

The Armenian Job

The role of the Armenia lobby in the
pattern of enmity in South Caucasus

Edited by Claude Moniquet and William Racimora

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Abstract

Azerbaijan is a country in transition that performed exceptionally well in the last 10-20 years, obtaining major successes, among other things, in the fields of economy, social welfare, urbanization, fight against poverty and terrorism, etc.

According to the World Bank, Baku's economic policies have been able to reduce the percentage of people living under poverty line from 50 % in 2001 to 7.6 % in 2011, whereas the GDP per capita has increased from 760.5 in 2002 to 5.119 in 2010. One further noteworthy fact: it is very important to mention that the country has experienced little income inequality over the same period. The same can be said for inflation, which has low rate despite the double digit growth. Moreover, the country has performed very well in reforming its social safety, pension and education systems.

In addition to these socioeconomic performances, Azerbaijan has been extraordinary effective in coping with terrorism despite a challenging regional context in the aftermath of the wars in Chechnya and external threats coming from Armenia and Iran. **One must note that the successes of Azerbaijan in fighting terrorism have been highlighted by the United States Department of State in the Country Reports on Terrorism 2010.**

Over the last years, Azerbaijan's achievements have been downplayed by propaganda campaign carried out by its neighbors, namely Armenia, Russia and Iran, which highlight critics over successes. As a matter of fact, the risk of instability in a troubled regional context has prevented the country from promoting a total liberalization. Moreover, the continued occupation of part of the Azerbaijani territory by Armenian troops and the "pattern of enmity" with regard to its geopolitical environment have forced Baku to undertake a long-term path toward democracy that favors security, stability and growth in order to ease domestic distress provoked by poverty and risk of terrorism.

As shall be demonstrated in the present report, the Armenian lobby has developed a comprehensive "black propaganda strategy" to deny these realities. **In this manner, it hopes that using its numerous relays in the United States and in the European Union will contribute to maintaining *status quo* in Nagorno-Karabakh and to preventing attempts to restore the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.**

Introduction

This paper will take in exam the role played by the Armenian lobby in the Azerbaijan-Armenia relations. Since the very beginning, Baku has to cope with difficult conditions due to both domestic troubles and regional tensions that did not allow the country to follow a linear path toward liberal democracy. More pressing contingences, such as poverty, the risk of religious extremism and, of course, the occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave by Armenia, have forced Azerbaijani authorities to prefer stability over chaos. This choice has been made in order to provide Azerbaijani people with better and safer living conditions. In particular, we will argue that Baku's development toward liberal democracy has been strongly hampered by Armenian pressure groups that have alienated the country from international assistance. As a result of the unsolved conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenian lobby organizations have become more active and taken radical hostile position and ever have since instable balance of power (BoP). Since the 1994 ceasefire, the regional BoP has been changing in favour of Azerbaijan, whose oil-driven revenues are growing Baku's economic and military power. Armenia has therefore decided to respond by using another kind of asset: its worldwide diaspora. In fact, Armenia has been using pressure groups in order to influence the political agenda in the USA and Europe toward Yerevan's interests. In this public affairs field, Armenia has been better-off in promoting itself and putting Azerbaijan in a bad light. Isolating Baku from international assistance and depicting it as a rogue state are some of the activities carried out by Armenian lobbies worldwide. Though it is not the only cause of troubles, the Armenian lobby has its shares of responsibility in fostering the pattern of enmity between the two neighbouring countries, hence preventing from a more rapid resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

This paper is not meant to justify Azerbaijan, neither to demonize Armenia. Both countries are actively working to reach international standard with respect to corruption, freedom of expression and human rights. Of course, the complexity of the Azerbaijan-Armenia relations is very deep rooted and it goes beyond the purpose of this work, which takes in exam only one part of the problem: the Armenian lobby.

Our work is divided in five sections. The first paragraph will provide the reader with a general snapshot regarding Azerbaijan's history, economy and politics. In the second paragraph, we will present the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), which provides the framework for analysing Azerbaijan-Armenia relations within their regional context. Then, we will apply the RSCT to the Caucasus, in order to identify the roots of the pattern of enmity behind the Armenian lobby. Therefore, we will describe some case studies in which the lobby has either sought or succeeded in promoting its interests at detriment of Azerbaijan according to a zero-sum logic. Our conclusions will summarize the above mentioned paragraphs, seeking also to find a balance between reality and propaganda.

1. Azerbaijan: a snapshot

1.1 Geography and population

Azerbaijan is a small nation located on the Caspian Sea, at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. The country holds important gas and oil resources and occupies a pivotal position, bordering the Islamic republic of Iran and the restive Russian republic of Dagestan. It has a total surface of 86,600 km² and is sharing borders with Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Russia and Turkey (9 km between the Autonomous Republic of Nakichevan and the Turkish province of Iğdır). The capital is Baku, on the southern shore of the Absheron Peninsula. The city has an estimated population of around 2 million people.

Azerbaijan has a population of around 9.5 million people, mostly belonging to the Azeri Turkish ethnic group. More than 90% of the population follows Shiite Islam, but the religious affiliation is mostly nominal, as most people are actually practising a very moderate form of their religion. The national language is Azerbaijani, but Russian remains a Lingua Franca for social and business relations. The use of English has smoothly progressed over the past years in the economic sector. The main minority groups are Russians, Dagestan (Lesgians), Avars, Iranians (Talishs) and Armenians. It is however worth mentioning that many Armenians left the country during the 1991-1994.

The country belongs to several networks of alliance and is member of many international organisations. The Republic of Azerbaijan joined United Nations on March 2, 1992, in the following months of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is also a member of the Council of Europe and of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which is running the Minsk Group to find a negotiated resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is still a member of the Community of Independent States (CIS) but it refused to join Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). On the contrary, it is a founding member of the pro-Western GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development. It has also participated in the US-led military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is lastly worth

mentioning that Azerbaijan has developed very close economic, cultural and diplomatic ties since independence with Turkey. However, it has favoured a more balanced external policy since the middle of the 1990's, especially towards Russia.

1.2 History at the crossroad of European and Asian civilizations

The etymology of the name « Azerbaijan » is uncertain, but several hypotheses have been proposed by historians. According to traditional sources, the name derives from the Old *Achaemenid Satrap Aturpatakan*, “Protected by the Holy Fire”. Azerbaijan, the “country of the fire worshippers”, has indeed played an important role in the ancient Zoroastrian religion due to the presence of natural fires. Regardless to the origin of its name, the land that is now Azerbaijan has been inhabited since very ancient times, as shown by the petroglyphs of Gobustan national park, which is located 60 kilometres south-west from Baku. Over the centuries, the territories of Azerbaijan have however been disputed by external empires: Aechemenids, Seleucids, Romans, Parthians, Sassanids, Arabs, Seldjuqs, Mongols, Safavids and Russians.

The Iranian culture has left an important mark on the country, as reflected by Shiite Islam and ancient architecture. One should also note that one of its most prominent Turkish Azerbaijani imperial dynasties Safavids State who ruled from 1501 to 1736. In that period of time, territory of Azerbaijan was 3,5 million square kilometres. By Treaty of Gulistan in 1813 and Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828, territory of Azerbaijan and the nation was divided in two parts – the South was integrated in Persia and the North intergrated in the Russian empire. During 1828-1908, 1 million Armenians were resettled from Tzar Russia and Ottoman Empire to South Caucasus. They were settled down in different part of South Caucasus, also in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The country became independent for 23 months after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and the creation of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic. Its territory was 114 thousands square kilometres. Azerbaijani Democratic Republic was the first democratic parliamentary republic in the East and Muslim world and the women had the right to vote. The short-lived state was soon annexed by the Soviet Union, but is

remembered as an important step for the construction of the national identity. It is worth mentioning that the three colours of the flag of present-day Azerbaijan have been instituted by the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan on November 9, 1918. The country became a Soviet Republic and was given its current territory in the 1920s, Stalin choosing to let the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within Azerbaijan border despite Armenian claims. These decisions will be the main cause of the war that erupted in 1988, three years before Azerbaijan and Armenia became independent.

