allying with Russia and Iran, tries to strengthen its positions with Turkey but runs a risk using the same alliance against Azerbaijan or Georgia. The same can be mentioned concerning all Caucasian nations).

Nevertheless, regulation of these problems is not unthinkable. Being insoluble, they may be at least manageable: if the entire region, political orientation and slogan notwithstanding, pursues the (inter-Caucasian) non-confrontation policy. Unless all conflicts are not

regulated by negotiations between the Caucasian countries, the Caucasian historical mechanism will work and harm everybody's interests.

Seemingly, the regional countries Russia, Turkey and Iran can't be regarded as only guarantors of security and stability of the Caucasian countries. Interference in the internal affairs of the Caucasus would spark riots in the region. A dilemma-either co-operation or confrontation may also carry danger. Either negligence of the big regional powers' interests or their excessive interference in the Caucasus's internal affairs may bring the region towards the grave economic and political consequences. The following story is a good example to demonstrate possibility to keep up balance between two regional powers:

Two nations of the similar geopolitical condition — the Basques and the Catalonians located on the French and Spanish border have been sustained influence of both countries during the long centuries. The two countries succeeded in their attempts to split the land of the Basques. By that time just on the French and Spanish frontier appeared the Catalonian political unit - Andorra that remained independent up to the present times. The Basques, struggling both against the French and the Spain couldn't stand, whereas Andorra, admitting at its territory both Spanish episcopate and French counts and later accepted double suzerainty, survived. The two powers balanced in Andorra turned to be favorable for the country. If the Basques formulated the like policy towards France and Spain, they would enjoy independence like Andorra.

This example shows that the Caucasian problems are at least manageable, if not soluble, in case all Caucasian nations come to terms reckoning with interests of all three great regional powers and trying to balance forces focused in the region. The Caucasians and particularly Georgia have to formulate policy towards the regional countries taking into account the common situation in the Caucasus. Caucasian unity is being an extremely pragmatic concept based on necessity to consolidate interests of all Caucasian nations in joint efforts to formulate right policy towards other countries.

The given analysis shows that the policy of Georgia as well as other Caucasian countries including the North Caucasus is to be regarded as one whole as far as interests of three big regional countries (Russia, Turkey, and Iran) are realised in the Caucasus in a whole. The Caucasus is to be regarded as a Barry Buzan's "security complex", i.e. "group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another".

There certainly appear some alternative approaches; for instance, some people in Georgia consider there is no need to formulate special policy towards such countries as Armenia and Azerbaijan – they should be treated as any of other independent countries, whereas Georgia's policy towards the North Caucasus should not be discussed at all regarding it as a part of the Russian Federation. According to other categorical premise, the Georgians and the North Caucasians are regarded as a unique, historically determined unity.

In this connection, it should be mentioned that the Caucasian unity is rather a pragmatic concept targeting at provision of the Caucasus with peace and stability. For instance, despite the North Caucasus is a part of the Russian Federation, it acts as an independent political force, which can directly affect Georgia's stability (Participation of the North Caucasians in

the Abkhazian conflict). These circumstances make the Georgians seriously reckon with the North Caucasian factor while formulating the foreign policy. Straight dialogue with the North Caucasus is a matter of security rather than of Georgian and North Caucasian common ethnic and cultural outset.

The military conflicts and their consequences followed the break up of the Soviet Union. The Caucasian countries, having experienced the same problems that they had in the past times came at a conclusion that the way to peace and sustainable development of the Caucasus is a dialogue and co-operation between each other. Enchained by acute problems of refugees, uncertain political status of seized territories, etc, the Caucasian nations comprehended importance of a peace dialogue and political methods of their solution. In this connection the Georgian Project of "Peaceful Caucasus" and "Caucasian OSCE"— the Chechen idea are noteworthy to mention. The joint economic projects, such as the East West transport corridor, the Caspian oil transportation project can play the significant part in development of the Caucasian co-operation.

Attitude of the big regional countries towards the Caucasian unity is a matter of special consideration. This unity must be beneficial for all above-mentioned countries, as far as they are interested in stability of the Caucasus. Anyway, the Caucasian unity must be formed with active participation of these countries reckoning with their consultations and public opinion.

Formation of the foreign policy of the Caucasus (Georgia) towards the non-regional countries, particularly, with the west countries, is one of the most significant issues.

