The Transitional Period Framework for the Restoration of the Integrity of Armenian Statehood

Hratchya and Armine Arzumanyan

Introduction: Historical and Strategic Contexts

The collapse of the USSR led to the formation of the post-Soviet space with its own logic and grammar. The absence of established political elites, as well as the power centers' consensus that the post-Soviet is a post-imperial one did not allow young states to go beyond proposed frameworks during assessing of national goals, challenges and threats. The problems of Armenian statehood, including the problem of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), can also be viewed through the lens of the post-Soviet frame.

The Artsakh conflict in its current form originated during the period of formation of the USSR. In its efforts to overcome the international isolation and achieve international recognition, the Soviet Union, upon a decision adopted within the framework of regulating its bilateral relations with the Turkey, transferred Artsakh and Nakhijevan into the Azerbaijani SSR. In 1923, on the part of the territory of historical Artsakh, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (region) was formed (NKAO). As a result of the collapse of the USSR by the end of the 20th century, two state formations came into being on the territory of the former Azerbaijani SSR: the internationally recognized Republic of Azerbaijan which declared itself the legal successor of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan of 1918-1920, and the unrecognized Republic of Artsakh that was forced since early days to organize its self-defense in an existential war. The logic and grammar of the post-Soviet space, as well as the pressure of the geopolitical centers of power, led to the fact that the concept of two states was chosen as a framework of Armenian statehood, which created many problems stemming from the disintegration of the space of Armenian statehood.

Qualitative changes in the world's political system and security environment lead to the dissolution of the post-Soviet space, which is becoming a part of political history. Currently, processes in the South Caucasus should

not be viewed in isolation from processes in the Greater Middle East, forcing post-Soviet states to adapt their policies and strategies to the emerging security environment. The finality of the post-Soviet period was clearly manifested in Armenia. Armenia's limited resources on the one hand, and the need to form a response to existential threats on the other led to a deep systemic crisis and awareness of the exhaustion and dangers of the post-Soviet frame. The velvet revolution of 2018, that made possible by the mobilization of the Armenian people during and after the April war of 2016, was the response of the Armenian people to the failure of the post-Soviet ruling elite eventually removed from power.[1] A process of systemic (revolutionary) reforms has begun in Armenia, and its implementation requires gathering the potential of the entire Armenian people.

The realization of the completeness of the post-Soviet phase of the Armenian history leads to the need to initiate a transition period, within which the negative consequences of the post-Soviet period will be overcome and conditions for further development will be created. The development of Armenian statehood in the transition period requires the development of a *framework for the transition period* that would inter alia close the gaps in the space of Armenian statehood and allow the creation of a United Armenia on the basis of two Armenian states and finalized the process of "Miatsum" (Reunification). Within the limits of this piece, precisely these aspects of the framework of the transition period are addressed.

1. United Armenia as an Element of the Transitional Framework

The transition period framework should create the conditions for overcoming external and internal constrains and achieving de jure unification of the two Armenian states of the post-Soviet period. Given the complexity of regional and geopolitical challenges and threats, the framework suggests completing the architecture of Armenian statehood, when the Republic of

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1 Arzumanian, Hrachya. *Velvet Revolution in Armenia: Challenges and Opportunities*. In: Labarre, Frederic and Niculescu George (Ed.): South Caucasus: Leveraging Political Change in a Context of Strategic Volatility. 18th Workshop of the Study Group, National Defence Academy at the Austrian Ministry of Defence, Vienna, April 2019, pp. 105-118.

Armenia and Artsakh would be elements or units of a united state.[2] The three main forms of unification of the Armenian states can be outlined: confederation, federation and unitary state. The creation of a federal state of United Armenia with a presidential form of government seems to be the best solution in the evolving security environment.

In the process of building United Armenia, Armenian statehood will have a hybrid character since into the future federation will include states having different form of sovereignty,[3] statuses in the international arena and different types of state power organization. United Armenia will include the Republic of Armenia recognized by the international community and the de facto existing but unrecognized Artsakh. In addition, the Republic of Armenia today is a state with a parliamentary system of government, and Artsakh – a presidential one.

