

IS END OF A DREAM? REASSESSING THE NATO ENLARGEMENT POLICY TOWARD THE BLACK SEA AND CAUCASUS REGIONS*

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ABSTRACT

Since the breakaway of USSR Ukraine and three Caucuses states (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) has, despite different will, still been endeavoring to acquire the NATO membership. Various factors have played significant role at the delay of those countries' attainment of NATO membership. In a summary, Russian strong counter-stance; the reluctance of, except the US, other major NATO members attitude toward enlarging NATO beyond Eastern Europe borders; instabilities in the region aroused from ethnic, religious and cultural conflicts; the partial change at the Washington Policy toward region and, the lack of internal consolidated national efforts at candidate states have adversely influenced the NATO enlargement at Black Sea and Caucuses; Although the dream of being NATO membership for those countries has not made happen so far, they must maintain their aspiration toward NATO for the regional and country level security.

Keywords: NATO Enlargement, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, Caucuses, Black Sea, instabilities.

ÖZET

SSCB'nin dağılmasından sonra Ukrayna ve üç Kafkas devleti (Gürcistan, Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan), farklı üyelik arzularına rağmen, halen NATO üyeliği elde etmeye çalışmaktadırlar. Çeşitli faktörler söz konusu ülkelerin NATO üyeliğini elde etmesindeki gecikmede belirgin rol oynamıştır. Özetle, Rusya'nın aşırı karşıt tutumu, ABD hariç diğer NATO'nun büyük devletlerin genişlemenin Doğu Avrupa sınırlarının ötesine taşınmasına yönelik isteksizliği, bölgedeki etnik, dinsel ve kültürel çatışmalardan kaynaklanan istikrarsızlıklar, Washington'un bölgeye yönelik kısmi olarak değişen politikası ve aday devletlerde NATO'ya yönelik içte yoğunlaşmış ulusal çaba eksikliği, NATO'nun Karadeniz ve Kafkaslardaki genişlemesini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Bu ülkelerin NATO üyesi olma rüyası halen gerçekleşmemesine rağmen, küresel, bölgesel ve ulusal güvenlik için NATO'ya olan yüksek hedeflerini sürdürmelidirler.

* Part of this study which titled as "Assessing the NATO Enlargement Policy at the Caucuses" was presented at the 9th Silk Road International Conference, 23-25 May 2014, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

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Anahtar kelimeler: NATO'nun genişlemesi, Azerbaycan, Gürcistan, Ermenistan, Kafkaslar, Karadeniz, istikrasızlıklar.

Black Sea and Caucuses (BSAC) region has become the one of the most destabilized regions after the collapse of Warsaw Pact and disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The frozen problems kept under control during Communist era have emerged and the ethnic, religious, sectarian and ideological disputes have ignited the competitions, conflicts and large scale wars at the region. The destabilized factors have started to negatively affect the Black Sea and Caucuses and others areas surrounding region it.

Newly established states have started to enjoy being independent after the 80-year -communist rule and most of them have seen Western ideologies as their new path for their future. The USA and NATO have initiated some project in order to satisfy newly established states' aspiration of being the member of Western family. NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP), Intensified Dialogue (ID), and Membership Action Plan (MAP) have been the main key partnership process before full membership. The aspirations of new states toward NATO membership and the desire of NATO to grant NATO membership to those countries have converged. The USA and other Western states have also seen those partnerships and dialogue processes to prevent destabilization factors from spreading to Western.

After disintegration of the USSR, Russia was heavily involved in internal problems and gave less attention to happening at old Soviet area. However, Russia has seen the development at his near abroad as threat to her interests since the middle of 1990s. So, she has attempted to become again a main determinant actor at the Caucasus and Black Sea. So, the BSAC Region has become rivalry zone among major players. The other diverse factors have also played role at this rivalry. Geopolitics concerns, energy matter, ethnic and religious competition, and sphere of influence have also seemed being effective at this struggle.

The main thesis set forth at this essay is that NATO's expansion toward the BSAC region has met some critical challenges, therefore, the expectation of NATO's membership for any regional candidate is unlikely to make happen in a foreseeable future. Thus, this paper first analyses the importance of BSAC Region, then the focus will be on relations between BSAC Region states and NATO will be studied. The enlargement policy and the factors affecting NATO enlargement policy will be examined in next separations. Finally, the paper will be finalized with a general assessment.

The Black Sea and Caucasus: A Venue of Instabilities

BSAC Region has had geo-strategic importance since early history; it has been interlock of different directions and regions. It can connect Central

Asia to Balkans and Europe; it can also link upper side of Russia to Iran, Anatolia, Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf and vice versa. The region had also hosted 'silk road' used for transferring the Far East Asian goods to Europe. Historically, it has become the rivalry area for the actors to control and occupy around Black Sea, Caucasus and Central Asia. During World War Second it was the main target of Hitler for valuable petrol reserves needed for the German Army. During the Cold War, the Caucasus was the weakest part of the Soviets land as it provided the fastest and easiest way to access the Soviet heart, as described "pivotal land" by Mackinder (1904).

