Paradoxical South Caucasus: Nations, Conflicts and Alliances

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This thesis titled
Paradoxical South Caucasus: Nations, Conflicts and Alliances

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ABSTRACT

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On one hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union was the end of a number of insolvable issues; on the other, it created new, no less challenging ones with which states that emerged from the ashes of the Red Empire had to deal. Ancient hatreds, hostilities and violence became an inseparable part of the South Caucasus where confrontations closed ways to cooperation and peace. How did the Soviet Union generate these hatreds and conflicts? Why these threats and bloody armed conflicts? Where do they come from? How does each state react to those threats? The newly independent states even had to fight each other by forming, inter alia, powerful military alliances. What are the dynamics and implications of the alliance formation in the South Caucasus? How do these states choose their strategic-military allies? To what extent do heterogeneous military alliances between Armenia and Russia or Azerbaijan and Turkey, along with Georgia’s effort to join NATO at any price despite negative messages from Russia, stabilize or destabilize the overall status-quo in the region? What drives those newly independent states in choosing their partners? Are those alliances cohesive? If so, how so? These questions are at the core of this research and are discussed and explored along with other important issues and conundrums.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Patricia A. Weitsman

Professor of Political Science
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INTRODUCTION

The world that surrounds us is rich in its regions, sub-regions, and states. Every region and state in the world has characteristics; some of them are common to all regions and states, others are specific to only one. Some regions are well studied, while others have attracted scientific inquiries more recently. By the same token, the world of politics is filled with very insightful topics and phenomena that have been studied and discussed extensively providing interesting and compelling details and insights about the reality that we call international relations. However, there are others that remain the foci of interests for only a few scholars.

The region of the South Caucasus, as a strategically important region, has become a source of regional studies only recently, especially in the framework of research on causes and consequences of the emergence of the Soviet Union and its demise just after the end of the Cold War. By the same token, the topic of the region’s alliances, their origins and politics has received less attention compared to many other dimensions of world politics. This thesis is designed to combine these two very interesting topics into one research effort aimed at exploring, on one hand, the dynamics of the South Caucasian states in the context of the emergence and later dissolution of the Soviet Union, and on the other, the dynamics of alliance formation, its implications and interactions among these states and among formed alliances. Recent developments over the Iranian nuclear program, the worsening relations between Israel and Turkey, two close American allies1, some progress and at the same time, some regress in NATO-Russia relationship and its influence on the South Caucasian context, make these tasks more compelling.

Based on the works and insights of prominent scholars such as Waltz, Walt, Snyder, Weitsman and others on alliances, and on existing literature about the history of the Soviet Union and the independence of the South Caucasian states since 1991, this thesis attempts to pose and answer a number of questions in order to reveal complicated interactions among nations, the confrontations they face and the alliances they form to “win” these battles. Hence, this tripartite study is about (1) nations of the South Caucasus and their history: (2) conflicts and the history of these conflicts; (3) and alliances and their characteristics. Through an exploration of the history of the region, dynamics of hostilities and conflicts, and independence movements, this work offers an analysis of heterogeneous alliances in the region, thus helping us to understand more thoroughly alliance formation mechanisms and the multilayer motives there.

What was the historical context and background in which the South Caucasian states emerged at the beginning of the 20th century? How and why have they been incorporated into the Soviet Union and what threats did they face? What were the driving forces pushing them toward independence movements in the late 1980s, just after the Berlin Wall fell, and how was the overall hostility toward one another established? What threats were they facing during the first years of independence? What role do ongoing conflicts play in the overall dynamics of alliance formation? What are the sources of threats and how are alliances formed to handle them? To what extent do those threats change alliance behavior? What is the degree of cohesiveness inside alliances, and to what extent do those alliances stabilize or destabilize the region? These questions are answered in this thesis, a comprehensive research which, in a historical context and in the framework of alliance formation, explores the region of the South Caucasus from the
very first days of the Soviet Empire, through its collapse and the years that followed up to the present days.

The complexity of the region, difficult and complicated interactions between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, on one hand, and big powers such as Russia, Turkey, and the US, on the other, make the task of covering all important aspects and essential details very compelling. Every detail counts and it is impossible to explore all important aspects, including alliance formation in the South Caucasus, without looking at the broad picture and multidimensional character of processes in the region. The thesis not only sheds a new light on the historical processes of Sovietization and de-Sovietization of the South Caucasus, it also provides a very careful and comprehensive exploration of internal issues, ethno-territorial conflicts, the struggle for freedom, and how alliances Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia form. To understand the parts we need to explore the whole and vice-versa.

This research intends to explore (1) the intertwined, interdependent and complicated multidimensional relations among these nations; (2) the impact of conflicts, and (3) the alliances they form. The alliance formation processes in the South Caucasus have not been discussed previously in such a thorough and empirical way. Moreover, existing theories in IR are not often applied to the three South Caucasian states. To explore these alliance behaviors the thesis looks at all three levels of analysis: individual (decision-making), domestic (bureaucracy and nature of the state) and international (international environment). This approach, based on Weitsman’s theoretical findings, will help us understand the complicated present and explore future implications. Intra-

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2 Jervis’s definitions in his “Perception and the Level of Analysis Problem”, in International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 29, No. 2, (June 1985), Ch. 1, p. 15, differ from those of other authors, so I have enclosed them in parentheses.
regional conflicts are an inseparable part of the South Caucasian reality, while the presence of big powers, with their heterogeneous interests and ambitions, is crystallized in the alliances the three South Caucasian states form independently. The ultimate aim is to assess the level of impact of the presence of different alliances in the region on the likelihood of destabilization of the security balance in the region.

On one hand, a major implication of this thesis is to provide more insights for those who are familiar with the puzzling situation in the South Caucasus and, on the other, to serve as a guide to those who are not yet acquainted with it. Through the contextualization of conflicts, the research aims to analyze complicated regional interactions and their impact on the overall geo-political landscape of the broader region. The culmination of the research is the alliance formation issue. The puzzle is to see how the regional context affects alliance formation processes and how formed alliances influence the region. In other words, the thesis seeks to understand what the region tells about alliances and what alliances can tell about the region. The identification of the nature and behaviors of alliances, based on the existence of materialist and ideational threats, can give us insights about the region itself. Even those who are not familiar with the military-political situation in the South Caucasus, can extract useful information about it by simply looking at alliances, the levels of threat and commitment of allies or their overall characteristics in general. The tables established in this thesis will serve this purpose and will help one to understand the complexity of the region through alliance formation motives and processes of the states.

A thorough exploration of these conflicts and the complicated interactions among nations, states and alliances brings to the surface a number of new questions that
challenge observers in general and me, in particular, to further explore alliance motives and behaviors in the region and to see the applicability of these findings to the other cases as well. There is a high level of complexity of issues in the region, which pushes us to carefully explore all possible details and make assumptions that could comprehensively demonstrate possible implications of regional interactions. The military-political and strategic diversity of the three South Caucasian states, coupled with the Soviet past of the region, the ethno-linguistic affinities of nations there, the presence of big powers and their far-reaching interests, makes the region unique but exemplary as well. It is a sort of laboratory where one can explore different political impacts, trends, developments and interactions in a very small territory. Hence, the thesis seeks to offer insights and findings that could help other scholars and researchers to explore other regional and supra-regional alliances with similar and different backgrounds.

This thesis is twofold: On one hand, it is problem-driven (the role of alliances in keeping peace or escalating conflicts) and, on the other, it is theory-driven (the application of IR theories and generalizations about alliance formation based on materialist and ideational threats as opposed to existing theories on alliance formation that are mostly materialist-oriented). Another implication of this research is not only to analyze the conflicts, their destructive role for the region and subsequent alliance formation motives and behaviors, but to seek to make some theoretical contributions to the field of IR. One of these contributions is to see and justify the utility of empirically combined but analytically separated application of three main IR theories and approaches: Realism, Liberalism/Institutionalism (materialist) and Constructivism (ideational). To me, this combination is more inclusive and gives much more validity and
accuracy to the exploration and interpretation of facts and underlying issues than would occur if they were applied separately and isolated from other theories. Through findings of the present analysis I seek to indirectly advocate for an appropriate theoretical synergy and empirical combination of different scientific approaches and views as an efficient tool for future research and works in IR.³

Chapter One gives a comprehensive overview of the existing theories on alliances, sources and levels of threats and the incentives for their formation. It examines the four main alliance behaviors, their dynamics, internal cohesion and the alliance paradox they create under the umbrella of an anarchic environment. It also reviews the existing literature on alliance formation of the three South Caucasian states. Chapter Two descriptively explores the establishment and demise of the USSR, the emergence of hostilities and conflicts due to Soviet federalism and Russia’s role in subsequent developments in former Soviet states. Chapter Three identifies the history and recent developments of three major conflicts in the South Caucasus and their impact on the overall military-political and socio-economic landscapes of the region. Chapter Four explores the three South Caucasian states since their liberation movements, the resulting independence and the needs in alliance formation. Chapter Five seeks to reveal motives and dynamics of alliance formation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia respectively. Chapter Six contains a comprehensive exploration of dyadic relations between states, alliances members and alliances. The concluding Chapter Seven revisits Weitsman’s alliance paradox theory to apply it to the case study.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The structure of the thesis follows a chronologically ascending path of reasons and motives for alliance formation and its dynamics in each three of the South Caucasian states before the Sovietization of the region and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The research design is built on (1) the exploration of existing theories on alliance formation, (2) understanding the historical background of the region, (3) exploration of dynamics of hostilities that led to conflicts in the region pushing Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to choose military-strategic allies, (3) assessment of levels of threat, the commitment and level of cohesion of alliances and (4) evaluation of stabilizing and destabilizing dimensions of alliances in the region. Weitsman’s theoretical and empirical findings will serve as a general basis for the whole exploration of alliance formation dynamics and implications in the South Caucasus, while her theories of levels of threat, cohesion and alliance paradox will be applied to our case study in a more detailed way.

First, I examine the recent history of the formation of republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in a regional (Transcaucasian) and broader (Soviet) context. This will provide a much better understanding of the military-political and socio-economic environment in which the three South Caucasian states form alliances. The Soviet past and the overall Russian impact on the region are far-reaching; hence more attention is paid to that dimension along with other no less important dimensions. Second, I do not resort to just one IR theory, but rather consider other contextually appropriate ones that might better explain puzzles that I face in exploring and understanding complex processes in the region including alliance formation. While the realist approach is an excellent tool to explain many issues, institutional and constructivist views, in their turn,
help to give broader and more inclusive explanations to a number of implicit and explicit processes and developments in the region. Third, I explore the emergence of hostilities and resulting conflicts from their historical and current prospective. Fourth, I give some new insights on alliance formation of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia taking into account specificities of those states’ histories, political-economic ambitions, systemic constraints and differences in their identities. By doing so, I seek to make some contribution to filling the theoretical holes that exist in the studies of the South Caucasus. Almost all existing research done in that region is realist, making those studies lopsided and merely descriptive, and, thus failing to include all possible details. Fifth, having applied Weitsman’s theories and approaches to my case study, I make new assessments on the intra-alliance developments and inter-alliance interactions in the context of possible future changes of the status quo in the region. Also, I introduce a new concept of materialist versus ideational dichotomy in evaluating internal and external sources of threat.

The use of a case study is straightforward and allows me to build my thesis in a structured and organized way. I use the comparative method to assess (1) the historical path of each South Caucasian state, (2) the ideational aspect of developments and evolution of hostilities, (3) dynamics of the emergence of threats and conflicts and (4) the alliance formation motives and resulting behaviors. These parallels are important to correctly applying (1) existing theories and (2) Weitsman’s multidimensional theoretical findings on alliance formation and its characteristics at the end of the thesis.

I look first at the three states just before and during the Soviet Union period. Then I present a more complex picture arising from the emergence of hostilities and hatreds in
the region and the formation of new independent states—a fact that complicated further
the situation and transformed these tense relations into violent bloody conflicts.

In addition, to assess the level of threats and the degree of cohesion, the thesis
seeks: (1) to explore historical facts, current developments and trends, increase in
hostilities, involvement in conflicts and resulting alliance formations; and (2) to establish
special tables illustrating these indicators. This approach is a combination of qualitative
data with quantitative-wise tables that summarize our findings in previous chapters.
Sources, levels of threats and perceived hostile intentions are identified through a
thorough analysis of the geo-political situation and different geo-strategic developments
of the South Caucasus since the first days of its Sovietization and beyond. The
aggregation of these data in the form of tables 1; 2 and 3 provides new insights about
alliance behaviors of the South Caucasian states and their partners. These tables seek to
establish and analyze dyadic relations under conditions of threats between not only
Armenia and Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey, or Georgia and the West, but also between
a given South Caucasian state and other states and powers. Levels of threats and
intentions in these tables are calculated based on Weitsman’s assessment which posits
that the level of threat is a function of: Military expenditures; military size; industrial
resources in terms of iron and steel production and in terms of urban population; total
population; proximity of the homeland; and intentions. According to this approach an
increase or a reduction in level of threat is characterized by a growth or a decrease in one
of these categories.4 For these tables, intentions are determinant in identifying levels of
threat.

4 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 34.
Tables 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9 and 10 summarize characteristics of each alliance in terms of a state’s motives under conditions of threat, external/internal and ideational/materialist threats, and in terms of the level of commitment and the degree of intra-alliance cohesiveness. This qualitative and table-based combined identification of necessary aspects and features helps one to look empirically at (1) the interactions between those states without alliances; (2) why, how and with whom those states thereafter, formed alliances; (3) the dyadic relations inside and outside alliances; (4) the level of cohesion of alliances, and (5) the interactions between alliances.
CHAPTER ONE: ALLIANCE LITERATURE

Part 1: Alliances: Theories, Approaches and Definitions

A broad literature on alliances and alliance formation exists and continues to develop in the study of world politics. It encompasses more and more details and case studies that enrich our understanding of this particular phenomenon in political science. Alliances represent one of the most important forms of cooperation in international system. The dynamics of alliance formation and the different contents they acquired to address states’ different needs and challenges in different points of human history have been at the center of interest of many historians, thinkers and scholars.

Weitsman, in her Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War (2004) and a number of articles, makes a comprehensive classification of existing works, approaches and viewpoints into several main streams. She nicely traces the theoretical paths into which the alliances were framed by scholars representing various schools of thought. While clearly recognizing theoretical and empirical differences between those various arguments, in an essay Weitsman (2010) synthesizes them into two main groups: (1) the realist literature, and closely connected to the realist arguments is the rationalist and formal literature, and (2) the literature developed from the liberal or institutionalist prospective. Connected to this are constructivist arguments in which alliance formation processes are more identity-based. For the purposes of the current research paper, this thesis will, to use a statistical term, recode Weitsman’s dual categorization and the existing literature into three main groups: (1) (neo) realist (combining realist, rationalist

and formal literatures), (2) (neo) liberal or institutionalist and (3) constructivist (including identity-based arguments).

Given the focus of this research, this tripartite separation seems more appropriate and corresponds better to the theoretical study of alliances in the South Caucasus and to arguments exploring empirical approaches. Weitsman (2010), herself, argues rightly that the literature on constructivist and identity-based arguments continues to progress and the difference vis-à-vis other theoretical frameworks becomes increasingly important.

Realism, focusing on power politics, threats and conflicts under security dilemma and anarchic environment, may have a lot to say about wartime, or near wartime alliances. Liberalism, focused on cooperative endeavors, harmonies of interests, and similar states structures and ideologies, may generate a number of insights on the operation of peacetime alliances. Constructivism advocates for the role of identities and identity-based interests and motives in alliance formations.

**Part 1.1: Realist Alliances**

The literature with a realist approach to world politics in general and alliances in particular is abundant. It covers a very broad spectrum of motivations and factors that culminate in the formation of alliances ranging from augmentation of power and capability aggregation through formation of alliances and reducing internal threats, to dynamics within alliances, their cohesion and disproportionate burden sharing. Proponents of the traditional realist perspective (Morgenthau, Gullick) argue that military alliances serve as “tools in a state’s arsenal to augment its power capabilities. States, according to this view, form alliances to add the power of their allies to their own”

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(Weitsman 2004). For Liska “alliance is as original an event in politics as is conflict: It associates like-minded actors in the hope of overcoming their rivals.” He argues that states enter into alliances to form partnerships or simply to supplement each other’s power capability. Snyder sees the alliance formation as a means to accumulate power.8

Neorealists or structural realists, such as Waltz, argue that states as unitary actors are acting under anarchic environments and are constrained by the systemic structures. In a self-help system, “at a minimum, they seek their own preservation, and at a maximum, drive for universal domination.” For Waltz, international politics is a competitive realm where states form alliances to maximize their security, by balancing against power. The balance of power theory is the driving research force for many other realists as well (Deutsch, Singer, Bueno de Mesquita, Stoll, Vasquez et al.). By contrast, Walt introduced the balance of threat theory, which posits that states respond to imbalances in threat, not just capabilities. He argues that “rather than allying in response to power alone, it is more accurate to say that states will ally with or against the most threatening power.”

Schweller offers a quite interesting concept of balance of interests instead of, or supplementing, the balance of power and balance of threats theories. And one quite innovative approach in explaining alliance patterns is that of David who, while exploring the first level of analysis, argues that especially in Third World states leaderships opt for partners to balance against internal threats.12

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7 Liska, George, Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1962, p. 3.
Weitsman argues that alliance choices are governed by the actual level of threat facing states, while there are threats that emanate from within alliances as well. She argues that “there is a curvilinear relationship between threat level and alliance formation,” resulting in balancing, bandwagoning, hedging or tethering behaviors depending on the level of threat. Alliance cohesion is another theoretical step forward by which Weitsman explores the complexity of military alliances.

Rationalist views (Singer, Smith, Sabrosky, Fearon, Leeds etc.) are mainly based on cost-benefit interplay in alliance formation.

**Part 1.2: Alliances as Institutions**

Neoliberal institutionalists such as Keohane, Wallander, Gheciu, Duffield, Long consider alliances as institutions and apply the neoliberal institutional theory. This emphasizes the role of institutionalization and creation of additional assets that, in addition to reducing transaction costs within alliances, render alliances more effective and survivable even when threats are minimized. Risse-Kappen argues that alliances “represent an institutionalization of the security community to respond to a specific threat.” The emphasis on non-state actors renders alliances vital in states’ choices and preferences. For Duffield, external threats, although reduced in some point of time are quite persistent and fuel the vitality of alliances such as NATO. Weitsman (2010), in summarizing neoliberal and institutionalist views, argues that such alliances are something more than the sum of their parts—a security community in which members

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14 Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 3.
transcend a mere alliance. High institutionalization of such alliances provides members with well-defined rules and establishes ambitious goals for enhancing members’ security.¹⁸ States seek to maximize their individual *absolute* gains and are indifferent to the gains of others. From a neoliberalist stance, cheating is the greatest impediment to cooperation among states, but international institutions, including alliances, help their members to overcome that and other barriers.¹⁹ They create an environment that, in contrast to an anarchic one, is beneficial and creates an order. The security and cooperative community established by alliances represents shared values and shared commitments to liberal democracy (Weitsman, 2010). It offers, as well, transparency, reduced transaction costs, economies of scale, credible commitments, rules, and information.²⁰ The institutional approach is very valuable in understanding how states can more comfortably cooperate with one another.

**Part 1.3: “Socially Constructed” Alliances**

Identity and idea-based constructivist explanations raise very important questions about the role identities, and interests emanating from those identities, play in alliance formation. A number of scholars (Katzenstein, Risse-Kappen, Finnemore, Barnett, Lynch, Desch, Williams, Neuman et al.) emphasize the politics of identity rather than the logic of anarchy and the balance of power/threat in their alliance formation. They argue that an identity-based approach provides a state with a better understanding of which states are viewed as potential or immediate threats to its national security.²¹ Threats are

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socially constructed and are not given by the structure.\textsuperscript{22} For Wendt, anarchy and the
distribution of power are insufficient to tell which country is an enemy and which is a
friend.\textsuperscript{23} States look at identities and the interest-based motivations of other states to
choose with whom to ally. Copeland emphasizes the role of shared ideas as an ideational
structure constraining and shaping behavior.\textsuperscript{24} Those structures constitute actors in terms
of their interests and identities, but structures are also produced, reproduced, and altered
by the discursive practices of agents.\textsuperscript{25} Alliances are behavioral outcomes of such
interplay.

For constructivists devoted to the task of exploring and analyzing post-Cold War
world politics, the “issues dealing with norms, identities and culture are becoming more
salient” because “the mix of factors affecting national security is changing.”\textsuperscript{26} The
identity-based approach focuses on how these identity factors affect the threat perception
and alliance behavior of states.\textsuperscript{27} Gause’s findings suggest that states can identify
ideological and political external threats to the domestic stability of their ruling regimes
as more salient than threats based upon aggregate power, geographic proximity and
offensive capabilities. The choice of an alliance partner is based on shared ideas, values,
understandings and identity. As the post-Cold War world evolves, civilization or
ideational commonality, what H.D.S. Greenway has termed the "kin-country" syndrome,

\textsuperscript{23} Wendt, Alexander, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 397.
\textsuperscript{25} Copeland, Dale C., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 190.
is replacing political ideology and traditional balance of power considerations as the principal basis for cooperation and coalitions.28

Constructivism sees alliances as by-products of national identity based interests and preferences. This relationship is based on shared identities and transnational political and cultural ideologies.29 The proponents of the constructivist prospective see a clear link between identity formation based on “self” versus “other” dichotomy30 and alliance formation. This approach seeks to explain how identities are constructed and how they shape and affect the foreign policies of a state. To predict states’ alliance behavior, constructivists explore this correlation between how states perceive themselves and others and how they chose partners.31

Part 2: Literature on Alliance Formation in the South Caucasus

In the framework of this thesis I have collected as many sources as possible to provide some interesting insights and ideas about the South Caucasus and alliance formation in the South Caucasus. A number of strategically important countries and regions (Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, etc.), differing by structure, regime and location, have been put under case studies and tested in terms of alliance formation, partner choices, alliance behaviors and general dynamics. However, there is almost nothing theoretically noteworthy written about allying behaviors, origins and strategies of the South Caucasian countries that a number of scholars and analysts consider geo-strategically important. There is no lack of newspaper articles and researches about the

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29 Gause, Gregory, op. cit., p. 278.
30 For “self” versus “other” dichotomy see Iver B. Neumann, “Russia as Central Europe’s constituting other”, in East European Politics and Societies, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Spring 1993).
region. The UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, the EU structures, International Crisis Group, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, International Alert, Amnesty International, and some American think-tanks such as CSIS, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the World Security Institute have been involved. However, most research misses important theoretical foundations and is written as reports and policy recommendations. Despite the interesting and compelling findings in those analyses, elements necessary to our theoretical understanding on alliance behaviors in the South Caucasus after the collapse of the USSR are still lacking.

The research done by Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University-SAIS is noteworthy. Svante Cornell—a prominent scholar in the field—has attempted to cover the problem of the different alliances in the South Caucasus. He discusses this topic in his book Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus, a rare attempt to understand the complexity of the region from different perspectives. Despite the scope of the book and its value in understanding different process patterns in the South Caucasus and beyond, Cornell’s arguments have mainly descriptive power and fail to provide accounts for generalizations and hence, for theorization. However, the book is still valuable empirically as a comprehensive attempt to provide meaningful explanations of complicated interactions in the region.

Ronald G. Suny’s Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Country Studies, without providing a theoretical framework, offers only historical case studies with some analytical insights into why no cohesion can be found between policies and strategies of the three states before and after the collapse of the USSR.
Michael Croissant’s *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications*, an attempt to summarize the “no war, no peace” status-quo between those two countries, looks at further development of the “frozen” conflict over the Nagorno-Karabagh (NK) region. He looks mainly at the domestic factors of the conflict.

Svante Cornell’s *Security Threats and Challenges in the Caucasus after 9/11* assesses the security level and different implications in the region. Though providing challenging insights and ideas and making a valuable contribution to empirical understanding of security issues in the region, it does not apply theories of IR.

None of the other sources I consulted provided theoretical explanations, offering only ad hoc descriptions and rationalizations. There was no attempt to take the South Caucasus as a case study in terms of alliance formation and test it. The only theory-driven research I could unearth is Turk scholar Hakan Şan’s master’s thesis *The Ethnic Dimension of Alliance Formation: Alignment Patterns in the Nagorno-Karabagh Conflict*, presented in 2007 at the Monterey Naval Postgraduate School. It is a theoretically consistent and informative work that attempts to theorize the role of ethnicity in alliance formation, but unfortunately includes only Armenia and Azerbaijan. David, on the other hand, offers a new theory of alignment that he applies to the Third World states, but he does not do so for the Soviet states.

The lack of analytically guided research in this area makes the research here more difficult. Weitsman’s book, as a comprehensive attempt to unify all existing approaches, provides arguments, innovative insights and a strong theoretical framework, is an important and reliable source for applying and testing some theories for our case study of

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32 See David, Steven R., *op. cit.*
alliance formation and its dynamics in the Caucasus. An overarching theoretical and empirical induction from a comprehensive look at existing alliance literature on behavior of the South Caucasian states indicates that all three form their alliances with powers and players with whom they have had political-military interactions in the past. First, the South Caucasian states prefer partners proven to be reliable and trustworthy, and second, as David argues, in weaker states “threatened leaderships have no choice.”

