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POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND GEORGIA IN THE POST-SOVIET ERA

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Abstract

Georgia and Turkey has become important partners in the Caucasus region after independence of Georgia in 1991. Two countries preferred to follow pro-West policies in their foreign policy against Russian factor. They have geopolitical importance and geostrategic location for Russia throughout history. This article analyzes foreign policies of Georgia and Turkey and examines Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline as a common foreign policy between them. The paper found out that this kind of projects between Georgia and Turkey would make them important actors rising from regional level to global level in the future.

Keywords: Turkish Foreign Policy, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline, Georgian Foreign Policy, Russia, geopolitical importance

INTRODUCTION

Georgia is one of the important actors in the Caucasus and South Caucasus. Its geographical and geostrategic location make it significant player for the Caucasus and the world. Especially, after the demise of Soviet Union, its importance is getting more understandable for the West. Russian Federation as a neighboring state of Georgia started to intervene in the Caucasus and Georgia. Russia intensified the conflicts between Abkhazia-Georgia and South Ossetia-Georgia by supporting the breakaway regions. This situation pushed Georgia to follow pro-western solutions and policies for Georgian foreign policy. Hence, Georgia started to arrange its policies compatible with the western institutions. And it announced its desire to integrate into NATO and the EU. By the way, Turkey was first included in the Caucasus after the collapse of USSR by recognizing newly

independent states in the region. Then, it used the ethnic roots with Azerbaijan to be included in the region. Turkey used important discourses such as status quo policy, territorial integration policy and so forth. These discourses made Turkey and Georgia closer partners within similar interests and goals in the region. Georgia-Turkey has established important pipeline projects to provide energy transportation from Caspian region to the west without Russia and Iran. In these projects, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey have significant position for the Western countries. And these countries, especially Turkey and Georgia maintained their aspirations for the integration with the Western institutions –the EU aspiration for Turkey, NATO and the EU aspirations for Georgia.

Georgia-Turkey foreign affairs on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan crude oil pipeline made them significant players in the region and world policy. Therefore, locations of the countries affected and are still affecting both countries foreign policies *via* BTC pipeline project. Furthermore, Georgia-Turkey foreign affairs would lead them toward being important actors from regional level to global level in the near future.

GEORGIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Georgia has a short history as an independent state after the fall of USSR. Georgia has had a complicated and problematic past since it became independent. At the same time, it is a reality that it is a weak and small country. It has a difficult neighborhood position with Iran, Russia and Turkey which are nervous about each other's activities in the South Caucasus (MacFarlane, 2012). It can be stated that Georgia was surrounded by nervous relations' network after independence.

Furthermore, Georgia has an importance location in the Caucasus region which is "bounded by Russia in the North, Turkey in the Southwest, Armenia in the Southeast, Azerbaijan in the East and Black Sea on the West" (Kaeter 2004, 105). Russia is seen as a threat for Georgians because of intervention of Russia to Georgian territory. By the way, Azerbaijan and Armenia are neighboring states of Georgia. Turkey and Black Sea are important gates for Georgia that opens to the West. Turkey is also important partner for Georgia.

Georgia had a series of problems after independence. Weak and powerless state structure of Georgia was on the top of the most important issues which caused the state to face a fragmented Georgia issue and separatists and ethnic group in its territory (Burke, 2009). There are more than 100 ethnic groups, including large groups of Armenians, Russians, Azerbaijani, Abkhaz, Ossets and Adjarians among 5 million population of Georgia. So that, it experienced difficult transition period after taking its freedom from Soviet Unions (Kaeter, 2004). This multi-ethnicity is a result of the geopolitical location of Georgia and the Caucasus.

On the other side, Georgia faced a number of crises in point of economic transition, setting a rule of law, creating civil society and democratic political culture as many post-Soviet states did after independence. Especially, it was in a struggle or fight with three regions including Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adjara. Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain in their struggle with Georgia to be independent (Burke, 2009). These two regions take place in the north of Georgia. Russia supports them against Georgian government. This remaining struggle changes economy, security, democracy and foreign policy of Georgia.

An important feature of geopolitical location of Georgia is to be on the Great Silk Road. So, Great Silk Road started to function in the II century B.C. which connected China to the Western countries. One route of this road crossing the Caspian Sea was connected with the Caucasus, passed through Georgia and from Phasis (Poti) by the Black Sea reached Byzantium and Rome (Asatiani, 2011).