Additionally, after the dissolution of the Soviet Unions the region became a center of crisis. NATO, through its transformation, has acted to prevent any crisis if it is, even, out of orders. NATO has been using crisis management methods. So, 2010 New Strategic Concept has been formulated this policy as security with crisis management (Erol&Oguz, 2012: 359). Besides, geo-politics importance, region's natural energy reserves and its energy transit capacity makes Black Sea and Caucasus critical status in terms of geo-economics. Black Sea, Caucasus and Caspian Sea Basin altogether have had enormous effect on the shaping of global powers' strategic interests and politics (For the Black Sea Security, see Demir 2012a). According to the British Petroleum Database Caspian Basin, BSAC (except Russia) accounts for roughly % 5 proven oil reserves and % 16 percent oil reserves (<http://www.bp.com/liveassets/>). Caspian Basin only accounts for 1-4% of global oil reserves and roughly 6% of global gas reserves. These are located for the most part in Central Asian littoral states (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan), but also in Azerbaijan (Khelashvili et al 2010: 109; for further information see Demir 2012b). Actually, altogether the region natural gas capacity has significant capacity to provide an alternative option against Russian gas monopoly, so it will help to decrease the dependency of Europeans to Russian gas export. Additionally, Caspian gas option can leverage gas price. This has been expressed by Khelashvili and Macfarlane as (2010: 109) "... Caspian Basin oil and gas are significant in American strategy for three reasons. Oil supplies at the margin can have significant price effects, and this gives the United States and other consumers an interest in access to these reserves. Moreover, although the United States accesses a wide range of energy sources, continental Europe has developed a significant dependence on Russia for gas".

"It can also be sets forth that the Caspian Basin strategically emerges as a non-OPEC huge source of oil and natural gas situated between the Middle Eastern and Russian energy networks". (Ghazaryan 2006:109) From the energy security point of view BSAC region also provides transit corridor of Russian, Caspian Basin and Central Asian energy to Europe.

The breakdown of the USSR led to a security gap which provided opportunities for other international actors who have strategic goals for the region. It was easy to reach the BSAC Region since there was no major play-

er controlling the area. "Many of Europe's major concerns, such as drug, arms, and human trafficking, illegal immigration, terrorism, and possible nuclear proliferation can only be addressed by including the Black Sea region within the NATO framework. Moreover, the areas where there are frozen conflicts, providing perilous havens for terrorists and criminals, are self-evidently of interest to NATO" (Petersen 2004). The USA and the European Union (EU) in coordinated their efforts have involved in controlling the region using every methods and capabilities. Among those capabilities, NATO was the leading organization which marries the Western's interests and goals. NATO enlargement policy was also directed to Black Sea and Caucasus.

Furthermore, "Russia, the U.S., Turkey, Iran, the Common wealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were the some of the other states and organizations that had interests in the region and a stated agenda to promote security and stability, as they define it, in the region"(Cornell 2004: 128). However, the main player among those actors was the USA which had the power to fill the gap in the region and reshape the region toward the post-Cold War design.

On the other hand, the collapse of USSR has provided the successor states small states to enjoy their independence. This has become an opportunity for them to design their internal relations as desired. Notably Ukraine and Georgia have eagerly wanted to be in the Western institutions while Azerbaijan and Armenia have had a lesser desires. However, gaining NATO membership particularly for the Ukraine, Georgia has been seen as the ultimate security guarantor. So the desires of NATO and those countries have overlapped.

Since 1991, "three South Caucasus states are undergoing huge transformations regarding institution-building, state-building, identity-building, border strengthening and setting up of effective foreign and military doctrines" (Ghazaryan 2006:108). On the other hand, the USA and the European Union wanted to reshape the world as they desire post-1990. The main issue was to expand Western's sphere of influence toward the old Warsaw Pact member's zone. Therefore, the enlargement policy has been invented to embrace those countries and almost all Eastern and Central Europe countries became the EU and NATO members at last two decades. However, Ukraine and Caucasian countries have not been able to access that membership because of authoritative Russia, lack of economic, political and legal competence. "Cold War legacies still shape mutual perceptions. Russians still view NATO as an anti-Russia organization which remains a threat to their security, despite NATO's clear statement that the Alliance is defensive and not directed against anyone" (Antonenko et. al 2009: 14). The American interest regarding region has been amplified with the Second Bush presidency and 9/11. The terror act against America led Washington to implement a new policy aimed at spreading the norm and vales of democ-

racy, freedom and liberal thoughts across third World Countries. Colored revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia can be deemed in this context.

Besides, the Afghanistan and Iraqi operations have put the region critical place in terms of providing logistics route to the operation area. According to Americans, the security of Euro-Atlantic has required to fill the security deficit surrounding Western world. This surrounding area has included the Caucasus as well. "The Caucasus has been deemed to protect the notably Europe from security threats emerged from Central Asia and Middle East. So, the need for institutionalized security arrangements to manage, reduce and if possible resolve the security threats in the Caucasus has become palpable" (Cornell 2004: 125-126). "Caucasus is still relevant for the purposes of ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and remains prospective transit area for the planned withdrawal of forces in 2014" (Tsereteli 2013).