33 David, Steven R., op. cit., p. 236.

**Part 3: Why and with Whom to Ally?**

**Part 3.1: Alliance Motivations and Formation**

One central endeavor in the alliance literature is to provide satisfactory explanations of how and why alliances are formed. A number of scholars devoted their time and energy to discuss the complicated and nuanced definitions of alliance formation and motivations. Motivations and alliances formations vary from state to state, region to region, case to case. Alliances can be formal or informal, institutionalized and not, come on stage and dissolve afterwards when the need is reduced. Whereas some alliances provide military assistance (e.g., NATO, CSTO), others provide collaborative economic incentives (Commonwealth of Independent States, Eastern European Partnership, Shanghai Cooperation Organization). However, one of the most salient and telling driving forces in alliance formation remains the phenomenon of war or military engagements. This accompanies almost all nations through the labyrinths of human history. Applied to specific cases, previously explored theories seek to answer the “with whom” and “why” questions.
Realists such as Liska see alliances as basically formal associations between two or more states against the threat of a third, more powerful, one. For him, conflicts are the primary determinant of alliances. Structural realists such as Waltz, who argue that there is an overarching structure and that there are interacting and structurally constrained units within that structure, contend that anarchy and the distribution of relative power drive most of world politics. While Walt argues that states ally to balance against threats rather than power alone, he sees alliances as an (in) formal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states, each assuming some level of commitment. States choose to “join alliances to protect themselves from states or coalitions whose superior resources could pose a threat.” Levy argues that states form alliances to maximize their power. Hence, alliances are meant to deter war, win if war occurs, or initiate war under more favorable circumstances. Snyder defines alliances as “… formal associations of states for use (or non-use) of military force, intended for either the security or the aggrandizement of their members, against specific other states, whether or not these others are explicitly identified.” He makes a further distinction between alliance and alignment. Alliances are cooperative commitments formalized by explicit agreements which introduce a sense of obligation not present in tacit alignments. Hence, alignments give their members more freedom and do not require formal engagement. Weitsman is more prone to speak of military causes of alliance or coalition formation. She sees alliances formation processes in terms of the level of threats

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34 Liska, George, Nations in Alliance.
37 Walt, Stephen, M., op. cit., p. 18.
and intentions states perceive from one another. She further defines an alliance in terms of a formal or informal agreement between two or more states intended to further (militarily) the national security of participating states.\textsuperscript{41} While identifying a number of different commitment levels, Weitsman’s straightforward theory posits that the level of threats is what matters in alliance behavior. The association between the degrees of threats and alliance formation is direct but not linear. Rather, high, moderate and low levels of threats correlate with alliance-formation motives of states in a curvilinear way; states, depending on changes in those levels of threat can change their alliance preferences accordingly.

Liberal institutionalists see alliance-formation motives in the benefits accruing to states from adhering alliances. Like other institutions, alliances provide opportunities for improved communication and transparency.\textsuperscript{42} Alliances provide stronger states with more room for maneuvering and increasing their influence over other states in or out of alliances. For weaker states, alliances are a good platform both to secure their existence and to pay less while doing so. Institutionalized alliances are better structured systems and, hence, are more viable compared to those that are not. The networking effect of alliances brings these institutions to the level of global corporations with strong governance and planning systems. NATO is a good example.\textsuperscript{43} Such alliances by their very existence create incentives for other nations to join them and provide a number of assets through institutionalized norms, rules, and procedure.\textsuperscript{44} Thus, neoliberalism sees security as an institution that requires the institutional approach found in alliances. The

\textsuperscript{41} Weitsman, Patricia, \textit{Dangerous Alliances}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{42} Weitsman, Patricia, \textit{Dangerous Alliances}, p. 170.
\textsuperscript{43} See for example, Duffield, John S., \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{44} See for example, Wallander, Celeste, \textit{op. cit.}
alliances smooth relations among their own members\textsuperscript{45} and create an environment for better mutual understanding. Establishing a mutuality of interests through institutions can allow a state to minimize costs and maximize benefits of cooperation and to enhance the security rather than accomplishing those objectives alone.

Constructivism advocates for motives and incentives that have a logic endogenous to states’ identities. States choose partners with shared values, norms and socially constructed knowledge more easily than those with heterogeneous interests who do not share the same or at least similar identities. The theory of democratic peace\textsuperscript{46} is another example. Although this theory advocates for a realist prospective, its content provides compelling insights into the role identities play in choosing allies. Barnett argues that the variable of identity—and not only calculus of costs and benefits—can signal which states are more or less desirable partners.\textsuperscript{47} The Cold War period provides abundant material to illustrate how identities shaped the alliance behavior of states that have ultimately created two poles and confronting alliances—NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The formation, enlargement and preservation of this dichotomy was driven by ideational (democracy versus autocracy) forces and identity-based motivations fueled by a harsh and durable confrontation between so-called western and communist identities. The importance of cross-national ideological solidarity in alliance formation is another source of motivation for states to choose allies.\textsuperscript{48} Ideological networks provide incentives and motivation to ally with states in an ideological group.\textsuperscript{49} Realists such as Walt would argue that security

\textsuperscript{45} Duffield, John S., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 764.
\textsuperscript{47} Barnett, Michael, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 401.
\textsuperscript{48} Mecum, Mark M., \textit{Solving Alliance Cohesion: NATO cohesion after the Cold War}, a thesis presented to the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University, (June 2007), p. 27.
\textsuperscript{49} Mecum, Mark M., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 27.
considerations will prevail over ideological preferences, and ideologically based alliances will not survive when more pragmatic interests are at stake.\textsuperscript{50} For constructivists, however, the survival of alliances will be linked directly to the change of identities over time and hence, with a transformation of national interests. Changes in identities and subsequent transformation of national interests will drive states to choose new partners and new enemies. Constructivists see the preservation of NATO, on one hand, and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, on the other, as a telling example of how identities change and affect alliance formation behaviors. For NATO, those changes enhanced the existence of an alliance in which old and new members identify each other as having similar identities (democratic values), while the changes in identities after the collapse of the USSR reduced the need for a new alliance, because its former members were already considering each other as having different identities, hence, it was no longer possible to stay in the same alliance or to form a new one.

Whatever the difference in opinions and approaches, all scholars unanimously agree with the premise that alliances are a central phenomenon in world politics and that “it is impossible to speak of international relations without referring to alliances.”\textsuperscript{51} Moreover, for our research on alliance formation behaviors and the impact of those alliances on stability or instability in the region, all three main approaches—(neo) realist, neoliberal institutionalist and identity-based constructivist—are very important in our understanding and explaining the complex military-political and socio-economic picture in the South Caucasus. “Why” and “with whom” the South Caucasian states ally remains an open and difficult question to be explored in this research.

\textsuperscript{51} Liska, George, op. cit., p.3.
Part 4: Sources of Threat

One of the most difficult and compelling features in alliance formation and the choice of allies is to predict a state’s behavior in these processes. As a dependent variable, a state’s behavior is rooted in a number of factors. Forces that drive states to form alliance are various, but the most important are threats and fears that determine alliance choices and preferences. To explore these sources of threats, we will distinguish between two main approaches—(neo) realist and constructivist (as opposed to three in conceptualizing alliances and their role in world politics used previously in this chapter). Many realists agree that although power and capabilities are an important part of the equation, states tend to ally with or against the foreign power that poses the greatest threat\textsuperscript{52} and behave differently according to the specific level or degree of threat each experiences.\textsuperscript{53} Sources of threats are different and differently affect the level of threats that states may pose while shaping the behavior of the threatened state. Proponents of more realist, and hence more materialist, approaches (Waltz, Walt, Jervis) aggregately distinguish various levels of sources of threats—external (such as power, threats, intentions) and domestic or internal (such as coup d’état, peasant or bourgeois revolutions,\textsuperscript{54} “alien” religious propaganda).

By contrast, in his seminal work on social aspects of international politics Wendt fundamentally advances the roles that ideational and intersubjective factors play in shaping states’ behavior including alliance formation. His insights gave birth to a number of studies that are focused on threats generated by changes in states’ identities and

\textsuperscript{52} Walt, Stephen, M., \textit{The Origins of Alliances}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{53} Weitsman, Patricia, \textit{Dangerous Alliances}, p. 18.
national interests-based strategies. A state’s identities can pose direct threats to another, while changes in one state’s identity can raise new concerns for another.

In the context of the South Caucasian alliance formation these two approaches go hand in hand and supplement rather than contradict or are indifferent to, each other. In this context Weitsman’s threat level-based approach is equally applicable to both realist and constructivist approaches.

The military-political landscape of the South Caucasus provides alliance formation patterns that are simultaneously existentialist and identity-based. The complexity of interactions among those states and of interplay with big and regional powers cannot be fully explored and understood by looking at either realist or at constructivist explanations alone. The micro-anarchic regional environment (enhanced by broader geo-political challenges) in the South Caucasus is not the only independent variable and source of threats that causes variations in alliance formation policies (dependent variable) of the three Caucasian states. The ideational and identity-based threats (IV) also have a tremendous impact on partner choices and preferences (DV). As Gourevitch argues, “treating [them] together will compel us to think differently.”

Proponents of each camp, unfortunately, fail to combine efforts to see the holistic picture of the sources of threats. Though this gap is not theoretically and empirically crucial, this research will attempt to fill it. We will go further in this thesis and

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conceptualize the theoretical synthesis of realist and constructivist approaches (at least in
the South Caucasian context) to generate the notion of two-fold threats: *materialist and
ideational*. From an empirical point of view, these two-fold threats can, in their turn, be
both *external and domestic*. The figure below illustrates this idea visually.

![Diagram of threats' nature and directions](image)

*Figure 1: Schematic illustration of threats’ nature and directions*

This fragmentation and differentiation based on the nature (materialist versus
ideational) and the direction (external versus internal) of threats faced by states will be
useful for a better and deeper understanding of the complex sources and incentives that
drive the South Caucasian states to choose politico-military partners.

**Part 4.1: Materialist Sources of Threat**

**Part 4.1.1: Materialist External Threat**

Walt distinguishes four sources of threat with various degrees of danger:
*aggregate power; geographic proximity; offensive power and aggressive intentions.*

The first source is the driving force for the balance of power theory. The last is another
important component of threat. Geographic proximity, especially in the South Caucasian
context, is a determinant factor in alliance formation and omnipresent in policy choices of

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the states there. The combination of capabilities, power and intentions make external threats more powerful and may prompt states to seek appropriate alliance behaviors to respond to those threats. In this context, intentions perceived to be hostile constitute a materialist external threat. Even a small hostile state may be as threatening as a (non) hostile large one, especially if the former is allied with a more powerful state. Thus, the size does not really matter.

**Part 4.1.2: Materialist Internal Threat**

Some scholars (David, Desch) contend that preservation of power at the domestic level in the hands of the ruling elite or its leaders is an important source of fears and perception of threats from within the state itself. This led to further exploration of how threats can be internal. Some patterns of states’ alliance formation can be explained by political elites’ fears of loss of control and power in the country. The main sources of such fears are popular movements, demonstrations, and strikes that can lead to revolutions or the overthrow of the ruling regime (as in a number of then Soviet Republics). Alliances in this context serve as a tool for power preservation. In a number of cases the communist regime resorted to the use of alliance potential to “extinguish” revolutionary epicenters in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, etc. In the context of unifying Europe (as a United States of Europe) one of the internal incentives for NATO’s creation was the idea to “keep Germans down” in case of a revival of militaristic ambition, lest such a revival internally threaten again the stability established after the WWII.

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57 From Dr. Weitsman’s comments in a personal conversation and electronic messages.
Part 4.2: Ideational Sources of Threat

Part 4.2.1: Ideational External Threat

Gause finds that some states identify some foreign-born ideological and political threats to the stability of their ruling regimes to be more salient than threats based upon aggregate power, geographic proximity and offensive capabilities. He argues that in the minds of leaders words are seen as more immediately threatening and able to shake ruling regimes’ viability than guns. Aggressive rhetoric, militaristic propaganda, and alien ideologies are among ideational external threats in countries whose regimes are not solid enough to absorb all kinds of ideas or to ignore aggressive intentions from other states. Ideational external threats tend to affect national security by means of propaganda and other media, and to weaken either the ruling elites’ governance or the very state or both. The Cold War, for example, made both Western and Eastern blocs to be very careful about foreign propaganda that could be harmful vis-à-vis their advocated ideologies.

Part 4.2.2: Ideational Internal Threat

Internal ideational threats if not coupled with external ones, cannot per se push states to form alliances. However, in the case of the South Caucasian countries those threats have some degree of negative importance and are (in) directly linked to alliance behaviors there. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Moscow-based centralized communist regime, since its creation and afterwards, used so-called цензура (censorship) in all socialist camp countries, as a very powerful tool for harshly controlling any ideology or propaganda inside the Socialist bloc. In communist peripheries (other than the Soviet Republics) the “fight” against such internal threats was enhanced by the

59 Gause, Gregory, op. cit.
military-political presence (legitimized by the Warsaw Pact) of the USSR in those
countries. A nearly identical censorship exists in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, states
with similar political regimes and fears of internal ideologies that could shake the ruling
elites’ foundations. Ideational internal threats in those states are seen as to come, for
example, from religious cults and groups that profess other than the state religion and
could harm national security. Hence, the alliances they form have as well such an “alien”
ideologies prevention component.

Part 5: Alliance Behaviors

Part 5.1: Balancing and Bandwagoning, Hedging and Tethering

States’ alliance formation behavior and consequent strategies depend on a
combination of sources of threats they face—the nature (materialist-ideational), the
direction (external-internal) and the magnitude/levels (high, moderate or low)\(^{60}\)—and the
intentions other states demonstrate. The general classical approach distinguishes two
main behaviors: balancing and bandwagoning (Waltz, Walt, Wolfers, and Jervis).
Weitsman (2004) further explores the issue and introduces two other outcomes—tethering
and hedging— an approach that “fills an important gap in the literature”\(^{61}\) on alliance
formation. To sum up all possibilities, the link between alliance formation and threat can
be illustrated as follows:

- When a state allies against a source of threat, it is balancing.
- When a state allies with a more powerful source of threat, then it is
  bandwagoning.
- When a state allies with a source of threat that is largely reciprocal, it is tethering.

\(^{60}\) For levels/degrees of threats see Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, pp. 18-30.

\(^{61}\) Snyder, Glenn on Weitsman’s Dangerous Alliances, in the cover blurb of the same book.
When a state seeks to ally in order to manage a potential threat and shut down avenues of expansion to its rivals, it is *hedging*.

Weitsman posits that “it becomes clear that these different behaviors emerge under different conditions. Threat does generate each of these responses, and, more precisely, different levels of threat will result in different alliance behaviors.” She argues that “what becomes important here is not whether a state is big or small, strong or weak, but the level of threat it is facing from another.” When states face low levels of threat, they hedge. As the threat rises to a moderate level, states will shift to tethering. States will also seek to balance against a source of moderate to high level threat by adding the power of others to their own. And when the threat reaches the highest level then the state will cave in and bandwagon with the source of the threat.

*Hedging* behavior “entails a low commitment move toward a state that represents neither entirely friend nor foe--one with which there is little or no conflict, yet little or no amity either.”

*Tethering* is “a strategy to manage relations with one’s adversary by drawing closer to it via agreement.” When the level of perceived threat between hostile states is symmetrical, states will seek to control threats by tethering them.

*Bandwagoning* is the strategy of weaker states that seek to join with rather than unite against the perceived source of threat. Weitsman posits that “the essence of

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62 Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 3.
63 Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 20.
64 Summary of Weitsman arguments on the curvilinear relationship between the levels of threats and states’ alliance behavior as made by Mecum, Mark M., *op. cit.*, p. 34.
65 Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 20.
67 Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 18.
bandwagoning behavior concerns asymmetrical threats,”69 valid equally for both big and small states.

*Balancing* is when “states join alliances to protect themselves from states or coalitions whose superior resources could pose a threat.”70 States can put their survival at risk if they fail to balance against the threatening state.

Weitsman’s four-dimensional classification of alliance formation motives based on the level of threat as opposed to existing theories is very powerful and offers new insights and avenues for better and theoretically stronger understanding not only of alliance behaviors but states’ foreign and military policy choices as well. Some features specific to the South Caucasian region demonstrate that the level of threat faced by Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan is significant. By assessing the degrees of threats those states face, one can make assumptions on alliance motives in the region, and even predict future motives and behaviors based on theoretically various analyses. The intricacy of various interactions in the region is curvilinear while the levels emanating from this structural complexity change under different circumstances. Such curvilinearity of levels of threat in the region is associated as well with the size and politico-military-economic power of countries there. If Armenia had much stronger resources the threat from neighboring Azerbaijan could be different. If Georgia were the size of and as strong as Ukraine, Russia would be more reluctant to engage it in military clashes. If Azerbaijan were smaller and economically weaker, Armenia would not take threats emanating from Azerbaijan seriously. If Azerbaijan were larger and economically stronger, its relations both with Turkey and Russia could be quite different. Thus, not just the degree, but other

69 Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 20.
aspects as well, are important in assessing the seriousness and potential of any threat. One of those aspects, along with the levels of threats, is the nature of threats important in the South Caucasian case. In some instances, the nature of threats is a primary concern, while the level issue is secondary. For example, Armenia always perceiving a threat to its Christian identity from Muslim populations in the region, balanced with Christian states (Byzantium, Russia) against possible Islamization regardless of the degree of that threat at different points in time. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, as a multi-ethnic entity, made efforts to reduce the Christian/Russian impact on its statehood, which was backed by its ally Turkey. As will be seen in the following chapters, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan along with other factors chose their partners based on cultural affinities shaped through history and regional interaction with bigger powers. Once allied, these states will change their alliance behavior very little despite (fundamental) changes in levels of threats.

Historical path-dependence is another aspect of alliance formation behavior in the region.

The shifting alliance behavior according to changes in the level of threat misses an important aspect: the threat’s durability. The change in threat level can be valid only if it persists to a significant extent. This means that the state can finally shift its alliance behavior only after the threat has long gone to a new level (higher or lower) capable of affecting the overall strategy in a time period.

However, Weitsman’s assertion that states ally based on the level of threats they perceive holds strong theoretical and empirical water for our case study. In fact this approach unifies those variations by “putting these arguments together, [under which] a comprehensive theory regarding alliance behavior under conditions of threat emerges.”

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71 Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 18.
Her level-based analysis is a link between alliance motives and final formation and also provides a theoretical ground for assessing the level of effectiveness and cohesiveness of those alliances.

**Part 6: Alliance Cohesion Theory**

In order to explore the sources and levels of threats, the choice of partners and the general dynamics of alliance formation in the South Caucasus it is important to look, as well, to the extent to which established alliances or coalitions are reliable and cohesive. Weitsman, in her a comprehensive and very important book on alliances, posits fresh and insightful approaches for better understanding not only of the past and the present of alliances, but also of the future through the prism of the level of interconnectedness of members within an alliance. The theoretical dimension of alliance cohesion is significant because the reasons states ally have a considerable effect on the cohesion of those alliances. Weitsman argues that threats emanate not only externally, but from within alliances as well.\(^7^2\) Her theory of alliance cohesion underlines how the *raison d’être* of an alliance directly affects the alliance cohesion and how internal dynamics, as the driving forces within an alliance, are dually linked to the persistence of the alliance. When states ally (be it by balancing, bandwagoning, tethering or hedging) to challenge a threat or “…to manage their conflicts of interests, the very factors or issues that bring them together may be the same ones that contribute to a low level of cohesion within the alliance.”\(^7^3\) History shows that some alliances collapse, while others endure. Weitsman suggests this is so because of variations in the level (high, moderate, low) of external threat as well as the level (high, moderate, low) of threat internal to the alliance. External

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\(^7^2\) Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 5.  
\(^7^3\) Idem.
and internal threats are closely intertwined and predict the longevity and preservation of an alliance.

This theoretically new approach is very powerful in explaining whether allies are reliable partners or will defect during high levels of extra-and intra-alliance threats to alliance member(s). The worst scenario the theory explores is whether allies will fight rather than secure each other. Putting Weitsman’s theoretical model in perspective we can draw important information about alliance behavior under different circumstances. As we will see, the viability of the three South Caucasian countries depends largely on the alliances they make and on which they rely. For example, although Georgia’s deep commitment to its Euro-Atlantic ambitions seemed to be reciprocated, the Russian-Georgian armed confrontation in the summer of 2008 showed a low level of cohesion and a high level of defection in the framework of Georgia’s military cooperation with NATO.

Liska, however, sees alliances as social institutions whose ideologies will define the basis and the limits of alliance solidarity.\(^{74}\) By opposing defensive and offensive coalitions, Liska argues that defensive alliances, such as those of democratic states, are rich in ideological lore, whereas offensive ones such as those of autocratic states will hold together by the prospect of gain and the dominant ideology will be that of the leading member.\(^{75}\)

Snyder largely calls the cohesion issue an “alliance security dilemma” in which he sees a very strong dichotomous association between the level of security and the level of autonomy of one ally under increasing/decreasing levels of threat.\(^{76}\) It means that a low level of threat produces a higher level of security, and thus, more autonomy. Conversely,

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\(^{74}\) Liska, George, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

\(^{75}\) Idem, p. 62.

a high level of threat produces a lower level of security, and thus, less autonomy. Interaction of those factors can lead alliance members to either abandonment or entrapment. These approaches of Weitsman, Liska, and Snyder are important in assessing the level of intra-alliance cohesiveness of the three South Caucasian states.

Part 7: Alliance Paradox: A Realist Approach

Another important contribution of Weitsman’s book when looking to all possible aspects of alliance formation, dynamics, their endurance, cohesion, and future developments, is the unifying idea about alliance paradox that arises from the anarchic environment of international politics. Worst-case scenario analysis by states, especially geographically proximate ones, creates an uncertain and insecure environment by triggering a vicious circle between reality and self-fulfilling prophecy. Weitsman posits that the alliance paradox is a consequence of the security dilemma manifested in an attempt to keep the peace but culminating in drawing the system closer to war. Alliances that pursue different and sometimes contradictory interests and objectives enhance the spiral of insecurity and, as an unintended consequence, make relations between members of different alliances far more dangerous. “Paradoxically, the more effective the alliance is at keeping the peace among its signatories, the more threatening it appears to nonmembers.” Hence, the very existence of alliances can be dangerous in the context of hostile interactions between states that choose different partners. The alliance paradox operates when the alliance formation of state A (whatever type of alliance) is perceived by state B as a manifestation of aggressive intentions or direct threat to its own national security. Weitsman’s alliance paradox theory has a strong explanatory power in

77 Idem.
78 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 7.
79 Idem, p. 171.
understanding of the correlation between state A’s perception of and reaction to state B’s actions and intentions. Hence, formation of an alliance to keep stability can, in fact, generate instability.

CHAPTER ONE CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have introduced the existing theories on alliances, sources and levels of threats and the incentives for alliance formation, discussed four main alliance behaviors, their dynamics, internal cohesion and the alliance paradox they create in an anarchic environment. Built mostly on insights and inspiration emanating from Weitsman’s research on alliances and varied aspects of this important concept in international politics, this chapter one sought to bring existing approaches into three main theoretical groups: Neorealist, neoliberal institutionalism and constructivist. While in some instances it is neither useful nor practical to combine all three, in other cases a more comprehensive approach is needed especially in understanding of complex and complicated interactions among the South Caucasian states. I also introduced a new notion of two-fold threats: materialist and ideational that from an empirical point of view, can, in their turn, be both external and domestic.

The chapter also sought to collect existing literature on alliance formation in the three South Caucasian states. While recognizing the value and efforts of a variety of books, research, articles and reports over the multilayer issues in the region, we could not find studies with a theoretical focus on the South Caucasus in general, and on alliance formation, in particular. This is because the region came only recently to the attention of prominent scholars and researchers. More generalizations and application of existing
theories exploring dynamics and implications of alliances in the region are to be expected in the near future.

This chapter is historical and descriptive. It goes from the first days to the last ones of the Soviet Union, helping to appropriately assess the importance of Russia in the regional context of the South Caucasus and to highlight its historical role in the emergence of hostilities in the region and formation of threats. The chapter helps to see why and how different alliance behaviors of the South Caucasian states emerged at the end of the Cold War. The chapter sets the Soviet framework in which hostilities were simply unavoidable. It explores the overall negative ambiance during the Soviet period and the connections Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia had with each other and with Russia before and during the Soviet period and after independence. It is about the Soviet background, namely the bloody start of the USSR, its no less violent developments and the ill-designed Soviet federalism in which conflicts emerged as systemic and ideational by-products and affected political-military and socio-economic aspects of all Soviet republics including the South Caucasus. Conflicts were an inseparable part of the internally and seemingly peaceful USSR. The violent and prison-type environment in which Soviet nations co-existed constitutes an important independent variable in understanding not only of the violent reactions of the South Caucasian states toward one another, but also of further steps they would take vis-à-vis Russia and other powers.

The emergence of the Soviet Union and its collapse “triggered a great and continuing debate, both political and intellectual.”80 The history of this unique and strong ideology based country was thorny and controversial and is not yet fully explored or understood. The Soviet Union was not like any other country, nor even an “ordinary”

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80 Strayer, Robert W., op. cit., p. x.
empire. It had big ambitions, ideologically charged and devoted people, strong dictatorial but charismatic leadership, and was blindly committed to the idea of socialism.\textsuperscript{81}

For some it was a tool to expand and sustain the Russian Empire,\textsuperscript{82} for others it was a historical chance to equate with the Europeans (an old dream of Peter the Great\textsuperscript{83}) by fomenting revolutions similar to the French Revolution. Still others saw the Soviet project as a crazy intellectual experiment to implement Marxist ideals\textsuperscript{84} of egalitarianism and solidarity among classes. For some it was an avenue to power and wealth\textsuperscript{85}. Finally for many others the Soviets, although atrocious and implacable, were a hope of survival and justice. Current political and military ambitions of the South Caucasian states are difficult to explain if one overlooks the historical context in which the region was formed.

