

Turkish Security Model of the South Caucasus Region

Maia Manchkhachvili
(Tbilisi State University, Georgia)

Abstract: This thesis addresses the Turkish model of regional security of the South Caucasus. This model was announced at the summit held in Moscow on August 11, during the period of the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008. The author of this model is the Prime Minister of Turkey of that time, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. According to this model, a whole array of regional security issues of the South Caucasus had to be resolved using the so-called 3+2 format. This meant that Russia and Turkey would come to the negotiating table together with the three states of the region (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia). Considering the fact that Turkey has been conducting its foreign policy, including the Caucasian policy according to a new foreign political doctrine from the late 1990s and the early 2000s, launch of such initiative and announcement that it is one of the influential political actors in the South Caucasian region absolutely naturally complied with its approaches. But, on the other hand, Russia, which finds unacceptable realization of ambitions of Turkey in the South Caucasian region in any form and dreams of restoring the Empire, did not accept the initiative of Turkey. Accordingly, despite repeated attempts from the part of Turkey, the model initiated by it was not realized but even not duly reviewed in political circles. Russia did not allow to review the issues which it intended to resolve based only on its own interests, together with Turkey.

Key words: South Caucasus; regional security; security model; Turkish security model

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1. Introduction

The topics of security models is one of the most unstudied and interesting topics of research in the political science. The model as such as a format of a political dialogue whose author may be a state, international organization, non-governmental organization, individual etc. and reflects approaches of its presenter/author regarding the number of subjects to be involved, the areas of cooperation, methods of struggle and the timeframes for settlement of the issues for which a specific model was developed.

If we review the world reality, we will see that states and international organizations (especially, military/political organizations) have developed their own security policy. Security policy is the area which a successful subject (state or other) must have defined and formed and it should not be designed only for short periods and be tough. In good case, there should be several long-term backup options. As for the security models developed for the region, creation of a security model for the South Caucasus is not a first precedent of a desire to settle regional problems within the framework of a certain format. Before offering security models to the South

Maia Manchkhachvili, Ph.D. Student of Political Science, Tbilisi State University; research areas/interest: international relations, foreign policy, security policy. E-mail: maia.manchkhachvili@tsu.ge.

Caucasus, the last similar precedent occurred for the Balkan countries when a special format was developed for regulation of the ongoing processes (The Balkans 2nd Stability Pact of 1999; The Balkans 1st Pact of 1995 (initiative of Balladur)). We will not review here whether this model was successful or not, why and under what conditions it was presented etc. As we have mentioned we will focus on a specific model whose author is the Republic of Turkey.

The new political reality created in the world after the Cold War stimulated the states and specific politicians to develop and offer a format/model of specific cooperation for settlement of the situation created in the South Caucasus in the process of looking for the way out of the economic and social situation.

Various cooperation formats were created in the dialogue in respect to the South Caucasus: after collapse of the Soviet Union one of the first was the so-called “*Gamsakhurdia’s idea*” which aimed to resolve the problems existing in Georgia and the North Caucasus by cooperation with the independent state of Chechnya. This idea remained unaccomplished and it was not presented to the public in the form of any type of working format. One of the interesting ideas of 1990s was the idea of the “*Caucasian House*”. Foundation of the “Caucasian House” tended to be a project of cultural nature and excluded working within the framework of any political format. The “Caucasian House” was also engaged in literary-translation activities. In 1990s the Georgian model of regional security of the South Caucasus was developed by the former President of the Republic of Georgia, E. Shevardnadze and it was “The Peaceful Caucasus”. It was an idea of political nature and implied a dialogue in respect to all three conflicts of the South Caucasus. The next model developed for the South Caucasus was the “*Stability Pact for the Caucasus*” developed by a group of researchers (Sergiu Celac, Michael Emerson, Narhali Tocci) and announced in Brussels on January 28, 2000. It is one of the most interesting and diversified models which have ever been created for our region. A few days before publication of this Pact (January 16, 2000), an Initiative of the Former President of Turkey — S. Demirel was advanced on development of the “Stability Pact for the Caucasus” as it was done for the Balkans. But the initiative remained unimplemented and such pact under his authorship was not developed. On the other hand, the former President of Armenia, R. Kocharyan took over this idea and formulated it. According to him, this Pact had to be based on “3+3+2” format: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia + Russia, Turkey + the UN, the European Union. The former President of Ingushetia, R. Aushev, called on the President of Russia, V. Putin to make all efforts to achieve political consequences of the dialogue of the Caucasian leaders. Unfortunately, the initiative of S. Demirel was not carried out.