Although the Black Sea and Caucasus have some security, politics and economic advantages, there are some challenges adversely affecting region. "It should not be forgotten that the Black Sea and South Caucasus region was plagued by conflict and instability long before the area achieved independence" (Tsereteli 2013). In addition to ethnic tensions, Ukraine and all "three Caucasus countries have been afflicted by the use of violent means to alter the leadership of the respective states" (Tsereteli 2013). Furthermore, "the event, which led to their independence, melted with widespread nationalism, ethnic strife, weak statehood and Soviet-era misgovernment triggered inter and intra-state conflicts, however, generally against a background of religious strife" (Ghazaryan 2010: 108). However, "the current U.S. and allied policies in this region focus on the new-type security threats associated with international terrorism, mass-destruction-weapons proliferation, arms and drugs trafficking" (Socor 2004). The main issue is to prevent spread of those new-type security threats to Europe.

Considering all those instabilities in the region, firstly in Georgia in 2008, later in Ukraine in 2013-14 have caused disorder, conflicts and partition. Furthermore, "the annexation of Crimean Peninsula by the Russia Federation in March 2014 questions three main areas of the Black Sea security architecture: maritime security, energy security, and the ability of the main stakeholders to contribute to the stability of the region" (Delanoe 2014: 2). Furthermore, Erol expresses that due to the Russian policy based on rough force since 9/11 the world is heading new cold war with apace. Erol (2014:2) also mentioned that confrontation of the West and Russia due to Ukraine events in Ukraine can resemble "second nuclear duello" after Cuba Crisis. These adversary development influenced NATO enlargement policy toward the region. Now, the NATO's Enlargement policy will be analyzed in detail.

The NATO Enlargement Policy at Black Sea Region and Caucasus

NATO as a collective security organization has globalized after the demise of Cold War notably, post 9|11. The globalization of NATO has come true through enlargement process,¹ accepting new strategic concepts focusing on prevention new threats and risks and finally conducting out of area operations. However, the enlargement of NATO is the main step of globalization of NATO. Because, the enlargement process has the concrete results in terms of providing collective security to the new members.

“NATO’s post-Cold War enlargement policy is based on the goal of reintegrating a fragmented Europe and a strategy of establishing a wide base of supporters to counter newly formed and developing threats” (Erdem 2010). NATO, as Western collective security organization, has been used as main tool to connect old Warsaw pact members and newly independent states after disintegration of Soviet Union. Furthermore, As NATO globalized, it has faced many challenges and risks that needs to be dealt with. So NATO has increased it engagement with diverse regions, actors and states. Therefore, as expressed by Cornell (2004: 129); “NATO’s increasing engagement is a direct result of the Alliance responding to the ever-growing security interests in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Wider Middle East”. However, some influential intellectuals like Erol has formulazided the NATO’s expansion toward eastward as “global gendarme” (2012: v).

NATO’s enlargement policy is based on the historical development and institutional arrangements which requires full consent of all members. This policy is named as NATO’s “open door policy” which built over Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, which states that membership is open to any “European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area”. (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm).

Before NATO enlargement policy, NATO had introduced several cooperation activities. Among them the Partnership for Peace (PfP) concept approved in 1994 has successful results in terms of meeting the aspirant countries desires, which see NATO as their new nest. Partnership approach has been employed to respond new state’s security needs. After successful implementation of PfP NATO leaders at Madrid Summit 1997 approved “open door” policy toward enlargement. In this context, the first enlargement decision was also held at that summit, the second decision was taken at the Prague Summit in 2002 and third one was in 2008 Bucharest Summit” (Erdem 2010: 43). In the post-Cold War era, the number of NATO members has reached to 28 which mean additional 12 new members.

¹ Enlargement policy was critiqued by some analysts. For example George Kennan, described this policy as “the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era” (Kennan 1997: 23, quoted from “The Future of NATO Enlargement”, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/1999/4/nato%20daalder/reportch3>).

NATO has established three steps that are needed to be completed by the partner countries in order to acquire a NATO membership; the Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAP), the Intensified Dialogue (ID) and eventually the Membership Action Plan (MAP) (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm). "IPAP projection was launched at the Prague NATO Summit in 2002 The IPAPs are developed on a two year basis and are designed to ensure a "comprehensive, tailored and differentiated approach to the Partnership" (<http://thessismun.org>) and "...to support the domestic reform efforts of partner countries which possess the political ability and will, to further enhance their relationship with NATO" (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49290.htm/).²

"IDs cover the full range of political, military, financial and security issues relating to possible NATO membership, without prejudice to any eventual Alliance decision." (<http://thessismun.org>, 24 November 2014) Countries that are interest in joining the Alliance are initially invited to engage in an ID programme. The ID formula has its roots both on the 1995 Study on NATO enlargement and on the 1997 Madrid Summit. Aspirant countries are also expected to meet certain political, economic and military criteria, which are laid out in the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm).

MAP is a program launched by NATO at the 1999 Washington Summit, which aims to help aspiring countries meet NATO standards and prepare for future membership (<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079718.html>; <http://thessismun.org>). To be more precise; "the MAP is a tailored program for aspirants, designed to help build a roadmap to future membership, by offering active advice, assistance and practical support to strengthen their candidacies." (<http://clinton4.nara.gov/WH/New/NATO/fact5.html>).

NATO Enlargement policy toward the candidate members firstly focuses on preparing them for NATO membership. This could be done by supporting democratization of political life and internal reforms too. However, assisting to remove destabilization factors that threaten those candidate members could also be part of those preparatory stages.

