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## **GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL FACTORS OF STATE BUILDING IN TRANSCAUCASIA**

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### **Introduction**

The 15 Union Soviet Republics were declared 'Sovereign States' with a legal right of secession according to the 1936 and 1977 versions of the Constitution of the USSR. But this was just a myth. The Union Republics possessed quite distinct autonomy in internal affairs, while on the international level all the Union Republics (to say nothing of the Autonomous Republics and Regions) were recognised at best as countries, not as states. This is true even of Ukraine and Byelorussia - members of the UN since 1945. From September to December 1991 the 14 Union Republics of the dissolved USSR were recognised as states first of all by the Russian Federation which was considered to be the direct successor of the USSR. Very soon the Newly Independent States (NIS) were recognised de-jure by the international community.

The emergence in the early 1990s of the political space called 'Post-Soviet' was a logical result of a certain global, political, and social-economic development even if many subjective factors fashioned its appearance. But neither were the NIS that appeared in this space entirely ready for state-building in the new economic and political circumstances. This is even more true when economic issues are concerned: up to 90 per cent of heavy industry in every Union Republic was managed directly from Moscow and economic ties were so interwoven that the rupture of these ties caused a collapse of the economic and social system. The opening of the markets made it clear that local products can't compete with those imported from the West (and even with those from the Middle East and South Asia).

Meanwhile the psychology of the population has not changed diametrically: ordinary people cannot adapt easily to the inevitable

change to the market economy in most NIS (or at least a move away from a planned economy); they often tend to blame all their quite real social misfortunes and the deterioration of their material well-being on the dissolution of the Soviet Union (support given at democratic elections to the neo-Communists must be attributed to this way of thinking). Such circumstances also cause serious problems to the state-building of the new political entities. If we examine the definition of nation-state given by Giddens 'A nation-state refers to a political apparatus, recognised to have sovereign rights within the borders of a demarcated territorial area, able to back its claims to sovereignty by control of military power, many of whose citizens have positive feelings of commitment to its national identity' (1) and try to apply it to the NIS, we may discover that not all of them fit this definition. Hitherto it was assumed that only Russia the true successor of the USSR maintains or is able to maintain its sovereignty in full measure as it is still in control of immense military power.

The latest developments, especially the ineffectiveness of military actions against the Chechen guerrillas, may tempt one to doubt this assumption, although this may appear a false impression. And what is there to say of the other NIS which are smaller and much weaker than Russia? Whose state apparatus remains mostly unchanged from Communist times and quite often fights only for its own survival at the helm? Whose borders are marked only on maps of the world and can't be protected even from each other? Whose military power is restricted? And national identity remains mostly at the level of ethnic identity in so far as not all the representatives of the minority ethnic groups feel themselves citizens of a New State - even if they are officially given citizenship (e.g. in Georgia) and even more if they are mostly denied such (as in some Baltic states)?

It is evident that state-building in the post-Soviet space encounters a lot of difficulties. Most of them are connected with the division of the larger state organism and imply a host of internal and to non a lesser extent external factors. Although the afore-mentioned concerns practically all the NIS, there must be differences in such a huge area as the FSU (Former Soviet Union) is. It must be a priori assumed that these differences are caused by some historical and geographical factors. These can be demonstrated more profoundly if different countries and regions are compared.

The Transcaucasus against the background of another region of the FSU  
It is evident that the actual state-building of the former Soviet Union Republics is taking longer than was supposed by the leaders of the national-patriotic move-ments in each Republic. This is true of the Transcaucasus which is distinguished against the background of the turbulent post-Soviet space by even more turbulence.