The dialogue for resolution of security problems and conflict in Georgia has been conducted since 1990s till present in the following formats: “Geneva Format”, “Abashidze-Karasin Talks”. We are also aware of the so-called “Steinmeier Plan”. The latter is the views of the current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier offered in 2008 (before the Russo-Georgian August War) regarding peaceful settlement of the two conflicts in Georgia. Also, two ideas belong to the former President of Georgia, M. Saakashvili: (1) On creation of a unified economic space by the two Caucasian states — Georgia and Azerbaijan; (2) “Idea of a United Caucasus” announced by him at the 65th General Assembly of the UN held on September 23, 2010.

And the final model addressing the issues of security of the South Caucasus region is the idea of the current President of Turkey (Prime Minister at that time), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the “Caucasian Stability Platform” announced by him in August 2008 in Moscow.

Foundation of a non-governmental organization “International Union of Young Caucasians” by the Georgian expert in Caucasian issues, Mamuka Areshidze in 2009 served the revival of the idea of the united Caucasian cohabitation. Their goal is to gather the representatives of the Caucasian ethnos living in Georgia — Kists, Avars,

Azeri etc. and facilitate peaceful resolution of conflicts by enhancing cultural relations. From 2013 the so-called “Tekali Process” began with participation of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. These are “meetings for peace” which are held in village Tekali, Marneuli region, Georgia annually in spring where representatives of the non-governmental agency talk about the opportunities of peaceful cohabitation within the framework of the United South Caucasian Union.

2. The Research Hypothesis and Research Questions

A number of questions arose in the process of working on the above issues, such as what are the goals of launching a new political format/model initiative? Does the Turkish government want to prove that he deserves to be involved in the Caucasian political games as an equal partner of Russia? Is the regional security model a format of real cooperation within which it is possible to actually resolve the security and other problems? What are the reasons for failure to implement the model? Should the state (i.e., Russia) which is the main threat to the regional security be a party to the security model? Do all roads lead to Moscow?

The research hypothesis is that initiation of security model does not increase the influence of this or that state (subject of influence) on the region for which (object of influence) it has developed the given mode. This is an attempt of certain type, especially which of the author of the model is a state (we have models initiated by a group of researchers or international organization) to influence the processes in the region for which it creates a certain format of cooperation. However, the subject of influence and the object of influence are not correlated to each other in terms that initiation of a model does not automatically mean its dissemination/extension to a specific region. In this case, security model is an independent variable, while the subject of influence, i.e., the state/party initiating the South Caucasian regional security model and the object of influence, i.e., the South Caucasus are dependent variables. Additional variables are variables like economic and political influence/leverages. During the measurement process a number of other additional variables may be used, for example, religious, cultural influence, but in this case we will not address them/or will use them as appropriate in any specific case.

The research process is based on qualitative research methods. While gathering data we use the method of interviews and document analysis:

For selection of interviewers we used the targeted selection method as there have been cases during conducting preliminary researches when professors of international relations and political sciences refused to give an interview by the reason that despite their great interest in the issue of regional security they considered that they did not have a good understanding of the issues of security models. Therefore, we started a targeted search of researchers working on security issues using the so-called “snowball” method. The expert interviews were based on preliminarily developed questions and their number increased in some cases due to the respondent answers.

In the process of analysis of documents in Turkey we found and studied both the contextual aspect of scientific papers of the interviewing professors on regional security issues and the existing materials on the foreign and security policy of Turkey, collections of conferences dedicated to security issues, articles published on the Turkish printed media, articles found in international scientific databases, data of the official webpage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (and not only).

The theoretical framework within which we review the Turkish model of regional security of the South Caucasus is the theory of Neorealism.

According to this theory, relations between states are defined by the international system structure, but

international politics does not represent a mechanic sum of foreign policy of the sovereign states and other participants involved in the system but is defined by peculiarities common for the system.

The idea of this theory is that the supreme power, “the central governance” superior to sovereign states does not exist. Therefore, each state participating in the international system acts within a wide range “from survival to the world dominance” considering its abilities.

According to the most well-known researcher of this theory, K. Waltz, understanding the peculiarities of the international system structure facilitates evaluation and analysis of actions of states because states define their national interests and strategy based on the evaluation of their own position in the international system.

Review of the foreign political activity of Turkey at the example of the South Caucasian region within the framework of this theory is interesting to understand the new regional mission of Turkey in this new reality in which it has initiated the regional platform.