Now we are focusing on the evolution of NATO's enlargement policy at Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Ukraine

Since its independence Ukraine has favored the Western-oriented policies. Ukraine has been one of first countries which desired to be NATO member at the Black Sea region. Ukraine has sustained its relations with NATO alt-

² IPAPs were launched at the Prague Summit in November 2002. On 29 October 2004, Georgia became the first country to agree an IPAP with NATO. Azerbaijan agreed its first IPAP on 27 May 2005 and Armenia on 16 December 2005.

though it has experienced social and political turmoil since its independence. It contributes to NATO's missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo, and in 2013 became the first partner country to contribute to the NATO-led counter-piracy operation Ocean Shield. (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?).

Starting the earliest phase, Ukraine joins the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) in 1991 and joined PfP in 1994. NATO and Ukraine substantiated their relations through the signing "the 1997 Charter on a Distinctive Partnership", which established the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC). This charter set out principles and arrangements for the further development of NATO-Ukraine relations and identified areas for consultation and cooperation. (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?). As Ukraine has great wish for the Western world, further steps were taken to deepen and broaden the NATO-Ukraine relationship such as adopting of the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan in November 2002, which supported Ukraine's reform efforts on the road towards Euro-Atlantic integration (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?).

In April 2005, the Allies and Ukraine launched an ID on Ukraine's aspirations to NATO membership. They also announced a package of short-term actions designed to enhance NATO-Ukraine cooperation in key reform areas (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?). At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, Allied leaders agreed that Ukraine may become a NATO member in future (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?). A "Declaration to Complement the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine" is signed on 21 August 2009 to reflect decisions taken at the Bucharest Summit and the December 2008 foreign ministers' meeting (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?).

After the political power transition in Ukraine, its wish to be part of Western family has faded. Ukraine is divided between supporters of the Russian Federation and Western sympathizers (Erdem, 2010: 43). Yanukovich's administration no longer pursued NATO membership since 2010, Ukraine has maintained the existing level of cooperation with the Alliance and has fulfilled the existing agreements. Ukraine has continued to participate actively in the ANP process which plays a key role in determining Allied support for Ukraine's domestic reform process (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?).

After the mass protest and uprising in Ukraine starting November 2013 Yanukovich was deposed in Feb 2014, however, Ukraine has lost its sovereignty over Crimean peninsula in March 2014 as Russia annexed it. Additionally, Ukraine has undergone internal struggle with the separatist Russians in Eastern Ukraine. Ukraine has lost its control over the region in where ethnic Russians lived. These developments can be deemed as the

sign of new power struggle. Erol (2014: 5) expresses that Ukraine events can be starting of power struggle for the Eurasia among the US/ the West and Russia.

So, we can say one part, western part, of Ukraine still favors the NATO membership. Therefore, "at the Wales Summit in September 2014, NATO Heads of State and Government pledged to step up strategic consultations in the NUC and further reinforce support for Ukraine so that Ukraine can better provide for its own security." (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?). "In the framework of the NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership, Allies pledged to reinforce the Annual National Programme in the defense and security sector through capability development and capacity-building programmes." (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?).

Nevertheless, in final NATO Summit Meeting in held Wale in September 2014, NATO made a strong statement and committed itself to defense and protect of "Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity when Ukraine's security is undermined" (<https://www.gov.uk/government>). This commitment implies as if Ukraine were a member of NATO. Because the text is a clear warning to protect the Ukraine's security if undermined. So, Ukraine has been granted for NATO's protection without being NATO member. Nonetheless, NATO has not promised to give the status of NATO accession to Ukraine in the NATO Summit 2014 declaration.

Georgia

Georgia's accession to NATO is one of the country's top foreign and security policy priorities. Georgia attaches great importance to NATO's role in strengthening stability and security of the country (<http://www.mfa.gov>).

As for the Caucasus region, NATO has implemented partnership policy toward Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Among those countries Georgia was the first aspirant to cooperate with NATO. "Georgia established diplomatic contact with NATO in 1992 when it joined North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). Georgia was again the first state joining NATO's Partnership for Peace program in 1994. On 29 October 2004, Georgia became the first country to agree an IPAP with NATO" (Chitadze 2010). Subsequently Georgia was able to reach Individual Partnership Action Program (IPAP) with NATO in 1996. NATO began ID with Georgia on Membership Issues September 2006. ID has afforded Georgia the opportunity to intensify relations with NATO, to enter into a deeper political dialogue, and learn more profoundly about NATO standards". (Chitadze 2010) Based on the country's progress in implementing IPAP and ID, Georgia formally requested a MAP in March 2008.

Georgia has maintained a close military partnership with the United States since breakaway from the Soviet Union. "Both countries bilateral relations culminated after 9/11 when the USA started to conduct the cam-

paigned of 'war on terror'. Georgia has greatly benefited since the US launched the global war on terror" (Shiriyev 2013: 136-137). The USA provided immense support for Georgian NATO membership in NATO Bucharest Summit in 2008. However, this support was not well received by France and Germany as both countries were skeptic about the Russian reaction. France and Germany did not approve the Ukraine and Georgian NATO membership decision in 2008 as they have been heavily dependent of Russian energy resources. Additionally, "...following the 2008 August War with Russia, some alliance members were doubtful about Georgia's membership aspirations" (Shiriyev 2013: 149-150). However, this decision has not stopped Georgian aspiration of being member of NATO. Kogan (2013: 5) has expressed as "it is indeed correct to say that NATO failed Georgia, but thus far Georgia has not failed NATO". "Due the threat that Russia posed to Georgia, a NATO-Georgia Commission was established and tasked with overseeing implementation of successive Annual National Programs intended as a substitute for a MAP. At NATO's Lisbon summit in 2010, participants reaffirmed the commitment enshrined in the Bucharest summit communique that Georgia would eventually join the alliance." (Fuller 2014).