The first real war between the then Soviet Republics (over Nagorny Karabakh) began in this region and is by no means over yet; the first coup-d'etat and the first fir-ing from cannons at Parliament occurred again here (The Tbilisi War, Winter 1991- 1992; tanks shooting at the Russian Supreme Soviet in October 1993 may be re-garded to some extent as an 'enlarged replica' of this episode); the first civil wars started again in the Transcaucasus and the most notorious internal conflicts on an ethnic basis occurred here (true, Moscow's adventure in Chechnia overshadowed

them, but in huge Russia everything happens on a large scale!); one of the NIS of the region (Azerbaijan) managed to overthrow and elect (by a majority vote each time!) three Presidents in three years, etc. All this, naturally affects state-building patterns in the area. The question may arise: Why? What are the reasons for such developments? Are all the above-mentioned events just results of mismanagement, the misrule of the corrupt and greedy elites? Is it all planned 'from Moscow' as the popular explanation suggests? Or maybe this is caused by some objective factors? And, finally, is the Transcaucasus a homogeneous region where we can predict some sort of future development by analysing it in a NIS?

The comparison of the Transcaucasus with another region of the FSU may help to answer some of the above questions. A short comparative analysis of the three Baltic and the three Transcaucasian NIS may show the role of history and geography in state-building.

### **Political-geographical differences on regional level**

A. **Location:** The Baltic states are located in a line along the Baltic Sea while to the East they all border with Russia (Lithuania formally bordered on the South-East with Byelorussia, which actually always had and recently has officially re-established 'special relations' with the Russian Federation abolishing the borders; plus Lithuania has a border with a Russia-owned province - Kaliningrad oblast -former East Prussia - to the South-West). And the former metropolis may be sup-posed to be the only threat for the statehood of all the three Baltic Republics. On the other hand the Transcaucasian states are situated asymmetrically. Only Georgia has access to the Black Sea, while Azerbaijan has access to a large closed water reservoir (the Caspian Sea, actually a lake), and Armenia is a land-locked state. Georgia and Azerbaijan border upon Russia which is usually supposed to be the major threat to the statehood of both (this assumption must be analysed in more detail). Armenia has no direct border with Russia and this objectively implies the former's policy to be the most pro-Russian in the area (certain Russian nationalists consider Armenia 'Russia's key to the Middle East'). All the immediate neighbours of Armenia might be considered by the latter if not directly hostile at best as 'watchful-neutral', in that towards all of them (except Iran) the popular Armenian sentiment, nourished by generations of the historians and writers, is that 'they owe us certain territories': quite a factor notwithstanding that official statements usually denounce such claims. This circumstance makes the maintenance of peace very doubtful in the region if a stronger hand from without is not interested in it.

B. **Boundary patterns:** after the first collapse of the Russian Empire the Baltic nations obtained in 1918 political borders mostly coinciding with ethnic ones. No substantial minority of any Baltic nation was left in another state and the population of each was mostly homogeneous: in the 1930s Latvians (with Latgals) comprised 76 percent, Lithuanians - 80 percent and Estonians 88 percent of the respective states [Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 1933, 1938]. This can be explained by the fact that no such states as

Estonia and Latvia ever existed before 1918 and therefore no historical borders could have been claimed. Lithuania had territorial claims towards a state from without the region (the historical capital of Lithuania - Vilnius was incorporated into Poland which was also restored as a state in 1918).

It is important that towards each other the Baltic states had no ethnic-territorial claims. When in 1940 these states were forcibly incorporated into the USSR and turned into 'Union Soviet Republics' their borders with each other were preserved. (Small territories were annexed from Estonia and Latvia to Russia, which creates some problems in international relations in the area but not between the Baltic States; a recent dispute over sea boundaries between Latvia and Lithuania does not seem to be insoluble). On the other hand, when the new independent states appeared in the Transcaucasus in 1918 their borders were delimited according to the administrative division of the former Russian Empire which never followed ethnic lines at all but aimed at creating heterogeneity (partially this was caused by the sequence and pace of incorporation into the Empire of the different territories during the 19th Century, but predominantly it was a deliberate imperial policy). Therefore independent Armenia got within its boundaries a large Azeri minority residing in the former Yerevan Gubernia; independent Azerbaijan a large Armenian one residing in the former Baku and Elisavetpol (Gianje) Gubernias (the latter comprised the ancient Khanate of Karabakh with the prevailing Armenian population); and independent Georgia got Armenian and Azeri minorities, residing in the former Tiflis (Tbilisi) Gubernia.