1.3 Politics: a democracy in progress

Azerbaijan was plunged into the war for Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988. Given the active support offered by the USSR and later Russian authorities to Armenian fighters in the first months of the war, Azerbaijan naturally turned to the West to defend its vital interests. Under the presidency of nationalist politician Abulfaz Elchibey from June 1992 until June 1993, the country even developed a pro-Turkish stance. This period was however marked by severe military defeats and by a growing political instability which led to the overthrow of Elchibey and to the coming back in power of former Soviet politburo member Heydar Aliyev. From 1993 until his death in 2003, he developed a political regime sometimes labelled as semi-authoritarian, but which has paved the way towards stability.

According to the constitution adopted in 1995, Azerbaijan is a presidential republic with the President acting as the head of state. The government is based on the separation of powers, the executive power being held by the President who is elected for a 5-year term. The current president of Azerbaijan is Ilham Aliyev, who received 77 percent of the votes in the election held after the death of his father in 2003. He was elected for a second term in 2008. According to a report issued by the OSCE, the election process failed to meet some of the organisation's commitments but "marked considerable progress towards meeting OSCE commitments and other international standards". In accordance with the Constitution, Ilham Aliyev re-named Prime Minister Artur Rasizade to head the Cabinet.

Parliamentary elections are held every five years while the validity of the results is ensured by the Constitutional Court. Upon the principle of the division of power, the president cannot dissolve the National Assembly but he has the right to veto its decisions. Opposition parties do exist in Azerbaijan. However, they might encounter obstacles in election time, although Azerbaijan's constitution guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

1.4 An economy in transition: successes and challenges

Since gaining independence from USSR in 1991, Azerbaijan experienced the same problems as other former Soviet republics in moving towards an open market-based economy. However, it succeeded to ensure the transition and to build a strong economic growth until the global financial crisis in 2008. According to the Oil and Gas Journal (OGJ), Azerbaijan's proven crude oil reserves are estimated at 7 billion barrels and the energy market's reform undertaken by the government in November 1997 led to booming oil exports. During the years 2006-08, economic growth reached double digit figures, and the development of the hydrocarbon industry has enabled the expansion of the construction, banking, and real estate sectors.

The oil production showed first sign of decline in 2011, but the country has started to develop new resources of income such as natural gas. Hence, it has become an increasingly important supplier of natural gas to Europe. The country however needs to achieve its economic transition in order to create a sustainable long-term growth, less dependent on the energy sector. To this end, it must pursue the modernisation of its economy and reinforce efforts to combat corruption and increase the role of the private sector in the economic activity. It is worth mentioning that the government is aware of these problems. It has increased the share of the justice budget, has started programs to offer e-access to the public services and has encouraged investments in new technologies, mainly in the field of telecommunications.

Regarding Azerbaijan's main trade partners, it must be underlined that the share of Russia and of the Community of Independent states has been over the past years, while trade is building with Turkey and EU countries has grown

significantly. Several hurdles however continue to hinder social and economic development in Azerbaijan, the most ticklish and sensitive being the ongoing conflict with Armenia. The economic costs of the war and of the departure from their homes of hundreds of thousands of refugees have durably crippled the national budget. Moreover, the endemic instability in the Caucasus region and its effects over the relations with natural economic partners such as Russia or Iran has kept numerous foreign investments away from the country.

2. The Regional Security Complex (RSC) in the Caucasus

The regional security complex theory provides the right framework to analyse states' politics in the Caucasus. The Caucasus is a RSC composed by three local actors, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and other external ones who share interests in the region, such as: Russia, Iran, Turkey, the USA and the EU (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, pp. 419-423). The RSC shaped itself around conflicts such as the Nagorno-Karabakh and those related to Georgia's secessionist regions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adzharia. These conflicts have determined a pattern of enmity in the axis Armenia-Azerbaijan and Georgia-Russia (Derghoukassian, 2006). Similarly, relations between local and external actors depend on the latter stands over the above mentioned conflicts.

In particular, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is still determining the pattern of enmity between Baku and Yerevan up to present days. The Nagorno-Karabakh is an internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan populated by a majority of ethnic Armenians. During the Soviet Union the region used to be an autonomous oblast under the jurisdiction of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). The state-to-state conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia erupted with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, although pre-existing tensions in the late 1980s were also registered. Azerbaijan declared independence on August 30, 1991. Soon after, on November 26, 1991, the new independent state withdrew the autonomous status to the Nagorno-Karabakh. Few weeks later, the region declared its independence from Baku on 10

December 1991; a status that has never been recognized by the international community. The departure of Russian troops brought about an escalation of the conflict in which Yerevan intervened to support its minority. The conflict ended in 1994 with a fragile ceasefire brokered by the international community. Since then, Armenian troops have been occupying the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as seven surrounding provinces (CIA, 2012). Equally important, Armenia connected Nagorno-Karabakh to its territory through the Lachin corridor (Jarosiewicz & Strachota, 2011). The size of these occupied territories is estimated between the 13% (ICG, 2005) and the 20% of Azerbaijan's territory (Ismailzade, 2011, p. 2), while the Central Intelligence Agency estimates about 16% (CIA, 2012). The conflict caused more than 30.000 deaths and over 1 million between refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (Ismailzade, 2011, p. 2). According to the World Bank, the 7 % of Azerbaijan's population is displaced (about 595.000 people) due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, thus "making it [Azerbaijan] one of the highest concentration of IDPs in the world" (World Bank, 2012, pp. 4-5).

The 1994 cease-fire continues today to maintain the *status quo* over Nagorno-Karabakh, although several attempts have been made by the international community to broker a peace deal once and for all. Negotiations are carried out by the OSCE-backed Minsk Group and more specifically by its three co-chairs: France, Russia and the United States (Ismailzade, 2011). So far, negotiations have been unfruitful, thus leaving the impression that a deal will not be reached in the near future. More worrisome, the risk of escalation of tensions and the possibility to "unfreeze" the conflict are options still on the table for both parties (Jarosiewicz & Strachota, 2011).

In this regard, Armenia knows well that current Baku's economic boom is likely to change the balance of power in the region. One should take into account that a great share of Azerbaijan's oil revenues is reinvested in state building, hence boosting the budget of several state sectors, defence included (Ismailzade, 2011, p. 9). So far, the regional balance of power has been played in the field of public affairs. In this sensitive "game", Armenia is seeking to balance Baku's growing power by strongly lobbying its cause worldwide. One should remember that Armenia can also count upon its widespread diaspora.

The Armenian lobby has played an important role in keeping Armenian issues on the political agenda of several western countries. Moreover, it has been very effective in isolating Baku from international assistance, above all in the first ten years following the independence. In this regard, Buzan and Wæver argue that “due to the power of the Armenian lobby in the USA, Azerbaijan has been black-listed and barred from American support” (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 421). All this has slowed down Azerbaijan’s development process toward a more effective liberal democracy. Baku, in fact, had to cope with more pressing contingences, such as the lack of international assistance, before promoting higher standard of living. This has forced Azerbaijani authorities to favor political stability and internally-driven socio-economic growth over the promotion of human rights and a full-fledge liberal system. The role the Armenian lobby is playing against Baku is one of the most evident expression of nowadays pattern of enmity in the Armenia-Azerbaijan relations.

3. The Armenian lobby

In a *Foreign Policy* article, former national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, ranked the Armenian lobby as the third most effective one in shaping U.S. foreign policy (Brzezinski, 2006). Dating back to 1915, Armenian diaspora is present in more than fifty countries, with some stronghold in the USA, France, Russia, Greece, Lebanon Syria and Iran (Minassian, 2007, p. 81). Nowadays, Armenia can count upon about 2 million people in Russia, 1.5 million people in the United States and another half a million in France (BBC, 2007). A total of more than 10 million Armenians live worldwide, out of which 7 million in diaspora (Minassian, 2007, p. 81; Taşpınar, 2010), which means more than two times larger the entire population of people living in Armenia (about 3.3 million).

The diaspora has played a twofold role in Armenian politics and society. First of all, it helps national economy through remittances. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenian economy has been strongly supported by funds provided mainly by Russians-Armenians and Armenians-Americans. The total amount of this funding for

the period 2003-2005 has been counted at around 37 % of Armenia's GDP (Minassian, 2007, p. 91).

The second main role has been the protection and promotion of Armenian interests in the world, such as the recognition of the genocide and that of Nagorno-Karabakh as either an autonomous State or as an integral part of Armenia. Indeed, the lobby has obtained some remarkable successes in the past 20 years; for instance the recognition of the Armenian genocide by 21 states and the Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act (a U.S. law that bans Azerbaijan from U.S. aids, hence making Baku the only former Soviet Republic not to benefits from U.S. support).