Georgia has thought if she actively supports NATO operations, it would facilitate Georgian NATO Membership journey. "Notably active participation in the ISAF mission would consolidate and hasten Georgia's NATO integration" (Shiriyev 2013: 149-150). "Georgia makes the largest non-NATO-member contribution to ISAF. Georgia actively participated in Iraqi Operation as part of the 'Coalition of the Willing'. Georgia has declared its readiness to participate in the NATO Response Force (NRF) which is an advanced multinational force, after the NATO-led ISAF has completed its mission in Afghanistan" (Shiriyev 2013: 156).

"The other important contribution is that NATO now has a greater role in monitoring Georgia's democratization commitments. The NATO-Georgia partnership means that the alliance is closely examining Tbilisi's pledges to democratic credentials, especially since the 2012 Parliamentary elections." (Shiriyev 2013: 156) Additionally, "Georgians argue that the combination of their rapidly modernizing military and their strategic location in the Caucasus make them a prime candidate for NATO membership." (Bounds et al 2009: 29).

In order to help Georgia achieve its goal of NATO membership, the NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) was established in September 2008. At the 2008 Bucharest Summit, NATO Allies unanimously decided that Georgia should become a member of NATO (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm). However the 2008 South Ossetia War between Russia and Georgia served as major impediment in Georgia's NATO membership, as it compromised the Georgian Army's poor military and defensive capabilities and further complicated NATO-Russian relations; as a re-

sult Georgia was not granted a Membership Action Plan so far (<http://theissismun.org>).

However, "NATO has not left Georgia alone at this period. She received the status of an aspirant state in December 2011, and the statements at the Chicago Summit in May 2012 indicated that at the next Summit (in 2014) NATO should expand on this" (Shiriyev 2013: 156). Therefore, NATO and notably the US was expected to send robust signal about Georgian membership at next NATO Summit on September 2014 to Russia for the policies she followed at Ukraine problem. However, in NATO summit 2014 NATO mentioned this issue such as "We note that that Georgia's relationship with the Alliance contains the tools necessary to continue moving Georgia forward towards eventual membership." (<https://www.gov.uk/government>). This means NATO still considers Georgian aspirations to be NATO member and the probable of Georgian membership is unlikely to make happen in near future. In order to avoid any disappointment NATO has launched a new initiative called 'Defence and Related Security Capacity Building' to reinforce NATO's commitment to partner nations and to help the Alliance to project stability without deploying large combat forces. NATO has agreed to extend this initiative to Georgia as well as Jordan, and the Republic of Moldova (NATO Summit 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government>).

However, current internal politics development in Georgia has not been evolving in the direction of Euro-Atlantic dimension. Although population of this country still favors for NATO, current leadership of Georgia behaves coldly toward NATO as expressed by Cornell (2014) "...the evidence available suggests that the country is now led by leaders who have no particular affinity for the West... In terms of an active and effective policy of Euro-Atlantic integration, Georgia may just have been neutralized. Clearly, this state of affairs risks negating all the efforts over the past decade or more at building functioning and accountable state institutions in Georgia."

Armenia

Armenia has not been so aspired country like Georgia in participation NATO activities. This has considerably resulted from Armenian dependability to Russia on security issue. Armenia has seen to establish her security and prosperity through Russia which provided huge assistance during Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan in early 1990s. However, Armenia has not left her linkage with NATO since gaining its independence. In this context, Armenia joined the newly created North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992, renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, in 1997. Armenia attended the PfP in 1994. Armenia has started to host NATO PfP exercises and joined the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) in 2002.

Since 2004, Armenia has been contributing troops to the Kosovo Force (KFOR). Armenia has also been contributing forces to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan (<http://www.nato.int/cps/>

en/natohq/topics_48893.htm). Armenia agreed its first IPAP on 16 December 2005. It was renewed in 2011. (<http://thessismun.org>). “The wide-ranging nature of the IPAP means that Armenia is not only cooperating with NATO in the defence sphere, but is in regular consultation with the Allies on political & security issues, including relations with neighbors, democratic standards, rule of law, counter-terrorism and the fight against corruption” (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48893.htm). Armenia contributes to the fight against terrorism through its participation in the Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism (PAP-T). While Armenia intends to intensify practical and political cooperation with NATO in order to draw closer to the Alliance, it does not seek membership in NATO (http://www.nato.int/cps/tr/natolive/topics_48893).

Although Armenia seeks to enhance its political and practical cooperation with NATO and further strengthen its relationship with the Alliance, it does not seek a full membership in the Organization (http://www.nato.int/cps/tr/natolive/topics_48893). “There are many practical problems that hinder a possible accession of Armenia to NATO. First, Armenia’s greatest concern is that a possible NATO membership will worsen its relationship with Russia; the latter being its main strategic partner. Armenia is also a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a Russian interest military organization much like NATO.”(<http://thessismun.org>).