In addition Georgia had local ethnic minorities residing along the Russian border. Among these new states Georgia had had a relatively recent statehood (abolished in the early 19th century, see below), and relatively distinct historical borders (which didn't coincide with the ethnic borders at the time of acquiring of independence). Armenia had had its historical statehood abolished almost a millennia before, and its claims of new boundaries mostly implied incorporation of the area of the spread of the Armenians (in Turkey before 1915 such an area was really large). The Treaty of Sevres (1920) promised Armenia a much larger area at the expense of Turkey but the Treaty clauses were never implemented. Azerbaijan had no historical statehood under that very name, although the religious (Shi'a Muslim) and linguistic (Turkic) homogeneity of its population made the forging of the nation easier. Its quite large irredenta was left outside its borders.

The wars for territorial redistribution began in the Transcaucasus in 1918 (the Armenian-Georgian War, stopped by British intervention). There was already tension over the possession of Nagorny (Mountainous) Karabakh. After the Russian Bolsheviks restored the Empire (now called 'the Soviet Union') and incorporated the Transcaucasian states under the titles of 'Soviet Socialist Republics' they redelimited their borders, but did this in such a way as if to leave 'delayed action mines' (that actually blew up 70 years later). It looks as if some actions of the Kremlin were

to some extent influenced by their good relations with Ankara. At least the creation of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara within Georgia and the Nakhichevan Republic within Azerbaijan (up to the mid-1930s Nakhichevan formally remained a 'protectorate of the Azerbaijan SSR') were influenced by this external factor. But the creation of the other autonomous units (the Abkhaz Republic - later Autonomous Republic and the South Ossetian Autonomous Region within Georgia, the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region within Azerbaijan) were entirely the internal affair of the Soviet leaders.

- C. **Attitudes of the International Community:** All the Baltic countries were recognised as independent states by the Western powers in the early 1920s after Soviet Russia signed treaties with them. Despite the annexation of the Baltic states by the USSR in 1940 the West continued to regard the former as existing but occupied. The three Baltic Soviet Republics seceded from the USSR in September 1991 and the then All-Soviet Government recognised the legal character of this act. Simultaneously the international community was happy to restore their relations with the Baltic states, who got adequate aid from the Western World. However, among the Transcaucasian states only the Democratic Republic of Georgia (the official name of the State) was de-jure recognised by Bolshevik Russia in May 1920 and, only after this happened, by such European powers as Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and also by Japan, Turkey, etc. But the USA never recognised Georgian independence in the 1920s. The other Transcaucasian republics got only de-facto international recognition.

The signing of a treaty with Georgia was no moral obstacle for the Bolsheviks to invade the 'recognised state' in just eight months' time and to establish forcibly the Soviet regime there (February-March, 1921; the other Transcaucasian States were sovietised and reabsorbed by the Russian Bolsheviks even earlier - in 1920). Although Georgia formally restored its independence on 9 April 1991 it was de-jure recognised on the spot only by Romania (which presumably needed such an act as a precedent for the recognition of Moldova). The rest of the World recognised Georgia, as well as the other former Soviet Republics only after the formal dissolution of the USSR (22 December 1991). The Western powers' attitude towards the Transcaucasian States continued to be 'diluted' by their relations with Russia. But as the oil interests of the West in the Transcaucasus increase the former will probably be more ready sometimes to op-pose the Russian dictate. First of all such an object of additional interest to the international community will be Azerbaijan, whose oil resources are immense.

### **Cultural-geographical differences**

Cultural differences in the Baltic region, although present, are not as sharp as in the Transcaucasus. The Catholic Lithuanians and the predominantly Lutheran Latvians and Estonians (their minorities confess

Orthodox Christianity), the Lithuanians and Latvians belonging to a single group within the Indo-European linguistic family, while the Estonians to a different linguistic family (akin to Finnish) still all can be attributed to the West-European cultural realm. Subethnic differences although still existing (e.g. the Latgals even had written literature up to the 1930s, but now consider themselves a part of the single Latvian nation; almost the same can be said about the Zemaitis within the Lithuanian nation), do not affect the statehood of any of the Baltic nations.