Thus, United Armenia within the transitional period framework is a hybrid federal state that will evolve or transform depending on the state-building strategy and the emerging context of the security environment. The development and implementation of a transitional framework will require the creation of a body, the Task Force, to coordinate the efforts of all branches of government of both Armenian states. The creation of the Task Force within the framework of the Security Councils of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh seems most natural. At a certain stage of framework unfolding, the creation of an Interstate Commission may be required. The participation of the Armenian diaspora, as well as the powers and functions of the Task Force and the Interstate Commission are a political task that must be solved at the earliest stages of framework development.

An integral part of the transitional framework is the principles, strategy, roadmap and procedures on the basis of which it will unfold in time. The

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2 Breuilly, J and Speirs, R. *The Concept of National Unification*. In: Speirs, R/Breuilly, J (Eds.). Germany's Two Unifications. New Perspectives in German Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2005.

3 Arzumanian, Hrachya. *Armenian statehood and sovereignty games*. In: Felberbauer, Ernst and Labarre, Frederic, (Eds.): What Kind of Sovereignty? Examining Alternative Governance Models in the South Caucasus. 8th Workshop of the Study Group Regional Stability in the South Caucasus, National Defence Academy, Vienna, 2014, pp. 133-148.

principles of reforming the constitutional field of Armenian statehood, the possible structure and functions of the main branches of power of the United Armenia, as well as the principles of the Artsakh settlement within the framework are discussed below.

1.1 The principles of reforming the constitutional field of Armenian statehood

Within the framework of the transition period, it will be necessary to clarify the principles on the basis of which the constitutional field of United Armenia is to be created.

The constitutional field will be developing on a large scale of time. In the post-Soviet period, a negative trend was shaped in Armenia. The ruling elites make changes to the constitutional field based on the logic of power struggle instead of adapting to the shifts in the global political arena. The existing global experience unequivocally states that such an attitude to the constitution ultimately leads to degradation of society and the state. The development of the transitional framework will require updates in the philosophy of nation building when changes in the constitutional field and reforms take place on a larger scale of time.

Creating conditions for restoring the integrity of the constitutional field of Armenian statehood. The constitutional field of Armenian statehood in the post-Soviet period was torn apart as two different constitutions are operating in the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh. Within the framework of the transition period, the constitutions of the Armenian states should be synchronized and brought to a common constitutional architecture. Thus, the necessary conditions will be created for the development of a shared constitution for United Armenia, restoring the integrity of the constitutional field of Armenian statehood.

The constitutional field is the future of Armenia. The constitutional field should not merely state current conditions, but also shape the future of Armenian statehood. In a sense, we can talk about projected activity and philosophy, when constitutional activity does not formalize, but forms Armenian statehood based on the 21st century vision of Armenia.

The Armenian people today is a global phenomenon. Up to 80 percent of Armenian people live outside of Armenia. The constitutional field should take into account the rights and obligations of this part of the Armenian people in relation to Armenian statehood. The Armenian constitutional field should also create the prerequisites for restoring the succession of Armenian statehood based on the decisions of the League of Nations, other international treaties concluded by the First Republic before its annexation by the USSR.

Thus, the constitutional field of Armenian statehood within the transitional framework should be able to describe the possible changes in the boundaries and status of Armenia in the turbulent environment of the Greater Middle East without the need to make changes to its architecture. The constitutional field should be able to shape both the Armenian statehood, localized in the Armenian Highlands, and the Diaspora, reflecting the realities of the Armenian people of the 21st century. The Armenian constitutional field should be inclusive, not exclusive, encouraging and supporting the openness of the Armenian society and people.

1.2 The structure and functions of the main branches of power of the United Armenia

The following part briefly discusses the possible structure and functions of the main branches of power of the United Armenia, as well as the issues of interaction and the mandate of the Republic of Armenia, Artsakh and United Armenia within the framework of the transitional period.