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is another country desiring to attain NATO membership. Turkey’s active support lies behind this willing. So, “Azerbaijan is seeking to achieve Euro-Atlantic standards and to draw closer to Euro-Atlantic institutions. Consequently, support to security sector reforms and democratic institution building are key elements of NATO-Azerbaijan cooperation” (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49111.htm).

In this context, Azerbaijan joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992; she attended the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994. Azerbaijan joined the PfP Planning and Review Process in 1997. She contributed KFOR Operations with troops 1999 to 2008. Azerbaijan has actively been supporting the ISAF operation in Afghanistan since 2002, as part of a Turkish contingent (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49111.htm). Azerbaijan agreed its first IPAP on 27 May 2005 with NATO (<http://thessismun.org>).

However, Armenia has been seen as the main destabilizing country in Caucasus by Turkey and Azerbaijan as she has been occupying Nagorno-Karabakh and other Azerbaijani lands since 1992. This makes region more problematic in security perspective. This situation can be used an excuse for not enlarging NATO at Caucasus as the Atlantic Alliance will not allow for new members who have unresolved territorial disputes (Rinna 2014).

Through closer and more intense cooperation with NATO, Azerbaijan is seeking to achieve Euro-Atlantic standards and to come closer with the Euro-Atlantic institutions (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49111.htm).

The Factors Adversely Affecting NATO Enlargement Policy at Caucasus

Although Georgia and Ukraine mostly, Azerbaijan in a lesser degree wants to be member of NATO, there are a wide variety of factors adversely affecting their membership process. Their membership journey has met various challenges. The challenges have resulted from the Russian strong counterstance; the reluctance of some NATO members concerning NATO enlargement; the change of Washington Policy toward region, lack of internal unified national efforts and finally the existence of ethnic conflicts in the region.

The Reluctance of Some NATO Nations

Some NATO countries, likes Germany and France were against the memberships of Georgia and Ukraine because of their energy dependency to Russia. This happened in 2008 as both countries vetoed the Georgian and Ukrainian membership. The enlarging NATO beyond Eastern Europe borders where instabilities aroused from ethnic, religious and cultural conflicts was considered not a right course of action for NATO by some NATO countries.

Some members think that Caucasus is out of Euro-Atlantic border. NATO should not expand its border far beyond its natural boundary. The frontier line of Europe must be end at Black Sea Coasts. Additionally, Caucasus countries are still far away from Western values in terms of social, political, military, security sector reform etc.,

The internal debate has been going in NATO about what to do notably with Georgian candidacy. The point is that the willing of defending Georgia from Russian threat has not emerged yet. As seen during the 2008 crisis, the support of United States to Georgia did not exceed the verbal and some and other aids. Therefore, there has yet not converging of different views regarding future candidacy process. "The skeptics of some NATO nations come from what Tbilisi's intention is. Some NATO members believe that Georgia wants to join NATO to gain 'protection', rather than for 'sociopolitical' reasons, entering a 'liberal rules-based system,' or advancing 'international freedom'" (Shiriyev 2013: 150-151).

The Changing Global Dynamics

The political-military condition of World has been significantly changed regarding enlarging policy. The first two enlargement waves were conducted slightly in mild climate when international relations were shaped with cooperative rather than zero-sum policy. The USA was deemed as only su-

perpower which could tailor international architecture. Additionally, Russia was not in assertive mode particularly in her near abroad at it is today. However, the international design has significantly been undergone through new paradigms such as rising of rest of World (Zakaria 2008) as economically, the resurgence of weakened Russia particularly with Putin regime, the decline of the US' power after Afghanistan and Iraqi operations. These paradigms have profoundly changed world political behaviors. So, the US and NATO are not in a position to design world as desired in 1990s. Sometimes it is hard to accept but a new world in where other actors have started to play significant role with Western countries. Russian also thinks that the ability of the West to dominate world economy and politics continues to diminish and the global power and development potential is now more dispersed and is shifting to the East, primarily to the Asia-Pacific region (<http://www.idsa.in/eurasia/resources>, Article 6, 1 May 2014). This transformation has been affecting NATO's expansion policy since 2008, particularly in Caucasus in where Russia is exploits protecting the Russian minority as a tool of intervention in the countries surrounding Russia. It seems that Russia implements a new kind "irredentism" policy. Moscow conceptualized new security needs with "near abroad" policy issued in 1993. Resurgence Russia has begun to emerge since 2007 when Putin challenged Western hegemonic security structure in Munich Conference and issued a "moratorium" on the suspend the observance of its treaty obligations on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) which became effective as of 14 December 2007 (<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches>).

The first crucial Russian blow to Western hegemony was the intervention in Georgia with armed forces on August 2008. Russian annexation of Crimean peninsula in March 2014 was the second bow to the Western hegemony. These have been clear sign of ending the Western superiority. "The consequences of the Caucasus crisis have gone far beyond local war. The war clearly reflected that the paradigm of relations of the 1990s, based on Russia's unilateral concessions to the West, is no longer accepted". (Alexandrova-Arba 2009: 287) This war has formally ended the unipolar or superpower era and opened for the multipolar order or non-polarity order as expressed by Richard Hass (2008). So, it can be claimed that changing dynamics of the global world also have decreased the NATO enlargement policy at Black Sea and Caucasus.