The Russian negative influences on the region caused ethnic conflicts in Georgia such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts, and the conflict over a region between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh conflict (Nichol, 2010). So, Russian policy over the region is still working by causing the conflicts among the region states because Russia sees Georgia and other regional countries as part of close foreign policy and sphere of influence after collapse of USSR.

Georgia's foreign policy motivation, overwhelmed by regional clashes and strained relations with Russia over Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Chechnya, moved toward more conspicuous integration with the EU and NATO. This motivation resulted in a proposed article in 2000, which highlighted joining into Western establishments. What profoundly propagated Georgia's swing toward the West was the Transcaucasian energy corridor, or Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline (Jones and Kakhishvili, 2013).

Turkey continues to be Georgia's "strategic partner" through collaborating over a railway project (the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railroad), which will advance commerce and tourism activities by rail from Asia to Europe, bypassing Armenia and evading Russian domain. Georgian-Turkish relations, despite the suspicions of Georgian people on the objects of Turkish investment and a long history of shared doubt, depend on common financial and strategic concentration (Jones and Kakhishvili, 2013).

Georgian foreign policy researches on some key points including the economy, political culture, national minorities, public opinion, institutional structures and authority in Georgia. Particularly, economy is a vital marker that influences the foreign policy. Georgia has self-capability to address and decide on its own particular interior vulnerabilities, monetary security for its subjects, and social administrations, for example, wellbeing, natural and pension supports. Georgia's interior social and political emergencies were personally associated with fizzled monetary approaches and affected noticeably its capacity to seek after remote arrangement objectives (Jones and Kakhishvili, 2013). For example, the NATO and the EU are interested in economically successful democracy because Georgia should integrate with similar institutions whose interests and values are same with the West (Georgia's Security Challenges And Policy Recommendations, 2012).

Georgia occupies strategic location at an important geopolitical juncture between South East Europe, the Black Sea littoral, the Caspian Basin, and the Middle East though it has no important natural sources in the South Caucasus (Georgia's Security Challenges And Policy Recommendations, 2012). When its location is considered, Georgia has to face significant security risks by depending on domestic situation, regional instability which has important results, an important regional power, an unwillingness of Euro-Atlantic actors to take significant risks, and significant vulnerability to global economic risks (MacFarlane, 2012). Hence, Georgia has also important concepts for keeping its important positions, maintaining its foreign policy and consolidating its state structure against internal and external interventions or strives.

For instance, the National Security Concept, Georgia's national values are arrayed that:

- *Sovereignty and territorial integrity* that determine nonintervention to Georgia's internal policy, and its recognition as an independent state in international relations
- *Freedom* of citizens' social and political rights,
- *Democracy and the rule of law* that emphasize democracy and supreme of law in the country,
- *Security* for country and its institutions, and citizens' security within international recognized borders,
- *Prosperity* that underlines granted basic human rights, and provided economic freedom,
- *Peace* that is included in the ensured regional and international security and stability of freedom, independence, unity, development and peace of Georgia. (National Security Concept of Georgia, n.d)

These values show that Georgia's almost all national values contradict with Russian behaviors against Georgia. 20 percent of Georgian territory is occupied by Russia within stationed 10.000 troops (Georgia's Security Challenges And Policy Recommendations, 2012) Moreover, Nika Chitadze (2012) summarizes these points that "the concept pays attention to fundamental national values for Georgia such as independence, freedom, democracy and rule of law, prosperity, peace and security. Firstly, Georgia rejects interventions of any state in its territory and domestic affairs. Secondly, it guarantees human rights and freedoms for individuals and groups residing on its territory. Thirdly, it provides peace in the country by using democratic rules and the law, and arranging political system of Georgia. The last, Georgian state institution makes regulations in economy and rules for Georgia's prosperity and security". This situation proves that sovereignty and territorial integrity, freedom, security, prosperity and peace are under threat for Georgia. So, Russia violated Georgian national values.

Georgia has national interests within national values in the concept. National security considers independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of people to develop national values and interests in the context of constitutional order in a state governed by rule of law. These values and points are very important for a country's foreign policy principles and priorities. In other words, national security interests are the key concepts for the foreign policy of countries (Chitadze, 2012).

Some of these principles seek Georgia's security and policy. These can be summarized as;

- Especially, future of NATO, its partners and its aspirants should be made clear by NATO. Georgia is ambitious to integrate into NATO because of security issues in the region. In case of any decline of NATO, Georgia may negatively be affected.
- Economic development, democracy, and security issues must be recovered for integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions of Georgia.
- A membership in an effective collective defense organization will provide Georgia to feel more secure in its region where rapid changes exist. Moreover,

membership of NATO as a collective defense organization help relations of Georgia and Russia improved.