Executive power. Relations between executive bodies of the United Armenia, the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh are hierarchical. The deployment of the executive power of the United Armenia would be based on the relevant institutions of the Republic of Armenia through the complication of the functions. Armenian statehood already has appropriate experience on the example of the formation of the Joint Armed Forces of Armenia on the basis of the Artsakh Defense Army and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia.

Representative power. The deployment of a federal state will require changes in the architecture of representative power. The existing structures of representative power of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh should be

supplemented by the bodies of United Armenia, organized in two chambers: the Supreme Assembly (lower house) and the Senate (upper house). The Supreme Assembly of United Armenia represents the interests of citizens residing in the territory of Armenian states. The Senate allows ensuring the integrity of the Armenian people by representing the interests, rights and obligations of the Armenian diaspora within the framework of Armenian statehood.

Judicial branch. The judicial system of United Armenia should also be unified. The existing judicial system of the Armenian states needs radical reforms. The implementation of judicial reforms to shape the judicial system of United Armenia is a complex problem given the large scale of time that developing such a system requires. For example, the new judicial system will have to redistribute power between local and supreme courts providing, on the one hand, a balance between the integrity and hierarchy of the system as a whole, and broad autonomy and independence of the judiciary at the local level, on the other.

2. Principles of Artsakh Settlement within the Framework of the Transitional Period

The creation of United Armenia allows us to simplify the process of Artsakh settlement, bringing its description and interpretation closer to the existing reality. The conflict around Artsakh, as a legacy of the USSR, evolved in the post-Soviet period adapting to the changing security environment. The creation of United Armenia allows the international community to operate with one actor from the Armenian side, while retaining the opportunity to reach a settlement within the framework of various scenarios, depending on how the processes will develop in the international arena and how the format for resolving the Artsakh problem will evolve. Two possible scenarios of the Artsakh settlement and the way they are described in the framework of the transition period are discussed below.

Scenario 1. The parties to the conflict recognize the existing reality.

In this scenario, the long-term viability of the dynamic status quo is recognized and efforts are made to restore the distorted format of negotiations and return Artsakh to the negotiating table as one of the main parties to the

conflict along with Azerbaijan. Republic of Armenia preserves the role of the security guarantor of Artsakh, but is no longer perceived as a party of the conflict.

Within the framework of the transition period and the creation of United Armenia, Artsakh takes part in the discussion of the problems of settlement and retains the necessary foreign policy functions broadly transferred to the Foreign Ministry of United Armenia. The settlement around Artsakh in this case comes down to solving the problem of amendment of boundary between Azerbaijan and Artsakh, as two state actors formed on the territory of the Azerbaijan SSR as a result of the collapse of the USSR.

The conflict settlement in this case is limited to the territory of the former Azerbaijan SSR and allows to avoid increasing the scale of the problem and the number of actors involved in its resolution. At the same time, the international community will not have to find ways to formalize the status of Artsakh as a state entity within the framework of international law by virtue of Artsakh becoming a part of United Armenia and its succession to the Democratic Republic of Armenia.

The main problem of this scenario is for the international community to convince or coerce Azerbaijan to agree with the recognition of Artsakh as a party of the conflict and the main state actor with whom it negotiates without initiating large-scale hostilities as it used to be in 1992-94.

Scenario 2. Recognition of the necessity to restore status quo ante by the parties of the conflict.

Within this scenario, a problem arises with determining the point of return and clarifying the actors who are parties of the conflict and participating in the settlement process. By acknowledging the completion of not only the Soviet, but also the post-Soviet period, it seems appropriate to roll back to a point before the emergence of the USSR. In this case, the new frame will be built on international treaties signed after the end of the First World War and the decisions of the League of Nations. Azerbaijan, recognizing itself as the legal successor of Democratic Azerbaijan, appeals to this basis. The consent of United Armenia to move to the same basis will create the necessary legal prerequisites for the evolving of this scenario.