Turkey accepted the new reality created after dissolution of the Soviet Union as a challenge and began to reevaluate its own place and role at the world and the regional level, considering the world tendencies and arrived at development of a new foreign political concept according to which Turkey should be not just an additive to the western policy and a pursuer of its policy, but it has an ability to play an independent game due to its own interests.

Therefore, Turkey permanently tries to become actively involved in the political, cultural, economic and other processes in the South Caucasian region. The theory of Neorealism allows us to define how adequately Turkey has assessed its abilities in the context of the new world reality, how adequately the new regional mission of Turkey was understood, whether this platform appeared to be a successful instrument for the Turkish diplomacy.

3. Review of Sources

It should be mentioned that there is minimum amount of researches dedicated to regional security models of the South Caucasus, including Turkish models. There are researchers who write a lot about the South Caucasian states, a number of problems in the South Caucasus, the security policy of the West and NATO in the region but not about the security formats specifically. We will refer only to those authors whose materials are the closest to our topic and which we have relied upon when writing this research.

First of all we will emphasize Turkish authors. Mitat Celikpala, Professor of Kadir Has University writes about regional security models of the South Caucasus, including Turkish models. The leading and the most significant role of Turkey in the regional security processes is underlined in his papers.¹

One of the well-known Turkish scientists who persistently researches the Caucasian region is Prof. Kamer Kasim. In one of his researches — “Caucasus after the Cold War” (“Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Kafkasya”, Ankara, USAK Yayinlari, 2011), important issues of the foreign and domestic policy of all three South Caucasian states (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia) are reviewed in detail.

A well-known Turkish scientist Mustafa Aydin also writes a lot about the regional security of the South Caucasus. The complicated geopolitical processes ongoing in the South Caucasian region are rather interestingly

¹ E.g., Turkey as a power and the Caucasus; Türkiye ve Kafkasya: Reaksiyoner Dış Politikadan Proaktif Ritmik Diplomasiye Geçiş, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Cilt 7, Sayı 25 s. 93-126, Bahar 2010, Security in the Black Sea Region, policy report II.

reflected in his researches.²

Researches of other researchers working in the area of the Turkish foreign policy are also interesting. We would like to particularly emphasize Prof. Baskin Oran and Haydar Cakmak, as well as Prof. Oktay F. Tanrisever, etc. Their researches/books are not dedicated to security models directly but they are authors of rather interesting researches covering the strategies of the Turkish foreign policy, the ongoing processes in the Caucasus and the Caucasian policy of Turkey.

Researches of the Azeri researcher working at Istanbul University — *Vugar Imanbeyli* address the security issues. His scientific articles are dedicated not only to the security model³ covered by our research but also the views of the former president S. Demirel. He is a rather critical author; however in his researches he underlines the point that Turkey has an ability to play a leading role in the political life of the neighbor regions.

During the research process, we reviewed articles of a number of Turkish journalist published in the following newspapers: *Today's zaman* (oppositional newspaper), *Zaman*, *Hurriyet Daily News*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Journal of Turkish Weekly* and *Turkish Press*.

In the process of search for factual material we have used the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/default.en.mfa>), Azerbaijan (<http://mfa.gov.az/>), Armenia (<http://www.mfa.am/en/>) and Georgia (<http://www.mfa.gov.ge/MainNav/DiplomatService/Ambassadors-at-Large.aspx>) as well as information portals, *Civil.ge* (www.civil.ge), *Regnum* (<http://www.regnum.ru/>), *Foreign Press* (www.foreignpress.ge), *Azernews* (<http://www.azernews.az/>), *Araratnews* (<http://araratnews.am/?lang=en>) etc.

We have found scientific articles at websites of Research Centers, for example, *USAK* (www.uksa.tr), *Chaillot* (www.chaillotpapers) and in scientific databases of *Jstor* (<http://www.jstor.org/>), *EBSCO* (<http://search.ebscohost.com/>), *Sciencedirect* (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>).

The following authors from the scientific community of the US, Europe, Georgia and neighbor states have rather interesting researches about the topic of our study: first of all, we should emphasize a well-known American researcher *Roland Asmus* and his book “*A Little War that Shook the World*”; *Eric R. Eissler* who has interesting scientific articles about the role of Turkey in resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia; *Ross Wilson* who defines the resolution of conflicts between the South Caucasian states (Azerbaijan-Armenia), persistent work for economic growth and introduction of democracy standards as guarantors of regional security and stability; *Isabelle Langerak* who openly states in her researches that if Azerbaijan does not change the political system in the country it cannot be the guarantor of peace and stability in the region due to the authoritarian nature of the political system; the Armenian researcher *Aram Terzyan* whose doctoral thesis and scientific articles address security models; *Eugene Kogan* whose scientific articles on relations of Russia and Turkey as well as their influence in the South Caucasian region really deserve attention; Researches of *Pavel Baev*, *Bruno Coppieters*, *Svante E. Cornell*, the Georgian researcher *Davit Darchiashvili*, *Arman Grigorian*, *Dov Lynch* and others are worth mentioning. We would also like to emphasize the researches and analytical articles of *Thomas De Waal* on the ongoing processes in the region.