- Self-defense and military capabilities have to be enhanced to NATO's standards with well-educated armed forces (Georgia's Security Challenges And Policy Recommendations, 2012).

Security issue is one of the most important problems influencing Georgian existence as an independent state in international relations. Particularly, its neighboring states cause this security issue. So, integration into NATO and other organizations will make relations between Georgia and its neighboring states easier, especially with Russian Federation. In short, Georgia's vital surroundings incorporate a rapidly changing political scene, fast technological changes, differing qualities of potential enemies and constrained military capabilities (Chitadze, 2012). Enhancing military capabilities, educated armed forces, integration with security organizations, analyzing environment and adversaries are key points for Georgia.

On the other side, defense policy as an important branch of foreign policy has some priorities compatible with national security policy. These priorities include followings:

- Prevention of and protection from direct aggression
- NATO integration and international cooperation
- Ability to asses strategic environment policy
- Provide stability in the Caucasus region
- Contribution to the international security environment (Chitadze, 2012).

According to National Security Concept of Georgia, nation's security, stability and significant role in the whole region depend on Georgia's membership of NATO. It is believed that NATO is going to guarantee these to Georgia. In addition, all reforms related to NATO membership help to strengthen the country's democratic institutions and foster its defense capabilities. Even any military aggression of Russian federation wouldn't change Georgia's path toward democratic developments and NATO integration. Otherwise, not only Georgia needs NATO's contribution to Georgia's future but also NATO will have an active partner to share responsibility of collective security for international missions. For instance, to be participant of International Security Force in Afghanistan is a really important example for this (National Security Concept of Georgia).

While NATO incorporation contains some portion of security arrangement and improvement for Georgia, the EU is identified as part of country's political and monetary advancement for Georgia. The integration of Georgia with the EU bolsters fair establishments, security, and also financial coordination with the EU. Henceforth, expanding institutional structures of participation with the EU is vital also for Georgia. It considers the European Neighborhood Arrangement and Eastern Organization as vital factors adding to Georgia's integration into the EU. In the meantime, Georgia foresees more dynamic EU inclusion to resolve the Russian-Georgian clashes. It is essential that the EU and different members of the international community have perceived the control of Georgian occupation by the Russian Federation. Subsequently, Georgia appreciates resolution to this influence of the European Parliament received on November 17, 2011 (National Security Concept of Georgia).

TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

Turkey has a wide relation network on the map because of its geography, geostrategic and geopolitical position, and history. Turkey has followed pro-west policies during its existence after the World War II. Since it has struggled with Russia throughout history, it has taken part in the West Block during and after the Cold War. Relations with international organizations and institutions were based on the Euro-Atlantic developments. It kept its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the forefront of its foreign policy. Regarding the fact that Turkey's relations with the Caucasus and Central Asia are important chances for Turkey to be an effective power in the region. Turkey was seen as a regional power which comprises an area from the North Caucasus to Persian Gulf and from Adriatic to Great Wall by the world leaders after the collapse of Soviet Union (Çelikpala, 2010).

The main factors that affect the Caucasus policy of Turkey are to provide and support independent political and economic stability, peace and cooperation, and pro-western values in the region. Moreover, keeping and recognizing independency and territorial integrity of the former republics is the primary policy for Turkey. So, Turkey has recognized almost all independent states of former Soviet republics and started diplomatic relations with them except Armenia (Çelikpala, 2010). While Turkey making these real, it was highly careful not to provoke Russian Federation in the first contact with the Caucasus states because of the risks caused by Russian aggressive policy toward Turkey (Punsmann, 2011).