The Armenian diaspora in the USA is organized around two main lobbying organizations: the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA). Both organizations are equally powerful and active in states like California, Michigan and Massachusetts. According to Dr. Svante Cornell, Johns Hopkins's Research Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, "the Armenian lobby in the U.S. is strong due to its organization and determination" and it is also very influential in local elections (BBC, 2007). One should note that the pro-Armenia caucus in Capitol Hill is one of the most influential lobby in Washington, counting upon about 163 congressmen (Minassian, 2007, p. 95).

On its website, the ANCA mentions that its core activities are (among others): to support "Nagorno-Karabakh's right to self-determination and independence within secure borders", to secure "direct U.S. aid to Nagorno-Karabakh", to ensure "the appropriate commemoration of the Armenian Genocide" and to encourage "Turkey and Azerbaijan to lift their blockades and adhere to international standards for human rights and humanitarian practices" (ANCA). Similarly, the AAA's goals are the international recognition of the genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh's final status as either "an independent state or as an integral and contiguous part of the Republic of Armenia" (AAA).

Similar activities are carried out by the Armenian lobby in Europe through the Brussels-based organizations "European Armenian Federation for Justice and

Democracy (EAFJD)” and the “European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA)” and in France through the “Coordinating Council of Armenian Organisations of France (CCAF)”¹ and the “Armenian National Committee of France (ANCF)”².

As we can see, the core of the Armenian lobbying activities is directed against its two main regional competitors: Turkey and Azerbaijan. In both cases, the lobbying has been pretty successful in pushing through its goals within Washington, Brussels and other European capitals. Issues at stake, however, are very sensitive ones as both Turkey and Azerbaijan are U.S./European strategic partners in the fight against terrorism and in enhancing energy security.

3.1 The genocide resolution

The recognition of the tragedy carried out by the Ottoman Empire in 1915-1923 by the international community is one of the core activities of Armenian lobbying organizations on both sides of the Atlantic. In the U.S., the lobbying consists in directly influencing U.S. Congressmen in both the Senate and the House of Representatives through the personal contacts that Armenian-Americans have within the Congress. Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Mark Kirk (R-IL) are two of the ANCA-backed Congressmen that are pressuring the U.S. government to adopt the resolution.

In 2007, the resolution was endorsed also by former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, and the Member of the U.S. House of Representative from California, Adam Schiff, who promoted the resolution on the Armenian genocide due to Armenian lobbying (Spiegel Online, 2007; BBC, 2007). On 11 October, 2007, Schiff-sponsored resolution was adopted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. However, the resolution did not reach the floor of the House of

¹ Conseil de Coordination des Organisations Arméniennes de France.

² Comité de Defense de la Cause Arménienne.

Representative due to President G. W. Bush's concerns that the resolution could harm relations with Turkey (The Guardian, 2010). The resolution was once again approved by a vote of 23 to 22 by House Foreign Affairs Committee on 4 March, 2010. The Committee approved the non-binding resolution although President Obama's objections concerning a very likely deterioration of relations with Turkey, as well as the resolution would have hampered any attempt of reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia (The Guardian, 2010). The same day, in fact, Ankara recalled its ambassador to the U.S., Namik Tan, hence threatening to open a diplomatic crisis between Washington and Ankara. Following the vote, U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, expressed the official stance of the White House. Secretary Clinton said: "the Obama Administration strongly opposes the resolution that passed by only one vote in the House committee and will work very hard to make sure that it does not go to the House floor" (CSIS, 2010).

According to *The Guardian*, the resolution was "the product of intensive lobbying by Armenian-Americans" (The Guardian, 2010). The newspaper reported that in 2009 the ANCA spent about \$ 50,000 for lobbying the Congress on the resolution, which also pressured President Obama to define the event as "genocide" in a message for the annual commemoration of the massacre (The Guardian, 2010). However, President Obama referred to the event as "genocide" only during his presidential campaign in 2008, but never since he took office as President of the United States in 2009 (Reuters, 2010). Moreover, according to the German news website *Spiegel Online*, Adam Schiff was forced to endorse the resolution not to put at risk his political career. *Spiegel Online* reported that "his predecessor in the constituency lost his seat when he failed to push through the resolution in 2000" (Spiegel Online, 2007).

The resolution has been presented again this year. On 20 March, 2012, the ANCA reported on its website that senators Menendez and Kirk introduced legislation S.Res.399 to demand the U.S. government to recognize the genocide (ANCA, 2012). The ANCA reported also the names of the other supporters of the Armenian cause that endorsed the resolution presented by senators Menendez and Kirk:

“Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Human Rights and Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee and Public Works Committee, Michael Bennet (D-CO), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Carl Levin (D-MI), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Joe Lieberman (I-CT), Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Jack Reed (D-RI), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower, and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism. Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY), the Vice-Chairman of the Democratic Conference, has also joined S.Res.399 as a cosponsor.” (ANCA, 2012).

As we can see, both the ANCA and the AAA are very keen in keeping the Armenian issue in Washington’s political agenda. Therefore, meetings between Armenian-American community and congressmen are organized on a regular base. This activity includes also special programs for future leaders, such as meetings between Congressmen and Armenian interns in the lobbying organizations. One of these meetings took place in July 2012, when a group of ANCA interns met with Adam Schiff and Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone (D-NJ). Following the meeting, Schiff stated that:

“It was a pleasure to meet with a great group of students who are interning for the Armenian National Committee of America this summer, including two of my constituents from Hollywood and Glendale. [...] I commend ANCA for its important role in helping to train the next generation of leaders within the

Armenian community” (The Armenian Reporter, 2012).

According to the ANCA Legislative Director, Raffi Karakashian, the main topic of discussion have been: “to strengthen the U.S.-Armenia relationship, ensure the right to self-determination for the people of Karabakh, and secure justice for the Armenian Genocide - and, in particular, for their insights into the special role that student leaders play in advancing these efforts.” (The Armenian Reporter, 2012). The same group of student later met with Republican Frank Pallone with whom the discussion focused on “Azerbaijan’s increased war rhetoric, recent attacks against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, and the practical steps that are being taken to challenge the Aliyev regime’s threat to regional stability.” (The Armenian Reporter, 2012). Following the meeting with Pallone, a constituent from Morganville (New Jersey), Armen Sahakyan, commented: “President Aliyev should be clearly condemned for his attacks against Armenia and Artsakh, as Rep. Pallone has done on repeated occasions.” (The Armenian Reporter, 2012). Other meetings were organized with Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), her staffer Ariana Reks and Ryan Sellinger - Sen. Menendez’s assistant (The Armenian Reporter, 2012). Meanwhile interns from the AAA met with Congressman Frank Wolf (R-VA), who has recently “travelled to the South Caucasus region to see first-hand the challenges Armenia and Artsakh face in light of Turkey’s and Azerbaijan’s ongoing blockade” (The Armenian Reporter, 2012).

On the other side of the Atlantic, similar activities are carried out in both the European Union and single member states. In Europe, the recognition of the Armenian genocide represents as a high concern as in the USA, considering all the strategic implications that are at stake. First and foremost, the very debated accession of Turkey in the EU. In fact, according to a non-binding resolution of the European Parliament, the accession of Ankara to the EU is conditioned to the recognition of the genocide by Turkey. On 28 September, 2005, the European Parliament’s resolution called Turkey “to recognize the Armenian genocide” (European Parliament, 2005). At the same time, the resolution stated that the EU “considers this recognition to be a prerequisite for accession [of Turkey] to the European Union” (European Parliament,

2005). The resolution has been strongly lobbied by Armenian lobby organizations in Brussels.