We would like to mention that it is impossible to specify all papers which we have reviewed during the work process.

² E.g., *Kafkasya'da Değişim Dönüşüm; Avrasya Üçlemesi*; III. 1. Basım, VI + 357 s., 160x235 mm. Kaynakça var dizin yok. 2012. *Turkey's Caucasus Policy*; UNISCI Discussion Papers, N° 23 (May/Mayo 2010), *Strateji ve Güvenlik*, Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayını, 2012 and other numerous researches.

³ *Kafkasya İstikrar ve İşbirliği Platformu*, *Central Eurasian Studies: Past, Present and Future*, Maltepe University, 2010.

3.1 The New Foreign Political Doctrine of Turkey

To obtain a full picture and clarify the main idea of offering the Turkish model of regional security of the South Caucasus, we should review the new foreign political doctrine of the Republic of Turkey. The foreign policy of Turkey has been conducted based on this doctrine for more than a decade. This doctrine was being developed for many years and was announced in a comparatively complete form in the late 1990s. Its author/ideologist is a Turkish scientist, Professor of International Relations Ah. Davutoğlu⁴. Within the framework of this doctrine, he analyzed the political, economic and cultural processes from the historic past — starting from the period of the Ottoman Empire until the modern stage and arrived at interesting conclusions.

According to his new doctrine, at the moment of foundation of the Republic of Turkey by Kemal Atatürk the foreign and domestic policy directions of the country were defined based on the international reality created in the world during that time: after collapse of the Ottoman Empire Turkey was forced to care about survival and give up the former territories of the Empire.

Turkey was still preoccupied with internal reforms when the world entered a new geological order and this country did not have time to analyze and keep pace with the processes ongoing in the world. The order predetermined by creation of a bipolar system during the period of the Cold War negatively affected Turkey in terms of caring about development/implementation of alternative strategies and the tactical maneuvers related to them. Accordingly, during the entire Cold War Turkey appeared to be dependent on two main parameters which did not allow it to plan an independent policy: 1) stay under the security umbrella of the West against the Soviet threat (it was not the goal of Turkey to stay under this umbrella. As a country which gained independence recently, it could not realize the processes ongoing around it in a timely manner) and 2) “Indexation of the Diplomatic Area” with Greece which is a part of EU, i.e., if Turkey wanted to receive a place under the EU security umbrella, its policy in respect to Greece had to be similar or approximated to the EU policy.

Stay under this umbrella cost Turkey creation of own area of influence and ignoring the centers of another alternative force. Turkey’s “request to join the EU was predetermined by the fear that they did not fall behind the processes within the block due to Greece.”⁵

During the Cold War, Turkey carried out policy which was based on creation of security lines along the border instead of strengthening the positions at the international arena and development of relations with the Eastern countries. This was a big mistake and overcoming this deficiency became the goal of the Turkish diplomacy in the late 1980s, for example, during the “Bosnia Crisis” when they realized in the country that they could not conduct operations even in the Balkan region in terms of supply of the air fleet. This was failure to estimate one’s abilities and wrong perception of the potential of the country. Therefore, Turkey saw the necessity of development of close relations with the neighbour regions and began to reevaluate the approaches used by it until that time.

According to Ah. Davutoğlu, Turkey did not have a right to continue its existence in a closed system as an entity of the world politics and began to create the center of civilization considering the difficulties existing in the reality of that period.

According to the new doctrine, Turkey, from geopolitical point of view, is a place of intersection of the marine and land power centers and this geographic state of the country is the constant factor whose importance

⁴ The fundamental research of Prof. Ah. Davutoğlu “Strategic Depth” is translated into Russian and Greek only. No English translation is available. This research was translated into Georgian by me.