Traditionally, the West considered the Caucasus through Russia, Turkey or Iran. The West countries used to support Iran and Turkey in order to halt the Russian expansion in the South. But this policy sparked exacerbation of the situation in the Caucasus and break up of the historically developed balance between Russia, Turkey, and Iran, as far as these countries had their own traditional interests in the Caucasus. Subsequently, Georgia, trying to wrest itself from Turkey and Iran's control found itself incorporated by Russia. Nowadays, we observe quite another picture: straight links with the western countries enable the Caucasian countries to avert traditional competition between Russia, Turkey and Iran for hegemony in the region. The more the West affects the region, the steadier is the Caucasus. But if the West encourages predominance of any of these countries empowering it to regulate the processes in the region, (i.e. supports either Russia in order to regulate democratic processes in the Caucasus, or Turkey targeting at decrease of Russian control in the Caucasus), the balance will be upset sparking new conflicts. Thus, the Caucasian countries should be directly integrated into the World processes but not through or by means of any of the regional countries.

Thus, the present situation of the Caucasus can be specified as transitional from the 'old' to 'new' concepts of the Caucasian security. The old concept of security implied protectorate of a big regional country (Russia, Turkey, Iran), whereas the new concept is based on the Caucasian alliance and strengthening of straight connections with the western countries. Obviously, the transition period is uneven and contradictory, mainly due to coexistence of both concepts that spark contradictory approaches towards the foreign policy

of the Caucasus. For instance, in some cases Georgia specifies the Abkhazian problem as analogous to the Chechen one (let us say, to make Russia concerned about regulation of the Abkhazian problem), whereas in other cases (for instance, discussing the same problems with the North Caucasians) it stresses the contrary opinion. As to the North Caucasians, the transitional period can be traced in their contradictory approach towards Georgia. First, finding likeness between the Abkhazian and their own problems, the Chechens supported the Abkhazian separatists in the struggle against Georgia, then they preferred to be orientated at Georgia. Asserting on the difference between the Abkhazian and the Chechnya conflicts Georgia could diminish the role of a mediator that Russia claims to take in the Abkhazian conflict. Contradictions caused by coexistence of the old and the new approaches can be also traced in Armenia and Azerbaijan. For instance, Armenia tries to even up military strategic co-operation with Russia and economic support of the West. Evidently, analysing the present situation there still remains a danger of restoration of the old security system, but strengthening of the straight links with the West and development of the Caucasian dialogue gradually makes it less possible.

Finally, after the World War II, when the World was divided into two poles, the western countries supported Iran and Turkey to rescue them from threatening Soviet aggression. Subsequently, the problems of democracy and human rights in those countries were ignored to some extent. Solution of these and other problems concerning reformation of those countries is a rather thoughtful issue that may seriously affect stability of those countries. For this reason, in the foreign policy these countries are traditionally balancing between Russia and the West seeking their own "unique" way of development corresponding to their traditional concepts. This can be exemplified by Iran's revolution as well as by strengthening of Islamic movement in Turkey.

In such circumstances the Caucasus may play either negative (provoking separatism in these countries), or positive (serving for a buffer) roles. If the Caucasian countries find themselves drawn into the inner processes of these countries, consequences will be deteriorating. This circumstance makes even more significant development of straight links with the West.

Conclusions

The external field of Georgia could be divided into three parts:

1. Local (sub-regional) - the Caucasus is a complex system of distribution of geopolitical forces, which has been developing under the influence of Russia, Turkey, and Iran, though it could remain different from these countries. Confrontation between three big geopolitical powers sparks confrontation within the Caucasus. Interference of any of the big regional powers in the inner Caucasian conflicts inevitably involves another regional power, i.e. expansion of the conflict.

2. Regional (open regional) - Russia, Turkey, Iran - These countries demonstrate the special interest towards the Caucasus and have been making constant attempts to bring the

region under control. From the other hand, the Caucasus is not a sole region they are interested in. They play a significant part in the World politics.

3. Global (the World) – The non-regional powers traditionally are less interested in the Caucasus, but they are extremely concerned with the Situation in Russia, Turkey and Iran.

These are interrelated statements greatly affecting each other, however, taking into account all above-listed circumstances, it is quite possible to work out a certain approach towards each level of political relations:

1. As far as the regional countries tend to be involved in the Caucasian conflicts due to the above-discussed historical mechanism, Georgia has to formulate the foreign policy targeting at regulation of inner conflicts within the framework of the Caucasus. It is possible only through negotiations, targeting at establishment of a kind of the Caucasian regional unity and elaboration of ways of regulation of inner Caucasian problems by means of local forces, besides, it is important to plan joint programs in Economy, politics, social fields, and science.

2. As to Russia-Turkey-Iran "open" region, Georgia should make maximal efforts to reckon with their interests trying not to breach the balance in favor of either of them in the Caucasus in order to avoid disruptions, which may bring the region to the conflicts.