Armenian lobbying in Brussels is organized around two main organizations: the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) and the European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA). Both organizations work to influence those EU policies that deal with Turkey and the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan). According to its website, the EAFJD states that it aims at:

- Acting as a link between European Institutions and the Armenian communities through the European Union;
- Advocating for these communities standpoint within these institutions;
- Providing a better understanding of Armenian related political and strategic issues to the European Union;
- Fostering the European Union's values of tolerance and dialogue in the Armenian issues; (EAFJD)

More precisely, two of their main goals are the recognition of the genocide and the occupation of "Western Armenia":

"The European Armenian Federation's actions touch on several European policy areas, especially in its external relations with the South Caucasus (including Armenia) and Turkey. Regarding the latter, the Union's main problem obviously remains the State denial of the Armenian Genocide and the perpetuation of the occupation of Western Armenia." (EAFJD)

Therefore, the EAFJD is strongly lobbying the EU to seek for its recognition of the genocide. The lobby complains that for more than a decade the EU has denied to recognize the genocide, mainly not to hurts relations with Turkey. In a 2008 online petition, the EAFJD claimed that the EU denial is done at citizens' name, without

their consent and “it is thus conniving against the will of EU citizens with the worst of crimes against Humanity” (EAFJD, 2008). The petition goes further by describing Turkey as a “racist, militaristic and xenophobic State where superiority of the Turkish “race” is taught, where ethnic and cultural diversity is repressed and where the heritage of minorities is destroyed. This very same Turkey committed the Armenian Genocide, keeps on denying it and is absolutely failing to comply with the European values.” (EAFJD, 2008).

The lobbying activity toward EU institutions can be better understood by examining a 2009 report on European elections. In this report, the EAFJD analyzed the voting behaviour of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) for the 2004-2009 legislatures (EAFJD, 2009). The report highlights a bi-partisan consensus toward Armenian interests, hence following a similar path to that present within the U.S. Congress. European MEPs have backed Armenian interests in top issues like the Turkish accession and the genocide resolution. In this regard, the EAFJD found its main sponsors within the European People’s Party (EPP) that strongly endorsed the cause against the Turkish accession and in favour of the genocide recognition. In particular, the report mentions that MEPs Jacques Toubon (France), Patrick Gaubert (France), Ioannis Kasoulides (Cyprus) Bernd Posselt (Germany) and Charles Tannok “were particularly active on the Armenian issue by tabling many amendments, by mentioning the question on several occasions during the debates and by encouraging their colleagues to vote in favour of the recognition by Turkey of the Armenian Genocide.” (EAFJD, 2009, p. 4). The report continues saying that this support reached its climax under Elmar Brok (Germany), whose report was finally adopted by the European Parliament in the already mentioned 2005 resolution that linked Turkey’s accession to the EU to the recognition of the genocide.

As concerns the Party of the European Socialists (PES), the EAFJD received the stronger support from the French delegation (Marie-Arlette Carlotti, Harlem Desir, Pierre Moscovici, Martine Roure, Beatrice Patrie and Pierre Pribetich), as well as from the Hungarian’s (Alexandra Dobolyi), the Italian’s (Giulietto Chiesa) and the Greek’s (Maria-Eleni Koppa) (EAFJD, 2009, p. 5). In particular the report says that: “A special mention must be allotted to Mr. Pierre Moscovici, to Mr. Harlem Desir, to

Mrs. Marie Arlette Carlotti and to Mrs. Martine Roure who tabled, supported and made adopted the famous amendment of September 28th, 2005” (EAFJD, 2009, p. 5).

Among the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe party (ALDE) special mentions were granted to the French MEPs Marielle de Sarnez and Bernard Lehideux and the Belgium Frederique Ries (EAFJD, 2009, p. 7).

Conversely, the report says that strong opposition to Armenian interests was exercised by the Greens/ALE, which the report defines as the “real lobby of Turkey within the European Parliament” (EAFJD, 2009, p. 7).

Similar kind of lobby is also carried out toward member states. So far, 10 out of 27 EU member states have recognized the genocide (Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland and Sweden). In 2006, the EAFJD launched a class actions to force German *Deutsche Bank* to pay \$ 20.000.000 as compensation for having withheld property assets belonged to Armenians died during the genocide (EAFJD, 2006). A year before a similar action was carried out against French insurance firm *Axa*, which in 2010 agreed to compensate 1.000 families (Eurasianet, 2010). France, indeed, hosts a well organized and determined Armenian lobby, which works intensively to make the country recognize the genocide and making its denial a crime. France recognized the genocide with a law dated 29 January, 2001, (Assemblée Nationale, 2001). Moreover, on January 2012 the French Parliament adopted a law to make the denial of the genocide a criminal offence. Therefore, according to the proposed bill, those who deny the genocide risk up to one year in prison and a fine of € 45.000 (Le Monde, 2012). It is worth noting that the Armenian lobby in France is well connected with top French politicians like Patrick Devedjian (former UMP Secretary General) and Edouard Balladur (former Prime Minister 1993-1995), both of Armenian descents. Once again the genocide law received a bi-partisan support from both the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) and the Socialist parties. However, the measure did not become a law yet as France’s Constitutional Council declared it unconstitutional (CNN, 2012).

The law has been endorsed by both former President Nicolas Sarkozy and later by present President François Hollande. According to the BBC, the anti-denial law is

strongly lobbied by the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organisations of France (*Conseil de Coordination des Organisations Arméniennes de France – CCAF*), which can count upon 500.000 French nationals of Armenian origins (BBC, 2012). In a statement to congratulate Holland for the election as new President of France, the CCAF wrote:

“The CCAF who welcomed François Hollande to the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on April 24 in Paris, knows his position against holocaust denial and has no doubt it will lead very quickly to a new legislation in that matter, as he elsewhere promised doing so”³ (CCAF, 2012a).

The CCAF refers to a previous meeting it hold with candidate President Holland before his election (CCAF, 2012b). In that occasion, the future President of France promised to push forward a new law against the denial of the genocide, which he publicly confirmed at the beginning of July 2012 (BBC, 2012).

As we can see from these short examples, the lobbying on the genocide resolution is one of the main attempts carried out by Armenian lobby organizations to influence U.S. and EU/European foreign and domestic policies toward Yerevan’s interests. In this case, the target was Turkey, a key U.S. and EU ally in sensitive theatres like Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran. In fact, Ankara is contributing to the Afghan conflict with about 1.327 soldiers on the ground (ISAF, 2012). Moreover, Turkey is providing a valuable logistic support through the Incirlik air base, from where military supplies are shipped to Afghanistan (CSIS, 2010). Finally, Turkey is playing an important role in the negotiations on the Iran’s nuclear program, by promoting itself as an honest broker between the opposing interests of Washington and Teheran (CSIS, 2010). Therefore, both Brussels and Washington are called to weight up their strategic interests very carefully before taking an official position on the genocide.

³ Author’s translation from French: «*Le CCAF qui a accueilli François Hollande à la commémoration du génocide arménien le 24 avril dernier à Paris, connaît ses positions contre le négationnisme et ne doute pas qu’elles se traduiront très vite par une nouvelle législation en la matière, comme il s’y est d’ailleurs engagé.*»

The same can be said for other Armenian lobby activities focused on alienating Azerbaijan from the U.S. and EU sphere of intervention for the promotion of both democracy and energy security. Since the beginning of the independence, the Armenian lobby has worked hard to prevent Azerbaijan from receiving international assistance. The Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act is one of the most known example.

3.2 Nagorno-Karabakh and the Section 907

The second strategic goal of Armenian lobbies is to consolidate the control over the Nagorno-Karabakh. This is pursued by creating international political consensus for the status quo, which might lead in the future to definitive acquisition of the region through self-determination. At the same time, Armenian lobbies work to provide funding for Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh from international donors and preventing Azerbaijan from receiving a similar treatment.

In France, for instance, the CCAF is pressuring the French government and the international community to recognize the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh. In a statement released in occasion of the so-called “presidential elections” in Nagorno-Karabakh the CCAF said the only solution to solve the issue is the recognition of the full independence of the region (CCAF, 2012c). In the statement, the CCAF accuses Azerbaijan of anti-Armenian racism and demand Baku to stop any threat against the Armenians (CCAF, 2012c).

Meanwhile, the Brussels-based European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA) has been working to push the EU to engage for the maintenance of the status quo by deploying a permanent observation mission (EuFoa, 2010). Armenia is therefore interested in freezing the conflict, not in its resolution, which sees now the international community not recognizing the Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent republic. Therefore, Yerevan would welcome international experts along the Line of Contact to prevent skirmishes that could lead to an open conflict. In this worse-case scenario,

Armenia fears the changed balance of power due to \$ 2 billion per year spent by Baku in its defence sector (EuFoa, 2010).