⁵ Davutoğlu Ah. (2001). *Stratejik Derinlik*, Kure Yayınları, Ankara, p. 72.

necessarily had to be reevaluated and therefore, the cultural, geographic, economic, political and geopolitical parameters had to be revised. The issue of search for cultural identity became important in these processes. Despite the fact that, for example, this author assigns the transfer to the political platform of Islam in 1993-1996 to the category of decisions made in an accelerated manner to a certain extent, he still considered, that on the one hand, during that period Turkey was occupied with study of a new international reality and development of foreign political doctrine and on the other hand, Turkey found itself in a reality when forces having the principles of historically continuous ideology of political culture became automatically activated and it seemed that the country went back to the normal. The elections also demonstrated that the Republican People's Party (CHP) which at a glance had a big political experience and enjoyed great support during the previous periods took back seat.

Considering the above, Ah. Davutoğlu mentions that the role assigned to Turkey by the political elite of that time did not correspond to the requirements of the society, historic experience and expectations related to the future ideals anymore and a new vision, new approaches were developed regarding which path Turkey had to take. According to this new strategy, the past strategy of maintaining the status quo had to be revised first of all and Turkey had to begin operating at the international arena. In terms of areas of activity, the priority directions for implementation of strategy of political, economic, cultural and geopolitical influence are as follows:

(1) The nearest land basin: Balkans–Near East–Caucasus;

(2) The nearest marine basin: The Black Sea–The Adriatic Sea–the Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea–The Red Sea–The Persian Gulf–The Caspian Sea;

(3) The nearest continental basin: Europe–North Africa–South Asia–Central and East Asia.⁶

According to this strategy, cooperation with Europe is rather significant to the extent that Turkey should focus on development. At the same time, considering the geopolitical location of the county it is possible to create an interesting strategic cooperation chain in the field of energy policy and not only.

If we look from a perspective of the new doctrine, Turkey already acts and takes steps for its implementation. Therefore, initiation of a security doctrine for the South Caucasian region is the constituent of the unified policy and an attempt to facilitate creation of reality corresponding to its interests in the neighbor region.

3.2 Platform Initiation

Advancing the initiative of the regional security model was not new for the Turkish diplomacy. As Turkey used the past experience and considered that the old format of cooperation (in which the influential world players (the UN, EU and the USA) were the platform participants in addition to the states of the region) was not successful, this time it offered an alternative of cooperation in a new format.

No official announcement regarding any type of political initiative was made in Ankara during several days after launch of the war in Georgia. But on August 11, the Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who paid an official visit to the President of Russia in connected with the situation created in the region proposed the “Caucasian Security Platform” to the international community and first of all, the political leaders of the states of the region, i.e., to initiate a dialogue for finding a way out of the difficult situation created in the region within the format 3+2 (Russia, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan). In the opinion of the Turkish side, regional problems had to be resolved with participation and endeavors of the states of the region first of all. Iran was not considered to the participant of the dialogue. The Prime Minister of Turkey did not confine himself to making the announcement and paid a special visit to Baku and Tbilisi during next days.

⁶ Davudoğlu A. ... title of the paper, p. 118.

This idea of pursue of security with 3+2 formula caused discontent of the countries and international organizations which had been excluded from this format. Among the countries of the region, Georgia initially dropped a hint that the Georgian side would not come to the negotiating table with the occupant country which had occupied about 20% of its territories. However, during the visit of the Prime Minister R. T. Erdoğan in Georgia, the President of Georgia at that time, M. Saakashvili gave a positive evaluation to the attempt of Turkey aimed at creating common security mechanisms in the region and asked Ankara to continue these attempts.

3.3 Azerbaijan and Armenia Supported the Security Platform

The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ed. Nalbandyan positively evaluated the initiative of Turkey and despite non-existence of diplomatic relations expressed readiness for the dialogue especially about the issues related to cooperation and security in the region and noted that Armenia had always been and will always be a participant of such type of negotiations. However, a bit later, one of the high-rank officials of this country, in particular, the Chairman of the Permanent Parliamentary Commission for Foreign Relations, Armen Rustamyan dedicated a special press conference to this topic on September 4, 2008 and stated that non-acceptance of Iran in this format of the Caucasian platform meant placement of a delay-action bomb in the region which could explode the existing security system any time.

Elmar Mammadyarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan at that time, Elmar Mammadyarov also welcomed the initiative but stated that it was required to review a number of issues in detail for further improvement of the platform and sophistication of mechanisms using which the set goals will be achieved in the future.