On the other hand, all the three major nations of the Transcaucasus belong to different linguistic families and religious faiths. The Armenians, linguistically Indo-European, confess a 'national religion' - Monophysite Christianity.<sup>(2)</sup> The Azeris, linguistically Turkic and from this point of view very close to the [Anatolian] Turks, are predominantly Shi'a Muslim, which historically made them culturally closer to Persia, not Turkey. The Georgians, belonging to a separate linguistic family (Kartvelian, comprising only the Georgian subethnoses), confessionally belong mostly to the world of Orthodox Christianity which in older times made them culturally closer to the 'Second Rome' (Constantinople) and later to the 'Third Rome' (Moscow). Besides, every tenth Georgian (the Adjarian subethnos) belongs to Sunni Islam, which makes them culturally closer to Turkey.

In spite of the afore mentioned differences, all the three Transcaucasian nations, because of a long coexistence within one superstate (the Russian, later - Soviet, Empire) and a long tradition of collaboration, have some similarities in culture and way of life (this applies even more to the Georgians and Armenians, who have a tradition of intermarriages as well). All of them claim to belong to (or at least - the closeness to) European culture. Even the Azeri elite, with its, in essence, Islamic and Middle Eastern traditions, stresses its adherence to European cultural values.<sup>3</sup> It must be said, in all fairness, that in none of the Transcaucasian nations is religion given a special significance and no fundamentalism (Muslim or Christian) can be envisaged at the moment.

### **The Transcaucasus against the background of the world: historical and geographical aspects**

What unites the state? R. Hartshorne defines the state-idea as the major centripetal force. In effect, if such an idea doesn't exist no state can emerge. But merely the existence of such an idea is no guarantee for the appearance of a state. The idea of statehood is connected with an idea of a united nation. This is true of modern states and it was to some extent true of the middle ages as well, when nation-states started to emerge in Europe. A similar process occurred in the Transcaucasus, where the Western and Eastern Kingdoms of Georgia ('Abkhazta samepo' and 'Kartvelta samepo', respectively) merged peacefully in the tenth century. By that time the Georgian hagiologist Giorgi (George) Merchule formulated a definition of the ethnic territory of the Georgians that became axiomatic in medieval times: 'Georgia is reckoned to consist of those spacious lands in which church services are celebrated and all prayers said in the Georgian (kartuli) tongue' [Lang, 1966, 109]. Within a century or so after Merchule enunciated his doctrine, the area where the

Christian (Chalcedonian) liturgy was followed in Georgian comprised the whole territory of the present-day Georgia. On this territory there existed a common iconography - first of all a common religious culture and common name of the state 'Sakartvelo' - it remains until today the name of the country ('Georgia' is the European name of the country).

The core of this medieval kingdom (actually an empire) by the 12th century unified most of the Transcaucasus with peoples of different ethnic or religious roots. But centrifugal forces appeared to be stronger, after a serious external enemy (the Mongols) arrived. The weakness of integrating factors within the feudal society in crisis didn't permit the East European (among them the ancient Russian) and Middle Eastern states to resist the not very numerous hordes of the nomads. Nevertheless after this 'Mongol-Tartar' yoke became looser the territories where internal impulses of development were better preserved, restarted their political development. But the territories that appeared to be on the periphery, were not able to do the same. The Transcaucasus was a typical periphery and just a glance at the map explains almost everything. During the last two millennia the Transcaucasian region was a peripheral part of the empires situated in the south of a relatively narrow isthmus between the Black and Caspian Seas limited from the north by the high wall of the Great Caucasus Range.