Consequently, in order to balance Azerbaijan's oil revenues, Armenia has always sought after external sponsors which would grant funding for Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh and, at the same time, would block similar aids to Azerbaijan. In this regard, the Armenian lobby has been very successful. According to a Congressional Research Service's report, the U.S. have provided funds for the Nagorno-Karabakh for more than \$ 36 million in the period 1998-2011 (Nichol, June 2012, p. 23). In this regard, one of the major successes of Armenian lobbying has been the so called "Section 907". The Section 907 is an addendum to the Freedom Support Act; a law that grants U.S. aid to former Soviet Republics. The Freedom Support Act was passed in 1992 with the goal of helping former Soviet republics in their delicate transition toward democracy. According to President George Bush senior, this sort of "Marshall Plan" was meant to "support free market and democratic reforms being undertaken in Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, and the other states of the former Soviet Union. In particular, the bill endorses the \$ 12 billion increase in the U.S. share of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and authorizes \$ 410 million in U.S. bilateral assistance" (Bush, 1992).

The Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act was strongly lobbied by the Armenian-American community to prevent Azerbaijan to have access to such funds. Specifically, the section prohibits Azerbaijan from receiving U.S. aids, as long as Baku continues its hostilities and blockade against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (Gregg, 2002, pp. 22-23; ANCA, 2006). Therefore, the Section has left Baku without U.S. financial support for the first ten years following the independence (1992-2002).

U.S. stance started changing in 2001, when the Senate approved a bill allowing the President to waive the Section's restriction if the U.S. national interest would require doing so (Gregg, 2002, p. 22). According to the bill, the President is allowed to provide funding to Azerbaijan if:

- Is necessary to support United States efforts to counter international terrorism;
- Is necessary to support the operational readiness of United States Armed Forces or coalition partners to counter international terrorism;
- Is important to Azerbaijan's border security; and
- Will not undermine or hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan or be used for offensive purposes against Armenia.

(Extension of Waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act With Respect to Assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan, 2008)

In fact, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Washington has started to gradually waive the Section on an annual basis, as Baku became a strategic partner in the war on terror and in the containment of religious extremism in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Consequently, since 2002 U.S. Presidents started waiving the Section based on the above mentioned exception.

However, in spite of the fact that Washington's funds allocated to Azerbaijan are less than half of those granted to Armenia, Armenian lobbying strongly opposes every year to the waiver of the Section 907. For instance, in a 2006 position paper against a new waiver of the Section 907 for the FY 2007, the position of the ANCA was the following:

“The waiver authority granted to the President undermines U.S. interests in the region by encouraging Azerbaijan to maintain its blockades and remain intransigent in the peace talks. The exercise of this waiver, in addition to representing a retreat from a principled stand against aggression and blockades, sends the dangerous signal to Azerbaijan that the U.S.

will not respond decisively to renewed aggression against Karabagh or Armenia.

Position: The Congress should reassert its authority to legislate guidelines governing our foreign aid policy by including a provision in the fiscal year 2007 foreign aid bill which allows the President to extend the authority to waive Section 907 on a year-to-year basis only with explicit Congressional approval.” (ANCA, 2006).

The fact the ANCA demands that the Congress should have the last word on the waiver extension should not come as a surprise, considering the influence they can exert on Congressmen. However, the lobbying has been able to keep Washington’s funds to Azerbaijan far below those allocated to Armenia. In fact, Baku still receives almost twice less than Yerevan. In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, Armenia received \$ 40 million, in addition to \$ 2 million for Nagorno-Karabakh, against the \$ 20.9 million of Azerbaijan (PanArmenian.net, 2011; Nichol, June 2012, p. 22). The ratio should be confirmed in FY 2013. Although cuts decided by President Obama, the U.S. should grant \$ 32.5 million to Armenia and \$ 16.3 million to Azerbaijan (News.am, 2012; Nichol, June 2012, p. 22). However, the funds for military aid should remain equal for both Armenia and Azerbaijan; \$2.7 million for Foreign Military Financing and \$ 0.6 million for International Military Education and Training (Nichol, June 2012, p. 22).

3.3 Unapplied European resolutions over Nagorno-Karabakh

Both the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament (EP) have passed resolutions and statements stressing the necessity of a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On January 25, 2005, the PACE adopted resolution 1416 entitled “The conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference” (PACE, 2005). The text mentions in particular the fate of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced

persons who live in miserable conditions. It also regrets that “considerable parts of the territory of Azerbaijan are still occupied by Armenian forces”, and that “separatist forces are still in control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.” The resolution also established a subcommittee headed by the late British peer Lord Russel Johnson, who repeatedly underlined the occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenian forces.

It must however be said that the boycott of the Armenian delegation has undermined the functioning of the subcommittee and has prompted no reaction from the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. Moreover, the Armenian delegation has voted against the resumption of the activities of the subcommittee in January 2010. Armenian members of parliament have indeed publicly declared that the involvement of any other body than the Minsk group would play a “disorientating role” in the peace process. One has to note that the sub-committee has however framed its activities under the U.N. Security Council’s resolutions 822(1993), 853 (1993), 874(1993) and 884 (1993)

In the same way, the European Union has adopted several documents drawing attention to the imperative need to respect the principles sovereignty and territorial integrity in its relations with the South Caucasus States (European Parliament, 2010). The resolution provides that it is “unacceptable and unsustainable, since it bears the constant risk of an escalation of tensions and a resumption of armed hostilities” and “considers it is unacceptable for any external actors to introduce conditions for the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the South Caucasus states”. Moreover, the EP has rejected the idea according to which Naogorno-Karabach includes all the Azerbaijani land occupied by Armenian forces.

As a matter of fact, one must recognize that these resolutions have remained, to date, little more than non-binding declarations without any tangible effect on the ground. Indeed, Neither the PACE nor the EP has decreed sanctions against Armenia for occupying Azerbaijani territories. One should add that several members of these institutions have been acting contrary to the resolutions passed by their own assemblies. Despite the fact that both the PACE and the EP reaffirmed the principle of sovereignty and of territorial integrity, members of these assemblies have visited

the occupied territories to monitor electoral process unrecognised by the international community. One may mention in particular the visit and the seminar organised in July 2012 by Cypriot EPP Member of the European Parliament Eleni Theocharous in the Brussels' headquarters of the Friends of Armenia.

3.4 The case of Ambassador Matthew J. Bryza

Matthew James Bryza served as the U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan from February 2011 till January 2012. His short staying in office was due to the pressing activity of the Armenian-American lobby against his designation (The New York Times, 2012). Since President Obama appointed Ambassador Bryza to lead the Embassy in Baku in May 2010, the Armenian lobby started his opposition campaign through pro-Armenian Congressmen in Capitol Hill. In particular, Senators Robert Menedez (D-N.J.) and Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) strongly opposed against his nomination. The argumentations regarded: Bryza's opposition to the U.S. "recognition of the Armenian genocide by Turkey" (Menedez), the lack of critics against Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia (Boxer) and "close ties with Turkey", considering that Bryza's wife is Turkish born (The Washington Post, 2010; 2011). The *Washington Post* has been very critical against the Armenian lobby that opposed to Bryza's nomination and later caused his withdrawal from office. In December 2011, *Washington Post* editor, Fred Hiatt, wrote that: "failing nomination of Matthew Bryza, out of public view and without so much as a committee vote, offers a vivid example of how the larger U.S. national interest can fall victim to special-interest jockeying and political accommodation" (The Washington Post, 2011). The journal sought to investigate the case by requesting pro-Armenian Congressmen the name of Turkish officials to which the Bryzas had alleged connections and why such contacts with a major NATO ally should have been considered of concern. However, such requests went unanswered (The Washington Post, 2010).

The case provoked international indignation as Bryza was considered an "exemplary ambassador who has served with distinction" by a group of 36 foreign policy luminaries, which included Thomas Pickering and Nicholas Burns – both former

undersecretaries of state (The Washington Post, 2011). Similarly, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty wrote that: “Bryza has more than 25 years of experience as a U.S. diplomat and was one of the most visible U.S. officials in the Caucasus region during George W. Bush’s administration, serving as deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. He is a former U.S. co-chair of the Minsk Group, which seeks to broker a settlement to the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh” (RFE / RL, 2011). Moreover, according to a Congressional Research Service’s report released last June: “U.S.-Azerbaijani relations appeared to generally improve – with some fits and starts – during 2011-2012 with the recess appointment of Ambassador to Azerbaijan Matthew Bryza, after more than a year without an ambassador” (Nichol, June 2012).