By the way, on September 17, 2008 the representative of the Embassy of Iran in Armenia, Kamal Zareh called this initiative incomplete and rather hastily developed in one of Armenian newspapers because according to him, it is impossible not to notice Iran when talking about ensuring the balance of regional forces. Exclusion of Iran from the platform strongly activated the diplomatic service of this country: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Manucherkh Mottak held negotiations in Baku, Erevan and Moscow, as well as in Berlin for the purpose of facilitation of peace and stability in the South Caucasus. Even though a number of professors state in their interviews (Mustafa Aydin, Mitat Celikpala⁷) that “Iran is not at the international arena of the Caucasus today” but it is impossible to totally ignore its factor in the South Caucasus. If we rely on the main postulate of views of one of the respondents — Serdar Dinler⁸ that “in the present world economic relations define resolution of the security policy problems”, why cannot we assume that considering the factor of Russia, Iran mitigated the methods to a certain extent and tries not acutely but still to be involved in the processes ongoing in the region, at least by means of establishment of trade relations only. According to Prof. K. Kasim,⁹ Iran attentively observed the processes ongoing in the Caucasus by the US policy in respect to Iran predetermines its comparatively passive policy in this region. But this does not mean that it does not have any interests in this region (Kasim K., Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Kafkasya, Ankara, USAK Yayınları, 2011, p. 144). Interesting was the evaluation of relations between Iran and Turkey made by Prof. H. Çakmak: “Although we have rather good economic relations as a separate country but Turkey does not cooperate with it in regional projects.”¹⁰

Russia responded to the initiative of the Turkish Prime Minister comparatively later: On October 7, 2008, the

⁷ The Interviews are recorded on December 15-17, 2014.

⁸ The interview is recorded on December 19, 2014.

⁹ The interview is recorded on December 18, 2014.

¹⁰ The interview is recorded on December 15, 2014.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov stated in the interview given to the “Rosyiskaya Gazeta” that the Turkish idea that the countries of the region should care about stability and cooperation in the Caucasus is interesting, but “now we have to do with an absolutely different Caucasus. There are already five states in the region. We have diplomatic relations with four of them and they are temporarily suspended with Georgia (Russia does not want interference of third countries in the processes in the Caucasus: opinion, www.regnum.ru/news/24.10/2008).

Washington received the Turkish initiative on regional security without enthusiasm. According to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Matthew Bryza, the US side was not even notified about it and they consider necessary that the cooperation is closer, especially that these two countries have many common interests in the South Caucasian region, particularly, in terms of energy projects and not only in this region.

It must be hard to believe that Washington was not informed of the fact that Turkey was advancing the initiative of creation of a political alliance in the region and especially when Washington controls the strongest Incirlik base of NATO located in Turkey, it is still possible that this corresponds to reality. The comment made by Prof. M. Aydin during his interview also supports this idea: “.... and why should America know about the Turkish plan? Did they tell us about all of their plans?” In the interview given to “Guardian” on August 18, 2008 the Turkish President Abdullah Gül stated: The conflict in Georgia has made it clear that the US cannot define the global politics any more and must share power with other countries.¹¹

Initiating the platform in the format of “Five” implied that for ensuring security in the region, Turkey and Russia were considered to be the guarantors which meant not only recognition of the particular role of Russia in the region but also the new role of Turkey which left Iran as well as the US having significant interests in the South Caucasus out of the game. Below we will review to what extent it was possible.

About one year after initiation of the platform certain changes occurred in the attitude of the Turkish side to Iran: after visit of the Turkish Prime Minister to Iran in the early November 2009 the positions of these countries became noticeably approximated. “Both Turkey and Iran are interested in stability in the Caucasus. Therefore, problems must be resolved through cooperation of the countries of the region”, noted R. Erdoğan after his return.¹² On November 2, 2009 an agreement was concluded between Turkey and Iran — Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Oil and Gas. According to the Turkish Minister of Energy, Taner Ildiz, the document provides for participation of the Turkish side in development of the largest gas field of Iran-the South Pars. It was insinuated in Ankara that as a result of implementation of this project, Iran may become one of the main suppliers of gas for NABUCCO Gas Pipeline. It was announced in Turkey that the idea of the Caucasian stability may acquire new dimensions by involvement of Iran in it and this pact may turn over a new leaf. After meeting between R. Erdoğan and the US President on December 8, 2009, B. Obama considered Turkey for the role of mediator and negotiator in relations with Iran.

Activation of the factor of Iran already made the first changes to the Turkish security model. Turkey was convinced that the opportunities for implementation of its interests by the attempt to start the dialogue with Russia were minimal and by introduction of Iran to this process, the political processes along with the economic ones would become interesting.

By August 19, 2008 it became known that the Turkish Prime Minister R. Erdoğan discussed the Caucasian

¹¹ US must share power in new world order, says Turkey’s controversial president, www.guardian.co.uk/2008/aug.