Thus expansion to the north couldnt be a normal event in the Transcaucasus. Even the Persian Empire of Achemenides was unsuccessful when invading what is now Southern Russia and Southern Ukraine. The open steppes (known as 'Wild Field' by the Russians) were good for the nomads, not for the sedentary peoples of those days. Only for a short period (the 11-13th centuries) did the 'Transcaucasian Empire' (formally, the united Georgian Kingdom where not only the Georgians lived, naturally) play an important political role in the Middle East: the Kingdom expanded to the south beyond the Transcaucasus proper and even attempted to colonise the North Caucasian foothills, beginning with the Orthodox-Christian missionary activities. This short-lived advance of the Transcaucasus became possible to a large extent because the old empires or regional superpowers either sharply declined (Arab Khaliphate, Byzantium) or had simply disappeared (Iran, Khazars), while the forces of the only viable regional empire, that of the Selchuk Turks, were diverted against the waves of crusaders invading from the west.

Incidentally this period of the advance of the Transcaucasus coincides with the A-phase of the first logistic wave (c.1050 - c.1250), which relates to the rise of material production in feudal Europe.(4) Then a two century long B-phase of real decline in production ('the crisis of feudalism') followed. But whereas this crisis ended in Europe with the birth of capitalism, in the Transcaucasus the crisis turned into permanent stagnation. It is incorrect to attribute this only to external aggression. To no less an extent this is connected with the sharp deterioration of the economic-geographical location of the area. The discovery by the western Europeans in the 15th century of the ways to India and the New World for a long time made the eastern Mediterranean, and even more the Black Sea basin, a remote periphery for western Europe. Besides, after the fall of Constantinople the Black Sea became 'the Ottoman Lake' and contacts with the West almost ceased.

The caravan routes lost their importance, and the local towns lost incentives for growth. The emergence of the regional superpowers - the Ottoman and Safavid Empires and the appearance in the area of the Muscovy state (later transformed into the Russian Empire) in the 16th century, made even more clear the peripheral character of the Transcaucasus. As a result of the Ottoman - Persian wars of the 16-18th centuries the Transcaucasus was divided into spheres of influence and its southern parts were gradually absorbed by the victorious side. Thus was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire a Georgian state - Samtskhe-Saatabago (it became 'vilayet-i-Gurjistan' - 'Georgian province' within the Empire), southern part of the Guria Principality (modern Adjara); all the lands settled by the Armenians were divided - the part lying in the Transcaucasus was annexed by Persia, the rest found itself within the Ottoman Empire.

Quasi-statehood was preserved in the northernmost part of the region, on the territory of the ancient Georgian Kingdom, where local Christian monarchs sometimes attempted to reunite the state. On the territories of the modern Armenia and Azerbaijan in the late Middle Ages local statehood was absent. East Georgia actually achieved unification by the mid-18th century and even became a subject of international law: at least the Russian Empress Catherine II signed a treaty with an [East] Georgian King. The latter fact didn't prevent a Russian Tsar, the grandson of the same Empress, in complete violation of the treaty, annexing almost the whole of Georgia to the Empire in 1801-1812. Later the other parts of the Transcaucasus were annexed to Russia. The region as a whole was too weak to resist its incorporation into a world empire. As a mini-system it was gradually incorporated by the Russian Empire during the 19th century and underwent a transformation.<sup>(5)</sup> This event had some positive results for the region as well: e.g. for the national consolidation of the large ethnic groups of the Transcaucasus the incorporation into the Russian Empire appeared more preferable than it might have been if the region had entirely become the prey of a Muslim Empire.

At the same time it must be stressed that the Russian Empire (and its successor - the Soviet Union) was not a part of the core region, remaining (after Wallerstein) economically a semi-peripheral state and being itself exploited by the core. But the Empire in its turn exploited the periphery, which was, in contrast with the sea-based empires, directly included into the state as a nearby territory and colonised. The last peculiarity made the possibilities of the local ethnic groups to secede from the Empire rather difficult. Besides, Tsarist Russia (and later the USSR) attempted to create an ethnic mosaic in all its peripheral parts. A certain westernisation of the elite's consciousness in the period of the Russian domination contributed to the development of the ideas of nationalism in the Transcaucasus. This ante-state nationalism found a stronger base among the Georgians and the Armenians: being both Christian peoples it was easier for them to adapt to the Western ideals of nationalism. The Turkic peoples of the region (the base of the future Azeri nation) possessed a feeling of unity that was more religious than ethnic. At the same time the capitalist development of Baku had been strengthening the formation of an Azerbaijani elite with a marked ethno-national self-consciousness.