In this case, the existing statement of the Artsakh problem, which is the result of decisions taken within the USSR, is removed. The parties to the conflict are United Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the problem itself is reduced to clarifying the borders and signing a peace treaty between these actors. The Republic of Artsakh, as part of United Armenia, reserves the right to veto decisions made by actors if they do not take into account the interests of the Artsakh society.

Within this scenario, the Artsakh problem is being generalized as an element of the international Armenian issue when the borders between United Armenia and Azerbaijan should be clarified not only in the Artsakh direction, but, for example, in Nakhichevan. In addition, the circle of actors directly involved in the settlement process will expand. Nonetheless, reaching a settlement under this scenario will make it possible to achieve long-term peace with the inevitable revision of the role and place of geopolitical and regional centers of power in the South Caucasus.

3. United Armenia in a Regional and Broader International Outlook

As discussed above, the necessity to establish a hybrid Armenian state through a unification of the recognized Republic of Armenia and the unrecognized de-facto independent Republic of Artsakh is a direct consequence of the growing inapplicability of general and regional policies and governance approaches typical for the USSR and the post-Soviet space to the current political and security environment of both the Armenian states and the South Caucasus as a whole. The existing international approaches and frameworks regarding the settlement of the Artsakh issue focus mainly on updating the status of Artsakh as related solely to that of Azerbaijan and not Armenia. Those frameworks, too, have proved to be practically inapplicable, lengthy and essentially fruitless for the past three decades.

This work views a unification of the two Armenian states as a better-applicable approach. Rather than altering the sovereign status of Artsakh as related solely to Azerbaijan and seeking international recognition for Artsakh's status separately, this piece suggests a mutually agreed unification of two democratic Armenian states into a hybrid federation and seeking international recognition for the newly emerged federation as a whole. The gross domestic bases of this unification have been in place for more than

two decades, while rapid changes in regional and global politics and the necessity of better-suited conflict settlement frameworks in the South Caucasus create space and opportunity for it. Two scenarios of Azerbaijan's potential response to this unification and the effect it would have on the settlement of the Artsakh issue have been discussed above. The following part of the work will address the expected regional and broader international responses to the emergence of Unified Armenia and its international recognition.

While assessing each of these responses separately, three important aspects of the unification scenario should be paid particular attention to. First and foremost, given that Artsakh has existed as a de-facto independent state, its will to form a federation with the Republic of Armenia upon mutual agreement as a new type of hybrid statehood cannot be viewed as an annexation of the Republic of Artsakh by the Republic of Armenia. This approach does not aim at promoting the Republic of Armenia to exercise direct sovereignty upon Artsakh, which would simply make Artsakh a new part of an already existing state. It aims to create a *new hybrid sovereign state* including both the Republic of Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia. It is not an annexation we would seek international recognition for, but a new form of Armenian statehood in general.

Second, Miatsum will alter the status of both Artsakh and Armenia while each one will preserve its own functions within the federation resulting in the formation of a new actor, thus responses to this unification are to be assessed as responses to the emergence of a new regional actor in the first place. In this context, the changes in Artsakh's status become a part of bigger updates and not *the main* update. Moreover, the issue of Artsakh's own recognition as an independent state grows essentially unnecessary in this scenario and can, thus, be omitted.

Third, the creation of United Armenia will solve a major power and security vacuum in the South Caucasus and broader regions. The roots of the Artsakh issue lay in the changes of administrative borders in the USSR as a deliberate act of creating a grey zone to make both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the region in general more vulnerable and easy to control. The dissolution of this vacuum will leave Russia – the predominant geopolitical actor in the region for the past two centuries – and other center of power

significantly less maneuvering space making the South Caucasus more stable which, given its crucial geographic location and geopolitical significance, contributes to stability in a broader strategic environment of West Asia and Eastern Europe.