Indeed, Washington encounters difficulties any time it has to appoint an ambassador to Azerbaijan. Bryza was nominated after one year the position remained vacant. Then, after twelve months in charge, his mandate was not confirmed due to the opposition of the Armenian lobby. Then again, Washington needed other six months before appointing a new ambassador. Finally, in June 2012 the Senate finally nominated Ambassador Richard Morningstar as the new U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan (Ria Novosti, 2012).

The nomination of Morningstar did not pass unnoticed to the comments of pro-Armenia Congressmen. On 13 June, 2012, during the confirmation hearing at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senators Robert Menendez and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) urged Morningstar to focus U.S. relations with Baku not only according to energy issues, but also by pressuring Azerbaijan on democracy building, improving its human rights record and finding a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (ANCA, 2012c). Senator Menendez expressed his concerns about President Aliyev’s warmongering declarations and asked Amb. Morningstar about the U.S. stance; he said: “do you think, based upon those types of statements, that the proposed sales of military hardware to be used in conjunction with Azerbaijan’s military helicopter fleet is really in the national interest of the United States?” (ANCA, 2012c). Similarly, Sen. Shaheen asked Morningstar about Israel’s proposal

for an arms deal with Baku worth about \$ 1.5 billion and its impact on regional stability (ANCA, 2012c). In this regard, the ANCA sent seven policy recommendation to the Congress and the White House in which the lobby called the Obama Administration to: “suspend all military aid to Azerbaijan, and stop the sale or transfer to Baku of any military equipment or dual-use items (including the proposed sale of advanced helicopter-based surveillance equipment - DDTC 12-002) (ANCA, 2012b). Following the hearing, ANCA’s Executive Director, Aram Hamparian, commented:

“We join with Armenians in New Jersey, New Hampshire and across America in thanking Senators Menendez and Shaheen for shining a spotlight on the failure of the Obama Administration to stand up to Azerbaijan’s escalating threats and acts of anti-Armenian aggression and worsening human rights record. [...] We were especially gratified, in light of Baku’s recent cross-border attacks into both Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh that Senator Menendez was able to secure assurances from Ambassador-designate Morningstar regarding the very strict scrutiny that clearly must be applied to any potential U.S. military transfers or sales to an Azerbaijani government that has openly pledged to use its growing arsenal to renew its aggression” (ANCA, 2012c).

The question now is whether Amb. Morningstar will have a longer staying in office than his predecessor. Indeed, both Morningstar and Bryza have been working hard to advance negotiation processes over pipelines linking the Caspian Sea with western European countries. In this regard, Morningstar has a long experience in promoting energy security for both the U.S. and its European partners. Previous to his appointment as U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Richard L. Morningstar served since 2009 as Secretary of State’s Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy. Previous to this, he

served as U.S. Ambassador to the European Union, as Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State for Caspian Basin Energy Diplomacy and as Ambassador and Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State on Assistance for the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union. He was also lecturer at universities like the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and Stanford Law School (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Therefore, Morningstar might pose even greater challenge to the Armenian lobby and other non-Armenian lobbies that perceive Azerbaijan as a strong competitor in the energy field. In fact, the project of building the Caspian pipeline, which is supposed to provide European states with more diversification of sources and routes than Russia, is opposed not only by Armenians, but also by other energy-rich countries that see Azerbaijan as a challenger of their oligopolistic position as oil and natural gas suppliers.

3.5 The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and the Southern Gas Corridor

Azerbaijan is an energy rich country. Its estimated oil and natural gas reserves amount at respectively 7 billion barrels per day (bbl/d) as of January 2012 and 30 trillion cubic feet (tcf) as of January 2011 (U.S. Energy Department, 2012). In 2010, Azerbaijan exported about 777,000 bbl/d, with a small contraction with respect to the previous year (about 8 %) due to maintenance of oil facilities in the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oil fields (World Bank, 2012). Oil production is expected to reach its peak in 2012 (U.S. Energy Department, 2012). In 2007, Baku became also a net exporter of natural gas. In 2010, the country produced 589 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas, out of which 350 bcf were used for internal consumption and 239 bcf for export (U.S. Energy Department, 2012).

The 80 % of Azerbaijan's oil export pass through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline (U.S. Energy Department, 2012). The BTC starts from the ACG oil fields in the Caspian Sea and arrives in the Turkish city of Ceyhan, passing through Georgia. From Ceyhan, oil is shipped toward Europe by tanker. Parallel to the BTC runs the South Caucasus gas Pipeline (SCP), also known as Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE). Other gas pipeline projects that should link Azerbaijan with Europe are under discussion. The most known are the Nabucco and its revised project Nabucco-West,

the Trans-Adriatic-Pipeline (TAP) and the expansion of the already existing Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI). These projects are part of the so called “Southern Gas Corridor”; a project aimed at reducing European states’ energy dependence on Russia (ISN, 2012).

Both the BTC and the Southern Gas Corridor have strong geopolitical implications. The BTC was a U.S.-baked project since the early 1990s, as it had to provide diversification of gas supply other than Russia (Gregg, 2002, p. 25). The construction begun in 2003 and in 2006 the first oil reached Ceyhan. The project was strongly opposed by the Armenian lobby in the early 2000s, considering that the pipeline was projected to bypass Armenia, as it finally did. In so far, Yerevan was excluded from the revenues due to transit fees (Gregg, 2002, p. 25). At that time, the ANCA set up a lobbying campaign against the realization of the pipeline. The resolution H.Con.Res.162 was introduced in July 2001 by Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chairmen Joe Knollenberg (R-MI), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), John Sweeney (R-NY) and Joseph Crowley (D-NY). The legislation was composed of four points, whose aim was to block U.S. financial aid to the project unless Armenia was included:

1. the United States should not subsidize any oil or gas pipeline in the South Caucasus whose commercial viability is in doubt or which hinders the United States goal of integrating Armenia into a secure and prosperous regional economic framework;
2. all proposals for South Caucasus oil and gas pipeline routes should be carefully evaluated to ensure that all nations of the Caucasus are included in consideration of energy and trade routes;
3. any engineering and feasibility study, and any project implementation, that utilizes United States Government funds, regarding the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, or similar energy transportation projects, must include trans-Armenian routes; and;

4. the Trade Development Agency should fund and support an oil and gas pipeline feasibility study to determine the cost savings of a trans-Armenia Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. (ANCA, 2001)

In Europe, Armenian lobbies have also sought to discredit the BTC pipeline. Commenting on a 2004 report of the EU Parliament on the “EU Policy toward the South Caucasus” the then EAFJD’s Executive Director, Laurent Leylekian, expressed his concerns about “environmental problems and serious threats to human rights and minority rights that could result from its [BTC] establishment”. Leylekian also expressed his surprise in seeing the Greens so supportive for a project that transport “dirty energies” such as oil and natural gas (EAFJD, 2004; EAFJD, 2009, p. 8). He therefore recommended the EU to “bring about a fair redistribution of the region’s energy resources that would ease tensions and offer a sustainable solution [...] That would be in the interest of the South Caucasus as well as the EU” (EAFJD, 2004). Later, when the pipeline was already completed the EAFJD criticized the lack of security measures to protect the BTC from terrorist attacks. In particular, the lobby mentioned the risk of Turkish separatist group “Kurdistan Workers’ Party” also known as PKK (EAFJD, 2008b). It said the pipeline passes from an area where the PKK are very active and that neither Turkey nor Azerbaijan can assure its security. This time, however, the transatlantic interest prevailed over the lobbying; hence the BTC was finally operative since 2006.

Although these claims might be true, these concerns do not take into account the overall strategy that both the U.S. and the EU conceive behind these projects. In this regard, Ambassador Morningstar once made it explicit by saying that: “The US government BTC pipeline strategy has three goals: to promote international energy security, to promote the strategic security of the region, and to ensure that energy development helped to promote civil society in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey” (Grennan, 2003). In particular, Washington conceives pipelines as a bridge for transferring peace, security, economic development and human rights in the Caucasus. Morningstar stated:

“Some people argued that the United States should not deal with the countries of the Caspian until they improved their record on democracy and human rights. [...] While these are very serious issues, I - and other people in the U.S. government - believed then, and believe today, that if you stay engaged and make a good faith effort in this region from the beginning, things will continue to incrementally improve in the region over time” (Grennan, 2003).