A definite increase in Georgian national self-consciousness and the rapid

integration of the different Georgian subethnic groups into one nation occurred in the second half of the 19th century. This made the imperial government rather suspicious and as a counter measure Abkhazian nationalism was encouraged on the eve of the 20th century and deliberately directed in an anti-Georgian way. Such a step proved to be a successful one (for the Empire). On the other hand a marked adaptation to the economic and civil life in the large economic (and political) space was taking place and this affected mass consciousness as well. During the 19th century at least there were no secessionist movements in the area. Moreover, when the Russian Monarchy was eliminated and the Empire collapsed, the local ethnic elites that came to power for the time being didn't desire to secede and even maintained some sort of regional unity (the 'Transcaucasian Seim' of early 1918). Actually the independence of the separate states was declared on 26 and 28 May 1918 only under the harsh influence of the then victorious central powers: Germany promoted the statehood of Georgia the most in 1918 (with its own interests in mind, naturally); the Ottoman Empire favoured Azerbaijan in a similar way, especially after the panturkist party of Mussavat came to power in Baku. After the Entente was victorious in the First World War, the fortunes of the Transcaucasus changed. The Western powers actually permitted Soviet Russia to return to its demesne. Azerbaijan with its oil resources was of vital interest to Moscow.

After the oilfields of Baku were regained (Spring 1920), the Georgian city of Batumi was required - as a pipeline terminal and the best port on the eastern littoral of the Black Sea. It was reannexed to Russia, after bargaining with Turkey, together with the whole of Georgia, whose armed forces resisted for a month (February-March, 1921). Under Soviet power, despite the solemn declarations of the local - mostly ethnic - partocracy of the adherence to the 'Socialist internationalism' some sort of 'anti-state nationalism' was practised and the new nations were actually forged. The same was happening in the other Union and Autonomous Republics and Regions. Introducing some type of political borders on ethnic lines implies some sort of nationalism as well. As the Union Republics of the USSR became subjects of secession so the autonomous units within the Union Republics attempted this also. In the weaker Union Republics such a separatism could have some success especially if it received substantial support from outside.

### **Towards state-building: the Transcaucasian nations compared**

The Transcaucasian nations, in spite of some similarities, have quite distinctive differences in their possibilities of state-building. There is no doubt that all of them will maintain statehood and will achieve some success in this way. But this will be achieved more or less painfully and in the near or distant future. Some political-geographical peculiarities are discussed below.

#### ***Armenia***

Sovietisation in late 1920 actually saved Armenia from the advancing Turkish armies, which might have meant the disappearance of the latter from the political map. As the price for this salvation by the Bolsheviks

Armenia was forced to drop its territorial claims towards its neighbours. Thus the Nakhichevan area was ceded to Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh remained within the former; the Georgian province of Javakheti (inhabited mostly by Armenians since 1829) remained within Georgia (although a smaller part of the territory of the former Georgian Democratic Republic was allotted to Armenia). Parts of Eastern Anatolia where earlier the Armenians constituted a large proportion of the population were left within Turkey and the former do not live there at all now (due to the ethnic cleansing of 1915-1918). In spite of such developments it appeared easier to achieve homogenisation on the smaller territory. Soviet Armenia started to play the major role in the cultural and political life of the Armenians who were earlier scattered in the other urban areas of the Transcaucasus, the Ottoman Empire and Russia. The large influx of Armenians into the Republic which served as the 'melting pot' of the nation helped to avoid the formation of distinct subethnic groups. The Armenian nation became the most consolidated. The ethnic minorities gradually left the Republic, first of all the substantial Azeri population constituting almost a third of the total in the 1920s (especially rapid was their exodus in 1988, after the Nagorny Karabakh crisis acquired a dramatic scale). Thus by the 1990s Armenia became the most homogeneous state in the area, the ethnic Armenians composing 97 per cent of the total population. This peculiarity is of the utmost importance in state-building. The successful war with Azerbaijan permitted Armenia to forge quite effective armed forces. Very influential Armenian lobbies in the USA and the rich diasporas in some other countries provide substantial help for the economic development of the country and for maintaining Armenian statehood. The role of Russia is dubious but it is predominantly favourable towards Armenia. On the whole Armenia will probably have the fewest problems in state-building in the area.