Expected and/or potential responses of Georgia, Russia, Iran, Turkey, the West, China and Israel to the emergence of United Armenia are addressed below.

3.1 Georgia and Iran: Regional Stability as the utmost priority

The Republic of Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran are Armenia's valued regional allies and nations with which Armenia shares millennia-long history of complex relations and friendship. Some of the most important shared values of the three stations are prioritizing regional stability and perceiving our lasting bonds with mutual respect. Of course, the decisions of each nation are, first of all, based on its own domestic and foreign policy priorities.

The main aspect of Georgia's foreign policy priorities that are interconnected with its potential response to the emergence of United Armenia is Georgia's worsening relations with Russia.[4] Given that the EU and NATO integration procedures are far from being finalized yet, the Russian-Georgian crisis suggests and requires increased volumes of regional cooperation.[5] This, once again, reassures that Georgia in the coming decade is most likely to prioritize regional stability. In case of the creation of United Armenia, Georgia would not want to put itself in a position where it has to choose between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Prioritizing regional stability and the intent to keep its relation with all regional states on a positive note, Georgia is most likely to stay neutral and urge its neighbors to sort out their relations as fast and efficiently as possible. Georgia's recognition of

4 Ragozin, Leonid. *What is behind the recent spat between Georgia and Russia?* In: Al Jazeera, 16.7.2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/spat-georgia-russia-190715132122083.html>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

5 Lebanidze, Bidzina and Grigalashvili, Mariam. *Not EU's world? Putting Georgia's European Integration in Context.* In: The Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP), 13.9.2018. http://gip.ge/not-eus-world-putting-georgias-european-integration-in-context/>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

United Armenia is not expected in the early phases, but given that the creation of United Armenia ultimately stabilizes the region Georgia is likely to consider recognition in the long term.

The main aspect of Georgia's domestic policy interlinked to the United Armenia scenario is the presence of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian issues. Georgia does put regional stability first in terms of foreign policy. However, how would solving the Artsakh issue by creating United Armenia influence the resolution of Georgia's own territorial issues?

The logic of a unification of the Armenian states is practically and essentially inapplicable for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Miatsum is a unification based on shared ethnic, political, military and historic ties. The Republic of Armenia and Artsakh are two majority-Armenian sates. As for South Ossetia, a similar unification with North Ossetia requires formal unification with the Russian Federation. If applicable, this unification would have taken place after the 2008 Russian-Georgian war and would in fact constitute annexation by Russia. The severe international response to the annexation of Crimea and the sanctions consequently imposed on Russia have severely damaged the Russian economy.[6] This, among other things, explains Russia's tolerance toward China's Central Asian takeover. Russia needs the economic alliance with China to redeem its suffering economy to an extent it accepted losing absolute strategic and economic dominance over Central Asia to China.

Given this severe reaction of the international community to the annexation of Crimea and its destructive effect on Russia's domestic and foreign politics, to risk the annexation scenario for an Ossetian unification considering its limited strategic significance is no option for Russia, making it a self-eliminating option for South Ossetia. Thus, a unification of Armenian states is not set to influence the Ossetian issue or give rise to new developments unfavorable for Georgia.

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6 Doff, Natasha. *Russia Still Paying Price for Crimea Five Years After Annexation*. Bloomberg, 17.03.2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-17/russia-still-paying-price-for-crimea-five-years-after-annexation>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