Turkish Foreign Policy was constituted on two obligatory reasons which influence all alternatives of foreign policy. These are Turkey's geography and long-standing ties with the neighboring states. These two sensible elements gave Turkey the role of a key local security player in the Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea regions (I. Turkey's Perspectives and Policies on Security Issues)

Turkey should have the capacity to utilize a more extensive mixture of military, financial, social and political approaches in a superior coordination to go up against contemporary security challenges. At the end of the day, Turkey expected to utilize a "thorough methodology" to experience today's security (I. Turkey's Perspectives and Policies on Security Issues). Consequently, it began to follow the westbound remote strategy after World War II and targeted close, profound and escalated participation with the West. Thus, it is a member of NATO from 1952 to present, and a candidate state for the EU (Doster, 2012**).**

Turkey is located on a geopolitical place at the crossing point of Europe, Asia and Africa, in the region of important commercial lines, energy corridors and controversial areas, in particular the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East. (Udum, 2007). This affected Turkish foreign policy as a source of positive and negative influence. Turkey is not only an Asian and a European country but only a Balkan, a Mediterranean, a Middle East, a Black Sea and a Caucasus country according to its strategic position (Sener, 2013). On the other hand, Turkey's location gives a particular focal status which contrasts from other central nations like Germany, Russia or Iran. Turkey holds an ideal spot since it is both an Asian and a European country and is also near Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean.

As far as history, society and its region of impact, according to Davutoglu, Turkey is a Central Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf and Black Sea nation (Kozakou-Marcoullis, 2009).

Republic of Turkey has anxiety on security depending on geographical and historical realities of the country. This anxiety means to keep and carry on Turkey's sovereignty to eliminate threats towards it. Moreover, anxiety of security comprises its existing geography and geopolitical/geostrategic legacy coming from Ottoman Empire. Turkey has Bosporus and the Dardanelles as strategic points which make Turkey important globally. On the other hand, international borders of Turkey also cause anxiety of security for Turkey because Turkey can feel naturally insecure in international relations as a result of large numbers of borders (Sener, 2013). And, Turkey shares its borders with Bulgaria and Greece in the West side of Turkey; Georgia, Armenia and Iran in the East side of Turkey; and Syria and Iraq in the Southeast side (Udum, 2007). And Russian Federation is also Turkey's neighbor which is linked with Black Sea border in the Northern part of Turkey.

Besides, while Turkey have realized the importance of its location and feel anxiety over its security, it is as yet looking for a higher global and local status, which is tried to be accomplished by joining the EU and serving the Euro-Atlantic group as a fundamental transit and social-civilizational "bridge" between the East and the West. In the long term, Ankara moves in the direction of joining the group of big "players" in charge of the European nations' energy security and expansion of energy resources for the EU, which represents the arrangements to unite the Caucasus and Central Asia into a solitary energy transportation framework that would extend Europe via Turkey (Yuldasheva 2008, 52).

Military capacity influences Turkey's diplomatic and political relations, and usage of security parameters in international community. So, it has significant military capacity with regard to main weapon systems, number of military personals, level of education, operation ability and mobilization system. In fact, one of the most important reasons for Turkey to have significant developments in military capacity is that crisis and conflicts in the Balkans, Middle East and the Caucasus influence foreign and security policy of Turkey. Any risk, threat or challenge in Greece, Armenia, or Syria can easily affect Turkey's policies as well. Otherwise, Turkey has relations with the Euro-Atlantic organizations as a provider of security and stability opposite to the position of consumer of stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic region (Sener, 2013).

It has been clarified that Turkey's national interests and foreign policy are affected by some specific subjects. Anxiety on security, military capacity and geostrategic location are the most important factors that lead Turkey's foreign policy. Turkey has relations with pro-western organizations because of its territorial importance in international relations. Its location helped Turkey enhance its military capacity to get rid of anxiety on security because of a series of international borders and neighboring states. It joined the NATO against the East Block during and after World War II.

Turkish foreign policy principles were arrayed by Davutoglu that:

There should be a balance between security and democracy in a country in order to be able to establish an area of influence in its environment, so Turkish foreign policy should focus on this,

- Zero problem with neighbor states' policy is inside of this principles to set important foreign policy,

- Enhancing relations with neighboring regions to be in those regions as Turkey became active in the Balkans, in the Middle East, in the Caucasus and in Central Asia. Hence, Turkey should use any chance within institutions or organizations in those regions,
- Adherence to multi-dimensional policy whereby with other important actors aims to be a modifier, not a competitor,
- A proactive foreign policy would make future clear for Turkey's steps in its policies (Kozakou-Marcoullis, 2009).

Turkish Security and Defense Policy as part of Turkish Foreign Policy have historically concentrated on regional cooperation, contribution to peace and security in its region, and alliance with international and regional organizations (Defence and Security Policy of the Turkish Republic, 2011). As Ataturk who is the founder of Republic of Turkey declared "Peace at home, peace in the world", the declaration has become the center of foreign policy priorities.