### ***Azerbaijan***

The formation of the territory of Soviet Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 1920s took place against the background of long disputes. These mainly concerned the mountainous part of the Karabakh province, which was principally inhabited by Armenians, and which in the period of the Russian Empire was part of the Elisavetpol Gubernia (formerly Ganje; this name was restored at the end of the 1980s). Both the independent and the Soviet Armenia claimed this territory. Finally the Politburo of the All-Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks - the real leadership of Soviet Russia, and later of the Soviet Union - decided to leave Nagorny Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan, giving it the status of an Autonomous Oblast. Of course, the Kremlin was not concerned about the fact that the ethno-territorial questions in the Transcaucasus were not solved. Strategically this seemed even more advantageous: all the states were appealing for help to Moscow. The fact that the problem of Nagorny Karabakh was not settled complicated the process of state building in Azerbaijan in the 1990s.

Due to the unsuccessful war with Armenia raging since 1988 a large part of the state was under the occupation of a foreign power and over a

million IDPs (Internally displaced persons) create serious social and political problems for the young state. To the credit of Azerbaijan works the creation of the national iconography, based on ethnic, not religious lines under Soviet rule. Even the new name of the nation ('Azerbaijanli') instead of a vague 'Turk' or 'Mussulman' was introduced by order from Moscow in the late 1930s: the Kremlin feared panturkism and panislamism more than ethnic Azeri nationalism. There is no doubt that the importance of this state to the international community increases because of the immense oil resources beneath the Caspian Sea. Transnational corporations are interested in the strengthening of Azerbaijani statehood. Although much depends on the attitude of Russia, which is eager to maintain its influence in the Caspian Sea basin, this can be partially balanced by the overall support of Turkey for Azerbaijan.

## ***Georgia***

This country was involved in several civil wars after its independence was restored. There was an intra-Georgian civil war (1991-1993) that left a moral wound which is only with difficulty healing. Actually the division of Georgian society into Zviadists and Antizviadists was one of the causes of the relatively easy (presumably temporary) triumph of separatism in Abkhazia. This division does not imply particular subethnic differences but goes through all the society sometimes dividing even families. Another negative factor for normal state-building is the attitude of Russia, for which Georgia was the major foothold of dominance in the entire Caucasus. The imperialist mentality in Russia fears losing this foothold and in practice uses 'delayed action mines' i.e. the autonomous units created in the early 1920s.

The facts show that the Kremlin insisted on the creation of autonomous units within the Soviet Republic of Georgia with the aim of preventing nation-state building. A secret report of the Soviet military attach of April 1921 (disclosed in 1993) makes clear a typical way of thinking in those days. The attach urged the dismembering of Georgia into the smallest autonomous units: 'the smaller these units are the more they will remain under the influence of the RSFSR'.(6)

The well-known conflicts in Abkhazia and former South Ossetia were mostly nourished from outside. Thus state-building in Georgia is very much hindered by the existence of the autonomous units within its borders. Georgia has no specific friends abroad - neither an influential Diaspora (as the Armenians have), nor any 'brother nation' (as Azerbaijan has in Turkey). Until now no serious oil or gas resources have been discovered in this country that would have made transnational corporations attentive and friendly. The country ought to rely first of all upon its own forces. Although history has taught the Georgians that Empires are the least reliable partners, political realities force the political elite of this country to understand the specific interests of its great neighbour Russia and to adjust to them while attempting to reach the final goal.

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## Notes:

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4. Taylor P., *Political Geography: World-economy, Nation-state and Locality*, Longman Scientific and Technical: Harlow, UK (1993), p. 16-17.
5. *Ibid.*
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