Further, this chapter attempts to show the continuity of the Russian ideological impact over the region established with the birth of the Soviet Union, its demise and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Otherwise, it would not be clear why the South Caucasian states are linked to and dependent upon Russia’s politics and strategic moves. Simply put, this chapter’s objective is to reveal Russia’s implicit and explicit influence on the region from the historical point of view. The chronological evolution of the chapter is just a way to facilitate the task of linking Russia to almost all developments in the South Caucasus.

\textsuperscript{81} Strayer, Robert W., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.
Glasnost and perestroika are important variables in understanding of why and how hostilities that implicitly existed among the South Caucasian nations became violent and uncompromising. To assess the importance of these events in the mid-1980s, the chapter looks at the evolution of preceding events in the Soviet Union that gave birth to Gorbachev’s “democratic reforms” which turned out to play a negative rather than a positive role at least in terms of triggering new hostilities and significantly raising the level of threats in the South Caucasus. The perception of those historically shaped threats and ideological hostile images the South Caucasian nations have toward one another is at the core of complicated and multidimensional alliance formation processes and behaviors in the region.

Part 1: The Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917-1923

Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь! (Workers of all countries, unite.)

Coined by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto in 1848 this slogan would become a symbolical manifestation of the communist and then socialist ideology of the emerging Soviet Red Empire and its satellites for more than 70 years. Led by Lenin, the Russian Bolshevik revolutionaries of 1917 were convinced that they, and only they, could undertake a monumental task of creating a society in a rationally planned and egalitarian community. Marx described the process of the industrialization of Europe as “naked, shameless, direct brutal exploitation” of humans by humans. In contrast, a socialist

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87 Strayer, Robert W., op. cit.
88 The Communist Manifesto, p. 16.
commonwealth would erase memories of degrading poverty, conflicting classes, contending nations and human alienation.\textsuperscript{89}

In a revolutionary move in October 1917, a worker-peasant (Bolshevik) government led by Lenin replaced the Provisional Government\textsuperscript{90} once the Tsarist regime was destroyed in February of that year. The Bolsheviks appointed themselves leaders of various government ministries. The Russian Civil War (1917-1923) soon erupted between the Bolsheviks (Reds) and the Mensheviks (Whites) resulting in the Bolsheviks ultimatum victory.\textsuperscript{91} It paved the way for creation of the USSR, which took control over the broad lands of the former Russian Empire.

\textit{Part 2: The Birth of the Soviet Empire: A New Tool for Russian Dominance}

The Russian Empire grew from a small Russian principality in the vicinity of Moscow into an enormous imperial domain. Ruled by a tsar, it spanned both Europe and Asia, embracing ancient, highly developed peoples in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the sophisticated cultures of Siberia and the Far East. The Bolshevik government, led by Lenin, inherited that empire.\textsuperscript{92} Between 1919-22 a new proletarian dictatorship was founded by the Bolsheviks who forcefully incorporated those nations and peoples into the newly nascent empire, baptizing it the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. To gain “desperately needed support for Bolsheviks, Lenin had promised national self-determination to the minority nations of the Empire.”\textsuperscript{93} The result was an enormous multiethnic state, an empire comprising one-sixth of the world’s land surface

\textsuperscript{89} Strayer, Robert W., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.


\textsuperscript{91} For more see Mawdsley, Evan, \textit{The Russian Civil War}, Pegasus Books LLC, New York, 2007.

\textsuperscript{92} Strayer, Robert W., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 4 for ideas expressed in these sentences.

\textsuperscript{93} Pearson, Raymond, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire}, Palgrave 2002, p. 6.
and populated by people speaking over a hundred different languages or dialects.\textsuperscript{94}

Russification became a new tool for the expansion of the communist ideology among the multiethnic Soviet communities. The Russian political and cultural dominance created among various ethnicities and titular nations \textit{latent} tensions that would erupt later when \textit{beneficial} conditions appeared. The Red Dragon was born.

\textbf{Part 3: Marxist-Leninist Ideology: New Opium of the People}

The \textit{Homo Sovieticus} declared the “end of history” by promoting that “the free development of each person should be the condition for the free development of all.”\textsuperscript{95} The socialist dream of equality, justice and community took shape in the mind of Marx and was implemented by Lenin. Religion was swept away, cultural differences blurred, traditions forgotten, and a “new grand, prophetic, utopian vision of human freedom”\textsuperscript{96} and a classless egalitarian socialist community were promoted instead. A new communist religion, \textit{das Opium des Volkes}, replaced all previously existing ideologies and visions that nations cherished in their struggle for freedom. The Marxist-Leninist ideology became the language of the new Soviet Bible that all subjects of the Soviet Empire should know and bow down to. It was an enormous cultural project to create a new mythology and worldview; to explain, justify and legitimate the Marxist-Leninist experiment.\textsuperscript{97}

Hundreds of thousands of the intelligentsia, scientists, artists, and clergymen were killed to force others obey and accept the new regime. One efficient tool the Soviets used to promote their ideology was that of \textit{“divide et impera,”} successfully implemented in

\textsuperscript{94} Strayer, Robert W., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{95} Idem.
\textsuperscript{96} Strayer, Robert W., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{97} Strayer, Robert W., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 31.
the creation of new Soviet Republics and Autonomous Regions, populating them with
different ethnicities and giving only one of them the role of a titular nation. The Marxist-
Leninist doctrine maintained the objective laws of history would guarantee mankind’s
progress towards the unification and eventual fusion of nations. This pushed the
Bolsheviks to organize the Soviet state according to the principle of national-territorial
autonomy, which produced outcomes whose scope of consequences was neither intended
nor anticipated by their creators.98 Any revolt or dissatisfaction among those nations was
considered a direct manifestation of hostility against Marxism-Leninism, and people were
sentenced, repressed or exiled to Siberian penal labor camps. Moscow became not only
the capital of a state, but that of a new history99 the slogan of which proclaimed that “кто
не с нами, тот против нас,”100 i.e. against history.

**Part 4: World War II and Stalin**

After Lenin’s death (1924) a hard struggle for leadership within the Communist
Party finally established Stalin as leader of the Soviet Union. He implemented more
forceful and dictatorial policies justifying them by reference to an earlier Lenin.101 Stalin
identified himself with Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great in their efforts to build a
strong state and to overcome Russia’s backwardness102 and, thus, Russia’s autocratic
tradition may have helped to sustain the Soviet experiment.103 Stalin launched a series of
campaigns of political repression and persecution of “enemies of people”. The gulag
became the last “asylum” for many of them. At the domestic level, the new dictator

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100 *Those who are not with us are against us*, a popular motto during first years of the Soviet regime, cited in *В круге первом* by Александр Солженицын (Solzhenitsyn), Олма-Пресс, Москва, 2006, p. 364, in Russian.
101 Strayer, Robert W., *op. cit.*, p. 29.
102 Strayer, Robert W., *op. cit.*, p. 23.
103 Idem.
fostered a cult of personality around himself and managed to keep control of the communist party leaders in the center and in the peripheries. To strengthen his control over every zone in the Soviet Union, Stalin created demographically heterogeneous zones in which nations with the same ethnic origins were divided into non contiguous territories. He engineered new demarcations for new republics and autonomous regions—the new Soviet-style federalism—resorting to the “nativization” (korenizatsia) process of the 1920s to increase his central power and diminish the actual power of autonomies\textsuperscript{104}. Transcaucasia became one of the first victims of the ill-designed experiment in demographic division.

At the international level, the Troyka of Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin\textsuperscript{105} was shaping a new world. The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of non-aggression signed in 1939 between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich assured each party’s neutrality in the implementation of dictatorial policies in both countries. However, Operation Barbarossa put end to this idyll when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. The entire Soviet population, from all cities and regions regardless of ethnicity and national origins, the elderly and the young, men and women joined the call of the Communist Party to defeat the Fascist dark force.\textsuperscript{106} Stalin was the commander-in-chief, the Generalissimo whose tyrannical charisma played an important role in the “Священная война” (Sacred War). Leaving millions of dead, cities and villages burned, and an almost entirely ruined economy, the Soviet Union’s involvement in WWII played a crucial role in defeating Nazi Germany. For Soviets it was a victory over capitalism as well. On the ancient platform of peasantry and lumpenproletariat Stalin immediately undertook a

\textsuperscript{105} See King-Hall, Stephen, Three Dictators: Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, Faber and Faber, 1970.
\textsuperscript{106} “Фашистская сила темная”–a famous expression in Russian calling all Soviet people to fight against the Nazis.
reconstruction of the empire by building a new military and industrial superpower. He sought to install communist governments in a number of Eastern European countries by forming the Eastern Bloc and establishing a dividing line—the Iron Curtain—between the communist bloc and the Rest. This long antagonism between the capitalist world and the USSR was known as the Cold War.

**Part 5: Hot Relations between the USSR and the West during the Cold War**

During WWII the British Empire, the US and the USSR, known as “The Big Three”, were leaders among the allied powers and sought to unite their forces in an anti-fascist coalition against the Axis powers. However, for a number of reasons, “the speed to which Soviets’ popularity was transformed into fear and contempt was a most remarkable swing of Western opinion”\(^\text{107}\) in the aftermath of the war. It was striking to see how today’s allies turned into tomorrow’s adversaries. Once the German danger was swept away, the communist ideology and Soviet expansionist ambitions became more salient, and the capitalist world feared again the spread of the “Red Terror” of “barbarian Russia.”\(^\text{108}\)

The ultimate manifestation of East-West, or Communist-Capitalist, antagonism was the emergence of two opposing military blocs known as the North-Atlantic Alliance or NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Symbolized by the Berlin Wall splitting Germany in two, this hostility evolved into a bipolar world in which the main actors were the Soviet Union and the United States. Mutual fears, lack of communication, mistrust, strong ideological differences, misperceptions and misinterpretations of each other’s actions and reactions pushed the two countries into a harsh arms race. Afraid of the “domino effect” of the

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communist ideology all over the world, the US relied on a strategy of containment and deterrence, while the Soviets saw the Americans’ policy as aggressive and offensive. Each prepared itself for counterattack in case of conventional and nuclear attack. The Mutual Assured Destruction was a horrifying consequence of the first- and second-strike capabilities of the nuclear powers. Perhaps, the culmination of the rivalry between two superpowers was the Cuban Missile Crisis. It did not turn into a nuclear war only by a miracle.

NATO was becoming a strongly institutionalized political-military entity which to the Soviets symbolized the aggressiveness and implacability of the western ideology. The West saw the Warsaw Pact as a repressive tool to keep “others” out of the Soviet/Russian spheres of influence (the USSR itself, Eastern Bloc countries, Yugoslavia, the Middle East, China, Mongolia, Cuba, some African countries etc.) and expand the Iron Curtain as much as possible. A goal was to oppress any revolutionary movements or ideological dissatisfaction among those countries.

However, Gorbachev’s rise to power in the mid-1980s as secretary general of the Soviet Communist Party caused paradigmatic shifts in West-East relations and opened new perspectives of turning antagonism into cooperation and mutual respect.

**Part 6: Perestroika and Glasnost: Gorbachev’s Communist “Democracy”**

The death in 1953 of Stalin, the last Soviet dictator and tyrant, marked the gradual and barely discernable decline of the idea of communism and the Soviet Empire
itself. After 1953 top leadership of the USSR faced the dilemma of reforms: How to change the regime without destroying it. Over decades this proved unsolvable. 113 Within five years, following the deaths in rapid succession of Brezhnev (1982), Andropov (1984) and Chernenko (1985), Mikhail Gorbachev was named secretary general of the Communist Party. 114

The Gorbachev’s advent to power in 1985 marked the beginning of perestroika (reforms) and glasnost (freedom of speech) in the USSR. Many in the West believed and even admired him by putting a great faith in this new Soviet leader. 115 Some were persuaded that Gorbachev dedicated his political life to the reformation and liberalization of the Soviet Union by bringing it closer to the democratic values, ideals and visions shared by the West. I have always been quite skeptical about his “liberal” and “democratic” views and goals. I argue that under a gloss of democracy and reforms Gorbachev was just trying his best to save the image, the overall existence and the shaky communist ideology the Soviet socialism. 116 The nominal revival of Lenin’s ideas in the name of attractive Western ideologies was simply the last communist leader’s last chance.

Gorbachev inherited a very weak, trembling and moribund communist legacy from his direct predecessors. 117 Formally elected the first president of the USSR in 1990, 118 Gorbachev along with his komanda (team) was well aware of the economic and political chaos in the country. 119 He made an effort to save the country from total collapse

113 Strayer, Robert W., op. cit., p. 47.
114 Strayer, Robert W., op. cit., p. 90.
116 Strayer, Robert W., op. cit., p. x.
117 Pearson, Raymond, op. cit., pp. xvi-xvii.
118 Langley, Andrew, op. cit., p. 88.
or, at least, to extend its agony. Galloping inflation and rapidly growing deficit, accompanied by a high rate of unemployment, were important elements of the economic crisis.\textsuperscript{120} Moreover, the then-ongoing war in Afghanistan, the 1986 Chernobyl explosion and the 1988 Armenian earthquake aggravated the economic situation. Domestic and foreign political developments were strongly shaking the entire Communist system, not just in the USSR but in peripheries near and far as well.

After cataclysmic years from the early 1970s, the empire was close to disintegration. This was not only a consequence of the economic and financial burden of a long years of an arms race, or the result of identity and ideological crisis—an artificially embedded utopian ideology about new life under communism. Nor was it conditioned only by intra-party clashes and communist elite’s disagreements over issues vital to the existence of the USSR. Instead, the weakness of the Soviet Empire was its irrational striving to exert dominance and imperial ambitions over all cultures and nations. This was a utopian ideal emanating from its Russian past and based on the Russian inferiority complex\textsuperscript{121} that was further exacerbated over many centuries by the Western arrogant complex of superiority.

The late 1980s were not like the early 1920s, and a number of Solzhenitsyns, Visotskys, Tsoys and many others, known and unknown, in or out of gulags, camps, and prisons were struggling not either against Communism or in favor of Capitalism/Democracy but for freedom. Old incentives coupled with new windows of opportunity pushed nations living in the Empire and beyond, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, etc., to seek the exhilarating liberation from a so-called open

\textsuperscript{120} Strayer, Robert W., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{121} Neumann, Iver B., “Russia as Central Europe’s constituting other”, \textit{in East European Politics and Societies}, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Spring 1993), p. 360.
air prison, “the denouement of long and ardent desires for a more independent cultural and political existence.”

Gorbachev was a convinced Leninist and did his best to sustain his communist predecessors’ legacy. However, he not only failed his last communist mission, but, instead, triggered unintended consequences for himself and his Communist Party fellows, accelerating the ruination of the Soviet/Russian Empire. He was never forgiven by Communists or proponents of the newly emerged movement led by Boris Yeltsin, the future president of an independent Russian Federation.

In this context, as we will explore the dynamics of future developments, previous links and interconnectedness between former Soviet Republics and centralized government in Moscow will play an eminent role in shaping foreign policies, including alliance formation, behaviors and preferences following independence in 1991.

**Part 7: Death of the USSR and Birth of CIS: New Name and Old Ambitions for Russian Imperialism**

The Soviet Union--once the world’s largest country, officially passed away on December 25, 1991, when the red Soviet banner was lowered above Moscow’s Kremlin, while the Russian white, red and blue tricolor was raised in its place.123 The USSR had grown out the Russian Great Revolution of 1917 and had been a central fixture of international political life for more than seven decades.124 Though the Empire was obsessed by external threats to its stability and territorial integrity, the real threats came from within.125 The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 announced a new era in European

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122 Strayer, Robert W., *op. cit.* p. 5.
124 Strayer, Robert W., *op. cit.* p. 3.
history in which the Russian component played and still plays a significant role. The failure of the coup d’état attempt—a Putsch—in August, 1991, by a group of high-positioned members of the Soviet government accelerated the process of disintegration. Movements, demonstrations and rallies in capitals and peripheries of Transcaucasia, the Baltic States, Central Asia, Ukraine and Belarus reached a climax. The definite weakening of Gorbachev’s position gave a new impetus to the demands for independence\(^\text{126}\) and the end of more than 70 years of a Soviet socialist project. Communist Moscow was already old and feeble and could no longer resist. Soon, the Soviet Union passed into history. Russian civilization created the dragon which over some 70 ruined not only its creator but swept away everything else around and then returned back home as “the wind that blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.”\(^\text{127}\)

Mother Russia was indeed the chief builder of the Soviet Union and the main responsible for the past and a new reality. Liquidation of the empire meant a new loss of its historical significance on the stage of human history. Russian civilization was losing what was meant to keep its identity and its historical quest for both imperial dominance and a place among civilized nations turned to have wasted its entire potential. New platforms were needed, new ideas should be generated.

Meeting in a hunting lodge in Belarus on December 7-8, 1991, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed an agreement formally terminating the existence of the USSR and forming in its place a Commonwealth of Independent States\(^\text{128}\) (Armenia,

\(^{126}\) Idem.


\(^{128}\) Strayer, Robert W., op. cit., p. 197.
Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan). Despite Gorbachev’s warnings of ethnic conflicts, economic chaos, and civil war, 11 former Soviet republics (some already officially independent) signed on the CIS. The Baltic States and Georgia demurred. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev formally resigned, transferring control of the Soviet military forces and the “nuclear briefcase” to Yeltsin. Russia again acquired a new powerful tool to shape its and others’ history.

CHAPTER TWO CONCLUSION

This historical prologue identified the historical and political evolutions through which the Russian tsarist empire went and reached revolutions paving the way for brutal implementation of Marxist and then Leninist ideas in the creation of the Soviet Union. The chapter sought to identify the influence of the complicated triangle of Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation on the South Caucasus and beyond. Using the method of process-tracing, the chapter summarized the past and gave some new insights and explanations of developments the Russian project experienced domestically and internationally. The chapter concludes with the birth and death of the Soviet Union, as the main generator of hostilities among the South Caucasian nations, and attempts to explain the emergence of a new platform—CIS—on which Russia intended to build new strategies and visions to assure and reassure its dominance and enduring presence in the region. This dominance is perceived as highly threatening by both Georgia and Azerbaijan, and somewhat less for Armenia. However, for all three republics of the South Caucasus this evolution of tsarist Russia into the Soviet Union and then into the Russian Federation played and still plays a crucial role in overall military-political and geo-

130 Strayer, Robert W., op. cit., p. 198.
strategic developments in the region and these states’ policies. These findings help us to understand the variables that cause variations in the alliance formation processes in the South Caucasus, alliance behaviors there and alliance cohesion.
CHAPTER THREE: FROM TRANSCAUCASIA TO THE SOUTH CAUCASUS:
GRADUAL CRYSTALLIZATION OF THREATS AND FEARS AND EMERGENCE
OF CONFLICTS.

This chapter attempts to explore two key historical events that generated both external and internal threats, and subsequent ethno-territorial conflicts. The first, known as Sovietization, created a complex context of hostile interactions among South Caucasian nations and a complicated background in which those states emerged at the beginning of the 20th Century as an important part of the Russian project. The second is the opposite process of de-Sovietization, the collapse of the USSR. The resulting independence of the South Caucasian states reinforced perceived materialist and ideational threats rendering hidden hostilities explicit and involving the whole region in political-economic turmoil, domestic tensions and conflicts with each other. These conflicts, as by-products of historical interactions among these nations on one hand and of recent developments on the other, crystallized external and internal threats and became an uninterrupted source of insecurity and instability in the region.

Current intra- or extra-regional threats, dyadic relations between the three South Caucasian states and big powers, and hostilities they face are directly linked to the very fact of their Soviet past. This chapter establishes the framework in which these connections and hostile resentments of the South Caucasian nations and states toward one another became salient. States, forcefully incorporated into the Russian Red Empire from the beginning of the Soviet Union, were constrained to “ignore” perceived historical threats and to exist under an utopist ideology. These false ideas of Soviet federalism and the artificial “brotherhood” among the South Caucasian states under the Soviet regime
only reinforced implicit resentments. Once the empire collapsed and the Soviet ideology vanished, these nations and states resorted to force and were involved in conflicts, forming alliances and military coalitions with more powerful states.

This chapter is designed to show how these hostilities evolved over time and to depict the transformation of those hostilities into existential threats. Conflicts are explored in terms of their historical and current developments and the overall situation they created in the region, a situation referred in this thesis as the “status-quo”. The descriptive empirical analysis is important to our understanding of the overall hostile environment in the South Caucasus and the framework in which ongoing political-military processes are its hostages. These conflicts established dividing lines between nations who perceive the presence of conflicts as strong evidence of threats and are ready to violently react to such threats. Hence, alliances are formed to minimize those threats and to maximize their utility.

This chapter is also important in empirically showing the ideational aspect of regional developments and the continuity of Russia’s influence before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This factor plays an important role in understanding alliance behaviors, choice of partners and geo-strategic developments in the South Caucasian region. In up-coming chapters this influence will be symbolically called the “Russian shadow.” This shadow was present from the first days of the Soviet Union, through its collapse, and on into the emergence of New Independent States, and their alliance patterns up to current times. The shadow of the Russian presence is two-fold: on one hand it mitigates threats and the security dilemma; on the other, it creates new tensions among and between nations in the South Caucasus.
Part 1: The Sovietization of the Region

In the 18th century Transcaucasia became “the object of a military-political struggle among three empires: tsarist Russia, Ottoman Turkey, and Safavid Persia.”131 Russia began its move towards the Caucasus to secure control over the region, aiming to move south towards Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Russia had both trade interests and incentives for colonization but none of these matched the strategic considerations that incited Russia to incorporate Transcaucasia into its empire.132 For Russia, Transcaucasia was both a strategically important platform and a window for gaining control over vast resources and geo-political perspectives towards south and south-east, with the main idea of conquering the Bosporus and expanding towards Central Asia and China.

The historical term Transcaucasus/Transcaucasia is a direct translation from Russian Закавказье133 (Zakavkazyev) literally “beyond the Caucasus.” It comprises a region sandwiched between the Black and Caspian seas and bordered by Russia, Turkey and Iran. This is a region of the world whose importance is larger than its size.134 It has been an arena for political, military, socio-economic, religious, and cultural rivalries and expansionism for many centuries. Populated by linguistically various and ethnically very different entities (e.g. Georgians, Armenians, the Turkic peoples, the Abkhaz, Ossetians, Chechens etc), the Caucasus with Transcaucasia constitutes a museum of peoples and a crossroads of religions, languages and cultures.135 Because of its geographical setting, the region became “an area over which empires have competed; an arena in which civilizations [...] met; it has served both as bridge and barrier to contacts between north

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132 Cornell, Svante E., Small Nations and Great powers, p. 31.
133 Энциклопедический словарь: под ред И. Е. Андреевского, Том. XIII, Исторические журналы-Калайдович, St. Petersburg, p. 819, in Russian.
134 Cornell, Svante E., SAIS reports on the Caucasus, 2006.
135 Cornell, Svante E., Small Nations and Great powers, pp. 19-22.
and south, and between east and west.” Transcaucasia has been a mixed blessing and followed a long and difficult historical path.

With the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 Russian troops abandoned the Caucasus leaving the region virtually undefended against external threats. With the fall of the Tsar, Armenians, Georgians and Caucasian Tatars (Azeris) attempted to organize themselves militarily by establishing the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic in February 1918. However, the heterogeneity of interests, existing conflicts, religious differences and preferences guaranteed this newly formed entity a very short life. Each nationality attempted to defend itself against surrounding threats, and three separate independent republics were proclaimed in May 1918. In the absence of a central government and in a politically anarchic environment in the region clashes among Transcaucasian nationalities were hard to stop.

The Christian Armenians under Russian dominance who had escaped the genocidal atrocities of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 were again threatened, this time by a coalition of the Ottoman Turks and Azeri Muslims. The governments of independent Georgia and Armenia were fortifying their military capabilities by seeking alliances. By that time, however, Soviet Russia, backed by the Red Army, was already returning to its tsarist predecessor’s old “backyards” imposing its new rules and ideology. At that time the Ottoman Empire, weakened by WWI and internal tensions, was incapable to defend either itself or its close ally Azerbaijan against the Soviet incursions into its territories. The three independent republics of Transcaucasia ceased to exist.

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136 Cornell, Svante E., Small Nations and Great powers, p. 18.
137 Idem.
138 Suny, Ronald G., op. cit., p. 15.
In the following years, the Russian Red Army invaded all three Transcaucasian independent republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, establishing Soviet Russian dominance. Full Soviet control over the region was established by 1923, initially under the auspices of a Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Republic (TSFR) that combined Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia again. Despite heated debates and clashes between Armenians and Azeris over disputed territories, Nagorno-Karabagh, with its Armenian majority, became an Autonomous Oblast (region) of Azerbaijan in 1923, a fact that triggered new hostilities between newly sovietized Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. In 1936 the TSFR was dissolved and separate Armenian, Azeri and Georgian Republics were created with all their tensions and mutual mistrust.

Although all three republics followed the same seemingly peaceful path, the Soviet period in the region covertly fomented new discontents mainly related to territorial issues in Nagorno-Karabagh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Disputes over those regions paved new avenues to hostilities and threats the three South Caucasian states would experience vis-à-vis one another in upcoming years reaching, their culmination during the first days of independence.

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In the late 1980s Red Empire was on the decline. The South Caucasus was involved in very hard political changes and confrontations with the centralized Soviet government. Independence movements in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia finally brought not only freedom and realization of the dreams of generations but revival of ancient inter-ethnic disputes, hatreds, economic difficulties and military power as well. The de-Sovietization brought new dangerous challenges generating an enduring wave of hatreds, violence, hostile attitudes and threats. Just as in the beginning of the 20th century when tsarist troops withdrew from the region, each Republic sought its own quick solutions and most optimal position. Unfortunately, many of these solutions were based on armed clashes, ethnic cleansings and pogroms. A strong military structure became an inseparable element of each national identity.
The rise of anti-Soviet and anti-communist sentiments among Soviet nations was fueled by symbolic appeals to history, myths and similar sources to “justify hostility, fears of group extinction, and a symbolic politics of chauvinist mobilization.”\textsuperscript{140} In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the process of de-Sovietization led to armed inter-ethnic confrontations characterized by three major conflicts: Nagorno-Karabagh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. These conflicts militarily involved all three South Caucasian countries and Russia as well. Some experts term these conflicts “frozen,”\textsuperscript{141} due to their “no war, no peace”\textsuperscript{142} character. Instead, I call them “dormant”, “latent” or “eruptive,” as they can explode at any time should the right conditions emerge,\textsuperscript{143} as happened in South Ossetia.