According to Sener (2013) "there are three basic principles and functions in Turkish Foreign Policy: to be supporter of status quo, to be pro-western and to be pragmatist and realist in foreign policy". Turkey has never been an expansionist state, and it doesn't demand or want to be shaped by borders. In the other words, it is not a revisionist state. Additionally, Turkey has not joined any war except Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974 since the declaration of Republic of Turkey. It has tried to be dynamic in near geography and follow global and regional balance (Doster, 2012). Especially, its borders and geography pushed it to be dynamic in the region because almost all developments in its close neighbors have easily influenced Turkish foreign policy. In spite of all of these, Turkey as a supporter of status quo follows two important points in its foreign policy. These are carrying on existing borders and maintaining existing balance in its international relations. Moreover, Turkish Foreign Policy implemented balance policy in two different ways. First is to attempt to set a balance between the West and anti-west. Second is to attempt to provide a balance among all factors which comprise the West. For instance, Turkey has rested on the Soviet Russia against the West between 1920 and 1936. Other example is that it rested on Great Britain against fascist Italy between 1936 and 1945 years, and resting on the USA against Soviet Russia threat from 1946 to present (Sener, 2013).

Turkey is seeking the EU membership because Turkey will constitute a true asset for the Union, with its geostrategic location, large economic potential, educated and dynamic population and with its visionary and multidimensional foreign policy. Turkey's accession to the EU will bring an added value to the Union, not a burden. Carrying this relationship forward with the ultimate goal of membership is a strategic importance for both Turkey and the EU (Turkey-EU Relations, n.d.). The contemporary Turkey aspires to join the EU as a full member and to be a leading economic and political actor in Eurasia. It envisages an international mission that is no longer peripheral and confined to the outskirts of Europe. Our mission envisions a pivotal role in the emerging Eurasian reality (Cem, 2013).

Considering these, Turkey needs to have good relations with a lot of country and states for its interests. During and after cold war, Turkey has security and territorial integrity anxieties because of the East Block or Russian expansionism policy toward

Turkey. Furthermore, Turkey's geopolitical and geographical location shows that political order after the Cold War provided many new independent states to be reappeared or reconfirmed by international arena. Moreover, almost all these "new" states - in the Balkans, in the Caucasus or in Central Asia - have mutual history, religion or language with Turkey. This provides Turkey to set a new international environment of historical and cultural dimensions in these regions (Cem, 2013). Hence, Turkey's anxieties couldn't prevent its role in these regions. Turkey can help them and develop itself by being members of the international organizations. While these organizations assist Turkey to keep itself from threats, they make Turkey a key figure in these regions.

As mentioned above, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf and Black Sea country, so it has to be interested in the developments and organizations related to these regions in foreign policy. Briefly, international organizations in foreign policy provide links to Turkey to be in touch with those regions. Turkey can gain its interests via organizations. These organizations mean cooperation among the regions and countries. Security-based organizations make wars difficult among states, while economic-based organizations or unions make economy and prosperity enhanced among countries, even regions. Most of them provide prosperity, peace, democracy, liberalist economy, free market economy, security and rule of law for each state which is members of them.

Turkey should be careful in its foreign policy toward the South Caucasus since this region has historical richness and diversity, and economic potential and opportunity within the possible conflicts. Especially, natural gas and oil reserves make the region significant for Russia and the rest of the world within the rivalries on the opportunities in the region. The South Caucasus realized itself as a strategic juncture between the East and the West as other powers did because it is a key transit route for energy and resources from Central Asia to the West (Hampson, 2013) via BTC and other pipeline projects.

GEORGIA-TURKEY COMMON PROJECT: BAKU-TBILISI-CEYHAN CRUDE OIL PIPELINE

In the world which is getting more global, demands for energy is rising by shaping not only economic policies but also strategic policies of the countries. For this reason, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan crude oil pipeline is established for transportation of Caspian Oil to the west and the world. This project constitutes the most important part of the East-West energy corridor. Geopolitical importance of Turkey would increase and Georgia would be in the forefront as an important transition country in the world (Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan HPBH Proje Direktorlugu).

The vital significance of the district has expanded with local undertakings, for example, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Unrefined petroleum Pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) Normal Gas Pipeline, and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railroad. Subsequently, Suleymanov (2013) states that:

> The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil, and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipelines do not just give a noteworthy access to Caspian hydrocarbons and establish the framework for the East-West transportation hall but they also put Turkey in a position on the world map as a critical transition point for vitality assets. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, Blue Stream and Baku-Tbilisi-

> Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipeline projects are significant and geopolitical projections of the region. These projects provide Turkey to become second important actor in the Eurasian energy corridor (Usul, 2013).