¹² Stanislav Tarasov: Turkey brings Iran to the “Caucasian equation”, www.regnum.ru/news/09.11.2009.

Stability Platform with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of several EU member states, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France Bernard Kouchner, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the Swedish colleague Carl Bildt, the Chairman of OSCE Alexander Stubb as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland and the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Turkey expanded the format of the dialogue related to regional security. However, the Turkish initiative on regional security failed to be implemented.

There are several reasons for the above:

The factor of Russia first of all: Russia has a different understanding of security in the south Caucasus and tries not to allow increase of influence of another force in the so-called area of its strategic interests. Russia does not need observers in self-proclaimed separatist regions of Georgia nor near its borders during implementation of its activities. It can be said that Russia represents the main threat to regional security.

The “Caucasian Security Platform” did not become a subject of actual discussion because it may be said that conducting the policy of recognition of two “new states” in the South Caucasus by Russia has “divided” the dialogue related to regional security issues into three parts: between Georgia and Russia (“Geneva Format”), between Armenia and Turkey (through mediation of Switzerland, Ankara initiated a dialogue with Erevan on cooperation and opening the border. The “road map” was also agreed on April 24, 2009) and between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Expectations of Ankara that this dialogue would turn into a common format were not met.

Second, exclusion of the West from this processes while it was owing to the West that the South Caucasian region was partially rescued from the arms of Russian since the 1990s. It was the lobbying of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Energy Project by the US that laid the foundation for these processes. At this stage too, a number of energy and economic projects are stimulated through the efforts of the West so that the states of the South Caucasian region can take the western path of development. Therefore, Turkey had to consider the Western factor. According to an American diplomat, “This is a region which is significant for us”.¹³

Third, insufficient readiness of Turkey to work for implementation of the initiative advanced by it in a more goal-oriented manner. Even though Turkey responded to the challenges created by the international reality by forming new foreign political views but at this stage the endeavors of Turkey could not outbalance the Russian influence on the region. Even the attempt of implementation of this platform means conflict of interests of two forces in the region which occurs in a rather tense and complicated manner in general.

4. Consequences

The processes ongoing in the South Caucasus show that it is a significant part of the international security system. The West, Russia and Turkey are the leading political actors in this system who have their clearly defined interests and each of them has own models of “regulation” of processes ongoing in the South Caucasus. There is a difference in methods: the West and Turkey use economic models of influence and tries to obtain energy leverages. As for Russia, it used all methods, first of all, power methods and if we rephrase one interesting opinion of R. Asmus, “the 19th century rules are not totally unusable today”, they are important again. After the Cold War Russia uses all efforts to separate the South Caucasian states (together with the Central Asia) from the western

¹³ Wilson R., *Building Security and Stability in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, NATO and Caucasus Regional Security, Baku, 2003, p. 113

line.¹⁴

The post-Soviet space of 1990s and more exactly, the South Caucasus was perceived by the world as a conflict region where there were no equal partner relations between states and no elementary guarantees of regional security. But the changes which occurred on the world political map emphasized the transit significance of the South Caucasus which was followed by activation of influential political actors in this region. As a result, the confrontation became more intense and the conflicts whose preconditions existed since the Soviet period and provoked a military confrontation.

The processes led to the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008. This war drastically changed the status quo and the system of balance of forces which existed in the South Caucasus for about two decades.

Due to the fact that the abrupt moves of Russia in respect to Georgia created a situation when Turkey might have been left out of the game and in case of the worst scenario, the corridor passing through the South Caucasus (which is located on the road leading to central Asia and both of these regions are strategically important for Turkey) might have been closed for it, Turkey already openly announces its own interests in the South Caucasus; The Russo-Georgian War of 2008 was a good touchstone for Turkey to act as an independent actor already.

5. Discussion

While looking for the reasons for failure of implementation of the Turkish model of the South Caucasus regional security the following questions arose: Was the initiation of the model by Turkey in this form and in this format a mistake? If Turkey was convinced that it was initiating a correct idea, why did not it announce this initiative in Ankara? Did its announcement in Ankara mean recognition of the privilege of Moscow? If Ankara did not yet have enough self-confidence to easily start realizing its own new doctrine, it should have been ready for the results too. Maybe it even realized that at this stage at least it could not overcome the resistance of Russia but it tested its own power as well as the power of Russia.

By the way, due to the problems created while realizing the second security model the attempt of expansion of the model resulted in its resemblance to the expanded format of the first model initiated by it. As Turkey already knew and had respective experience of what the format expansion would result in, it would be better that it did not allow expansion of the second model format.