One of the most important characteristics of these conflicts is that all three generated three unrecognized de-facto independent state-like entities. This reality profoundly affects all aspects of the political-military landscapes of the three South Caucasian states and beyond. The overall picture highlights these conflicts in the context of the complexity of the regional interactions and threats each South Caucasian state has vis-à-vis its neighbors due to these conflicts and the status-quo they have created around them. Moreover, because of these conflicts, the three South Caucasian states think only about worst-case scenarios thus complicating the puzzle even more.

\textsuperscript{141} Cornell, Svante E., \textit{Small Nations and Great powers}, p. 18.
Part 2.1: Nagorno-Karabagh Conflict: History and Present

The Armenia-Azerbaijan quarrel over the NK region was the first stone in the avalanche of ethno-territorial disputes that swept away the Soviet empire. The Azeris claim the region has always been under Azeri rule. The Armenians, on the other hand, advance the claim that NK was originally an Armenian site of residence and that Azeri rule was illegitimate. Before the Sovietization of Transcaucasia in the early 1920s, the region of Nagorno (Upper/Mountainous as opposed to Lower/Valley)-Karabagh was overwhelmingly populated by Armenians under tsarist Russian rule. Ethno-cultural and religious diversity, on one hand, and expansionist ambitions of different empires at that time, on the other, turned the dispute into real antagonism between Armenians and the

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Caucasian Tatars\textsuperscript{146} populating the current Azerbaijani territories. The Karabakh region thus became a stumbling block between Armenians and Azeris.

Following Stalin’s incorporation of NK into Azerbaijani SSR in 1923 and his successors’ refusal to revisit the issue, the question of the region’s status was held in abeyance by years of strong central rule from Moscow. However, the issue of the disputed region never receded in importance in the hearts and minds of either Armenians or Azeris. Soviet Armenians retained a strong covert desire for unification with their brethren in Karabagh and vice-versa, while Azeris considered the region an inseparable part of Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{147} With the implementation of glasnost and perestroika in the mid-1980s, Gorbachev opened a Pandora’s Box of grievances long suppressed by the Communist regime.\textsuperscript{148}

A sharp demographic decline of Armenians in NK due to discriminatory policies of Baku revived historical resentments among the Armenians in NK that who were “enjoying” an autonomous status within the administrative boundaries of the Azerbaijani Soviet Republic, as well as among Armenians in Armenia. New tensions, along with irredenta just below the surface between these two historical rivals, were released. The result was a spiraling cycle of violence and bloodshed between the two republics,\textsuperscript{149} characterized by mass rallies in both capitals, mutual deportations from each country of “opposite” nationalities, pogroms of Armenians in Sumgait,\textsuperscript{150} Ganja (1988) and Baku\textsuperscript{151}

\bibliography{\textsuperscript{146}}The terms “Azeri” and “Azerbaijani” were born only in 20\textsuperscript{th} century upon the formation of the short-lived Republic of Azerbaijan. Prior to 1918 the Azeris were referred to as “Caucasian Tatars” or simply as “Tatars”, cited in Michael P. Croissant, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 7-8.
\bibliography{\textsuperscript{147}}See Croissant, Michael P., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 25, for some of the ideas above.
\bibliography{\textsuperscript{148}}Croissant, Michael P., \textit{op.cit.}, p. xii.
\bibliography{\textsuperscript{149}}Croissant, Michael P., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 25.
\bibliography{\textsuperscript{150}}An Azeri industrial suburb of Baku.
\bibliography{\textsuperscript{151}}For Sumgait and Baku pogroms of Armenians see, Cornell, Svante E., \textit{The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict}, p. 16 and Croissant, Michael P., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 25.
(1990). Signs of a new, full-fledged war between two neighboring countries were becoming more obvious.

Gradually, with the imminent withdrawal of the Soviet forces, Karabagh became the scene of a full-scale war. On December 10, 1991, NK held its own referendum on independence following Azerbaijan’s on October 18, 1991. With the official end of the Soviet Union in 1991, conflict became armed confrontation between the Armenian forces and Azerbaijan resulting in thousands of deaths, more than a million refugees and internally displaced persons with a great material and mental destruction. The role of the Russian Federation was equally excoriated by each confronting side: Armenians accused Russia for backing Azerbaijan and Azeris claimed overall Armenian superiority over Azeri troops was due to the very large amount of armaments conceded to Armenians by Russia.

The international community tried to contain the situation, and in 1992 the CSCE (now OSCE) created the Minsk Group to mediate and find solutions to the conflict. However, not until 1994, under the auspices of the Russian Federation was a cease-fire agreement signed, and the NK conflict “frozen.” For Russia, it was a long-range, multidimensional strategic step to secure its future presence and dominance in the region and beyond, by making both Armenia and Azerbaijan heavily dependent on its decisions and tactics. Since then no room has been provided for signing a single document to bring conflicting sides closer to a settlement. The status-quo of the conflict does not suggest any negotiated or formal solution, and very often is manipulated as an easy and efficient

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154 Shankelman, Jill, Oil, profits, and peace: does business have a role in peacemaking? The Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace, 2006, p. 77.
155 International Crisis Group, op. cit.
tool in hands of regional (Turkey, Iran) and major (Russia, the US, and the EU) powers for their respective regional and geo-strategic interests. Azerbaijani rhetoric is still focused on a military solution of the conflict, while Armenia is ready to continue to support NK authorities and to give no less violent response to any military aggression.\textsuperscript{156}

Armenians perceive both ideational and materialist external threats from Azerbaijan over the NK issue. For them, the NK region is the cultural center of Armenia and is strategically located to defend Armenia against any attack from Azerbaijan. For Azerbaijan, the NK conflict, as a source of external ideational and materialist threats, plays almost exactly the same role as for Armenia. Azerbaijan considers the NK region as an inseparable part of its territories and fears the idea of secessionism can push other ethnic minorities to follow the same path creating more security issues for it.

Currently the NK region is a de-facto independent republic. This conflict plays a significant role not only in shaping the mirroring national identities of Armenians and Azeris, it also continues to have a great impact on overall political-military and socio-economic developments in both countries and beyond.

\textsuperscript{156} Statement by Armenia’s President Serzh Sargsyan at the General Debate of the 63\textsuperscript{rd} session of the general assembly, September 19, 2008 \textless \url{http://www.president.am/events/statements/eng/?id=19} \textgreater .
Part 2.2: Conflict in Abkhazia: History and Present

Following a long history, Abkhazia came under the protection of Tsarist Russia in 1810 as an autonomous principality and separated from Georgia’s earlier dominance. It continued to administer its own affairs until 1864 when it was incorporated into the Russian Empire.\textsuperscript{157} The Russian Revolution of 1917 led to the 1918 establishment of the independent Democratic Republic of Georgia which included Abkhazia in 1918. Two years later, the Russian Red Army invaded Georgia and took over Abkhazia as well. Stalin made Abkhazia an autonomous republic within Soviet Georgia, and encouraged large numbers of Georgians to immigrate there.\textsuperscript{158} Demographic changes and the existential fears of losing their strong national identity pushed the Abkhazian population


to enter into direct conflict with the central government in Tbilisi during Gorbachev’s perestroika period. In the March 1991 referendum virtually all of the non-Georgian population of Abkhazia voted to stay in the USSR but independent from the Georgia Soviet Republic, seeing that as less of a threat than being part of an already independent and jingoistic Georgia.  

However, the USSR collapsed in the following months while pressures from Tbilisi were multiplying. Tensions between the Abkhaz and Georgians in Abkhazia led to open warfare, and in July, 1992, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet voted and declared an independent Republic of Abkhazia. This move toward a self-proclaimed sovereignty was followed by sending the Georgian National Guard to Sukhumi. The resulting armed confrontation left hundreds of deaths, a large number of refugees and an uncertain future.  

For two centuries the Abkhaz had viewed Russia as a savior and protector of their interests vis-à-vis the Georgians. The involvement of a large number of Russian troops fighting on the side of Abkhazia triggered more tensions and instability. President Shevardnadze accused Yeltsin of unlawful intervention and of intentionally weakening Georgia’s national security by supporting separatists. In 1994, however, a meeting of conflicting parties, mediated by Moscow, agreed to a cease-fire and creation of a security zone, clear of heavy weapons, separating the parties. The agreement, recognized by Resolution 934 of the UN Security Council, mandated the peacekeeping forces of the CIS (overwhelmingly Russian) to monitor compliance of the parties of the cease-fire. In the

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159 Idem.
161 Idem.
162 Idem.
following years, various Georgian leaders sought ways to re-conquer Abkhazia, but the Russian military presence and its strong informal support stopped any Georgian progress in that direction. The Russian military and strong political support of Abkhazia significantly exacerbated Russian-Georgian relations, which worsened further when Russia responded militarily to Georgian attacks on another separatist region of South Ossetia. This led to Russia’s official recognition in August 2008, of the independence of Abkhazia (and South Ossetia).

Map 4: Abkhazia between Georgia and Russia
Source: http://thelanarhall.com/general/on-whose-watch/

Part 2.3: Conflict in South Ossetia: History and Present

The South Ossetian case is particular in that it is a clear example of the negative implications of Soviet “federalist” politics “based on national divisions” as discussed earlier. At the beginning of the creating a new communist empire the Bolsheviks, fearing potential revolutionary moods among nations and ethnicities under their direct dominance, implemented very “efficient” mechanisms of according them so-called

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164 See Chapter Two for more details on the Soviet federalism. See as well Cornell, Svante, E., Small Nations and Great powers, p. 42.
administrative autonomies\textsuperscript{165} within a Soviet Republic administered by another titular nation. The Soviets were trying to reduce current and future ethnic minority issues by leaving them at the discretion of the central republican governments. Ossetians, however, were the only nation in the period of Soviet dominance that was split into two different administrative jurisdictions—Georgian SSR (South Ossetia) and Russian SSR (North Ossetia)—rather than having its own, unlike Armenians in Armenian SSR and in NK.

Ossetians are a separate ethnic group, speaking a language based on Persian.\textsuperscript{166} The split between two different republics has always been a source of discontent among Ossetians from both sides of the “river”. Moreover, Georgian centralized politics toward a number of ethnic minorities living in the Georgian asymmetric federation\textsuperscript{167} augmented those resentments during the last days of the Soviet Empire, driving those nationalities to strive for independence at any price.

Demands in 1989 for unification of South and North Ossetia within the Russian Federation were immediately rejected by Georgia. Through a 1990 referendum South Ossetia declared its independence while the Georgian Supreme Soviet abolished the autonomous region, declaring a state of emergency there. In parallel with the collapsing Soviet Union, tensions between South Ossetia and Tbilisi were becoming more salient. When another referendum called for integration with North Ossetia in Russia, Georgian troops invaded Tskhinvali,\textsuperscript{168} causing thousands of causalities and creating tens of thousands of refugees on both sides of the Georgian-Russian border.\textsuperscript{169} Yeltsin sought to mediate a cease-fire in 1992 and sent Russian peacekeeping forces there under the CIS.

\textsuperscript{165} Formally autonomous, but in fact fully dependent on central governments, those soviet nations were afraid by further dominance. That is why they were taking advantage of any opportunity to declare their independence.

\textsuperscript{166} Suny, Ronald G.,\textit{ op. cit.}, p. 171.

\textsuperscript{167} Cornell, Svante E.,\textit{ Small Nations and Great Powers}, p. 196.

\textsuperscript{168} Burford, Tim,\textit{ op.cit.}, pp. 31-32.

\textsuperscript{169} Suny, Ronald G.,\textit{ op. cit.}, p. 171.
mandate. From then until mid-2004, the situation was generally peaceful. In June, 2004, after the Revolution of Roses, serious tensions rose as Georgian authorities strengthened their efforts to bring the region back under Tbilisi rule. Official Tbilisi protested continually increasing Russian economic and military-political presence in the region, accusing Russia of attempting to undermine Georgia's territorial integrity. The international community was called upon to replace Russian peacekeeping forces by NATO or other internationally mandated troops.

However, the overall picture changed in early August 2008. On one hand the ruling elite’s ratings were declining, and the newly formed opposition gained momentum in the country. On the other hand, growing Russian influence in the region and Georgia in particular, along with Saakashvili’s ambitions vis-à-vis full membership in NATO and the EU, involved the young Georgian president in an ambitious and unprecedented move using blitzkrieg tactics to get South Ossetia back outright. The five-day armed confrontation involved full deployment of Russian troops and armaments and not only changed the present of the region but also had far-reaching and not yet fully explored implications for the entire geo-political situation in the South Caucasus. Russia, tired of being criticized by the West for its every single step (Soviet legacy and ideology, Chechnya, autocracy, weak economy etc.) and the subject of disdain for its “backwardness” sought to take a full advantage of the Georgian “temperamental” military move to Tskhinvali. Russia reinforced its dominance in the wider South Caucasus region as revenge for Kosovo and the use of double standards by the West. South Ossetia’s independence has been recognized by Russia, a step that caused serious shifts in various directions, especially in alliance behavior of regional states.
CHAPTER THREE CONCLUSION

The target of this chapter was to explore the Soviet and then de-sovietized contexts in which conflicts and hidden threats, implicitly “alive” during the 70 years of Soviet existence, emerged and were then overtly and fully expressed after the break-up of the USSR. These conflicts are generators and by-products of threats the South Caucasian states perceive either from one another or from big powers. They create tense relations either between the central government and the peripheries or between two neighboring states. The Nagorno-Karabagh conflict escalated Armenian-Azeri relations, constraining them to perceive existential threats from one another. Conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia that established very hostile relations between Georgia and Russia, along with the de-jure recognition of these regions by Russia enormously increased the levels of both materialist and ideational threats Georgia faces because of separatist movements and secessionist projects on its soil. The idea of abandoning a region at the expense of a
state’s territorial integrity was seen by Georgia to be as harmful as the very conflicts and wars resulting from secessionism.

These conflicts have tremendous influence over almost every aspect of the overall landscapes of the three South Caucasian states, from identity formation, cultural evolution and socio-economic development to military doctrines, foreign policies and geo-political implications. The picture gets more complicated when these conflicts become a source of legitimization of de-facto independence of the secessionist regions of NK, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. Georgia and Azerbaijan are ready to regain control over these regions at any price including strong military build-ups and direct military interventions. These hostile intentions are perceived by Armenia and Russia as direct threats to their national security and the peaceful existence of their citizens.

The alliance politics is another important aspect affected by these threats and conflicts. Alliances in the region are a direct reaction to them. The regional developments coupled with perceived threats cause the three states to be very careful in choosing allies. Allies are chosen to meet complex military-political needs all three states have vis-à-vis one another and in regard to regional and big powers. The following chapters will further explore these processes, showing the complexity of intertwined issues, the consequences of hostilities, the fragility of the established relative peace and the role alliances play in this puzzle.

On the other hand, the Russian shadow, as discussed, seems to be present in anything vital to those three states. Russia’s national security, whether tsarist, Soviet or Federative, was always best assured by expanding its influence over neighboring countries. Russia continues to establish a “belt of security” around itself and the South
Caucasian conflicts are well-suited and used for this purpose. Failure to understand specificities of those conflicts can lead to missing some crucial components of the alliance formation process in the region.

Russia plays a very careful and far-seeing game. It tries to dominate the region by allying not only with those countries that need it (e.g. Armenia), but also with those who do not (e.g. Azerbaijan, Georgia). Russia attempts to create environments where “reluctant” states are facing the option of either cooperating or bandwagoning with it. Russia, however, though a very important player in the South Caucasian “market” is not unique there and has “competitors” in face of the US and the EU, and to some extent, Iran and Turkey. Different in size, ambitions, capabilities and ideologies, each of these powers, in its turn, pursues its own interests. Very often, the pursuit of heterogeneous interests leads to the clash of interests among big powers rendering Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia more dependent on those interplays.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE FREED SOUTH CAUCASUS AND DYNAMICS OF SUBSEQUENT HOSTILITIES

During last days of the Soviet empire the Transcaucasian states could still avoid painful “divorces” both from the Soviet Union and from each other. They had a chance either to peacefully quit the Soviet Union as the Baltic States did, or to form a new regional cooperation as Russia and Belarus. Moreover, they could help each other to minimize unexpected consequences of the collapse of an empire that had become home for many nations over more than 70 years. Ironically, they chose none of these options. Rather, the consequences to the South Caucasus of the collapse of the Soviet Union have been the most violent and painful of all the former Soviet regions. On one hand, this was due to unprecedented domestic developments in the fight against the communist regime and the quest for independence; on the other, it was characterized by ongoing conflicts coupled with perceived threats, ethnic cleansings, wide-spread violence, intolerance and overall hostilities. These hostilities became driving forces in revived national ideologies and for appeals for revenge and justice. All three states perceived threats and fears inside the region and beyond. Uncertainty reigned the region, and the quest for survival worsened perceptions of threats, rendering the three states pathologically sensitive and fragile. They failed to unify and became violently hostile toward each other.

History and past interactions among the South Caucasian states still play an important role in the region. The process of de-Sovietization of the South Caucasus remains a very broad topic due to the complexity and its large impact on the overall collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. In the South Caucasian states the quest of independence, restoration of national ideologies, myths and ideas about their respective
ethnic exceptionalism boosted reviving and creating enemies both internal (intra-regional) and external (extra-regional), who could help to build their self versus others.\textsuperscript{170}

The identity is a relation\textsuperscript{171} and the “self” is constructed only as opposed to the “other”. Hence, the identity formation, reformation or revival in the South Caucasian context took two directions: extra-regional or anti-communist (independence versus soviet authoritarianism) and intra-regional or inter-ethnic (perceived superiority of one ethnicity over another). The anti-communist direction is what drove those nations in their quest for liberation from the “prison of nations” to find a place among civilized and developed nations. The intra-regional direction (involving Armenians in Armenia and in NK against Azerbaijan, the Abkhaz and Ossetians against Georgia, Azeris against Armenians in Azerbaijan, Armenia and NK) was characterized by and culminated in inter-ethnic clashes, armed conflicts, tension and new turmoil in the republics themselves and throughout the region in general.

The perestroika period created a “beneficial” environment for manifestation of those directions in a combined way. The inter-state and inter-ethnic conflicts, wars, and confrontations were enhanced by mirroring nationalist ideologies\textsuperscript{172} on one hand, and national movements against the ruling communist regime on the other. They shaped the paths the three republics of Transcaucasia would follow. Moreover, the unifying glue and overlapping [Soviet] identity, which held the Soviet peoples together for almost 70 years, was no longer present.\textsuperscript{173} It disappeared in 1991 as suddenly and brutally as it emerged in

\textsuperscript{170} For more on the “self” versus the “other” issue and its implications, see for example, Bukh, Alexander, “Identity, Foreign Policy and the Other-Japan’s Russia”, in European Journal of International Relations, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 319–345; Neumann, Iver B., “Russia as Central Europe’s Constituting Other”, in East European Politics and Societies, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Spring 1993).


\textsuperscript{172} Idem, p. 94.

\textsuperscript{173} Cornell, Svante E., Small Nations and Great Powers, p. 50.
1917-21, leaving the floor completely open to the emergence of new options most of which have been non peaceful. Those developments were directly linked to alliance formation processes that the three states were pursuing. The allies they were choosing should match the best their ideals of guarantors of their security, survival and independence. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia followed different paths and the combination of historical and current trends generated different alliances and alliance behaviors.

**Part 1: The South Caucasus: Survival, Perceptions of Threats and Quest for New Allies**

**Part 1.1: Armenia.** Threats perceived by Christian Armenia and its survival issues are of the highest priority for the ruling elite and the country’s population. These threats have been shaped gradually through history and culminated twice. The first is linked to the genocidal atrocities committed by the Ottomans between 1915-21 which deprived thousands of Armenians of their homeland, and currently “more Armenians live outside the Armenian state than in very Armenia; large communities exist in the Middle East, the US, France, and Russia in particular, as well as in Latin America, Iran, Syria and other countries of Europe.”174 In the early 1920s Armenia was incorporated into socialist ideology and the communist project “limiting it to a diminutive Soviet republic of 30,000 km².”175 The legacy of those massacres of more than 1.5million of deaths, refugees, and the lost of historical lands left “a deep imprint on the Armenian psyche; it is no exaggeration to state that the genocide [and subsequent lost of territories] is one of the

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174 Idem.
175 Cornell, Svante E., *op. cit.*, p. 35.
most important factors determining Armenian society today.”¹⁷⁶ That dispersion created “two Armenias”: The Soviet one with about 3.3 million of inhabitants and a “global” one or its huge diaspora of 7-8 million.¹⁷⁷

The second climax is directly connected to Armenia’s quest for independence and to its involvement in a violent conflict with Azerbaijan. Starting in the mid-1980s a number of Armenian intellectuals and nationalists began a series of loyalist movements that were rapidly transformed into a campaign for national liberation and independence. The issue that galvanized further the Armenian Pan-National Movement (APM) was that of NK region.¹⁷⁸ There had already been violent outbreaks between Armenians and Azeris in Baku and a number of villages of NK. The number of participants in daily mass demonstrations in Armenia’s capital of Yerevan rapidly increased to hundreds of thousands with massive strikes, boycotts and protests. By the end of 1989, with the decline of the Communist regime in Eastern Europe and a weakening central government in Moscow, demands for Armenian independence and reunification of the NK region grew stronger. In March 1991, Armenia refused to participate in the referendum on renewal of the USSR, and accused Soviet authorities of having “declared war on Armenia.”¹⁷⁹ On September 21, 1991, Armenia scheduled its own referendum on secession, and the Supreme Soviet declared Armenia an independent state. Armed confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan was reaching its apogee and each side needed strong allies to help to “win” the battle. Russia was “playing” on both sides; Turkey was evolving gradually into the Azeri reality, and Iran was trying to remain

¹⁷⁶ Idem.
¹⁷⁹ Idem, p. 135.
neutral. The EU and the US, geographically and strategically far removed from the region, were waiting for further developments in those Russian “backyards”.

Small Armenia faced big challenges and big powers, and needed optimal and efficient realization of a combination of three factors: Survival and security issues; a better socio-economic life; and quest/preservation of its independence (with stronger and closer ties with its diaspora). It was hoped these quests would provide a better future for Armenia. Russia would play a cementing and exceptional role in the implementation of this three-fold matter for Armenia on international and domestic levels.

**Part 1.2: Azerbaijan.** Armenia’s reawakening nationalism and its irredenta on the eve of Soviet annihilation were viewed by Azerbaijan with explicit hostility. The Azeri population responded with increasing demonstrations in various cities accompanied by riots and killings of Armenians in Sumgait in 1988 and in Baku in 1990. Those events and the Azerbaijani desire for continued rule over the NK region helped galvanize the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF), which was gaining popularity because of its tough stand on the NK issue. Contributing to the Azeris’ perceived loss of sovereignty over NK was a widespread feeling of anger and frustration with how the crisis was handled by both the Kremlin and Azeri party officials. These grievances caused Azeri discontent with Soviet rule to be translated into growing nationalist fervor and were fueled as well by the Armenian nationalist movement itself. In September, 1991, Ayaz Mutalibov was elected president without electoral opposition but under charges from the APF that the election process was corrupt. In 1992, he was succeeded by Elchibey, leader of the

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APF and a very strong pro-Turkish politician. However, Aliyev, the former Azerbaijan Communist Party chief seized power in 1993. Anti-Armenian resentments were widespread there, and a new national Azeri ideology was gradually forming around the hostile attitudes that Azeris considered legitimate and justified. Violent clashes and armed confrontation with Armenian forces in the NK region reinforced the level of hostilities between the two nations failing to provide room for peace and reconciliation.

Since the very first days of Azerbaijan independence and armed clashes with Armenia, Turkey as a brethren country re-established a political, economic, military and strong cultural presence in Azerbaijan. Although Aliyev’s accession to power “was seen as Turkey’s loss and Russia’s gain,” oil and gas rich Azerbaijan as a linking corridor between Europe and Central Asia became soon attractive not only to Turkey but to other big powers as well, including Russia, the EU, the US and Iran. Aliyev, seeking to restore Azerbaijani control over the NK region and the adjacent territories, took advantages of his country’s rich resources to reinforce its positions vis-à-vis Armenia and to begin development of a new Azeri economy and military build-up. Unlike Armenia, Aliyev sought to use Azerbaijani geo-strategic positioning and natural resources to adopt a stance relatively less dependent on big powers. Although he accepted Russian mediation over the cease-fire and joining the CIS, “Aliyev staunchly refused to accept the stationing of Russian troops in Azerbaijan,” unlike Armenia which found itself in a regional mess where Russia was gradually becoming the only solution. Aliyev, a former pro-communist influential leader in Moscow, “did not turn out to be the Moscow friendly leader the

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184 Eastern Europe and the CIS, p. 156.
185 Cornell, Svante E., Small nations and great powers, p. 292.
186 Cornell, Svante E., op.cit., p. 293.
Russians had hoped for. Rather, he became a strong leader for Azerbaijan whose primarily goal was to minimize threats from Armenia and its ally Russia. In this attempt, Aliyev “sought to broaden Azerbaijan’s links with the Muslim world and ameliorate his Islamic credentials.” Without becoming entirely dependent on any of them, including Turkey, he managed to “play the Turkish card whenever it [suited] his purposes, but [could] turn also his back on Ankara if necessary.