As for Abkhazia, there simply is no state – either recognized, unrecognized or federal – to consider an Armenia-inspired unification process with. The only plausible scenario is unification with the Russian Federation, which, for reasons addressed above, is unlikely to take place. The only applicable option is to consider Miatsum as the precedent for the creation of a Georgian-Abkhazian-Ossetian confederation meeting the expectation of all parties of the conflict by giving the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia a certain level of sovereignty and preserving Georgia's conventional territorial integrity through shifts in the nature of statehood used over the territory. Notable, granting these regions autonomy within of a Georgian republic has proved to be an ineffective and unsustainable, but to grant the regions a status of republics equal to Georgia within a Georgian federation might work better and help satisfy the demands of the break-away regions. Consequently, it is safe to assume that the emergence of United Armenia would bear little to no unfavorable and/or harmful upheavals to Georgia's territorial disputes and cannot serve as a precedent for deepening the South Ossetia or Abkhazia issues. Georgia's overall domestic and foreign policy priorities, thus, are in line with Miatsum.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, like Georgia, prioritizes regional stability. Nonetheless, Iran's foreign policy and the way it interacts with other regional and global actors are different from those of Georgia. The strategic and economic components to Iran's foreign policy do not necessarily coincide, unlike Georgia's. The volume of Iran's economic cooperation with Azerbaijan exceeds that of Armenia.[7] Nonetheless, though formally neutral on the Artsakh issue, Iran's long-term strategic disposition in the Caucasus goes in line with Armenia's. This is explained by Iran's aspiration to maintain a balance of power.[8] Azerbaijan's is richer of resources and Iran's active engagement with Azerbaijan is logical and easily comprehensible. However, Azerbaijan as a Turkic state and its close ties with Turkey and

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7 "Iran-Azerbaijan 6-month trade more than doubled". In: Tehran Times, 3.8.2019. https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/438877/Iran-Azerbaijan-6-month-trade-more-than-doubled>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

8 Giragosian, Richard and Sharashenidze, Thornike. *Engaging Iran: Implications for the South Caucasus.* In: The European Council on Foreign Relations. 18.9.2015. <https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_engaging_iran_implications_for_the_south_caucasus4022>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

Israel build up a strategic environment unfavorable for Iran. Pan-Turkic aspirations of Azerbaijan and Turkey aiming to establish Turkic dominance create a strategic landscape where Armenia's and Iran's strategic priorities coincide.

The creation of United Armenia would bring four strategic shifts that contribute to the balance of power Iran seeks. First, by dissolving the now-prominent power and security vacuum, it would stabilize the Caucasus as a whole. Second, it would strengthen Armenia's positions facing pan-Turkic aspirations from its neighbors. Third, the resolution of the Artsakh issue would leave Turkey much less space for intervention in regional politics reducing the risk of expanding the conflict zone to an extent harmful for Iran. Another less significant factor is the decline of Russian influence that Iran can benefit from, though to a limited degree. It is, thus, safe to say the emergence of United Armenia meets Iran's strategic vision for the South Caucasus, and it would be reasonable enough to expect Iran to recognize United Armenia and cooperate with this new actor.

3.2 Familiar dilemma for Russia: Choosing the lesser of two challenges

Grey zone conflicts such as the Artsakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia issues are quite characteristic for the crumbling post-Soviet space where Russia is losing absolute dominance that it quite successfully re-acquired after the collapse of the USSR. Following the Russia-Georgia war of 2008, Russia became the first and, so far, one of the two UN-member state to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia along with Syria.[9] As addressed above, Russia did not and still does consider annexation as a conflict resolution option resulting in increasingly worsening relations with Georgia, as well as Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's dependence on Russia with blurry and unclear perspectives if matters remain as they are. This leaves Russia significantly less maneuvering room since losing Georgia as an ally and having limited opportunities with Abkhazia and South Ossetia changed the regional strategic landscape for all actors involved, making Armenia is Russia's only remaining ally in the South Caucasus. Whom to

[9] "Georgia Severs Relations With Syria For Recognizing Abkhazia, South Ossetia." RFE/RL, 29.5.2018. <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-syria-establishes-diplomatic-relations-with-abkhazia-south-ossetia/29257063.html>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

support in the process of the creation of United Armenia is quite a dilemma for Russia.
On the one hand, United Armenia would leave Russia with even less maneuvering space and control over the region than it has as for now. On the other hand, given the overwhelming social and political will for unification among the people of both, the Republic of Armenia, Artsakh and the Armenian diaspora large portions of who live in Russia, holding a strictly negative position on this may result in the loss of another ally. Russia is ultimately choosing between two scenarios neither of which it would find favorable. The Russian ruling elite found itself in a similar situation in April 2018 when the Velvet Revolution overthrew Armenia's strongly Russia-affiliated government. Due to the overwhelming nationwide support for Nikol Pashinyan, Russia preferred to lose its allies in the overthrown government to possibly losing Armenia as an ally whatsoever.[10]