Russian Implication on NATO Enlargement Policy toward the Caucasus

Generally Russia has expressed her deep concern for the NATO expansion toward the lands where were formerly under the control of the USSR. Indeed, Russian policy makers also view NATO as an instrument of US policy in both Europe and Eurasia.

Russia believes that Gorbachov let German unification after Western Block promised not to enlarge NATO toward east while the Western claimed that that premise was for the 1989 conditions, not for the politics situation after the collapse of the USSR (Sarotte 2014).

Russians believe that NATO enlargement is a zero-sum attempt to provide security for NATO states at Russia's expense (Antonenko et al 2009: 14). For instance, Russian Military Doctrine updated as of 2010 (<http://www.sras.org/>) has clearly described NATO expansion as first threat to Russia: "... the desire to endow the force potential of the NATO with global functions carried out in violation of the norms of international law and to move the military infrastructure of NATO member countries closer to the borders of the Russian Federation, including by expanding the bloc...";

Russian policy has been shaped by four factors. These have been expressed by Chitadze (2010 para 2.1.) as "1. The eastward enlargement of NATO and the European Union after the ending of "Cold war"; 2. Alternative oil and gas transit routes; 3. the "colour revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine; 4. Recognition of the independence of Kosovo by western states". As seen from those factors, Russia namely doubts the Western policies and that caused Russia is to be inflexible to the actions and policies of NATO and the USA. Furthermore, Russia contemplates those approaches as threat to her security.

Considering those explanations NATO's extension into the South Caucasus will once again bring the organization directly to Russia's borders. NATO had better be prepared to any act that may include military confrontation with Russia (Rinna 2014). Similarly, it would be a great exaggeration to describe Russia as an international player committed exclusively to the principles of realism in the conduct of its foreign policy (Makarychev 2009: 49).

On the other hand, NATO enlargement risks by affecting Russian nuclear doctrine in ways that would deeply undermine regional security (French, 2014). So, Moscow might formally withdraw from the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) which prohibits the fielding of land-based, intermediate-range cruise and ballistic missiles with ranges of between 500 and 5,500 kilometers (French 2014).

Russia also threatens the countries in the region, which want establish strong connections with the Western Organizations. This was clearly expressed by Cornell (2014) as:

"The notion of mending ties with Russia while continuing on a path of European integration was always questionable; but threading that needle became outright impossible in the wake of Moscow's aggressive response to the EU's Association Agreements with Armenia and Ukraine. Armenia was forced into submission, opting instead to join the Eurasian Union; what happened in Ukraine when Moscow failed to obtain a similar outcome is plain to see."

To sum up, Russian strong posture against NATO's enlargement policy is a critical factor at the decision to be taken. NATO decision will be shaped by the US' determination. The Moscow's zero-sum policy regarding Black Sea and Caucasus regions have indicated that more appeasement and permissive policy of the Western family toward at those regions would not stop Putin's expansionist policy. Notably Moscow's decision to annex the Crimea to Russian soil and policies employed at Ukraine issue has proven that Russia wants to reestablish the new USSR. The Transatlantic world has been disappointed by the Russian policy in Ukraine. Therefore, the NATO clearly announced in its last Summit that NATO will defend Ukraine's security if it is undermined. This is a security guarantee granted to Ukraine which is almost equal to those of a member nation.

The Implication of Inter-States and Inner States Instabilities at the Caucasus on NATO's Enlargement Policy

Generally, Black Sea and South Caucuses are defined by three interrelated problems, Weak statehood, ethno-political conflicts, and destructive foreign interventions (Rondelli 2004: 28) The countries in South Caucasus have systematic problems regarding well-functioning-state structure, democracy capacity, respecting rule of law, abuses of freedoms and human rights. These are internal issues needs to be resolved with democratic process that requires substantial time. Those states are not in position to fulfill the candidacy requirements. Rondelli (2004: 28) has defined those states' stance as follows; "The endemic state weakness, conceived both as a lack of institutional capacities of a state (Kalyuzhnova, Lynch, 2000), as a polarization of the political arena combined with lack of governance and as a Max Weber's lack of state monopoly over the legitimate use of force, is another common trouble of the South Caucasus societies.

Additionally, radical power transition in any region countries may considerably implicate her aspiration of NATO membership. This was valid factor in Georgia after internal power transition 2004 and also with Yanukovich's power in Ukraine. Power transition in both countries negatively affected the aspiration Georgian and Ukrainian of being member of NATO. Additionally, these features have scared the some NATO nations in terms of the eligibility of region's countries for the NATO membership. Without resolving inter issues NATO have to face those nations' internal issues and make NATO spend time and energy for the secondary issues.

Coming to inter-states problems, instabilities in the region such as extremism, separatism, terrorism, territorial disputes, regional arm race, and transnational organized crimes (Efe 2011: 435) are creating important risk for region. Territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia problems with Georgia, and Ukrainian internal fights and Crimean problem with Russia are the most important problems in the

region that cause instabilities. NATO does not want to give membership status to any nation that has territorial dispute with its neighbors.