**Part 1.3: Georgia.** In the late 1980s Gorbachev’s “reformist” policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and traditional systemic control from the center fueled nationalist feelings and pushed the Georgian SSR in a direction far from the Kremlin before the Soviet Union collapsed. Georgia, a state with a strong dislike of everything Russian, was involved in struggles both for independence from Moscow and control of government. It was involved in conflicts with ethnic minorities seeking, in their turn, to escape the control of Tbilisi. This ethno-political tripartite reality strongly affected multiethnic and politically heterogeneous Georgia that took shape since independence in 1991. After the April Tragedy in 1989, when Soviet troops killed some 20 Georgian peaceful demonstrators, the atmosphere of renewed nationalist fervor showed that the vast majority of the population was committed to immediate independence from the Communist center, but personal ambitions of opposition leaders prevented the emergence of a united national front, unlike in Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, “the most widely honored and recognized of the nationalist dissidents,” sought to gain power and become president of Georgia. Once the Soviet Union collapsed,

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187 Idem.  
188 Idem.  
189 Idem.  
190 Suny, Ronald G., *op. cit.*, p. 169 for main ideas of the paragraph.  
Georgia, unlike Armenia and Azerbaijan, refused to participate in the formation of the CIS\(^1\) in December, 1991, considering it just another Russian project. But since then Georgia has had difficulties to establish solid political institutions. It was “caused by the distractions of continuing military crises and by the chronic indecision of policy makers about the country’s proper long-term goals and the strategy to reach them.”\(^2\) At that time, Russia’s controversial role vis-à-vis Georgia in ongoing conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was not weakened at all when former communist leader Shevardnadze gained the Georgian presidency in 1992. Russia was still covertly supporting separatist movements in its backyards, a policy most unwelcomed to the ruling elites of Georgia. Russia used its two military bases in Georgia as leverage to keep control of the region. Because of Russia’s covert military support of secessionist governments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgian ruling elites were seeking to close those bases as a first act of a sovereign country.

Since 2003 the Russia-Georgian relationship during the first years of Saakashvili’s presidency, despite some superficial attempts, was experiencing bad times. Russia’s unwillingness to treat Georgia as a sovereign and independent state was pushing Georgia and its already very pro-American president to seek reliable allies elsewhere. Ironically, Russia is the country closest to Georgia, with a huge market and openings, and Georgia could benefit from full cooperation with that country if it were not involved in controversial relations. However, the geo-political developments and Georgia’s leader’s choice and preferences were leading Georgia towards the West. Russia’s attempts to stop those “western” moves and Georgia’s president’s determination to deny Russia a

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\(^1\) However, it joined the club in 1993, but withdrew from it in August, 2008, just after the Russian-Georgian five-day war.

presence in South Ossetia led to armed confrontation between the two countries in August, 2008. That formally deprived Georgia of two important regions forcing Georgia to redefine its overall strategies and policies to survive.

CHAPTER FOUR CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 explored the overall picture of the three South Caucasian states since their liberation movements, independence and further domestic and geo-political developments. It analyzed those countries’ choices, preferences and imperatives they had and still have vis-à-vis each other. The main purpose was to show how ongoing conflicts and perceived threats drove the policies and strategies these states designed and implemented and how these policies reflect trends these countries choose or are forced to pursue due to their historical backgrounds and identity-based factors, current challenges, and geo-political constraints. The central feature here is the revival of old hostilities and the emergence of new ones that reinforce old threats and shape new ones. This evolution was a catalyst in establishing appropriate policies to face and minimize those threats. The combination of all these factors compelled the three republics to choose allies according to their security “needs” in face of threats which differ from country to country and generate various policies. Hence, the choices of partners are different as well.

Armenia faces high level of existential threats from Muslim Turkey and Azerbaijan. This level of threat has a significant impact on the overall political-military policy of the country making it very vulnerable and sensitive to even minor geo-political changes in the region. This is largely due also to its geographic setting, scarcity of natural resources, landlocked situation and being surrounded by countries hostile to it. “Anarchy
implies...a need for help,”¹⁹⁴ and Armenia’s need for an increase in its security is symmetrically linked to its choice of a military partner that could provide it components it lacks for its survival.

Azerbaijan’s military, political and economic alignment with Turkey provides benefits it would not achieve alone. Azerbaijan has perceived threats from Armenia and by extension, from Russia, and its primary objective is to regain control over the NK issue. Allying with Turkey provides Azerbaijan with more opportunities and stronger stance in its conflict with Armenia. Due to its rich hydrocarbon resources and its more beneficial, if not optimal geo-strategic positioning, Azerbaijan has more flexibility in its choice of partners, even though, for a number of reasons, it prefers Turkey over others.

Finally, Georgia, although better positioned geographically than Armenia and to some extent Azerbaijan, both of which lack Black Sea access, has ethno-separatist conflicts with two secessionist regions and subsequent threats. Georgia perceives more threats from Russia which, in turn, significantly reduces the level of Georgia’s national security through its direct meddling into Georgian domestic issues. This stance of Russia, and Georgia’s historical experience with it in face of high levels of old and new threats, push the latter to seek assistance from the West, which in turn is not yet fully committed to sharing Georgia’s national security burden. Thus, Georgia pays a high cost for its stance vis-à-vis Russia.

The following chapter will synthesize those crystallized hostilities in the form of high-level threats to show how they affect partner preferences of each South Caucasian state, the alliance dynamics and the implications those alliances generate vis-à-vis these

¹⁹⁴ Snyder, Glenn H., op. cit., p. 52.
states. It will also show the multipolarity and resulting heterogeneous character of alliance formation in the region. Then, the assessment of dyadic relationships between allies and other states, the level of threats, the degree of cohesion of the alliance and the likelihood of the destabilization of the region can proceed.
CHAPTER FIVE: DYNAMICS OF ALLIANCE FORMATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Part 1: Polarity of Alliance Formation in the South Caucasus

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR made fundamental changes in directions former soviet republics would take in years to come. As critical junctures of history, these two important events shaped the hearts and minds of nations that would cement the emergence of new independent states and pave new paths of history. It is especially true for the region of the South Caucasus whose role and impact on the overall decline of the Red Empire was unprecedented. We saw how hostilities and threats crystallized in the region and paved new avenues to more tensions, resulting in choosing of powerful partners in the quest for survival of the South Caucasian states.

One particular dimension is worthy of mention before we proceed to a detailed study of alliance formation in the region. The reader should bear in mind that the overall situation in the late 1980s and the period around the collapse of the Soviet Union were characterized by almost total chaos at all levels of the empire. The decline, although many factors were involved in it, had an unexpected nature. The overarching uncertainty in the collapsing empire was an important determinant. Neither Moscow nor its peripheries were aware of what was going on and what would be the consequences of those changes. Hence, many actions of the central government and newly emerging political leadership in the republics were not adequate, consistent or targeted.

Being at the crossroads of heterogeneous regional and geo-political interests, on one hand, and historical and cultural differences based on the many domestic factors discussed in previous chapters, one the other, the three South Caucasian countries have
developed diverging strategies to ensure their security.\textsuperscript{195} The ongoing ethno-territorial conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia (with overall entrapment by Russia), and over NK in Azerbaijan (with a strong military-political involvement of Armenian forces) have been the primary sources of enhancing the overall regional security dilemma and rendering unintended anarchical consequences more tangible.

\textbf{Map 6: Multipolarity of alliance formation in the South Caucasus}

\textit{Armenia,} as a historical ally of Russia, perceived existential threats from Turkey and Azerbaijan as hostile for it. In need of security, it sought to restructure its ties with Russia, which in turn, was strongly motivated to reestablish previous tsarist and Soviet influence. Thus Russia was gradually becoming not only Armenia’s military ally but its political and economical unique partner as well. Because of Armenia’s geo-political and economic vulnerability and its need to ally with a great power, Russia quickly offered (some say, imposed) its multi-vector assistance. In the early 1990s when armed confrontation between Armenian forces and the Azerbaijani army in the NK region was reaching its culmination Russia managed not only to mediate the conflict and impose a

\textsuperscript{195} Cornell, Svante E., “Security Threats and Challenges in the Caucasus after 9/11”, p. 44.
lasting cease-fire since 1994, but played a crucial role on both sides as a superpower in pursuit of new ambitious projects in the region and beyond.

_Azerbaijan_, deeply concerned about its problems with the NK region and perceiving threats from Armenia, anchored its national security policy to Turkey with whom it had strong ethno-linguistic affinities and which could serve as a bridge connecting Azerbaijan with both the West (Euro-Atlantic structures) and the East (the Muslim world). On the other hand, Azerbaijan’s conflict with Armenia was indirectly linked to Russia as well with whom Azerbaijan was trying to establish advantageous relations. Azerbaijan had been seeking to balance its foreign policy between Turkey and the Muslim world, Russia and the West. All sides were equally important, and the only solution for Azerbaijan seemed to be to position itself in the middle of that triangle. The NK issue still remained a stumbling block for Azerbaijan in its overall geo-political and economic endeavors.

_Georgia_, by contrast, was challenged more by its enduring domestic political and economic instability. This included ongoing conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that were used by Russia to exert more pressure on the country and in the region in general. Georgians sought to face those domestic and external problems primarily by seeking American protection. However, Georgia’s geographic proximity to Russia and the latter’s direct and almost overt military and political involvement in its internal affairs were making Georgia’s pro-western ambitions not only difficult to achieve but were a new source of problems and more pretexts for Russia to enhance its presence.

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196 Cornell, Svante E., “Security Threats and Challenges in the Caucasus after 9/11”, p. 44.
For Armenia and Azerbaijan, a big share of their choice of an alliance partner was based on shared ideas, values, understandings and identity of the "kin-country" syndrome. Military and security purposes of “preserving, against external military attack, values presently held” pushed those two to seek alliances in Russia and Turkey respectively. Georgia was not similarly linked to any great power either historically or presently. Its quest for security and stability was formed under rapidly changing ideologies, visions and policies, making Georgia vulnerable and easier for external forces to manipulate. To a lesser extent under Shevardnadze’s regime and to a much greater one under Saakashvili, for needed economic and political benefits, Georgia stressed its historical resentment of Russia and its sympathy for the West/Euro-Atlantic structures, especially the US.

Internal threats are another important dimension of alliance formation of the South Caucasian countries. Domestic instability affects the partner choice of states that feel insecure not only externally but internally as well. Armed insurgencies, assassination attempts, and attempts at coups d’état constitute the inner side of the complicated regional puzzle. The choice of allies, hence, should encompass all features and characteristics of both external and internal dynamics.

In short, this chapter seeks to analyze why Armenia chooses Russia, Azerbaijan allies with Turkey and Georgia is in quest of a reliable partner. What are main causes of their choices? Do they have alternatives? After having identified strategic and military allies of the South Caucasian states and the reasons how and why these states choose

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Snyder, Glenn H., *op. cit.*, p. 5.
their allies, we will proceed, in the next chapter, to detailed exploration of characteristics of the alliances these states form in response to challenges and perceived threats.

Part 2: Armenia: Military, Socio-Economic and Cultural “Brotherhood” with Russia or a Marriage of Convenience?

Part 2.1: Why Russia?

Snyder argues that “the military dependence of a state on an ally is a function of the degree of threat it faces from its adversary, the extent to which the ally can contribute to deterrence and defense against the threat, and the availability and cost of alternative means of meeting the threat.”198 This complex puzzle can be better defined as national security based on the premise of meeting threats. The solution to the conundrum of self-preservation under conditions of external threats, domestic instability and economic backwardness lies in “the degree of conflict of interests with the adversary, the likelihood that the adversary intends to resolve the conflict by force and the relative military capability of the state and its adversary.”199 If we merge this premise with what Weitsman neatly defines as a “combination of power and intentions”, we will have a clearer picture of what Armenia has faced since independence. Armenia’s alliance with Russia is the crystallization of the above-mentioned features and traits by which Russia’s assistance to it made Armenia highly dependent on Russia because “the greater the ally’s contribution to meeting any shortfall in capability, the greater the dependence on the ally.”200

Russia’s presence in Armenia was justified by a legitimate security need because of the armed confrontation with Azerbaijan in the early 1990s and historical tensions with

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198 Snyder, Glenn H., op. cit., p. 31.
199 Idem.
200 Idem.
Turkey. As noticed by a prominent Armenian scholar, Armenia’s foreign policy was based on the premise that Turkey considers Armenia “to be one of the barriers against the Turkish expansion towards Central Asia. The golden dream of pan-Turkists was to either liquidate the “Armenian Wall” standing on the way of Turkish expansion to the Turkic world or to transform it to an Armenian corridor.”

In the same context, conflict with Azerbaijan was seen by Armenia as a continuum of that “pan-Turkic” ideology. Since 1992 Turkey and Azerbaijan, in a move to isolate Armenia and force it to capitulate, “jointly held an embargo on Armenia.” Being blocked by two (Turkey and Azerbaijan) out of four (Georgia and Iran) contiguous states, Armenia saw itself as an isolated, abandoned and highly vulnerable state for which security was an ultimate goal, an obsession that could only be cured by allying with a big power.

At the beginning of the conflict with Azerbaijan in the late 1980s “Moscow seemed increasingly irritated with Armenian nationalism and subtly moved closer to Baku’s position, which it viewed as pro status quo and therefore in line with the interests of the center.” Gorbachev’s leadership sought to back oil-rich Azerbaijan where the communist influence was still higher than in Armenia which totally ignored the Soviet regime and where a new political elite was emerging. However in the years following independence when Azerbaijan clearly declared its kinship to Turkey, Russia turned to Armenia as it had over the last 200 years. Russia needed Armenia (or any reliable partner in the region) as much as Armenia needed Russia (or any reliable big power). The Armenian political elite, in its turn, made its short-, mid- and long-term choice: To ally

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with Russia in all possible spheres. Armenia had no alternative, and its population “welcomed” that choice by “tacit agreement.”\textsuperscript{204} Geographic proximity to Russia, Soviet and previous dependence, and strong economic connectedness made that choice indisputable. The historical and cultural “brotherhood”\textsuperscript{205} between two Christian nations further enhanced that need. One of the most important factors in this alliance formation was also Armenia’s strong attachment to the Soviet/Russian military doctrine and Soviet military experience of the Armenian military personnel. The re-distribution of “the Soviet legacy” was chaotic. Russia, as the legal successor to the USSR, formally and informally conceded its remaining military arsenal to every former Soviet republic (including Armenia and Azerbaijan, but excluding the Baltic States). Moreover, the situation in the former republics was getting more and more out of the control not only of the Kremlin but also of local national movements—all military equipment from bases, military units and centers, was either stolen by local armed groups for use in armed conflicts or just given away to newly formed local governments.\textsuperscript{206} This “concession” and “theft” of the Soviet/Russian arsenal shaped the future military doctrine of the region. Although Azerbaijan kept more armaments (because of a greater number of Soviet military bases on its soil)\textsuperscript{207} than Armenia, it sought, however, to ally with Turkey which appeared during the collapse to be more promising and attractive than did uncertain Russia. Armenia had only Russia, attractive or not, promising or not. Russia in its turn was gradually re-discovering its old ally Armenia as a needed resource to deploy its presence in the South Caucasus.

\textsuperscript{204} More research on “tacit agreement” in the ally’s choice is done in my study “The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Alliance Formation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia since their Independence in 1991” presented as final paper for Dr. Suzuki’s class: Graduate Seminar in Comparative Politics, Ohio University, (Spring 2010).

\textsuperscript{205} Cultural and religious aspects in Armenian-Russian relationship have played an important role.

\textsuperscript{206} Melikyan, Gevorg, “The Dynamics of Military Basing in the South Caucasus”, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{207} For more on the redistribution on the Soviet military legacy see Melikyan, Gevorg, op. cit., p. 189.
Armenia’s national identity’s naïve adherence to an idealistic view of Russia as an eternal savior, partner and protector and, of Turkey entrenched as an eternal enemy, made Armenia to accept a strong Russian military presence on its soil. In August 1992, Armenian and Russian leadership agree in Moscow to Russian military support for Armenia and a legal status for Russian forces in Armenia. In August, 1993, Armenia, the Russian Federation and four other CIS states sign a resolution on military cooperation. Russia, in relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, makes mediating efforts which result in a cease-fire in 1994 and stop bloodshed between combating sides. The balancing behavior of Armenia against aggressive Azerbaijani intentions and allegedly against geographically adjacent Turkey made Russia to become an exclusive ally of Armenia in the region. Unlike the Diaspora Armenians who are reluctant to see renewed close ties with Russia (and by extension, with the communist ideology) and have always tried to distance Armenia from Russia as much as possible, the lower and middle classes in Armenia were more prone to continue the historical “brotherhood” with Russia as a “natural” ally. Many Armenians, who had been gasterbeiters (migrant laborers) in Soviet Russia, were again seeing Russia as a good source of welfare and were less prone to seek such new and peripheral partners as the US and the EU. Another important factor was the Russian language shared by almost all Armenians as a common vernacular and a

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209 Melikyan, Gevorg, op. cit., p. 189.
212 Croissant, Michael P., op. cit., p. 108.
successful tool for past “imperial Russification.” Moreover, visa restrictions between Armenia and Russia were lifted, making the mobility of citizens easy.

In 1997, Armenia and Russia signed a far-reaching friendship treaty which called for mutual assistance in the event of a military threat to either party and allows Russian border guards to patrol Armenia’s frontiers with Turkey and Iran.

In May 2002, six CIS members (including Armenia and Russia) founded a new structure, the CSTO-Collective Security Treaty Organization (a military partner of Shanghai Cooperation Organization). The main tasks of the Organization are to coordinate and deepen military-political cooperation; form multilateral structures and mechanisms of cooperation to provide national security to member states on a collective basis; and to provide help, including military help, any member state which becomes a victim of aggression. First, it was created to further Russian control over former Soviet republics. Second, it was a new sort of “Warsaw Pact” against any enlargement of NATO over former Soviet Union space. Finally, it opposed further development of such “prodigal” former Soviet republics, as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Ukraine. They, in their turn, formed an alliance (GUAM) as a new emerging axis within the CIS. Currently, Armenia hosts two Russian military bases on its soil in the framework of CSTO. The presence of those bases is perceived by Georgia, Azerbaijan, and to some extent, Turkey as an emphasized threat vis-à-vis their national security.

Armenia, in parallel, deepened its relations with the US and the Euro-Atlantic structures. In 2003, it acceded to the WTO; in November 2006, its European

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Neighborhood Policy Action Plan was approved, and in May 2009, it became part of the Eastern Partnership that assumes higher level of political and economic integration of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The signature of the Partnership for Peace program with NATO in 1994, Armenia’s participation to Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) since 2005, and a series of training and other assistance by the US Department of Defense paved a new path for Armenia in its progress to democratization and nation-building. However, in the context of a strong military alliance with Russia that amalgamates all components of Armenia’s security and those of its economic and political growth, those activities are viable and operational as long as they do not harm Armenia-Russia relationship. Russia is a relentlessly jealous partner who does not appreciate “adulteries” and whose “jealousy” makes Armenia adopt as well some bandwagoning covert behaviors vis-à-vis Russia.

**Part 3: Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan and Turkey in the Region: İki Dövlet, Bir Millet**

**Part 3.1: Turkey or Someone else?**

The military-political, economic and cultural alliance between Azerbaijan and Turkey was outlined from the very beginning of the fall of the Soviet regime and even before. The liquidation of the last empire in the world was “warmly welcomed by certain circles in Turkey,” a country that was almost incorporated into the USSR in the early 1920s along with the South Caucasian states. Turkey suddenly “rediscovered that it actually had “lost cousins” in the Caucasus and Central Asia.” At the beginning of the
20th century Turkey attempted to form a common state with Azerbaijan. Even when Azerbaijan was sovietized in the early 1920s, Turkey maintained its links with it. The Turkish position regarding the Caucasus was shaped based on priorities in terms of its “relations with its “brother state.” After Azeri independence, Turkey quickly readjusted its foreign policy priorities in terms of new regional and geo-political realities by rendering it Azerbaijan-centered. The new policy was shaped according to the following features:

- Support for Azerbaijan’s independence,
- Support for Azerbaijan’s sovereignty over the NK region
- Prevention or limitation of Russia’s return to Transcaucasia
- Participation in Azerbaijani oil [and gas] production, and the export of those commodities through Turkey
- Preserving a friendly, though not necessarily pan-Turkist, government in Baku.

This policy was a crystallization of the overall interactions between the two brotherly states at the beginning of a new era in Azerbaijan-Turkey relationship, marking the path the two countries should follow in the future. Azerbaijan, being involved in armed conflict with its neighbor Armenia and witnessing unsettled relations with Russia over the Caspian Sea and its oil-rich resources, was not satisfied with Russia’s stance in the NK conflict. Azerbaijani political leaders and the entire population unanimously questioned Soviet and then Russian policies in the conflict over NK by claiming they were entirely pro-Armenian and that, despite the atheist past of the Soviets, Russia would

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223 Idem.
always back its Christian ally in the region. In that context, Azerbaijan sought to reestablish multilayer relations with the Muslim world, namely Turkey.

Unlike Armenians vis-à-vis the Russian alliance, the role of Turkey as leader of a pan-Turkic world was not welcomed equally well\(^{225}\) by the Azeri establishment and fellow Azeris. 70 years of Sovietization, newly emerging national identity based on strong secular tendencies in Azerbaijan as opposed to Turkish Islamist and secular mixed traditions, as well as total Russification of national education by means of imposing the Cyrillic alphabet in 1939 by Stalin\(^{226}\) slowed total integration or fusion with Turkey and prevented Azerbaijan’s becoming a Turkish province.\(^{227}\) Having rich resources in oil and gas, Azerbaijan attempted to maintain its relative autonomy and keep its revenues as much as it could, while at the same time it sought to open doors to any possible cooperation and investments from Turkey. Strong ethnolinguistic and cultural affinities helped this process to run smoothly and with little efforts despite some contradictions in interests. Turkic solidarity was first expressed by rejection of the Cyrillic. The new Azeri elite followed the path of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)--the founder the modern Republic of Turkey, who sought to change the Turkish alphabet from the Ottoman script with its all Islamic associations to a Latin-based set of characters.\(^{228}\) Second, being an inheritor of the ruined economy of former Soviet Azerbaijan, the armed conflict in NK and the new realities surrounding its quest of formation, the new Azerbaijan needed Turkey as never before. Third, the ruling elite which saw three presidents during first three years of independence, allied with powerful Turkey not only for advice but for political and

\(^{225}\) Eastern Europe and the CIS, p. 159.
\(^{228}\) Goltz, Thomas, op.cit., p. 255.
military support as well. It needed to maintain its gained power though under pressure from Russia, with the socio-economically disastrous situation with about 800,000 IDPs and the armed conflict with Armenia. Baku welcomed Turkish military involvement in the reformation of the Azerbaijani army and in June, 1996, signed an Azeri-Turkish agreement on cooperation in the military field. By balancing imperatives against Armenia, and by extension Russia and Iran, Azerbaijan gradually combined this strategy with covert bandwagoning behavior vis-à-vis Turkey.

With the accession to power in 2003 of Ilham Aliyev, son of the late Azerbaijani president Heydar Aliyev, some important changes were undertaken by the new government. It sought to change some vectors in Azerbaijani foreign policy, making it more aggressive, pro-active and ambitious. The new president softened the rhetoric towards Russia, made reforms in the military and economic spheres, activated Azerbaijan’s relations with Georgia as a reliable transiting country, with Central Asian states, and with Iran, Israel and the Euro-Atlantic structures. In 2005 Azerbaijan was offered the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) by NATO to further its active participation in Partnership for Peace program since 1994. Its relations with the US intensified with more and more foreign oil and investment companies involved in the growing Azeri oil- and gas-based economy.

Because of Russia’s unpredictable “gas and oil” policies vis-à-vis its neighbors, Turkey launched a new energy security policy based on Azerbaijani gas and oil. Azerbaijan thus gradually became not only a “consumer” of its brother’s privileges but a country that enjoys Turkey’s geo-political position, and the reputation. It became an

important source for Turkey giving it more geo-political flexibility and economic maneuverability in terms of hydrocarbon resources. Azeri-Turkish strategically important and economically very efficient tandem renders Turkey and Azerbaijan more interconnected and less dependent on others. Azerbaijani economic growth and gradually raising regional significance give it incentives to become an economic “local hegemon,” an ambitious vision formerly only the prerogative of Turkey, and to some extent, of Iran.

Aliyev sought not only to increase his country’s geo-political weight but also has taken some steps towards reducing Russian influence in the region. Together with Ukrainian, Georgian and Moldovan presidents, Aliyev undertook the revival of GUAM, Organization for Democracy and Economic Development. His steps are meant to show his country’s economic and political-military independence. Moreover, Azerbaijan makes significant steps towards the Euro-Atlantic structures, without, however, asking for membership in NATO or the EU. The reaction of the EU and the US follows immediately by including Azerbaijan into the NABUCO project, a very ambitious strategy meant to contain Russia’s gas and oil monopoly.

Similar to his Ukrainian and Georgian counterparts excited by the idea of regaining control over seceded or less controllable regions, the Azeri president launches a new military policy based on rapidly year-by-year growing military expenditures to threaten Armenia and push it to make unilateral concessions on the NK issue. From 2002 to 2009 the Azerbaijani military budget grew almost 16 times. Armenia responded by increasing its military budget and military involvement of Russia. These moves set in a

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vicious motion the spiral of arms race and escalation of hostilities. The Azeri quest to regain the NK region by military force becomes more and more crystallized in Azeri officials’ rhetoric, propaganda and the overall resentment of Armenians. However, the presence of Russian troops in Armenia and Armenia’s membership in the CSTO helps contain Azerbaijan.