The Southern Gas Corridor is part of the same strategy. On 26 June, 2012, Azerbaijan and Turkey signed an agreement on the realization of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP). The TANAP is a \$ 7 billion project for a 16 billion cubic metres (570 bcf) gas pipeline reaching Europe from Azerbaijan through Turkey (Reuters, 2012). The 80 % of the stake is hold by SOCAR (Azerbaijan’s state oil company) while the remaining 20 % is hold by Turkish’s oil companies BOTAŞ and TPAO with a share of 10 % each (OSW, 2010). The construction is expected to start at the end of 2013 – beginning of 2014. It should be operative since 2018 (Reuters, 2012). The signing of the TANAP agreement brings the realization of the Southern Gas Corridor to a new phase, as it would be compatible with the Nabucco West project when and if it will be realized. The Southern Gas Corridor should increase Europe’s energy security by granting sources of supply and transit routes other than Russia’s, from which the EU is already dependent by 25 % for its natural gas imports. In this regard, Azerbaijan plays a key role in the diversification of Europe’s natural gas supply. In fact, Azerbaijan would be both a natural gas supplier and a transit country once the natural gas from Central Asian states will be available. Accordingly, former U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan Matthew Bryza said at the 11th annual Georgian International Oil, Gas, Infrastructure and Energy Conference & Showcase in Tbilisi: “Europe intends to develop gas trade everywhere. If gas trade will be organized in Netherlands, Belgium, France and other countries, the gas market network will be established in these countries passing through Europe.

Azerbaijan can play a major role in this field. “Southern Corridor” is one of the most important projects for European gas supply. However, the project is impossible without Azerbaijan.” (APA, 2012)

As mentioned before, the Southern Gas Corridor has evident geostrategic implications. In fact, it is directly competing with Russia’s South Stream project, which is seeking to replace all EU/US-backed alternatives. The signing of the TANAP agreement was therefore unwelcomed by Moscow. Russia’s state-owned gas company Gazprom made the point very clearly. In an email-statement issued on 29 June, Gazprom’s spokesman Sergei Kupriyanov declared that if the TANAP project is “completed as planned in 2018, Turkey could then apply for help to Baku” (Reuters, 2012b). In other words, if Turkey proceeds with the realization of the TANAP, Moscow will not provide any emergency gas supply to Ankara. Obviously, the same might happen to Baku.

3.5 Eurovision and human rights

In May 2011 the Azerbaijani singers Ell & Nikki won the Eurovision song contest. The victory granted Azerbaijan the opportunity to host the prestigious event, which took place in Baku on May 22-26, 2012. The contest has also been the occasion for Baku to show the developments made so far to an international audience, as well as to demonstrate its reliability in hosting an international event.

However, the Europe-wide media attention around Eurovision has represented also a great opportunity for Armenia and its lobby to attack Baku on its public image. With respect to Azerbaijan, in fact, Armenia has adopted the same victim stance as it did with Turkey, although Yerevan occupies the 16 % of Azerbaijan’s territory. In this regard, the bulk of Armenia’s propaganda is aimed at blaming Azerbaijan for its aggressive rhetoric and for the violation of human rights. This is usually pursued by remarking facts or declarations made by Azerbaijani authorities with regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh. Similarly, Yerevan is very keen in putting the stress on real or alleged human-rights violations carried out by Baku and, at the same time, downplaying its own. The distribution of incomplete or even distort information to influence international public opinion is part of this strategy.

Yerevan always depicts Azerbaijan as an aggressive authoritarian regime comparable to that of Belarus (EuFoA, 2011), or that of the Taliban's in Afghanistan (EAFJD, 2009). For instance, in the EAFJD report, the Brussels-based lobby compared the destruction of the Julfa cemetery to the destruction of the Buddahs of Bamiyan in Afghanistan by the Taliban. In this regard, in response to a statement of MEP Isler-Beguín (Greens-France), who called for equal judgment on Azerbaijan taking into account the cultural heritage destroyed by Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, the report says that:

“for the Greens group, a testified and universally condemnable act – exactly similar to the destruction of Bamiyan's Buddahs by the Talibans – must be tolerated if not concealed because of external religious considerations et according to the idea that one should keep the “balance” between an aggressor and its victims” (EAFJD, 2009, p. 14).

The Eurovision contest provided, therefore, the right stage for delivering similar attacks. Since Azerbaijan won the competition last year, there has been a questioning in Armenia whether to participate or not. Finally, in March 2012 Armenia announced its decision to withdraw from the contest. The decision was taken after a boycott campaign raised by Armenian singers following the death of an Armenian soldier in the Line of Control. Armenian media reported on 23 February that Albert Adibekyan, an Armenian soldier serving along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, was shot dead by an Azerbaijani sniper (Epress.am, 2012a). A day after, a group of 22 Armenian pop singers launched a campaign to boycott the contest. In the statement they said the incident occurred “at a time when the mediators in the negotiation process of the Karabakh conflict have for several times called on the conflicting parties to withdraw snipers from the Line of Contact, [...] Azerbaijan, as we can see, not only does not accept the proposal but also takes advantage of every occasion to shed the blood of Armenians. [...] We refuse to appear in a country that is

well-known for mass killings and massacres of Armenians, in a country where anti-Armenian sentiments have been elevated to the level of state policy” (Tert.am, 2012).

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), responsible for the Eurovision contests, expressed its regret for Armenia’s decision to withdraw from the competition. The Eurovision’s executive supervisor, Jon Ola Sand, said the EBU did all efforts to ensure the participation of the Armenian delegation, but the circumstances were beyond their control (AFP, 2012b). However, the EBU later fined Armenia for the late withdrawal. Therefore, Armenia had to pay the full fee for participation plus an additional fine of 50 % of the total amount. In addition, it was forced to broadcast the finals of Eurovision. Moreover, in case Yerevan would have not been compliant, the country would have been excluded from the 2013 edition of the song contest (RiaNovosti, 2012).

The situation became more embarrassing when in June the Armenian Defence Ministry publicly admitted that the Armenian soldier was not killed by an Azerbaijani sniper, rather by another Armenian conscript (Epress.am, 2012b). The admission came quite late, as a human rights NGO, the Helsinki Association for Human Rights (HAHR), already reported in March that according to the autopsy of the dead soldier the bullet was fired “only 7 meters from him” (Epress.am, 2012b; ArmeniaNow, 2012). According to the HAHR’s expert Ruben Martirosyan: “there is a new way of calling the murders committed in border military bases - to hide the case, attributing the blame to a [Azeri] sniper, to gain dividends in front of the international community. Parents will be comforted believing that their child has died as a hero. But this will simply destroy our army” (ArmeniaNow, 2012).

Apart from this disinformation campaign, Armenia found also fertile terrain in attacking Azerbaijan’s public image. Indeed, Azerbaijan is endeavoured to improve its democratic standards as requested by the EU and the Council of Europe. The country, in fact, is still affected by corruption in different spheres of public life. For this reason, anti-corruption measures have been implemented in recent years, although they will take years before becoming fully effective. Furthermore,

censorship against critical media is also practiced. Finally, Azerbaijan has to improve dialogue with the opposition in a more constructive way (Freedom House, 2012a). However, the same can be said to Armenia. The country, in fact, is considered by international NGOs as a “Semi-consolidated authoritarian regime” (Freedom House, 2012b). Violent repression of dissidents’ protests, for instance, has been widely documented by NGOs and international media.

One well documented example is the bloody crackdown occurred during the violent protests following the 2008 presidential elections. The election, which saw the victory of President Serj Sargsyan, has been considered “insufficient regard for standards essential to democratic elections” by the OSCE (OSCE/ODIHR, 2008, p. 1). OSCE’s Election Observation Mission (EOM) found attempts of manipulation, intimidation and biased media coverage in favour of candidate Sargsyan (OSCE/ODIHR, 2008, p. 2).