Especially, BTC is the cornerstone of Turkey's policy toward South Caucasus (Punsmann, 2011) since the route and construction of this project is planned according to regional balances and relations with Turkey's allies and their policies. Moreover, this provided to set up a regional balance based on Turkey-Azerbaijan-Georgia by supplying energy to western markets (Çelikpala, 2010).

Despite the fact that BTE and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railroad are critical to Georgia, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline venture is more vital for Georgia financially as well as politically. At the point when BTC pipeline undertaking was imagined, Georgia had a progression of obstructions to tackle in the local and global nature. These were the shortcoming of the state, corruption, and Russia's approach towards Georgia (Papava, 2005).

Meanwhile, Papava (2005) states that BTC will produce "monetary advantages and open doors for an upgraded personal satisfaction for those whom our business effects". Bearing this in mind, specific goals of investment programs in Georgia are as follows:

- Improved economic opportunities and increased incomes;
- A developed and improved agricultural sector;
- Enhancement of the quality of life by means of revitalized social infrastructure;
- Improved ability of communities to take independent initiatives, organize and manage social development.

When it is considered in the setting of geopolitical sense, Georgia's area is the hugest for the South Caucasus, particularly if one considers the contention between the two different countries of the location: Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia has picked pro-Western strategies for its geostrategic significance (Papava, 2005).

BTC pipeline adds to the development of Georgia's part in both the Black Sea and the Caspian regions. In the meantime, fruitful abuse of its transitional capacity later on will rely on irreversibility of fair changes, and predictable compatibility of the technique of incorporation with the European and Transoceanic associations (Papava, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Geopolitical and geostrategic locations of Georgia and Turkey pushed them to set important relations and policies toward the west. Especially, Russian aggression and intervention to Georgian territory were important reasons for Georgia's pro-western policies. Turkey had similar issues with Russia. Turkey has also anxiety on security as a result of Russian expansionist behaviors. Turkey has important channels that make Turkey globally important. Hence, it has joined to NATO to provide security against Russia and other revisionist states. Georgia has followed the integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions while Turkey is following the EU membership. Furthermore, BTC project has been an important opportunity for two countries.

Turkey should be careful in its foreign policy toward the South Caucasus since this region has historical richness and diversity, and economic potential and opportunity within the possible conflicts. Especially, natural gas and oil reserves make this region significant for Russia and the rest of the world who can rival on the opportunities in the region. The South Caucasus realized itself as a strategic juncture between the East and the West as other powers did because it is a key transit route for energy and resources from Central Asia to the West via BTC and other pipeline projects.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey has found a space to develop its relations with the Caucasian states including Azerbaijan and Georgia. Turkey started to set good relations with these states by respecting their territorial integrity and independency. Georgia has a border with Turkey and shares similar anxieties with Turkey in foreign policy.

Moreover, Georgia and Turkey have similar priorities in their foreign policies such as the integration into the western institutions. While Turkey as a member of NATO is waiting for the membership of the EU, Georgia has also aspirations for both NATO and the EU. This kind of factors and similarities provided two countries and Azerbaijan to have close relations with each other. As a natural result of this, BTC pipeline was established between Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan to transport the oil and natural gas from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus to the West without Russia and Iran. Within this pipeline project, aspirations of Azerbaijan and Georgia have increased to set relations with the West. In addition to this, Turkey was important figure for these two countries to connect them to the West since Russian Federation has started to be effective in the region after the fall of Soviet Union to struggle with external actors. However, Turkey's status quo policy ensured to gain Georgia's trust in foreign policy, especially in economic relations with Turkey. Russian aggression toward Georgia intervened and supported the breakaway regions against Georgian government.

In conclusion, while Georgia is the key figure in the South Caucasus, Turkey has important partners in the Caucasus for its energy and economic needs. Furthermore, BTC pipeline may be considered as an important step for the European energy security. Besides, it can be evaluated as a good chance or policy for Georgia, as a potential candidate for membership for Euro-Atlantic institutions in the near future. Georgia and Turkey are important partners in the regions. This partnership would provide stability in the Caucasus and important cooperation between Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan based on economic, politic and security concerns. Especially, Georgia-Turkey relations regulate the issues between Armenia-Turkey and Armenia-Azerbaijan by making Georgia as a transition country between Armenia and Turkey. 

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