Moreover, the five–day armed confrontation between Russian and Georgian troops in August, 2008, and the unilateral de-jure recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russia, affected the overall regional security system. Turkey took some steps towards reconciliation with Armenia, while Azerbaijan sought to establish better relations with Russia. Armenia-Russia and Turkey-Azerbaijan tandems seem to “swing” with their partners. However, those two military alliances have more conflicts than convergence of interests, laying ground for confrontation between the two military “marriages” in the region.

*Part 4: Georgia: The Rose Revolution and Other Colors of Georgian Politics*

*Part 4.1: Who is Georgia’s Military Ally or is the West the Best among the Rest?*

If in the Armenian and Azeri cases alliance formation since independence has been mostly caused on one hand by fears, threats, ongoing armed conflict and survival, and on the other by strong religious, historical or ethno-linguistic and factors, Georgia has been mostly involved in a hard quest to gain independence and maintain domestic power after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Georgia’s political domestic instability was fueled not only by secessionist movements in Abkhazia, Adjara, and South Ossetia, and by growing dissatisfaction among other ethnic minorities of Georgia, but also by inter-elite “clashes” and a sharp polarity between different political parties.
The combination of those main pillars submerged Georgia in socio-economic and political turmoil accompanied by armed tensions for the country’s territorial integrity, by some (allegedly Russia-orchestrated\textsuperscript{232}) assassination attempts and assassinations of a number of key Georgia politicians and the overall instability. The reign of strongman presidents and the routine use of electoral fraud and manipulation produced widespread apathy, resignation, and cynicism about prospects for democracy in Georgia. In the fall of 2003 these trends dominated in Georgia. But shortly after parliamentary elections that year, a brief and nonviolent series of mass protests in Tbilisi—the so-called Revolution of the Roses—forced Georgian President Shevardnadze and his ruling party to resign, paving the way for democratic reforms under Saakashvili.\textsuperscript{233} The Rose Revolution brought qualitatively new changes, visions and challenges to the country.

Georgia has since experienced cardinal transformations in its domestic and foreign policies\textsuperscript{234}. The new ideology advocated for a stronger and prospering Georgia basically independent from Russia. Saakashvili’s administration sought to build a constitutional democracy in the country and to establish Georgia’s place in the common European family by integration with the EU, including a full membership, and joining NATO.\textsuperscript{235}

Accession to power of hardliner Saakashvili in 2003 widened considerably the existing gap between Georgia and Russia as countries with opposite political polarities. The new president sought to establish much closer and far-reaching relations with Azerbaijan (as its main alternative source of hydrocarbons), Turkey (as its main importer


\textsuperscript{234} Saakashvili, Mikheil, “Failed no longer”, in \textit{Foreign Policy Magazine}, April 15, 2010.

of Azeri gas and oil through the Georgian corridor), the US (as its main military-strategic partner) and the EU (through NEP and Eastern Partnership and with a prospect of becoming its full member). The growing pro-western orientation of Georgia was furthered by cultivating strong relationships with NATO (PfP and IPAP) and by closely cooperating with the US Department of Defense on a mutually beneficial basis. Saakashvili continued to maintain and reinforce Georgia’s “good neighborly bilateral relations with Armenia and some Central Asian countries.”

Since 1999 Georgia had been negotiating with Russia for withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia, and one of Saakashvili’s first steps as president was to make Moscow accept Georgia’s conditions. By December, 2007, all four Russian bases were completely closed down and the military equipment transported to Armenia under the auspices of an Armenia-Russia military coalition. Saakashvili actively continued “the policy of preventing the CIS from becoming a Russian-led tool of supranational reintegration” of former Soviet countries under Russian dominance. Meanwhile, Moscow “granted Russian citizenship to thousands of Abkhazians and South Ossetians by claiming that they are henceforth “Russians” and need a protection by Russia.” Saakashvili saw that move as a direct threat to Georgia’s territorial integrity.

The Georgian ruling elite decided to minimize its dependence on Russia by balancing against it through military-political, financial and technical assistance from the EU and the US. It sought to institutionalize country’s security system and to sign a

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237 For more see, Melikyan, Gevorg, op. cit.
239 Melikyan, Gevorg, op. cit., p. 191.
240 Saakashvili, Mikheil, from his “Speech during the Winter Session of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly”, Strasbourg, January 26, 2005.
hedging agreement with NATO. The US pushed both EU and NATO decision-makers to accelerate and even facilitate Georgia’s (and Ukraine’s) accession to those institutions. If the European Union was reluctant to discuss Georgia’s accession even for the future, NATO’s HQ was showing more excitement and motivation to see Georgia as one of its full members. Nothing could stop the process, and nothing for Saakashvili was worthy to do so. The pro-western Georgian president, through his Janus-faced policy of authoritarian democracy, was convinced that Georgia’s future is linked solely to the West, while Russia is the country of the past. For him the West was the best among the rest. Although many in the country had a more Russia-oriented outlook than a Euro-Atlantic one, because of previous links, geographic proximity, linguistic compatibility, and job opportunities, Saakashvili had a clear vision of Georgia’s present and its future. His ambitious projects were based on strong incentives to reinforce his country and its sovereignty by (1) restoring its territorial integrity; (2) by establishing symmetric political and economic relations with all countries, including Russia; and (3) by establishing symmetric institutional relations with NATO and the EU. By the same token, Saakashvili was sending clear messages to an already miffed Russia that while Georgia was reluctant to restore its past with Russia, but it could have relations based on respect of Georgia’s sovereignty and its domestic and foreign policies.

The big Russian bear did not take Georgian moves too seriously, resorting to a number of political, economic, or diplomatic leverages to block Georgia’s (and, at the same time, Ukraine’s) possible path to NATO. While NATO was overtly inviting Russia to bilateral full cooperation (some were even arguing that Russia could become NATO’s
member\textsuperscript{241}) on a wide range of areas, Russia still considered NATO as the United States’ most efficient European tool to keep Russia under control. Russia and Georgia were suffering from inferiority complexes, towards the West by Russia, and towards Russia by Georgia. Georgia was playing a negative role against Russia with its “western enterprises” while Russia needed Georgia to assure its full control of the Black and Caspian seas (and of Central Asia, by extension), a stronger presence vis-à-vis Turkey and an opening to Iraq and the Middle East. Moreover, Russia was not willing to accept that such a small country as Georgia could create such big problems.

Georgia responded by increasing its presence in GUAM and used it as a tool to counterbalance Russia-led CSTO and, by extension, CIS. Georgia sought to boost its military potential by inviting American military trainers and organizing cooperative military exercises. It greatly increased its military expenditures (in some estimates by about 12 times in 2008 that of 2002\textsuperscript{242}). It signed agreements for acquisition of armaments from the US, Ukraine (in the framework of GUAM) and Israel. Georgia felt the needed support, assistance and encouragement of its western partners and allies in the fragile geo-political situation the new government had inherited from Shevardnadze. In 2008, Saakashvili, in an endless quest to find solution to the “frozen” conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, attempted to “defrost” them and solve the issue of Georgia’s territorial integrity once and for all. On August 7, 2008, Georgian forces begin a major artillery assault on Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia.

To some, the restoration of Georgia’s territorial integrity was needed by Saakashvili for his quest of NATO membership which “accepts” only states without

\textsuperscript{241} Braun, Aurel, NATO-Russia Relations in the Twenty-First Century, Routledge, 2008, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{242} Melikyan, Gevorg , “The Dynamics of Military Basing in the South Caucasus”, p. 192.
territorial disputes. However, Russia reacted immediately. It not only fully defeated Georgian NATO-style troops, in the aftermath it granted formal independence to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Saakashvili’s calculations did not appear to match the geopolitical reality his country was facing. NATO refused to intervene. The US did the same, and the EU restrained itself from directly confronting Russia and made only a few declaratory statements that Russia clearly ignored. Russia’s coercive actions, known as “peace enforcement”, were intended to compel Georgia to change its behavior and to make substantial shifts toward a new geo-political design of the region. This was also a message to NATO cherishing visions of some “eastern” enlargements where Russia was gradually regaining its lost positions and influence after the collapse of the USSR.

NATO’s degree of commitment and the level of its motivations in the Georgian context were not on the same page with Georgia. Georgia’s agreements with NATO, although very close, were only partnerships, and did not constitute a military alliance. Georgia has neither full membership nor military agreements governing cases of invasion or the like. NATO and, by extension, the West including the US, was not willing to be entrapped in a direct conflict with Russia with which it was trying to build a friendly, rather than a cold-war style, relationship. The North-Atlantic Alliance neither could nor wanted to pay the high cost, while the Georgian president was engaged in wishful thinking. The lack of a formal military alliance caused Georgia to rethink its position and find other ways to secure multidimensional stability for the country.
CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

The sharp militarization of the region was the response to what the three South Caucasian states perceived as threats to their national security. The military alliances they form are not only “primarily instruments of national security policies,”243 but institutions that, in the context of the South Caucasus, directly affect the geo-strategic developments there. Jervis and Snyder argue that “the weaker ally enjoys some bargaining power because of its greater vulnerability.”244 However, in the South Caucasian context states do not have a high enough agency to influence their alliance partners. The opposite is true.

This chapter attempted to reveal relationships and dynamics between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and the military alliances they make. The main purpose of this chapter was to explore the main reasons and motives of alliance formation in the region. The overall picture is quite puzzling and illustrates processes taking place in the region and affecting political-military policies and alliance choice. It demonstrated the geopolitical fragility of Armenia and Georgia, and Azerbaijani threats vis-à-vis Armenia and its quest for “local hegemony” that makes Turkey more careful with it and willing not to concede all the leverage it has in the context of its NATO membership, its candidacy for EU accession, and the important role Turkey plays among Muslim countries, especially vis-à-vis Iran and the Middle East. The presence of formal military alliances seems to differ markedly from collaborations or partnerships that lack a high degree of commitment as in case of Georgia. NATO, motivated by Georgia’s accession, could not demonstrate the needed commitment to “save” Georgia from Russia when the latter was

243 Snyder, Glenn H., op. cit., p. 5.
244 Snyder, Glenn H., op. cit., p. 170.
literally attacking not only the military activity zone, but other Georgian cities as well, including Tbilisi suburbs. NATO’s military involvement could have led to unintended escalation and possible direct confrontation with Russia, a “hot” situation not faced since the Cuban missile crisis in the 1960s. On the other hand, Russia, in its turn, never asked and/or imposed its strategic allies (Armenia for example) either to intervene or to recognize Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence under the auspices of military cooperation.

This can, inter alia, lead us to an assumption that “eastern” or “Russia-centered” alliances are “leader-based”, as opposed to NATO which, for example, not only has a strong institutional structure, but also is a highly sophisticated and cohesive decision-making body. Russia, leader in the eastern alliance, chooses the best ad-hoc tactics inside the alliance, and the ideological charge inside of those alliances is not high. By contrast, the degree of motivation to keep those alliances alive is high, but depends on the alliance leader. The more committed the leader is, the more secure other allies are.

To sum up, the chapter made a clear distinction among alliance formation motives and the resulting three different types of military alliances in the South Caucasus, with different degrees of interdependence. These degrees will help us establish, in the following chapters, the levels of cohesiveness of military alliances in the region and other important characteristics of alliances. According to Snyder, “interdependence [of allies] may be symmetrical or asymmetrical and high or low.”

Armenia, since its independence, has been involved in armed conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan, and having perceived high level of threats both from Azerbaijan

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245 Snyder, Glenn H., op. cit., p. 31.
and Turkey, seeks to “return” to its old friend, Russia. “The greater the ally’s contribution to meeting any shortfall in capability, the greater the dependence on the ally.”\textsuperscript{246} The interdependence between Armenia and Russia is “high and asymmetrical” and very constant. It implies that “the least dependent one will have the most influence”\textsuperscript{247} inside and even outside the alliance relationship. Russia has overall control of Armenia’s economic and political-military development while Armenia seems almost reluctant to find some leverage or cards to play against Russia.

Azerbaijan has formed a strong political-military alliance with Turkey. Threats from Armenia push Azerbaijan to seek a strong ally, and the best option in this context is Turkey. For Azerbaijan, the NK conflict is a static process making no progress. Hence, Azerbaijan depends militarily on Turkey and on close military cooperation that is as stable as the conflict and threats from Armenia. However, besides threats from Armenia and disputes over the NK region, Azerbaijan faces strong economic challenges as well. That is why, Azerbaijan, unlike Armenia, seeks to have more diversified relations with other powers to respond both to existential and economic challenges. However, its economic and military-political dependence on Turkey swings from very high to high, and from moderate to low toward Russia. When it is at very high level of dependence upon Turkey, it tries to ameliorate its relations with Russia and manipulate its oil and gas prices vis-à-vis Turkey (as Russia does toward Ukraine). When Azerbaijan is at a mutually dependent level with Turkey, it involves in Turkey-centered projects such as NABUCCO, and lowers its gas and oil prices for Turkey. When Azerbaijan is at a moderate level of dependence on Russia (the powerful ally of Armenia), it plays its

\textsuperscript{246} Snyder, Glenn H., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{247} Idem.
Caspian cards and revives its quest for the control of the NK region. At a low level of dependence on Russia, Azerbaijan’s rhetoric in the NK issue becomes more aggressive, with emphasis on a possible military campaign against NK. At that level, Azerbaijan also takes strong steps towards the US and Central Asian states, which usually irritates Russia, making it to exert more influence over Azerbaijan by playing the “Armenian card” and increasing Azerbaijani dependence on Russia.

**Georgia** is not involved in any military alliance. Its institutional alliance behavior is more amorphous and not strictly contoured. It does not swing between powers as does Azerbaijan, nor is it stuck with only one power as is Armenia. Having highly perceived threats from Russia and a very low level of threat from Euro-Atlantic structures, it demonstrates more institutionalist ambitions to be fully integrated with NATO and the EU as a better continuum of its west-oriented policy. However, its geographic proximity to Russia and secessionism inside the multiethnic country make Georgia dependent on Russia’s intentions. This dependence reduces Georgia’s chances with NATO which would be happy to embrace it but must take into account Georgia’s relationship with Russia and the overall context stemming from that relationship.

The following chapter will summarize all findings from the previous chapters in terms of levels of threats, alliance motives and behaviors, the degree of cohesion and the dyadic relations between military allies and other states. It will assess as well the likelihood of destabilization of the region based on those findings.
CHAPTER SIX: MILITARY-POLITICAL GEOMETRY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

As we could see, the complexity and multidimensionality of the interactions among the South Caucasian states, on one hand, and of the interplay with global and regional powers including alliance-formation ambitions, on the other, are intriguing. Those interested in revealing causal mechanisms and making some generalizations on causes and implications of conflicts can be divided into three groups: Those who see roots of conflicts “as a direct result of the destabilizing and deceitful policies of …great powers that seek influence in the area;” ²⁴⁸ those who argue that “conflicts are rooted in the relations between the concerned peoples and not in the actions of great powers; moreover the regional alignments and interrelationships between outside players are made possible by the existence of these conflicts;” ²⁴⁹ and those who see that “there is certainly truth in both explanations, and the degree of truth varies from one conflict to another” ²⁵⁰ in different time-periods.

When states form alliances they do not read scientific analyses and research. Rather, they assess the level of threats and intentions they perceive from other states and act accordingly. However, decisions of many weak states that choose allies depend on the big powers’ “final decision,” as well. In other words, it is a two-way street, a dyadic relationship and thus, causality of the dilemma goes back and forth from weaker states, including conflicts, to powerful ones and vice-versa. Domestic and systemic levels interact and create dilemmas. In previous chapters we analyzed how conflicts impact domestic and foreign policies of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In this chapter we

²⁴⁹ Idem.
²⁵⁰ Idem.
will revisit alliance formation patterns for each South Caucasian state and schematically explore the interactions and dyadic relationships the three South Caucasian states have with other states or powers.

**Part 1: Alliance Formation in the South Caucasus Revisited**

Weitsman, referring to Keohane, argues that alliances seen as institutions combine “persistent and interconnected sets of rules (formal or informal) that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity and shape expectations.”251 She also argues that the magnitude of threat and motives matters greatly. The combination of all aspects related to alliances makes alliance formation a complex and multilayered endeavor, difficult to predict as to its future evolution. Alliances formed by the South Caucasian states shape different behavioral patterns, activities and expectations based on sources, levels of threats and, motives for alliances formation. Weitsman provides a wonderful tool for exploring the multiplicity of those different dimensions under one theoretical and empirical roof. The curvilinearity between factors that shape alliance behaviors and motives is an added value in our understanding of the complexity of alliance formation. Having applied Weitsman’s unifying theory of alliance formation to our case study, we unpack details that otherwise could be confused or not relevant. The “autopsy” of motives and sources of threats that lead to the emergence of alliances outlines a new picture of the South Caucasus. Weitsman’s approach perfectly holds in assessing not only interactions between allies but with non-signatory states as well.

**Armenia** is oriented to a great extent to Russia, with whom it forms an alliance, to a more reduced extent to the EU and Euro-Atlantic structures, and to an even lesser

251 Weitsman, Patricia, *Dangerous Alliances*, p. 17.
extent to Iran. The ruling elite and the overall Armenian population, despite occasional important disagreements with Russia, considered it to be its only reliable partner, historical and ideological friend, and “Christian brother”. Under very high levels of perceived threats from Azerbaijan and Turkey, the Russian presence is the only solution for Armenia. From the Russian perspective, Armenia is considered a constant partner, and hence, reliable. The combination of domestic and international factors prompted Armenia to adopt balancing behavior with Russia vis-à-vis threats from Azerbaijan and Turkey. To Armenia, Russia is a power which can reduce existential threats Armenia has with its neighbors and can also offer economic and political dividends. Russia’s role, neither underestimated, nor overestimated, is overarching. However, a closer analytical eye to the Russia-Armenia relationship reveals that such a high level of dependence may create some intra-alliance threats. Although not at a high level, those threats push Armenia to be more careful with Russia and to consider bandwagoning behaviors if the Russian attitude changes under certain circumstances. Armenia will bandwagon with Russia so as not to be fully absorbed by it and thus, become a Russian “province”.

From a constructivist view, one should analyze not only static, never-changing relationships but more dynamic ones as well. It is true that Armenia perceives Turkey a serious threat. Threats, surprisingly, have a dual implication: they can push a state to balance against it or to bandwagon (capitulate to) with it. But there is a third dimension of threat as well. It prompts countries to tether. Armenia, aiming to reduce threats from Turkey, launched an unprecedented reconciliation process between those two historically rival nations. The project was welcomed by Turkey which, in its turn, shares its own threats from Armenia vis-à-vis its national security. This move by Armenia and Turkey
aimed to be implemented as a strategy of lowering the threat levels from high to moderate thus allowing them to change their balancing behavior to a tethering one. A possible “tethering agreement”, as Weitsman puts it, “will, at a minimum, stave off the immediate possibility of armed conflict between the rivals and at most will facilitate cooperation between them through heightened transparency and opportunities for trust to grow.” The table below illustrates all interactions that Armenia has with Russia and other states.

Table 1: Armenia: Possible sources of threats, intentions and alliance motives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of threat</th>
<th>Level of threat and intentions</th>
<th>Alliance motives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Russia</td>
<td>Low/moderate*</td>
<td>Balancing/Bandwagoning*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(brotherly/strategic*)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Turkey</td>
<td>High/Moderate*</td>
<td>Balancing/Tethering*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(hostile/neutral*)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>Balancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(hostile)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. NATO</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(non aggressive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Georgia</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(friendly)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Asterisk points out the likelihood of such a behavior under changing levels of threats and intentions (marked also by an asterisk)

-Azerbaijan is oriented to a great extent to Turkey, with which it forms a military alliance, to a lesser extent to the Muslim world, and to a moderate level to the West and Russia. Azerbaijan shares very strong religious, cultural and ethnic affinities with Turkey. Their alliance, similar to the Russian-Armenian one, was reached without domestic

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252 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 21.
253 The design of all tables in this thesis is based on Weitsman’s tables in her “Dangerous Alliances”.
pressure or discontent. Turkey is Azerbaijan’s “brother with a “healthy” sibling rivalry between them. Turkey is a powerful regional actor which historically sought to dominate the region and dictate its own rules, but it lacks resources that Azerbaijan has. Thus, Turkey plays a tricky game by maintaining close relations with Azerbaijan, and limiting the latter’s “expansion” in the region.

The perceived Armenian-Russian overarching threat forces Azerbaijan and Turkey into the closest alliance. Ideological convergences make that alliance more powerful and identity-based. The Turkic kinship factor is important, and the presence of “alien” identities only reinforces that ideational “self”. However, Azerbaijan always feels a slight apprehension about Turkish political, military and even cultural “dominance”.

Azerbaijan always seeks to endogenously equalize its positions vis-à-vis Turkey by using its oil and gas leverage. During the Armenia-Turkey reconciliation talks officially started in 2008, Azerbaijan tried by all possible means to tilt those processes to its own interests, leaving Turkey no alternative but to accept them. Azerbaijan feels some ideational threats from Turkey’s Islamist ideology that might negatively impact the secular identity Azerbaijan is trying to maintain. However, the Azeri policy toward powerful, much more advanced and unpredictable Turkey cannot go beyond swinging from balancing to bandwagoning. The combination of domestic and international factors forces Azerbaijan to opt for a balancing behavior with Turkey in light of perceived threats from Armenia. Under certain (very restricted) circumstances, Azerbaijani policy for Turkey can swing from balancing to bandwagoning behavior. This shift is mostly possible if the level of discrepancies over certain issues increases\(^{254}\) and the level of threat from Armenia.

\(^{254}\) One of the possible “increases” in the level of threat can be over religious perceptions—secular for Azerbaijan and Islamist for Turkey.
decreases giving Azerbaijan more autonomy.\footnote{Snyder, Glenn H., \textit{Alliance politics}, p. 181.} As with Russia’s role for Armenia, the Turkish presence helps Azerbaijan to solve a number of domestic problems.

Azerbaijan also has controversial relationships with Russia. Russia, as a strategic and military ally of Armenia, is seen by Azerbaijan as a source of threat. It has huge regional ambitions which do not fit those of Azerbaijan. The partition of the Caspian Sea resources and Russia’s growing influence in Central Asian politics and economy are examples. However, Russia’s big market is attractive and is a cheaper way for pumping its hydrocarbon resources. Russia, in its turn, does not want to so threaten Azerbaijan as to lose it as a partner. Azerbaijan and Russia managed to sign a number of bilateral agreements and make progress in their relations. Based on its current interactions with Russia, Azerbaijan chooses a hedging policy. However, if the level of Russian threats growths, Azerbaijan can easily balance against it using its oil and gas leverages, Turkish alliance and links with the Muslim world. With the Euro-Atlantic structures, namely NATO, Azerbaijan sees a low level of threats and thus demonstrates hedging behavior. The table below illustrates interactions of Azerbaijan:
Table 2: Azerbaijan: Possible sources of threats, intentions and alliance motives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of threat</th>
<th>Level of threat and intentions</th>
<th>Alliance motives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Turkey</td>
<td>Low/Moderate (brotherly/cooperative*)</td>
<td>Balancing/Bandwagoning*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Russia</td>
<td>Moderate/High (non aggressive)</td>
<td>Hedging/Balancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Armenia</td>
<td>Very high (hostile)</td>
<td>Balancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Georgia</td>
<td>Low (non aggressive)</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. NATO</td>
<td>Low (non aggressive)</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Asterisk points out the likelihood of such a behavior under changing levels of threats and intentions (marked also by an asterisk)

-Georgia is oriented to the EU and Euro-Atlantic structures, but this alignment is very limited, gives no sense of full alliance formation and seems to be controlled by Russia. Georgia which has religious affinities with Russia through the Eastern Orthodox Church always demonstrated a more independent attitude before the Sovietization of Georgia and after the Soviet collapse. Unlike Armenia and Azerbaijan, where the ruling elites and the overall population were on the same page in terms of Russian and Turkish alliances, the opinions of different ruling elites and those of the Georgian ethnically heterogeneous population did not always, if ever, match, thus creating more tensions. The Georgian case is, in fact, particular, because Georgian alliance behavior reflects the absence of a strong military ally as opposed to Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is largely explained by the lack of historical or cultural affinities with any of the big powers that could have been revived once independence was achieved. Second, both Armenia and Azerbaijan choose their allies based on the geographic proximity factor, while Georgia looks to more remote partners in the West.
The ideal partner for Georgia would be Russia, and Georgians are well aware of it. In an interview with Saakashvili published on June 5, 2010, in ”Le Monde”, the Georgian president stated that Georgians “are neither foolish nor suicidal: Having Russia as an enemy can be fatal” for Georgia. Georgians do not want Russia as an enemy, nor does it want it as an ally, and here is the paradox. Russia, meanwhile, is trying to entrap Georgia to bandwagon with it at any price. Georgia is more than reluctant and is trying to balance against that “big Russia bear” by seeking military assistance from NATO. Full membership in NATO, as many argue, could prevent Russia from intervening in South Ossetia in 2008. But a similar quest for NATO membership, others argue, was the cause of the Russian attack on Georgia. Currently, Georgia has even more complicated relationships with Russia, while the western states exert pressure on Russia, by irritating it further. Georgia’s moving nearer to NATO promises new surprises.