Despite the fact that the model failed to be realized and according to I. Kogan, “One year later only Turkey remembered this model”, it was attempt of Turkey to act based on the new political strategy. In this case it is less important whether this attempt was successful or not because fight for one’s own interest is never unsuccessful and if we look from Russia’s perspective, this force also failed to realize its own goals.

From the perspective of the states of the region, the processes prior to and after 2008 War strongly affected the sovereignty of Georgia. The one fact which may be considered positive is that the world became convinced that the Georgian side was right when talking about the hidden threat and creeping aggression from Russia. The war processes caused certain financial losses to Armenia as a result of temporary closure of land and marine roads. For Azerbaijan it was a message from Europe to make a firm decision in favour of construction of a democratic system in the country. From the European perspective, these processes were followed by persistent search for alternative ways of obtaining energy resources to be exempted from such large energy dependence on Russia.

It is impossible to settle regional problems of the South Caucasus without a political will of the parties. If

¹⁴ Kasim K., Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Kafkasya, Ankara, USAK Yayınları, 2011, p. 121.

resolution of these issues is not oriented at concessions and the benefits received by consequences of the stable regional order obtained in return for them, it will not be able to cope with the most influential regional act—Russia for a long time and Russia should realize it first of all.

Resolution of regional security issues, considering the existing reality and its difficulties, may be changed by either by a great political will or great geopolitical shifts. But until a respective stage, the forces interested in peace and stability in the region should stay alert and not stop their attempts.

Despite the fact that it has been yet actually impossible to find a format within which it would be possible to resolve the issues important for the region, the processes ongoing in the South Caucasus and the interest of the world community in these processes show that the dialogue is going on and someday these processes will bring certain outcomes.

6. Conclusions

Study of the foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey, since its foundation until the modern stage, provides an interesting picture of transformation of the foreign political priorities. Since the period of development of a new foreign political platform, other foreign political directions named as significant priorities were added to the road of the European orientation named as the constant priority. According to the authors of this ideology, the most complicated process of search of the 1990s arrived at decisions according to which Turkey first of all had to plan and decided what it wanted on its own. Secondly, it could mark the areas of its interest as an independent political actor. According to the new foreign political doctrine, the Near East, the Black Sea basin, the South Caucasus and Central Asia are the regions where Turkey would play its political, economic, cultural, educational and other game based on its own interests.

Yet in the early 2000, the initiative of the former President of the Republic of Turkey — S. Demirel and the proposal offered by the Prime Minister of Turkey at that time, R. T. Erdoğan in 2008 were constituents of the new foreign political platform of Turkey and the attempt of its realization.

Russia as the triggering factor of these processes would certainly not allow to carry out the processes in the region according to the rules offered by Turkey. As time has already shown, it happened this way. The platform initiated by Turkey failed. This was partially expected. But another thing is the most significant in these processes: Turkey as an independent actor has already entered the arena and its actions are not limited to initiation of this platform only.

Considering the complicated geopolitical situation of the South Caucasus it is difficult to expect stabilization of the situation and improvement of the situation in terms of the problems existing in the region - conflicts, economic conditions, introduction of the European standards and human rights protection in the nearest future, in the nearest decade. These are the goals which are achievable in the South Caucasian region only if a comparatively peaceful, stable political environment is created and persistent work during many years brings certain outcomes. But the point is that against the background of the tendencies in the world politics creation of a stable political environment in the Caucasus is not easily achievable, especially when it is the neighbor of a not less complicated Near East region.

As a result of observation of the nature of conflicts and tendencies in these two regions, we think that we may even witness a change of the political map within the nearest two decades. Prof. K. Kasim does not rule out the possibility that it is not excluded that the conflict of interests may result in a new military confrontation in the

South Caucasus too.¹⁵

In these processes Turkey undertakes the role of the regional leader and tries to introduce its own order in the neighboring regions of the Near East, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. But despite the fact that its leadership is partly perceptible, the Russian factor is the barrier which the interests of Turkey in these regions will permanently collide with. During the nearest decade, despite the fact that we consider that the role of Turkey will gradually increase in its neighborhood, it will not be able to replace the political presence of Russia in these regions.

Initiation of regional security model in such situation was one more good attempt from Turkey to try and suppress the increased political appetite of Russia and remind it that the world is not unipolar or even bipolar and despite the fact that its influence in the South Caucasian region is rather big, this does not mean that Turkey intends to give up its plans.

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¹⁵ Kasim K., Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Kafkasya, Ankara, USAK Yayınları, 2011, p. 215

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