However, what gathered international media attention was not the election *per se*, rather the violent crackdown that followed. The OSCE reported that 10 people were killed, more than 200 injured and around 130 arrested in the clashes occurred on 1 March in Yerevan (OSCE/ODIHR, 2008, p. 2). According to a report released by Human Rights Watch (HRW), police attacked peaceful protesters with truncheons, teargas, electric shock devices and tracer bullets (HRW, 2009). Moreover, several illegal actions were committed during the detention and interrogation of arrested demonstrators. Verbal and physical abuses were reported during the arrest, the transportation and custody in police stations. One of the victim said HRW he was: “forced to lie down in the van and a policeman in a black mask put a foot on his face, pinning him flat down, while another one kicked him in the back, head, and stomach.” (HRW, 2009, p. 42). To another victim police threatened to rape his wife and daughter, as well as to rape him with a truncheon (HRW, 2009, p. 43). In all this,

authorities did not allow the arrested to contact their family, nor a lawyer, hence in open violation of international treaties on human right to which Armenia is party to⁴.



Despite this, the Armenian lobby has been able to downplay such events in international institutions like the European Parliament, where some of its members tend to apply a double-standard to Armenia and Azerbaijan. For instance, in a question for written answer addressed to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, MEP Charles Tannock (ECR-UK) raised concerned over alleged violations of civil and human rights before and during the Eurovision song contest in Azerbaijan (Tannock, 29 May 2012). Therefore, he demanded the High Representative if she would “take this opportunity to outline the EU’s concerns to Baku over these worrying human rights allegations in the EUs Eastern Neighbourhood” (Tannock, 29 May 2012). However, MEP Tannock did not raise any similar concerns over civil/human rights violations in Armenia following the 2008 presidential elections. MEP Tannock’s tendency to apply a double standard to Armenia and Azerbaijan might be justified by his anti-Turkish/Turkic bias. In March 2012, in fact, he blamed Turkey and Azerbaijan for imposing a 20-years long embargo to the “peaceful” and “democratic” Armenia, he said:

“Mrs Jäätteenmäki – this was again in the interpretation – you said that Turkey had been a force for good in the work it has done in its region. How then do you account for the fact that it has kept the border closed and imposed an embargo on peaceful, democratic Armenia for 20 years, for no other reason than the fact

⁴ European Convention on the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol.

that it sides with its cousins in Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh? How can you justify a boycott on a country like Armenia purely because of your solidarity with some other country? This is absolutely unparalleled in any other place in the world. So what good is it doing in terms of keeping its border with Armenia shut?" (Tannock, 28 March 2012).

Similarly, Bundestag member Viola von Cramon-Taubadel (Alliance '90/The Greens), who is the deputy-Chairman of the Parliamentary Friendship group for Relations with Southern Caucasus, has also applied a double standard by voicing her intention to include the Eurovision issue into the agenda of the Bundestag. "I shall strive to appeal to the EU countries to boycott the Eurovision 2012," she said. One has to note that her stance is directly in line with the new ideological orientation of the Green Party, which has joined the anti-Azerbaijani



campaign waged in Germany by various political parties, think tanks and private foundations, including the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. All these organisations continue to bring discreet support to opposition groups in Azerbaijan.

In the same time, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel has visited Armenia on several occasions and has openly expressed her friendship and admiration for this country. She has also been a strong defender of the participation of Yerevan state University to the "International Parliamentary Scholarship" of the Bundestag. Indeed Viola von Cramon-Taubadel held a meeting in the framework of this program with representatives of the scientific and educational sectors in Armenia in November 2011. Interestingly, the program hasn't been open to Azerbaijani students although there were 15 scholarship holders coming from Armenia in 2011. Finally it is worth

to mention that in September 2011 she met former Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan along with other members of the Bundestag and of the Armenian national Congress.



The same can be said of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's (PACE) special rapporteur on political prisoners in Azerbaijan Christoph Strässer. Strässer has also called people to ignore the holding of the Eurovision song contest in Baku because “human rights are being violated in Azerbaijan”. He has also claimed that he could not visit Azerbaijan because “he was unable to obtain the necessary government invitation to apply for a visa”. One should recall that Azerbaijani authorities specified that all European citizens are welcome in the country.

Christoph Strässer, who is a close ally of former German chancellor and Gazprom executive Gerhard Schröder, has adopted an openly hostile position towards Azerbaijan. According to many experts, one can analyse his stance as the art of a strategy aiming at blocking access to European Energy market. To recall, Gerhard



Schröder is a strong advocate of the Nord Stream pipeline. Schröder, in fact, has been appointed at the head of the consortium project. Christoph Strässer’s political action regarding South Caucasus should therefore be considered as a part of the commercial competition between Nord Stream AG and other potential suppliers of Energy in Azerbaijan.

Finally, the other PACE monitoring group rapporteur Andreas Gross has also applied a double standard over Azerbaijan’s democratic process.

Following November 2000 elections in Azerbaijan, he said: “Since 1994 I have observed 13 elections in 7 countries and this was the worst election fraud I saw. An hour before the opening of the polling station I found 150 completed, signed and stamped ballots for the ruling party in a safe. All day on Sunday only around 350 citizens came to the polling station. In other words, the results were obviously a foregone conclusion” (ESI, 2012, p. 5). Two remarks have to be made. First, there was no other confirmation about the data provided by Gross concerning the alleged violations. Second, no similar critics were moved against the violence in Armenia following the already mentioned elections.

Conclusions

The Armenian lobby has been playing a major role in the enmity relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Indeed, Armenia has been very successful in protecting and promoting its interests in the international arena at detriment of its regional enemies: Turkey and Azerbaijan. The resolution on the genocide, the Section 907 and the campaigns against the BTC/Southern Corridor are only some of the most evident examples. Propaganda campaigns have been carried out in order to depict Azerbaijan as a pariah state in Europe, while at the same time promoting the image of Armenia as a well consolidated democracy. The truth, as often happens, stands in the middle.

Azerbaijan is a transition country whose path toward democracy is still on the way, above all as concerns electoral process, corruption and freedom of speech. However, neither does Armenia's. Since its independence, Baku has had to struggle for its territorial integrity, against poverty and the risk of domestic terrorism. These were the first contingences the country had to face once it regained the status of independent political entity. In this regard, the Armenia lobby has contributed to isolate the country from international assistance, hence slowing down the process for the building of a stronger civil society and a more democratic form of government.

Some of these contingencies are still in place, since Armenia is still occupying part of Azerbaijan's territories such as Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding provinces. However, Baku has turned out successful in coping with the other contingences: poverty and terrorism.

According to the World Bank, in fact, Azerbaijan has been able to reduce poverty from 50 % to 7.6 % in the period 2001-2011 (World Bank, 2012). A World Bank's report says that a raise in minimum wages by 10 % in 2012, a drop in unemployment to 4.2 % and the implementation of social welfare reforms have contributed to such decline, which should further decrease in the future. With regard to social safety, the World Bank reports that the Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) program "is among the best performing in terms of targeting accuracy and helping people to cope with poverty and shocks" (World Bank, 2012, p. 4). Similarly, the automated

Management Information System (MIS) for pension is “recognized as the best practice in the region” (World Bank, 2012, p. 4).

Similar successes were obtained through reforms to fight religious extremism. Following the independence, poverty, low level of education, poor living standards and widespread corruption paved the way to extremist interpretations of Muslim religion (Gafarli, 2012). In that period, radical groups from Iran, the Middle East, North Caucasus (Dagestan and Chechnya) and Turkey were proliferating in the country (ICG, 2008). One should note that the country is indeed at the crossroad between Iran, Turkey and Dagestan. Thus, since 2003 Azerbaijani security forces have undertaken several operations against terrorist cells of organizations like Hezbollah, Al Qaeda and Forest Brothers (ICG, 2008). In this regard, the U.S. Department of State recognized that Azerbaijan has been successful in “reducing the presence of terrorist facilitators and hampering their activities” (U.S. Department of State, 2011). In its annual *Country Report on Terrorism*, the U.S. Department of State mentioned that Baku has been very effective in contrasting terrorists’ activities in money laundering and transfer of other materials. In particular, the report says that “The Government of Azerbaijan has demonstrated an increasing level of professionalism in anti-money laundering and counterterrorist financing (AML/CTF) since 2009” (U.S. Department of State, 2011).

Of course, Azerbaijan still needs to improve its civil and human rights record. For this purpose, Baku has to strengthen its cooperation with western states and institutions like the United States, the European Union and the Council of Europe. At the same time, it is essential that such actors decide to strongly engage Azerbaijan’s issues in a less biased and a more constructive way.

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