Georgia seeks to compensate Russian dimension by allying with Turkey, though not on a military basis. Historically, “Georgia was not seen as an important partner and was neglected in Turkish policy.” With the escalation of an Armenian-Azeri relationship Georgia has gradually become an important link between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Georgia, in its turn, takes advantage of the geo-political situation in the region to build a good relationship with Turkey. However, Turkey is not fully confident of a Christian Georgia which strives for full independence. The table below illustrates the multidimensional Georgian alliances formation politics:

Table 3: Georgia: Possible sources of threats, intentions and alliance motives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of threat</th>
<th>Level of threat and intentions</th>
<th>Alliance motives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Russia</td>
<td>Very high (hostile)</td>
<td>Balancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Turkey</td>
<td>Low to Moderate (friendly)</td>
<td>Hedging/Bandwagoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Low (friendly)</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Armenia</td>
<td>Low (friendly)</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. NATO</td>
<td>Low (non aggressive)</td>
<td>Balancing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2: External and Internal Dyads and Levels of Cohesion

Although Weitsman’s approach is applicable only to exploration of intra-alliance dyadic relationships, their nature and features, we sought to apply it here. It seems to work successfully with bilateral interactions as well, given that there are only two purely military alliances in the region, and that this small N aspect could not tell us everything about the complexity of the regional trends. Thus, Weitsman’s dyadic “diagnostic” of alliance motivations and the revelation of degrees of cohesion can be applied to other alliance-like interactions or relationships.

In previous chapters we mentioned one of Snyder’s approaches, according to which an intra-alliance or simply “alliance security dilemma” is based on “risks of abandonment and entrapment”\(^\text{258}\) and may vary under different conditions. This assumption is theoretically and empirically well-grounded. However, dichotomy is not the only characteristic of alliances in the South Caucasus. Our findings show that

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\(^{258}\) Snyder, Glenn H., *op. cit.*, p. 181.
independent of abandonment and entrapment there is also a simple but necessary “cohabitation” between allies whereby, in some time periods, there is need neither to quit nor be involved in a war, but to interact.

Liska, in his turn, argues that “when they are sufficiently intense, and security is the chief concern, conflicts are the primary determinants of alignments.”259 This argument holds well for the three South Caucasian states. If Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia had not been involved in armed conflicts, probably the security dilemma would not have pushed them that far to form such strong military alliances to face each other. Neither would they be more prone to bandwagoning with strong states because of their vulnerability and impotence to determine they own fates.260 They all seek security by establishing not only political, economic and cultural relations with big actors but militarily institutionalized ones as well. However, theoretical findings in other case studies show that alliances are not eternal and may dissolve over time due to changing geo-political environments. Another aspect of their dissolution is the level of interconnectedness between the signatories and the degree of commitment of allies inside the alliance. It is important as well to assess the level of internal and external threats that an alliance faces. Weitsman’s cohesion theory may explain why Georgia was not supported by NATO during Russia’s overt intervention in August 2008. By looking inside the alliances, one can determine the extent to which those alliances are cohesive and how changes in the level of threat can affect the cohesiveness of those alliances. Based on Weitsman’s theory on alliance motivations and its characteristics we can look

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259 Liska, George, op.cit., p. 12.
to the intra-alliance dyadic relationships of each military coalition in the South Caucasus as well as to other important dyadic relationships, and explore current alliances there.

Based on findings provided in Tables 1, 2 and 3, we can now proceed to explore dyadic relationships inside alliances and cooperative interactions. We will look first at the characteristics of purely military alliances: Armenia-Russia tandem and Azerbaijan-Turkey tandem. Second, we will move on to Georgia, whose military cooperation with NATO will have the special definition of “pre-alliance status”. Third, we will look at the characteristics of the other dyads. Finally, we will assess the level of cohesion inside alliances and the degree of commitment in other interactions.

**Part 2.1: Armenia**

**Part 2.1.1: Armenia-Russia**

Weitsman demonstrates perfectly how a state, seeking to balance against a high level of external threats under security dilemma, chooses a partner, while Snyder contends that weaker states chose alliance partners “for meeting external [and internal] threats more effectively than could be done by their members individually.”261 Being sandwiched between seemingly hostile states, Armenia’s main concern is to enhance its security at almost any price. It also seeks to join Russia because the benefits of an alliance with Russia “are greater than the costs.”262 For Armenia political, economic and cultural dimensions are secondary to its security issues. The balancing motives of Armenia and Russia are, as Weitsman puts it, characterized by a very high level of commitment that under conditions of high external threats makes the intra-alliance

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261 Snyder, Glenn H., *op. cit.*, p. 4.
262 Idem, p. 43.
relationship “quite cohesive as states enter those agreements.” \(^{263}\) Under the perceived threats from Azerbaijan and Turkey combined with demonstration of very aggressive intentions as Armenia sees them, “balancing with others may be the only way to avoid that fate.” \(^{264}\)

Finally, Armenia’s political, military and overwhelming economical dependence on Russia creates some hidden avenues of bandwagoning with Russia. However, external threats are immense, and intra-alliance threats will always be only secondary. Only serious changes in the levels of threats for Armenia can give Armenia another alliance motive and change its behavior vis-à-vis Russia. Thus, the Armenia-Russia politico-military strong tandem has a very high level of cohesion, a high level of commitment and a very low level of defection from either side. Russia posits itself as a very strong and implacable leader, a dominant power that pushes Armenia, as its only strategic ally in the region, to serve its interests which are anchored by its overall regional dominance. This mutual interdependence creates an environment of strong interconnectedness and cohesiveness, with, however, a highly centralized decision-making dimension inside of the alliance. (See also Table 1)

\(^{263}\) Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 30.
Table 4: Dyadic motivations of the Armenian-Russian military alliance under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russia’s motives</th>
<th>Armenia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of alliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance</strong> (against NATO expansion, to limit Turkey’s and Iran’s level of influence in the region)</td>
<td><strong>Balance</strong> (against Turkey and Azerbaijan)</td>
<td>High commitment level; high cohesion, high external threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bandwagon</strong>*</td>
<td>Variable commitment level, though probably high; moderate cohesion; internal threat to Armenia is high, external threat to Russia is high*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Asterisk points out the likelihood of such a behavior under significant and enduring changes in one state’s motives (marked also by an asterisk)

Part 2.1.2: Armenia-NATO

The military cooperation between the three South Caucasian states and NATO opens interesting perspectives that can considerably elevate those states’ level of interaction with western countries. Under conditions of very low levels of threats from either sides NATO’s Partnership for Peace and Individual Action Plans are excellent institutional tools in achieving a high level of cooperation without facing mutually threatening frameworks. Armenia as a Russian ally is an important regional partner for NATO. Not only Armenia’s strategic location but its closeness with Russia plays an important role in this interplay, making Armenia a valuable partner for NATO. Both sides demonstrate an efficient level of commitment which is, however, limited only to cooperation in some fields and does not imply a necessity to form an alliance. Some wrongly believed that Armenia-NATO interaction could turn to a real military alliance with full membership for Armenia. However, not because it is inconceivable, but because the geo-political choices of Armenia and the threats it faces in the region make this option less valid. On the other hand, as discussed, Russia’s aggressive attitude toward NATO’s possible enlargement in the region, limits any such development for Armenia.
Table 4.1: Dyadic motivations of Armenia-NATO military cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATO’s motives</th>
<th>Armenia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of military cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Low commitment level; modest cohesion, low external threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2.1.3: Armenia-Georgia

The table illustrates the external threats at a very low level. This allows two countries to develop mutually beneficent relationships in a number of fields and remain formally neutral vis-à-vis conflicts both states face.

Table 4.2: Dyadic motivations of Armenia-Georgia cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia’s motives</th>
<th>Armenia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Low commitment level; modest cohesion, low external threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2.1.4: Armenia-Azerbaijan and Armenia-Turkey

Table 4.3: Dyadic motivations of the Armenia-Azerbaijan interaction under conditions of very high level of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Azerbaijan’s motives</th>
<th>Armenia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get Armenia to capitulate</td>
<td>To get Azerbaijan to capitulate</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Dyadic motivations of the Armenia-Turkey interaction under conditions of very high level of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turkey’s motives</th>
<th>Armenia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of alliance/cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bandwagon</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandwagon</td>
<td>Tethering*</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Asterisk points out the likelihood of such a behavior under significant and enduring changes in one state’s motives
Armenia’s interactions with Turkey and Azerbaijan are the most problematic as discussed earlier.

**Part 2.2: Azerbaijan**

**Part 2.2.1: Azerbaijan-Turkey**

The interaction between the Armenia-Russia tandem and the Turkish-Azeri military, political and economic alliance as a counterbalance to it, is probably comparable only to the NATO- Warsaw Pact interplay in terms of the level of antagonism between them. Azerbaijan and Turkey each has perceived threats from Armenia and, by extension, Russia. Article 4 of the Cooperation and Security Treaty Organization’s (CSTO) stipulates that “In case an act of aggression is committed against any of the Member States all the others Member States will provide it with necessary assistance, including military one.” This clearly implies to Azerbaijan that in case of renewal of armed confrontations with Armenia, Russia would not delay its intervention as a CSTO signatory. On the other hand, Russia has ambitions to become the regional hegemon, which makes both Turkey and Azerbaijan balance against it. Georgia’s conflict with Russia over South Ossetia demonstrated how wrong were those who shared the opinion that Russia would refrain from a direct intervention. Thus, Azerbaijan, although seeking to maintain good relations with Russia, ties itself to Turkey to balance against an “Orthodox” threat from Armenia. In this context, the Azeri-Turkish interaction is as solid, valid and reliable as the Russian-Armenian one. However, having some divergences in geo-political and also cultural perceptions of its future, Azerbaijan exerts some leverage to maintain its relative independence, and in doing so, sometimes swings.

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to bandwagoning behavior vis-à-vis Turkey as opposed to its possible defection from the alliance under threats of being absorbed by Turkey.

Table 5: Dyadic motivations of the Azerbaijan-Turkey military alliance under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turkey’s motives</th>
<th>Azerbaijan’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of alliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance (against Russia and Iran)</td>
<td>Balance (against Armenia, and Russian-Armenian military build-up)</td>
<td>High commitment level; high cohesion, high external threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Bandwagon*</td>
<td>Variable commitment level, though probably high; moderate cohesion; internal threat to Armenia is high, external threat to Russia is high*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Asterisk points out the likelihood of such a behavior under significant and enduring changes in one state’s motives (marked also by an asterisk)

Part 2.2.2: Azerbaijan-Russia

The very close cooperation that Russians want is characterized by hedging behaviors on both sides. Russia takes steps to get Azerbaijan to bandwagon to keep it under its influence. However, given the Azerbaijani low level of dependence on Russia in a number of fields, including hydrocarbon resources and the military, Russia tries for mutually beneficial cooperation in various domains “with an eye on...blocking off avenues of expansion for their potential rivals while simultaneously seeking to curry favor to ensure their actions are not overly provocative.”266 Russia is more careful with its actions against Azerbaijan, than with Armenia. Azerbaijan, in turn, seeks to keep with Russia the level of relations Georgia was willing to have. The Azerbaijani alliance with Turkey and its openings to the Muslim World, on one hand, and a number of western

266 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 29.
investors on the other, allows Azerbaijan to maneuver easily in issues vital to it.

Sometimes, due to temporary geo-political readjustments Russia seeks to get Azerbaijan to bandwagon with it. This move increases the external threat for Azerbaijan pushing it to adopt more balancing behavior against Russia.

Table 5.1: Dyadic motivations of Azerbaijan-Russia cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russia’s motives</th>
<th>Azerbaijan’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedging</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
<td>Low commitment level; modest cohesion, low external threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandwagoning</td>
<td>Balancing</td>
<td>Variable commitment level, though probably high; moderate cohesion; internal threat to Azerbaijan is high, external threat to Russia is high *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2.2.3: Azerbaijan-NATO

With NATO, Azerbaijan seeks relationships that could diversify its policies and make it strategically more important. Both NATO and Azerbaijan run a close cooperation with low-level commitment and no prospect for Azerbaijan to apply for full membership in the near future. Allied with NATO’s Turkey, Azerbaijan enjoys cooperation with NATO with more ease and flexibility. Currently NATO-Azerbaijan military cooperation does not harm Russia’s interests in Azerbaijan as it could in Armenia’s case.

Table 5.2: Dyadic motivations of Azerbaijan-NATO military cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATO’s motives</th>
<th>Azerbaijan’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of military cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Low commitment level; modest cohesion, low external threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2.2.4: Azerbaijan-Georgia

For Azerbaijan, Georgia is a vital transiting corridor to pump its gas and oil to Turkey and then on to Europe. For Georgia, Azerbaijan is vital to its existence as the only source of gas. Both form the core of GUAM-Organization for Democracy and Economic Development whose agenda looks more anti-Russian than anything else. Although not very powerful or institutionalized, GUAM is still an environment in which military agreements between its signatories take shape.

Table 5.3: Dyadic motivations of Azerbaijan-Georgia cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia’s motives</th>
<th>Azerbaijan’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedging</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
<td>Low commitment level; modest cohesion, low external threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2.2.5: Azerbaijan-Armenia

Table 5.4: Dyadic motivations of the Azerbaijan-Armenia interaction under conditions of very a high level of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armenia’s motives</th>
<th>Azerbaijan’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get Azerbaijan to capitulate</td>
<td>To get Armenia to capitulate</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2.3: Georgia

NATO seems to have far-reaching plans for Georgia as a future partner and full member. It is the only state from the region that has clearly expressed a strong motivation to access NATO. This move by NATO is seen by Russia as a clear message that NATO (by extension the US) does not limit itself to only granting memberships to the former
Soviet Bloc countries. Rather this “new” enlargement is a direct perceived threat to Russia’s interests in the region. NATO-Georgia cooperation opens fantastic institutional opportunities to each by reducing costs and increasing benefits. Georgia wants to be integrated into the family of European states and seeks to do so by being first integrated into NATO and then probably having more chances to request full membership in the EU. However, the more NATO activates such membership talks, the more Russia undertakes measures to block any avenues of “Western expansion” on its “southern flanks”. In June 2010, NATO’s SG reaffirmed his organization’s commitment to Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic ambitions stating that “the Alliance is waiting for Georgia to conduct necessary reforms before it can enter the bloc…and NATO’s door remains open for Georgia.”

A NATO-Georgia alliance could render Georgia more powerful and create more headaches for Russia both in the region and beyond as Russia seeks to control from the South Caucasus all avenues to the Middle East and Central Asia.

Being in a “hedging-hedging” dyadic relationship, the level of commitment inside the Georgia-NATO pre-alliance was and still remains very low. The Georgia’s lack of full membership allowed Russia to act freely and without constraint during its military campaign against Georgian troops in the South Caucasus. That is what pushes Georgia and NATO to increase their commitment level and transform “hedging” motives to “balancing” against Russia. Weitsman’s classification allows once again, from a different angle, to clearly understand one of the reasons of why NATO did not intervene during the five-day Russian-Georgian confrontation in August 2008.

Part 2.3.1: Georgia-NATO

Table 6: Dyadic motivations of NATO-Georgia military cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATO’s motives</th>
<th>Georgia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of military cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Low commitment level; modest cohesion, low internal threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2.3.2: Georgia-Turkey

Being in a very problematic relationship with Russia, Georgia seeks a much deeper cooperation with Turkey as a NATO member and a US ally and as a country with a big market and broad opportunities. Turkey, in its turn, is quite comfortable with cooperation whereby Georgia plays a necessary role as a corridor between Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Table 6.1: Dyadic motivations of Georgia-Turkey cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turkey’s motives</th>
<th>Georgia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedging</td>
<td>Bandwagoning</td>
<td>Low to moderate commitment level; limited cohesion, threat within alliance to Georgia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2.3.3: Georgia-Azerbaijan

Table 6.2: Dyadic motivations of Georgia-Azerbaijan cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Azerbaijan’s motives</th>
<th>Georgia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedging</td>
<td>Hedging</td>
<td>Low commitment level; modest cohesion, low external threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See “Part 2.2.4: Azerbaijan-Georgia"
Part 2.3.4: Georgia-Armenia

Table 6.3: Dyadic motivations of Georgia-Armenia cooperation under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armenia’s motives</th>
<th>Georgia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Low commitment level; modest cohesion, low external threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See “Part 2.1.3: Armenia-Georgia”

Part 2.3.5: Georgia-Russia

Table 6.4: Dyadic motivations of the Russia-Georgia interaction under conditions of threat:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russia’s motives</th>
<th>Georgia’s motives</th>
<th>Characteristics of interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get Georgia to bandwagon</td>
<td>Balancing</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 3: Threats in the South Caucasus: External Threats versus Internal Threats, Materialist versus Ideational

Part 3.1: The Armenia-Russia Alliance: Threats

The Armenia-Russia alliance faces quite high levels of materialist external threats in the region when it comes to Armenia’s conflicts with Azerbaijan and Turkey. However, the Russian presence in the alliance, and Russia’s bilateral relations with both Azerbaijan and Turkey outside the alliance, slightly reduce the level of external threats for the alliance. The alliance supports a strong military doctrine reinforced by mutual agreements, legitimizes the presence of Russian troops in Armenia and allows both states to establish common strategies and tactics.

From the ideational perspective, the alliance enjoys a moderate level of external threats that come mainly from international organizations and western states that “blame”
the alliance for being a Russian project. Those criticisms are directed toward Armenia’s Russia-oriented ideologies and Russia’s egocentric identity. Although those systematic menaces are not threatening enough for serious measures, some European or NATO-oriented ideologies are sometimes artificially limited on both states. Internal materialist threats for the alliance are at a very low level due to factors largely discussed in previous chapters. The synergy of Armenia’s fears vis-à-vis its neighbors and Russia’s need for a reliable partner for the implementation of its ambitions make the alliance cohesive, cooperative and shielded from internal threats, while low levels of ideational threats are due to the almost unanimous policies adopted by the alliance. The events in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 appeared to be a test for CSTO member states including Russia and Armenia. Russia’s decision to intervene militarily in Kyrgyzstan was adopted unanimously, and in that context Armenia should have sent its troops as well. The cost of entrapment or abandonment by Armenia is downplayed by the benefits of commitment. The Armenia-Russia alliance is cohesive and faces a low level of intra-alliance threats and a high level of external threats. This can explain also why Armenia and Russia do not fight each other. The table below schematically summarizes the levels of external and internal threats from materialist and ideational points of view for Armenia’s alliance with Russia.

Table 7: The Armenia-Russia Alliance: Threats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Internal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materialist</td>
<td>Ideational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3.2: The Azerbaijan-Turkey Alliance: Threats

The Azerbaijan-Turkey military-political alliance perceives a high level of external materialist threats from Armenia because of its alliance with powerful Russia. Concerned about the NK issue and blaming Russia for its defeat in the confrontation with Armenian forces, Azerbaijan seeks to secure itself against the Armenia-Russia tandem. Turkey, in its turn, perceives threats from the same tandem and invests resources and energy in its alliance with Azerbaijan to prevent Armenia and its strategic partner Russia from reinforcing their geo-political and military capabilities in the region. Ideational external threats for the Turkic alliance are at a moderate level. In the context of a constitutionally secular Islamism in both Azerbaijan and Turkey, on one hand, and the quest for Europeanization, on the other, these two allies face the dilemma of maintaining a balance between two poles. However, those challenges are not threatening and are being handled quite effectively. Both materialist and ideational internal threats are as important inside the Azerbaijan-Turkey alliance as in any other one. The reasons for a very low level of internal materialist threats have been discussed previously. In addition, the low level of ideational internal threats is a manifestation of a combination of all factors that make the alliance powerful. Azerbaijan has some fears of Turkey as for some radical Islamist views, but inside the alliance there are no serious ideational divergences of policies or strategies. A telling example of this is the last move by Turkey which because of its alliance with Azerbaijan froze an ongoing reconciliation process with Armenia as a sign of solidarity with its Azeri ally. Similar to the Armenia-Russia tandem, the Azerbaijan-Turkey alliance has low-level intra-alliance threats, cohesive relationships and high level external threats. Those components prevent them from fighting each other.
Table 8: The Azerbaijan-Turkey Alliance: Threats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Internal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materialist</td>
<td>Ideational</td>
<td>Materialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 3.3: The Georgia-NATO Alliance: Threats*

Externally, if Georgia succeeds in getting full membership, it will face very high levels of materialist threats from Russia, and moderate ideational threats due Georgia’s population’s close links with Russia and their attachment to its former Soviet identity. Internally, the alliance will have a very low level of materialist threats due to Georgia’s strong ambitions to become a full member of the EU. While Georgia’s leadership has already shifted their minds and ideational “gears” to accept NATO ideology, and by extension, pro-western doctrines, ideational internal threats will be at a moderate level, because of many Georgians’ attachment to more Russia-oriented ideology. Can Georgia and NATO member states fight each other if Georgia becomes a full member? It seems that the Cold War relationships within the alliance and the presence of a common external enemy have made this Euro-Atlantic institution quite careful about choosing new allies. Despite the fact that the communist regime no longer threatens this bloc, NATO, balancing costs and benefits, promotes a low-level threat environment by making its members “respect” and maintain it. By the same token, an intra-alliance confrontation between Georgia, if it becomes a full member, and other member states seems almost impossible. However, the likelihood of defection or at least, abstention by other member states to avoid being militarily entrapped in a conflict, is still high not so much because of

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* Asterisk points out the “pre-alliance status” or the likelihood of such an alliance.
low commitment vis-à-vis each other, but rather due to a strong reluctance to confront Russia because of Georgia. The asterisk points out that the following table is a hypothetical schema of possible Georgia-NATO alliance or just an interpretation of a “pre-alliance” situation.

Table 9: The Georgia-NATO Alliance: Threats*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Internal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materialist</td>
<td>Ideational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

This chapter concluded the findings of previous chapters and sought to schematically demonstrate and analyze dyadic relationships between allies in the framework of existing military cooperation in the South Caucasus. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia seek security by allying with major players. At the same time, all three make tremendous increases of their military budgets while seeking to compensate shortfalls in their capabilities through their alliances. Azerbaijan and Armenia have strong and motivated commitments inside the alliances they formed almost immediately after the demise of the Soviet Union. They formed alliances to counterbalance each other and to revive the historical paths they follow, sometimes at the expense of each other. This antagonism is, to some extent, maintained and reinforced by the big powers with which they all. As alliances’ leaders, Russia and Turkey have, in their turn, their own agendas regarding those states and the region as a whole.

George, by contrast, seeks not only security but an ally as well, a partner who could provide that security. The geo-political uncertainty makes Georgia just as vulnerable as threats make Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, Georgia is not yet involved in any of institutionalized military alliances. Neither NATO nor GUAM provides the security Georgia needs vis-à-vis Russia externally and other threats internally. GUAM’s failure to provide such an environment can be explained by its non-functionality and the limited capabilities of the organization despite ambitious visions and intentions.

For NATO, the puzzle is more complicated. NATO has growing and expending ambitions in the region related to its presence in Afghanistan and the Iranian dossier. On
the other hand, Russia seeks dominance over its former “satellites” and fears any NATO move toward southeastern enlargement. NATO, in its turn, does not want to worsen its relations with Russia, but it welcomes the cooperation it had with Russia until now, and hopes to further it in more fields\textsuperscript{269} in the future. So, the complexity of the region in the context of confrontation between Russia and the Rest becomes salient in the Georgian soil.

The dyadic exploration of alliances and cooperative interactions demonstrates various degrees of cohesiveness and levels of commitment. High levels of commitment are characteristic of both the Armenia-Russia and the Azerbaijan-Turkey alliances. Georgia did not form an alliance, thus cannot expect to have a partner with a high level of commitment. These comparisons make obvious the role conflicts play for weaker states in forming alliances and in quests of expansion and dominance by stronger ones. In the South Caucasus the more states are threatened by conflicts and confrontations, the more they seek alliances that could provide security. Conflicts increase the existing levels of threats to the highest point, thus pushing states to be very sensible of security issues. Given that conflicts are between the South Caucasian states, their allies, hence, cannot be the same powers, but different ones. This dichotomous alliance formation renders those intra- and extra-regional interactions more complicated and unpredictable. Weitsman argues that alliance cohesion is directly linked to the two important factors: external and internal threats and the level of commitment are directly linked to the level of threats. The higher external threats, the higher the intra-alliance cohesion and the level of commitment. This is a clear case for both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

\textsuperscript{269} From a speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on December 17, 2009, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_60223.htm>.
But what if the conflicts are settled, the external threat disappears and the South Caucasian states no longer need to add to their capabilities or seek military assistance from big powers? Will those alliances endure, as for example, NATO did after the end of the Cold War? Will Armenia still be with Russia and Azerbaijan with Turkey? It seems there can be two answers based on two distinct theoretical approaches. The first argument is presented by Weitsman who points out that “if…the level of threat internal to an alliance is low, even if the level of external threat diminishes, the alliance will endure.” Weitsman is clearly basing her assumptions on the variations in the level of threats. External threats coupled with goals, strategies and motives may create a cohesive alliance, and it can vanish once those threats are no longer valid. External threats also can be at a low level, and there will be no alliance, either because there is no external threat, and hence, no need for an alliance, or because “the threat level within the alliance may be so high,” that states will either refrain from forming it, or if already members, they will defect.

To further explore Weitsman’s threat-level-based theory, we can induce from her arguments that the determining component in alliance cohesion in general is not so much the external threat, as the internal one. Weitsman herself posits that “the level of internal threat more than the level of external threat inhibits the cohesion.” If an alliance is formed and afterwards it does not vanish or alliance members do not fight each other, this is due only to a low level of internal threat which can keep the alliance alive regardless

270 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 6.
271 Idem.
272 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 5.
273 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 142.
the level of external threats. NATO is a good example. The presence of high-level external threats only reinforces alliance cohesion.

The second answer to the cohesion dilemma is found in Liska’s “ideological” approach to alliances, as discussed in Chapter 1, part 5. For Liska, “the construction of alliances, their implementation and the perpetuation have specific ideological requirements.” Based on his arguments, we can assert that alliances do and will endure if they have compatible ideological backgrounds and similarities.