Concerning United Armenia, Russia will be facing a similar choice. One way, Russia may lose its only remaining ally in the South Caucasus and a major share of regional control. The other way, recognizing Miatsum and maintaining mutually beneficial relations with United Armenia will give Russia a stronger ally with less control over it. Both scenarios, thus, will inevitably lead to a decrease of Russian regional control. Notable enough nonetheless, Azerbaijan's diverse strategic partnerships will not give Russia enough space to redeem the consequences of losing Armenia as an ally through enhancing Russian-Azerbaijani strategic relations making a strictly negative position on United Armenia far more unfavorable for Russia than accepting Miatsum with all following shortenings of Russian capabilities.

Thus, it can be concluded that Miatsum will put Russia before a complex dilemma. With the post-Soviet order crumbling in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Russia is more likely to choose the lesser of two troubles and acknowledge the emergence of United Armenia.

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[10] Giragosian, Richard. *Paradox of power: Russia, Armenia, and Europe after the Velvet Revolution.* European Council on Foreign Relations. 7.8.2019. <https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/russia_armenia_and_europe_after_the_velvet_revolution>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

3.3 Turkey: Invade Artsakh after Syria?

A simple look at the history and nature of Turkish-Armenian relations during the 20th and 21st centuries and Turkey's position on the Artsakh issue leave no doubt that Turkey will be strictly against the unification of Armenian states. Recognition of United Armenia is not expected, but the ultimate question is what can Turkey do to prevent Miatsum given the current political and security environment in the South Caucasus and West Asia? Armenia and Turkey have no diplomatic relations, and Turkey has already been implementing the policy of blockade of Armenia leaving no space for imposing any other sanctions or other soft-power initiatives to prevent the emergence of United Armenia.[11] Most importantly, therefore, is how likely a military operation from Turkey would be.

Turkey has previously expressed direct readiness to join Azerbaijan in military actions against Artsakh and Armenia, but the NATO and EU have so far keeping these aspirations in check. Turkey hosts several US and NATO bases and houses roughly 50 US nuclear bombs, and its recent turn to Russia for the purchase of a 2.5 billion USD missile defense system has been rising major questions among its NATO allies regarding bilateral and multilateral cooperation.[12] After Turkey's recent military incursion into northern Syria, nine European countries – including the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Germany – as well as Canada have halted arms exports to Turkey.[13] On October 23, hours before a United States-brokered five-day truce between Turkish and Kurdish-led forces was due to expire, a deal has been reached between Turkey and Russia for Kurdish fighters to withdraw from a Turkish-ruled "safe zone" in northeast Syria within 150 hours, after

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11 Cheterian, Vicken. *Armenia-Turkey: genocide, blockade, diplomacy*. OpenDemocracy, 13.10.2009. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/armenia-turkey-genocide-blockade-diplomacy/>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

12 "Turkey: Which countries export arms to Turkey?" BBC News, 23.10.2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/50125405>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

13 Tidey, Alice. "UK, France, and Germany halt arms export to Turkey over incursion into northern Syria". Euronews, 16.10.2019, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/10/13/france-and-germany-halt-arms-export-to-turkey-over-incursion-into-northern-syria>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

which Ankara and Moscow will run joint patrols around the area. As a response, Kurdish armed forces and the Syrian government joined efforts to resist the Turkish invasion.[14] On October 29, the US House of Representatives voted to impose sanctions on Turkey over Syria followed by adopting a resolution re-affirming the United States' record on the Armenian Genocide on October 30.[15]