3. Non-regional countries (the West, in particular). Georgia should strengthen straight connections with the western countries avoiding integration into the World community through any of the habitual, big regional country, as far as this may cause strengthening of latest positions in the Caucasus, break up of the balance and consequently, instability.

On the basis of above-stated approaches we can frame short statements with regards to the Georgian (the Caucasian countries') foreign policy.

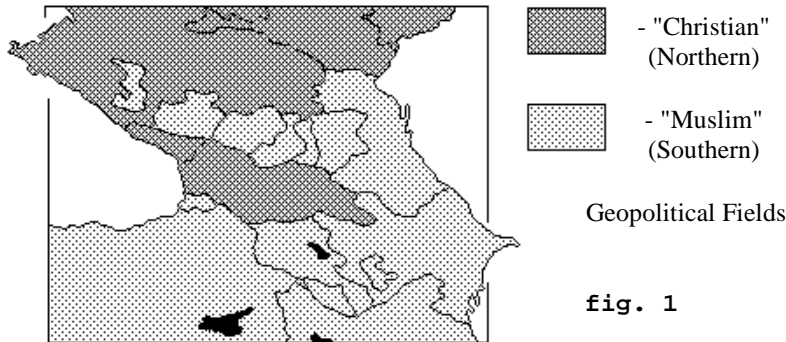
Local level – Integration; Regional level – Balance; Global level – Straight connections.

These principles come together and cover the entire field of the foreign policy. Besides, the above-listed approaches shape an entire system of the Georgian political background; violation of either of them causes violation of the others. For instance, formation of relationships with the West through any of the big regional countries would cause strengthening of its positions in the Caucasus, breach of the balance between the big regional countries and subsequently, instability in the Caucasus.

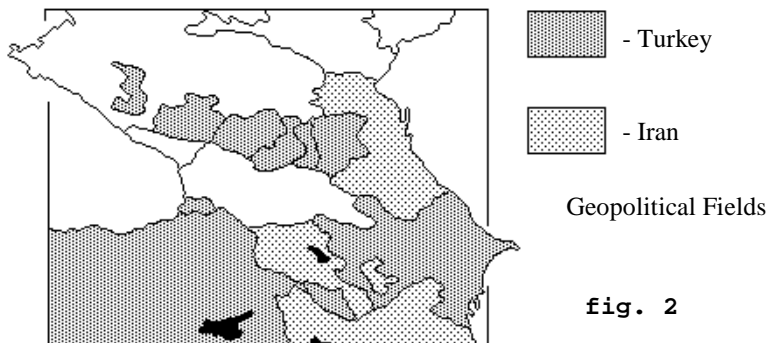
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Analysis, presented in the article is superficial to a certain extent. For instance, the North Caucasus is regarded as one region, whereas it comprises several ethnic groups. The role of Armenia and Azerbaijan in interrelations of the North and the South is not analysed either. Still it can be used both for more detailed analysis of the present situation and spotting out the future tendencies.

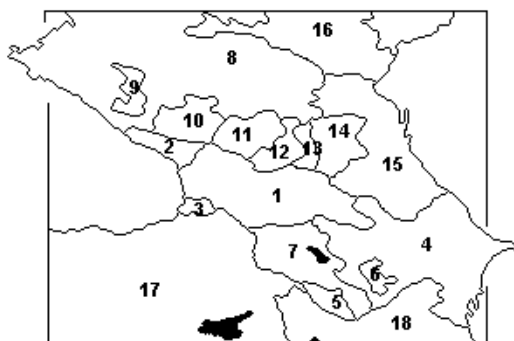
The given pattern outlines the Caucasus as a complex political unit. Though simplified, it gives essential characteristics of the Caucasian geo-political picture.



Coming into contact, the Northern and Southern geopolitical forces created not a mere junction of the Islamic South and Christian North geopolitical areas, but a kind of transversal zone consisted of the Christian South and Muslim North.



Armenia and Azerbaijan also played the same part of a point of intersection of Iran and Turkey. Armenia is situated straight between Turkey and Azerbaijan, ethnically related to Turkey. The small isthmus, which joins Armenia to Iran, separates Azerbaijan from Turkey



- 1. Georgia
- 2. Abkhazia
- 3. Adjara
- 4. Azerbaijan
- 5. Naghchevan
- 6. Kharabag
- 7. Armenia

8. Russia

- 9. Adige
- 10. Karachai-Cherkezia
- 11. Kabardo-Balkaria
- 12. Ossetia
- 13. Ingusheti
- 14. Chechenia
- 15. Dagestan
- 16. Kalmikia
- 17. Turkey
- 18. Iran

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