The Changing American Policy towards the Black Sea and Caucasus

Since 1990 and particularly 9/11 America has given priorities to Middle East, Central Asia, Caucasus and Black Sea regions at where instabilities and other challenges might erupt and destabilize Trans-Atlantic interest and prosperity. Caucasus region has some specific features related to Trans-Atlantic interests. Euro-Atlantic interests in Caucasus require stable, reform-capable states, safe from external military pressures or externally-inspired secessions, secure in their function as energy transit routes, and able at any time to join U.S.-led coalitions-of-the-willing or NATO operations (Socor 2004). In this context, Black Sea and Caucasus region was received significant advocacy from the US in terms of spreading electoral democracy, rule of law, liberal economic values and resolving destabilization factors. Additionally, the USA put pressure over France and Germany to give membership status to Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest Summit in 2008.

However, "After its proactive role in the Black Sea during most of the 2000s, the US has deprioritized the Black Sea since the election of President Barack Obama (Delanoë 2014: 4). The Obama administration has changed the strategic priorities to the Pacific and Asia. So, the USA has not insisted on granting membership candidacy to Georgia due to relation with Russia. Russian support was necessary in Libya, Iran, Afghanistan and Syria crisis. America has considered Russian apprehension at NATO's enlargement policy. "Today, the main drivers of Washington's involvement in the region remain energy security, and NATO ballistic missile defense (BMD) with components located in Turkey and Romania." (Delanoë 2014: 4).

"However, due to shale gas development in recent years, the U.S. has become the world's largest producer of natural gas and no longer needs to import Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)".(Tsereteli 2013) This is likely to reduce its energy dependence and also reduced prices. "Washington is thus unlikely to challenge Russia in its 'sphere of privileged interests', and as a result, the US influence has retrenched from the Black Sea stage during the past years. Instead, the US is pushing the EU to take the lead in the region" (Delanoë 2014: 4).

All in all, the Obama Administration, too, has supported NATO enlargement, although it's generally been less specific about the potential scope and timing of expansion (French 2014).

The Lack of Unified National Effort toward NATO Membership

Caucasus, Black Sea or Central Asian Countries have different internal views on the NATO membership; there is lack of consolidated national will among people toward NATO membership. Any political power transition or change may adversely influence on the NATO membership. There is no 'national

policy' focusing on the membership of NATO. Whenever a government changes either through election or with the popular uprising, new administration is highly unlikely follows the former policy toward NATO. For example, although Georgia has had the utmost will of becoming NATO membership, after radical power transition, and the nation's motivation of for NATO membership has faded comparing with motivation in 2004. Similarly, after political power transition in Ukraine, Yanukovich was not so eager to push for NATO membership. Furthermore, Ukraine has lost Crimea and faced territorial division starting the beginning 2014. All those dynamics have revealed that there has not a solid political stance for NATO membership. It can fluctuate according to the governments' political preference.

Conclusion

Black Sea and Caucasus region has become the one of the most destabilized regions after the collapse of Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the USSR. The frozen problems have caused the ethnic, religious, sectarian and sometimes ideological competitions, conflicts and large scale wars at the region. The destabilized factors have started to negatively affect the region itself and others areas surrounding Caucasus. The US, NATO and EU have been quite worried by Putin's new realist approach of Russian foreign policy. If Western follows an appeasement policy it might led to more aggressive Russia in future.

On the other hand, the USA and NATO have been major actors to shape world politic-military structure during 1990s. Caucasus has been deemed region that might have adversely affect Euro-Atlantic security and stability. Particularly 9/11 terrorist attack made region more important for America about the war she initiated against global terrorism. Coincidentally, newly established states at Caucasus have seen Western ideologies as their new path for their future. The USA and NATO have initiated some projects in order to satisfy newly established states' aspiration of being the member of Western family. Among the countries in in the region, Georgia is the most aspirant country wanting to be NATO member.

Although NATO's open-door policy is effective, no country has been granted membership of candidacy since Bucharest Summit in 2008. Furthermore, the latest developments in Ukraine have confirmed the failure of the EU Eastern Partnership on the one hand, and the inability to expand NATO eastward, by integrating neither Ukraine, nor Georgia, for the foreseeable future. (Delanoë, 2014: 4).

NATO enlargement toward Caucasus was hindered by NATO internal factors and external factors stemming from Caucasus. These are the Russian strong counter-stance; the reluctance of other powerful members of NATO toward the new members in destabilized region; the instabilities conflicts at inner-states and inter-sates at the region; the partial change at the Washington Policy toward region, and the lack of internal unified national efforts

at Ukraine and Georgia for NATO membership. While comparing those factors, Russian hindrance and the USA's will are important than the others. If NATO and the USA are going to accept Georgia, NATO needs to be willing to prove that it will defend the geographic integrity of its members (Rhina 2014).

The NATO Bucharest Summit 2008 diminished the probability of Georgian and Ukrainian's attainment of NATO membership. NATO Summits in Lisbon in 2010, Washington 2012 and in Wales 2014 did not change this situation. As that happening has proven NATO's expansion toward the BSAC region has met some critical challenges, therefore, the expectation of NATO's membership for any regional candidate is unlikely to make happen in a foreseeable future.

However, NATO must keep contacting with the region countries, for preparation of probable full membership in future, by establishing strong ties such as pursuing active political dialogue and practical cooperation in support of those countries reform efforts and maintain their Euro-Atlantic aspirations. In latest NATO Summit in Wales, September 2014 we are able to see the hints of that approach. So, although the dream of being NATO membership has not made happen so far, the states in the region must maintain their aspiration toward NATO for the realization of this dream.

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