After being effectively frozen out of the negotiations, Iran is also not happy that Moscow and Ankara essentially ignored its demands for a Turkish withdrawal. Iran's response is part of its aspiration to maintain a balance of power in West Asia. All these measures and developments will be creating a lasting effect on Turkish and regional politics and security. The situation around Syria will take a long time to be finalized, and the rapidly changing political and security landscape in the region shaped by NATO, US, Russia, Iran, Syria and the Kurdish forces leave Turkey little to no maneuvering room for an invasion in United Armenia. Thus, given the shifting environment and the severe international response to Turkey's assault of northern Syria with all its consequences, a strongly negative position on United Armenia but no hard power operations are expected.

3.4 The West: How important would the collapse of the post-Soviet be?

As addressed in the sections above, the post-Soviet order characterized with almost absolute Russian economic and strategic dominance is crumbling in Central Asia and the South Caucasus due to internal developments, the decline of Russian economy and the rise of China. The creation of United Armenia will push this process further by leaving Russia with less control of the security and strategic landscape of the South Caucasus. Due to the outsize strategic and geopolitical significance of Armenia and the South Caucasus, the weakening of the post-Soviet order there creates room

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14 McKernan, Bethan. *Turkey-Syria offensive: Kurds reach deal with Damascus to stave off assault.* The Guardian, 14.10.2019.<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/13/kurds-reach-deal-with-damascus-in-face-of-turkish-offensive/>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

15 Edmondson, Catie and Gladstone, Rick. "House Passes Resolution Recognizing Armenian Genocide." *The New York Times*, 29.10.2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/29/us/politics/armenian-genocide-resolution.html>, accessed on 15.11.2019.

for competition among other regional and global actors for an increase of influence in the region including the EU, NATO, US, China and Iran.
Thus, within the current environment of steadily intensifying tensions between the Western power bloc and Turkey, as well as Iran, the South Caucasus becomes a region of even greater importance for than usual. Iran and China are two of the biggest global and regional rivals of the Western power bloc who would benefit greatly from this shift in regional security seeking to deepen their engagement in Armenia and the region. Notably, China has already become Armenia's second biggest trade partner outweighing the EU. Thus, it is expected of the West to actively partake in consolidating the fall of the post-Soviet order in the South Caucasus through advancing its engagement with and assistance to the new regional actor whose emergence, coincides perfectly with the Western vison for the region.

Conclusion

The reform of Armenian statehood requires the involvement of the entire Armenian people in the development of a transitional framework and the creation of United Armenia. Moreover, the ability of the new Armenian government to synchronize processes within the framework of the general philosophy of these reforms will play a great and sometimes decisive role. The development and implementation of such a large-scale project will require a systematic holistic approach, relevant skills and competencies.

In a regional and broader international perspective, the creation of United Armenia is feasible due to a set of circumstances. The political and strategic landscape and the security environment in the South Caucasus and broader neighboring regions of Eastern Europe and West Asia are currently in a state of rapid but foreseeable changes and shifts. The emergence of United Armenia, which would contribute greatly to establishing and maintaining stability in the South Caucasus, goes in line with short- and long-term strategic interests of Iran, Georgia, China and the Western power bloc. The creation of this new actor will appear as a strategic dilemma for Russia but due to its severely damaged economy, crumbling strategic alliances Russia cannot risk losing yet another strategic ally – the only one it currently has in the South Caucasus. This makes Russia somewhat reluctant to accept the emergence of United Armenia as the lesser of two troubles. Following a turn to Russia for the purchase of defense missiles systems, as well as the

northern Syria assault and its unclear outcomes and consequences, Turkey has been having major issues with its strategic partners and allies. This leaves Turkey little to no maneuvering space for hard power interventions into the Artsakh issue – practically the only action Turkey could employ against the emergence of the new Armenian state. It can thus be concluded that the upcoming decade will be a period of strategic opportunity for the unification of Armenian states.