For the South Caucasian states the assertions of both Weitsman and Liska play an important role. The two arguments hold well for our case study and can explain why Armenia and Azerbaijan are cohesively connected to Russia and Turkey respectively, and this is mutual. In Georgia’s case, although some (to some, strong) ideological similarities exist between Georgia and the Euro-Atlantic structures, this did not result in alliance formation. By contrast, for Armenia and Azerbaijan ideological component played and still plays an important role and adds value to threat-based cohesiveness. The higher the external threat and the stronger or more similar the ideological and historical background, the more cohesive the alliance is. The more cohesive it is due to strong and/or similar ideological and historical backgrounds, the lower the level of internal threats. An alliance can be cohesive even when the external threat is diminished. In addition to the military, long-term alliances create as well varying degrees of economic and political interdependence between allying members.

But in the case of the Armenia-Russia alliance, and to some extent, the Azerbaijan-Turkey tandem, there seems to be a third answer to the “cohesion” question.

274 Liska, George, op. cit., p. 62.
Why in quotation marks? Because the aggregate power of Russia and Turkey, sometimes plays an imposing role over weaker states (such as Armenia and Azerbaijan) and creates a forceful cohesiveness independent of both the variations in external and internal threats and the ideological component. This is an artificial cohesiveness which varies only when the stronger ally refrains from imposing its will. Even if external threats become less powerful, weaker states will remain committed and stronger ones will stay motivated if they still pursue their interests. Based on Weitsman’s unifying theory, Liska’s arguments about the amalgamating role of the ideological dimension, and the argument about artificially created cohesiveness, we can predict that both the Armenia-Russia tandem and the Azerbaijan-Turkey alliance will remain very cohesive. The low level of internal threat, the ideological structure of the interaction and the imposed level of commitment will maintain a high level of intra-alliance cohesiveness for both alliances.

For Armenia, variation in the level of cohesiveness will depend only on the extent to which Russia exerts pressure over it. The more Russia flexes its power rather than relying on mutual benefits to maintain the alliance, the less will be the cohesiveness. In all other cases, Armenia will stay committed. It will keeping as high a level of commitment as possible within the alliance. The geography of the region cannot be changed, and landlocked Armenia has no choice. It is closely linked to Russia in all possible fields that create an additional set of motivations to stay committed. From Russia’s point of view, alliance with Armenia will erode only if Armenia ceases to be useful for Russia’s foreign policy. Abandonment by Russia would mean total isolation for Armenia and the unintended consequences would cost Armenia dearly, including renewal of military confrontation with Azerbaijan. However, as much as the complex
geo-political developments fragment the region and different powers exert their influence, Armenia still remains a valuable and indispensable partner for Russia.

For Azerbaijan, even under conditions of allegedly vanished external threats, Turkey will still have great influence over it, and multiple links created between the two states will maintain the alliance in the long run. Moreover, their ideological and ethno-linguistic similarities will reinforce the alliance.

Georgia, as it was discussed, has no alliance and is still seeking for a reliable and long-term partner. This is a compelling and difficult task because of both Georgia’s historical background and Russia’s “readiness” to block any move toward opting for an ally that would not match Russia’s interests in the region.

We come to the conclusion that the more cohesive alliances in the region are the one between Turkey and Azerbaijan and the one between Armenia and Russia based on a coherent and committed interaction. However, the existence of the Armenia-Russia tandem seems to be at the mercy of Russia, while Azerbaijan apparently has more agency and more maneuverability. Georgia’s alliance politics is still taking shape. It is difficult to predict if Georgia will join NATO, and if it does, what will the dynamics of the alliance be? We can only assume that Georgia will feel more secure under NATO’s umbrella. However, it is much more difficult to predict the degree of that security and the level cohesion of a NATO-Georgia possible alliance. It will be difficult as well to assume whether Georgia will be able to settle its problems with Russia, or make forceful territorial claims vis-à-vis South Ossetia and Abkhazia. If it does, will NATO’s other members join Georgia in its quest to restore its territorial integrity or will they defect? In other words, if ever Georgia joins NATO, will a Russia-Georgia confrontation become a
real stumbling block between Russia and NATO by pushing NATO members into entrapment? Or will NATO accept Georgia as a country with territorial issues, as it did with Greece and Turkey? These are open questions about Georgia’s future, and it is not an easy task to answer them.

In Part 2.3.1 of this chapter and elsewhere we detailed the Georgia-NATO relationship by making hypothetical assumptions based on Weitsman’s threat-level-based theory. It helped to explore the likelihood of military cooperation between Georgia and NATO and to assess the level of commitment and cohesion within the alliance based on possible geo-political changes. The ideological dimension described by Liska plays a less significant role in forging a Georgian quest for Euro-Atlantic structures, while Weitsman’s arguments are more powerful and explain better (1) why Georgia needs NATO and vice-versa, and (2) what will be the possible level of cohesion under given levels of external threats both for Georgia and NATO.

In terms of the level of ideological impact on the degree of cohesion within existing or forming alliances, the Azerbaijan-Turkey alliance will have the highest level of the influence; a middle rank will define the Armenia-Russia alliance; and a low level influence will exist for Georgia-NATO cooperation and a possible alliance if ever the Georgian government obtains its population agreement over NATO’s membership.

In all three cases, the level of threats, whether external (in terms of alliance motives and behaviors) or internal (in terms of alliance cohesion and the level of intra-alliance commitment) prevails over the ideological factor. Finally the factor of an imposed dependence plays an overarching role most for Armenia, less for Azerbaijan and very little for Georgia.
The Table 10 summarizes those interactions in terms of levels of external and internal threats, levels of commitment and levels of cohesion for three alliances in the region based on Weitsman’s arguments.275

Table 10: Summary of Findings: Threats and Alliance Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Level of external threat</th>
<th>Level of internal threat</th>
<th>Commitment level</th>
<th>Cohesion level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia-Russia Alliance</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan-Turkey Alliance</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia-NATO Alliance*</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Since an alliance does not yet exist for Georgia, this is only a hypothetical analysis of alliance characteristics based on our findings and assumptions and according to current developments.

We can see that levels of threats, commitments and cohesion are very similar, which is not surprising. This is what emanates from clear antagonistic relationships between states and crystallizes hostile intentions and attitudes toward each other. Having explored different *intra-alliance* interactions in the region and how they affect the level of internal cohesion of alliances, let us now explore the *inter-alliance* relationships, i.e. interactions between existing alliances in the region based on our findings. The next and concluding chapter will explore the alliance paradox issue and the extent to which heterogeneity affects stabilization or destabilization of the region.

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275 Since ideational factors are not as determinant as materialist ones, and the idea of overarching imposed cohesiveness is not yet fully explored, the table illustrates only the levels of threats, the levels of commitments and those of cohesion based on Weitsman’s findings.
CHAPTER SEVEN: ALLIANCE PARADOX REVISITED

Weitsman argues that “military alliances are manifestations of relationships of enmity and amity; they drive those relationships as well.”276 While this is a nice and comprehensive prologue to an alliance cohesion and intra-alliance relationships issue, it is equally valid for inter-alliance relations. Alliances, with two or more members, formal or informal, hierarchical or not are very efficient institutions. They are formed and maintained according to a combination of multiple major and minor factors and materialist and/or ideational components, the intertwined nature of which predicts not only how allies behave toward one another, but also what kind of relations their collaboration in what we call an alliance--an organic entity and rational actor--will have with another similar unit.

This chapter’s units of analysis are military alliances and their interaction in the South Caucasian context. The difficult part of this investigation is that the alliances in the region are as heterogeneous as the history, ethno-linguistic backgrounds, socio-economic visions and geo-political ambitions of the three South Caucasian states that form these alliances with their big allies. An alliance’s principal mission is to contain external threats and reduce the security dilemma for its signatories. It also provides “an institutional basis for cooperation among signatories,”277 thus minimizing the level of internal threats via cooperation and interdependence. It creates some venues for “ideological solidarity”278 and lays grounds for riskless manifestation of states’ identities. However, the anarchic environment of the system enhanced locally by armed confrontations, mistrust and quest of regional dominance by some states in the South Caucasus not only increases the

276 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 136.
277 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 126.
insecurity and uncertainty there but sets in motion the vicious “action-reaction” cycle. The spiral of hostility engenders arms races and a stronger need for equilibrium, a balance of power and threats—vis-à-vis threatening states. Thus, alliances that states resort to as an efficient tool for balancing against threats, “are seen as potentially aggressive by their apparent targets; these states then seek security by forming a counteralliance, which is perceived in turn by members of the first alliance as possibly aggressive.”279 That is what Weitsman calls “the alliance paradox”. Intended to balance against threats by adding another state’s capabilities to one’s own, alliances “may wind up increasing uncertainty” and “trigger a reaction in kind.”280 The alliance paradox, as Weitsman puts it, as an attempt to keep peace can “heighten the systemic insecurity”281 and culminate in drawing the system closer to war.

This chapter’s main target is to assess the likelihood of such a result and to explore interactions between existing heterogeneous alliances in the South Caucasus. “Do alliances effectively deter war and keep the peace, or do they increase hostility and foster war?”282 The main concern for our case study is to see the extent to which the Armenia-Russia military alliance, the Turkey-Azerbaijan tandem and the Georgia-NATO military pre-alliance may affect the status quo—the established relative peace—in the region. Will those alliances keep the peace or increase the insecurity?

279 Snyder, Glenn H., Alliance politics, p. 17.
280 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 7.
281 Weitsman, Patricia, “Alliances and War,” p. 89.
282 Idem.
Alliances in the South Caucasus: “Proponents of Peace or Weapons of War?”

The established status quo is what is now known as relative stability in the region where not only the three South Caucasian states but the alliances they form, and the notably leading states in those alliances, have different if not contradictory interests. On one hand, Russia, Turkey and NATO, and by extension the US, and on the other Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia implement policies that, rather than reinforcing stability, can shake the fragile peace and “revise” the status quo. Wendt suggests that status-quo states should be relatively peaceful, while revisionist states are conflictual. This is true as well for alliances which share quite paradoxical identities in the South Caucasus.

First, based on our findings we can see that three alliances have high levels of commitment and cohesion because of the high level of external threats and a quite low level of internal threats. In an anarchic environment and under conditions in which historical hatreds and antagonisms are always present, the combination of the above-mentioned characteristics seems to be a “perfect” equation for engendering a high level of regional polarization. War-prone geographic predisposition and being at the intersection of western and eastern civilizations, add more to the likelihood of confrontation rather than peacekeeping. Not only the three South Caucasian states but also their principal allies at different points in time have endured different levels of antagonism and confrontation. Weaker states were always at the mercy of stronger ones, and the path they took, along with their relations with their neighbors was largely dependent on their dominant partners’ regional choices, preferences and relations with

283 From Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of peace, weapons of war.
other powers. Big powers increased their presence by forming alliances with or imposing alliance on one of three states in the South Caucasus. These powers expected then a high level of commitment in response to the presumptive “benefits” the alliance was supposed to bring to allies.

The more alliances are committed to a common project and the more cohesive they are, the more threatening and, hence provocative, they appear. Alliance members are supposed to share the burden of costs and enjoy the benefits. The more an alliance manages to do so while maintaining low levels of internal contradictions, the more other states seek to form alliances with no-less powerful allies. Once formed, an alliance becomes a very powerful tool with added capabilities, maneuverability, and preparedness to contain an enemy state’s moves and/or to deter it. The more an alliance arms itself in the name of defense, the more offensive and aggressive its intentions appear. This contradictory perception drives all sides to antagonism, and alliances, similar to states or statesmen, have a “natural tendency…to think in worst-case terms.”

In an environment of uncertainty, the formation of an alliance by a South Caucasian state generates a counteralliance or a counteraction, and instead of increasing security and mitigating the security dilemma, this move increases the cost of cooperation and reduces security benefits and costs of entrapment in a new conflict. The Russian-Georgian armed clash in August, 2008, is a classical example. Georgia sought to ally with the Euro-Atlantic structures and increase its dependence on NATO by decreasing its dependence on Russia. Russia responded accordingly and sought as well to threaten Georgia by compelling Russia’s allies to unilaterally recognize Abkhazia’s and South

Ossetia’s independence. Measures create countermeasures and actions trigger reactions that are usually exaggerated than symmetric. Armenia, for example, seeking more security and less vulnerability, increases its dependence on Russia by increasing its military capabilities and isolating itself from neighboring states. This, in turn, renders Armenia more unpredictable, hence, more dangerous. Azerbaijan, willing to increase its role in the Muslim world through close cooperation with Turkey and by pushing its relations with Turkey to a higher level, highlights its “hydrocarbon” independence from Russia and the West, and thus, decreases its predictability in the eyes of Russia and the Euro-Atlantic structures by pushing them to take countermeasures. Russia and NATO, for example, “enjoy” the same effect when Russia seeks to reinforce its relations with Armenia by increasing its military presence there, while NATO, willing to be more involved in the region through Georgia, seeks to counterbalance against Russia and Armenia, by extension.

Second, the three South Caucasian states have clear internal conflicts and conflicts with neighboring states. All three lack formal peace agreements with those conflicting states, because each hopes to solve problems to its own benefit. In such an environment all conflicting sides have exaggerated perceptions of increased threats and share fears about their security. Each of the South Caucasian states, for example, fears that a neighbor, backed by its ally, may resort to the use of force: Armenia against Azerbaijan (and its ally Turkey); Azerbaijan against Armenia (and its ally Russia); and Georgia against Abkhazia and South Ossetia (and their ally Russia). Backed by Turkey, Azerbaijan’s military rhetoric is spectacular, while Armenia, backed by Russia sends clear messages that any attempt to use military force will meet with a cooperative
military response. Georgia, hoping to receive NATO’s assistance, threatens Russia via the Abkhazians and South Ossetians. As mentioned previously, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia continue to increase their military expenditures.\textsuperscript{286} If during the Cold War the arms race was dictated by antagonistic ideologies and realities between the Soviets and most of the rest of the civilized world, the South Caucasian arms race scenario seems to be an expression of irrational overvaluation of risks and an exaggerated perception of self-help and survival. The main issue here is that the large portion of armaments comes from their allies.

Third, big powers in these alliances pursue geo-political and geo-strategic interests that contradict each other. The quest to dominate the region is one of the priorities of global and regional players alike. By definition, all three powers involved in the region of the South Caucasus are revisionist by nature and intentions. Each would be happy to shift the balance of influence in its favor, change the status quo and set self-serving rules. On one hand, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and on the other, Russia, Turkey and NATO form two-dimensional complicated interactions inside of an inner (smaller) triangle and an outer (bigger) triangle.\textsuperscript{287} A “clash of interests” in the region is present both between the three South Caucasian states and their allies. How does it happen that the South Caucasian states do not fight each other? Will they fight in the future? More pertinent to our theoretical study, do existing alliances create more security or do they increase the insecurity? Are they causes of war or peace?

\textsuperscript{286} According to some estimates Azerbaijan’s military expenditures were about 2 billion for 2009, which is 16 times, more than in 2002. Armenia’s military budget for 2009 was about 7 times more than in 2002 and Georgia’s military budget for 2009 was about 18 times more than in 2002. Compared to 2008, military budgets of the three countries increased by 54\% (AZ), 47\% (GE) and 30\% (AM) in 2009.

\textsuperscript{287} Terms borrowed from Cornell’s, \textit{Small Nations and Great Powers}, pp. 393; 396.
Although these questions are large enough to be the topic of separate research, some insights can shed light on the situation in the region and provide some answers. The systemic impact on the interactions of the states in the region is as tangible as unexplored and unknown. The structural mechanisms that, inter alia, lead to war or peace are only partially understood. Brinkmanship tactics are common to all three states and theoretically the tense interactions between states and the alliances they form should lead to more confrontations. Georgians followed that path by attacking South Ossetia, hoping to have NATO on its side. Azerbaijan, in turn, having Turkish support, increases its implicit and explicit aggressive rhetoric vis-à-vis Armenia, and threatens to revise the status quo. However neither the Georgian move toward South Ossetia, nor Azerbaijani military rhetoric nor the tense Russia-NATO relations after Georgian-Russian five-day war managed to destabilize the region. Why so? Do alliances play a role here?

Although there is no a single answer to this multidimensional question, given our findings and some theoretical logic we can make some assumptions. Military alliances, indeed, are a more powerful tool, than some scholars think. Their aggregate power is more than just a combination or cooperation between states. Especially when alliances have a very high level of commitment coupled with a high level of cohesion, the power of those alliances and the military potential they acquire intrinsically, render their cooperative impact much more powerful and unpredictable. An alliance is more than the sum of its parts. It aggregates capabilities and goes beyond what a state, weak or strong, could do alone conventionally. In different contexts, alliances seem to be as powerful and determinant as nuclear weapons in a bipolar or multipolar world. As with nuclear weapons, alliances can have a mitigating impact on the establishment and preservation of
the status-quo. To continue the analogy, both the Armenia-Russia alliance and the
Azerbaijan-Turkey tandem have “first” and “second” strike capabilities. Consequently,
neither alliances "would have to rely on deterrence to dissuade the other from attacking
should it be tempted to do so."288 The analogy suggests that a state, and by extension the
alliances it forms, cannot “credibly threaten to impose a sanction that, if imposed, would
subsequently result in its own destruction.”289 This is what nuclear optimists see as an
equalizing role of those weapons. The presence of alliances have a deterrent value and
makes the security dilemma less aggressive and dangerous due to a dependence on
simultaneous interactions of inner and outer South Caucasian triangles. Based on this, we
can argue that the Georgia-Russia conflict, for example, has been escalated to the level of
a military campaign only because, Georgia, as opposed to Armenia and Azerbaijan, was
not in an alliance that could either prevent or stop the escalation. By the same token, if
Georgia manages to gain membership in NATO without triggering Russia’s full
discontent, it can acquire that mitigating role in the future.

This is not, of course, a perfect analogy and cannot fully explore the issue of why
the South Caucasian states and their alliances do not fight each other currently and may
not in the future. Alliances, unlike nuclear weapons, are powerful but at the same time
organic and rational units, not just ammunition. If nuclear armaments are powerful
instruments to substitute for conventional weapons, and hence create more incentives to
avoid a Mass Assured Destruction, alliances have their own external and internal very
complex dynamics and increasing potentials dependent on a number of factors.

289 Powell, Robert, op. cit., p. 89.
Alliances are much more complex than one might think. A deeper and multidimensional understanding of them is still needed. An alliance as a unit of aggregate capabilities is as complex as the dynamics among its allies. The nuclear weapon analogy can only partially explain why, despite emphasized antagonism, there is more rather than less stability in the region. Moreover, alliances promote interactions rather than create new tensions, and open perspectives of cooperation among big powers despite heterogeneous interests in other fields. Although seemingly threatening, alliances in the South Caucasus appear to have adopted a defensive rather than offensive stance. The multidimensional interactions among states and big powers inside different international organizations communicate a defensive message and create a relative transparency that mitigates immensely fears. In the near future, the region will depend on the interplay of the abovementioned inner- and supra-regional triangles with mutually mitigating potential through status-quo mechanisms that foster connectedness and interdependence. This forecast, of course, assumes absence of such paradigmatic shifts as war in Iran, escalation of Turkey-Israel relations, a more aggressive Russian stance toward Georgia’s Western ambitions, issues over distribution (through NABUCCO or Russian pipelines) or owning of regional hydrocarbon resources involving Azerbaijan, Iran and Central Asia.

In the short and medium terms the alliances reduce the possibility of renewed military activities because the status-quo provides a framework under which major conflicts are currently inconceivable. However, in the long run, if this “no war, no peace” situation in the region is maintained with neither bilateral/multilateral peace agreements nor a negotiated settlement than the fragile cease-fires between Armenia and Azerbaijan on one hand, and Georgia and Russia, on the other, the relative stability is threatened.
Alliances can then have a negative impact. In the aggregate, three main causes can lead to destabilization of the status quo:

1. Internal threats such as a coup d’État or revolution (as during recent events in Kyrgyzstan) that can highly undermine a state’s internal stability and provoke another state to take advantage of that instability and launch military attacks;

2. External threats such as sharp increases in military expenditure, military rhetoric, or aggressive intentions that can be perceived by another state as real threats leading from defensive to offensive strategies, and making changes in military doctrines by promoting the use of force and possibly entrapping the existing alliances into conflict;

3. Inter-alliance tensions such as quest for more spheres of influence, emergence of new priorities, or serious conflicts elsewhere between major powers.

So, alliances can (1) escalate an already destabilized status-quo (as the renewal of armed confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the NK region) by being entrapped into conflict and (2) become on their own an independent source of instability. In the context of the South Caucasus the first option seems to hold better than the second one. The three states are more prone to shake the relative regional security than their alliances. However, the entrapment issue can turn those alliances more dangerous, especially an alliance with a low level of internal threats and a high level of cohesion. Once entrapped into conflict, rather than mitigating conflicts, alliances can increase the insecurity level in a changing status-quo. Moreover, it seems that alliances are unlikely to generate conflicts on their own, even if they have issues with other existing alliances. What they can do is to increase the levels of insecurity. The likelihood of full-scale
entrapment of alliances into conflicts seems very low. First, drawing allies into conflict would be much more costly than not doing so. Second, big powers have the capability to “convince” their weaker members to avoid escalation even if war is seen as a solution at some point. Third, those same big powers, while allied with conflicting sides separately, may have bilateral relations with those various parties and hence, can exert outside pressure on those states to step back from escalation the conflict. Up to now, the described mechanism works in the South Caucasian context. However, as mentioned, in the long-term, this pattern may change, if some hypothetical conflicts arise between big powers in the region, entrapping the South Caucasian states in the confrontations of “others” or if the existing conflicts between the South Caucasian states are again escalated.
Theoretical implications

As stated in the introduction, the thesis seeks to answer a number of questions. In parallel with establishing a problem-driven research design, it made some theoretical contributions as well. Alliance formation, as we could see, is a complex endeavor and comprises not only motives and interests based on materialist/rationalist incentives and existential threats but involves identities and ideational factors as well. In an effort to explore this puzzling phenomenon, I introduced and applied a new concept of materialist versus ideational dichotomy coupled with an evaluation of internal and external sources of threat.

When one explores historical hatreds, mistrust among nations, causes of the emergence of conflicts, and alliance formation behaviors regardless of geographic location, one has to recognize the importance of both materialist and ideational factors in an integrated way, but doing so only by identifying the distinction between the levels of implication of each dimension without confusing or merging boundaries of every theoretical account. As Barkin rightly argues: “The paradigmatic way of thinking about different approaches to the study of IR is problematic. It obscures both the compatibilities among different approaches, and the complex ways in which they interrelate. In building paradigmatic castles, it encourages insular thinking and a focus on emphasizing differences. It also encourages paradigmatic partisans to try to fit too much within the walls of their particular approach, in an attempt to make their paradigmatic castle self-sufficient.” Barkin, Samuel, op. cit., p. 2. Hence, a clear separation followed by a synergy of materialist and ideational threats is needed. This will provide IR scholarship with more flexibility and
room in explaining such difficult multilayer and multidimensional phenomena in world politics as interethnic conflicts, historical hatreds, causes of war and alliance formation. A combined but unfused application of different IR theories aims to reveal these different layers that underlie alliance formation mechanisms and processes.

This more inclusive way of tackling issues in IR is more efficient and productive. It lays grounds for a better and deeper understanding of complex issues that cannot be explained by being strictly attached to only one IR theory. It is true that every theory has its own value, and the task of an IR scholar is not the promotion of a theory but the offering of solutions to existing problems via an appropriate use of all possible tools.

This thesis combined and applied realist, liberal-institutionalist and constructivist approaches when appropriate, regardless of its author’s preferences or personal bias for one or another of these theories and approaches. The epistemology of political phenomena differs from a theoretical prospective to another, and the rigor of scientific research is in its valid explanatory power. The more and better a study explores and explains underlying causes and implications, the more effective and useful is the research. Otherwise, even a well-designed research can become an end in itself without either contributing to the progress of the discipline or offering some solutions to existing problems in world politics.
EPILOGUE

As in many other regions in the world, nations in the South Caucasus are in conflict. Although they share geography and have a number of similarities, they fight each other on a daily basis--on the battlefield, during international contests and conferences, through TV and newspapers, and all with a false pride of national exceptionalism. Why so? What causes these bloody conflicts? Are they endogenous or exogenous? This thesis sought to explore the complicated puzzle the Soviet Union created and which these nations, backed by big powers, have willingly accepted and irrationally complicated. The causes of war remain the most compelling and difficult issue in world politics. Wars draw nations into self-destructive actions, annihilating what previous generations created and what upcoming generations could create. And they do so not only on their own, but by entrapping other nations as well. Alliances, as Weitsman nicely puts it at the end of her book, have a power to shape the world we live in. But what kind of world?

Paradoxically, as we saw, they can shape a better world or a worse one. This means that more research and study are needed to understand and explain the vitally important and extremely challenging phenomenon of conflicts among nations and military alliances in world politics. One thing is clear: Neither alliances as powerful tools nor offensive or defensive weapons are needed to maintain peace but a strong awareness by mankind of the extreme fragility of peace and of devastating consequences of any war, especially when led between powerful military alliances.

291 Weitsman, Patricia, Dangerous Alliances, p. 175.


42. Mecum, Mark M., Solving Alliance Cohesion: NATO cohesion after the Cold War, a thesis presented to the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University, (June 2007).

44. Melikyan, Gevorg, “The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Alliance Formation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia since their Independence in 1991” presented as final paper for Dr. Suzuki’s class: Graduate Seminar in Comparative Politics, Ohio University, (Spring 2010).


80. Александр Солженицын (Solzhenitsyn), Олма-Пресс, Москва, 2006, p. 364.

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