Nationalism and Democratization Process in Armenia: Impacts of the Nagorno-Karabakh Issue

Ermenistan'da Milliyetçilik ve Demokratikleşme Süreci: Dağlık Karabağ Meselesinin Etkisi

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Abstract

After the collapse of the USSR, newly emerged states' democratization process had gained greater attention. After for years governed under communist regime, these states tried to adapt their own national sentiments with their state building process. Nationalist tendencies both promoted and distorted the creation of the democratic institutions. If a state fails to crystallize the absolute prerequisites of democratic values, radicalization of the nationalist dispositions would stall the environment of dialogue and erode the differences in a society and as a result democracy would not mature in such kind of environment. This study aims to understand the role of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in democratization process of Armenia. It is argued that radicalization of national movements and acceleration of the nationalist values with conflicting manner hampers the democratization process and strengthens the authoritarian regimes.

* **Key Words:** *Nationalism, Democratization, Nagorno-Karabakh, State-Building, Armenia.*

Özet

SSCB'nin yıkılmasından sonra yeni kurulan devletlerin demokratikleşme süreçleri büyük dikkat çekti. Yıllardır komünist rejim altında idare edilmenin sonrasında bu devletler kendi ulusal hassasiyetlerini devlet inşa süreçlerine adapte etmeyi denediler. Milliyetçi eğilimler demokratik kurumların ortaya çıkmasını hem desteklemiş hem de engellemiştir. Bir devletin demokratik değerlerin mutlak önşartlarını kristalize etmeyi başaramadığı durumda, radikalleşen milliyetçi eğilimler, toplumsal farklılıkların ve diyalog ortamının aşınması sonucunda demokrasi olgulaşmamıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Dağlık-Karabağ çatışmasının Ermenistanın demokratikleşme sürecindeki rolünü anlamaktır. Milliyetçi hareketlerin radikalleşmesi ve milliyetçi değerlerin çatışmacı tarzı demokratikleşme sürecini engelleyerek otoriter rejimleri güçlendirmiştir.

* **Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Milliyetçilik, Demokratikleşme, Dağlık-Karabağ, Devlet İnşası, Ermenistan.*

Introduction

One of the major subject themes in political sciences research interest for decades is democratization, or the way in which authoritarian regimes opens a gate to democratic regimes. The emergence of the new states after the breakup of the Soviet Union have been an incident of academic concern for some period of time. Each of these states' transition experiences have different explanations. However, most of the descriptions for these different regime trajectories

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concentrated on the central role of elites.[1] Democratic transition processes and the construction of new political system were handled via central elites. State and nation building as well as the integration of this isolated part of the world with the world economy were the new challenges of political elite and international actors.[2] In the state building process, political elite is one of the main actors of this process. The leaders of these new states were the ones that had important roles in the Soviet politics and bureaucracy –who can be called as *nomenklatura*-, or they were the leaders of popular movements like in Azerbaijan and Armenia. Nationalist tendencies in both countries, particularly in Armenia, have a great impact upon the political life both in domestic and international politics. Democratization processes in Armenia has been negatively affected by nationalism. Nationalism is regarded as having a negative influence on the prospects for democratization.[3] Nationalism puts forward its questions with respect to the state and its boundaries, which is more remarkable than regime type. Stateness question with the help of nationalist tendencies captures the whole political agenda since any contradistinction between territory of a state and the national identity of those who live in that state makes stateness discourse more vital. In such a condition, nationalism takes an antagonist form and emerges as an impediment with regard to democratization process. In connection with the democratization process, nationalism is appeared as potentially subversive due to the fact that it encourages the mass mobilization. Nationalist sentiments, values and goals have the potential to force the masses so that they could seek their goal. Nationalist mass mobilization is considered as contradictory for the democratization processes vis-à-vis central elites. Because political elites, in any case, inclined to preserve their authority, they are in a position that prefer to suppress and control the masses. The case in Armenia is different in that sense. State itself used nationalism as an instrument to reinforce its authority. In Armenia, Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan is an important source of nationalist cause for political elites to pursue their domestic and international goals.

In this paper, it is going to be discussed the process of democratization within the framework of nationalism in Armenia. However, the main focus of this discussion is going to be developed in the context of the Karabakh issue. As an argument of this paper, every process in post-Soviet space has several similarities and differences determine the path towards democracy and the pattern of state building. These factors can be counted as international mili-

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1   Graeme Gill, "Nationalism and the Transition to Democracy: The Post Soviet Experience", *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Sonbahar 2006, s. 614.

2   Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "Mehmet Şahin, Bağımsızlıklarının 20. Yılında Orta Asya ve Kafkasya'daki Türk Cumhuriyetlerinin Entegrasyon Süreci (1991-2011)", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, Sayı 37, Bahar 2013, s. 114.

3   Gill, *a.g.m.*, s. 616.

tary conflict, ethnic conflict, the values embedded within the characteristics of a society or the process of itself that goes slowly. In this sense, Armenia is not an exception and factors special to this country are influential on the current situation. Social, economic, cultural and historical factors are the main indicators in this sense. However, the Karabakh issue is one of the political conflicts that is dominant in Armenia and shapes the political agenda of the leaders and political life of the country. The main argument of this paper is nationalism and nation building is a significant term of state building process. Yet, radicalization of national movements and promoting nationalist values with military conflicts hampers the democratization process and strengthens the authoritarian regimes. In this context, with a qualitative method, the historical facts lying behind the Armenian democratization process and the impact of the Karabakh conflict on the transition is going to be analyzed.

In the first part of the paper, relation between nationalism and democracy and its role in the post-Soviet era is going to be analyzed. Then, historical background of the conflict and the essence of the Karabakh region will be scrutinized. Lastly, the framework of democratic environment in Armenia will be discussed with a certain focus on the Karabakh issue and democratization in Armenia. It is argued that the Karabakh issue stands at the core of the Armenia's domestic politics and promoting radicalization in nationalism prevents a smooth transition to democracy.

Democracy and Nationalism

Democracy is a Latin oriented concept, of which its roots come from Greek. It is the combination of two Greek words, *demos* and *kratia* and means government by people or rule of majority.[4] Evolution of this system, from ancient Greek city states to the present, brings us the representative democracy in which people choose their administrators to represent themselves in the policy making and governing process. Even though democracy can be defined as the rule of the majority, in modern terms a system that neglects the demands of minority or minority rights cannot really be defined as democratic. Minority concept can be defined as a political, sexual, ethnic or any other group that differs from the majority. Samuel Huntington discusses this phenomenon by giving reference to Robert Dahl's 'procedural' definition of democracy; a system is undemocratic, "to the extent … it denies voting participation to a part of its society" and "that no opposition is permitted in elections, or that the opposition is curbed or harassed in what it can do, … or that the votes are manipulated or miscounted."[5] Or in other terms the rule of minority and neglecting demands of majority such as in authoritarian regimes will again cause problems in terms

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4   Merriam Webster Dictionary, http://www.merriam-webster.com/.
5   Samuel Huntington, *Thrid Wave Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London: University of Oklohama Press, 1991, s. 7.

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of social cohesion in a society. Thus, the delicate balance between these two is one of the main essences of democracies. However, while discussing democracy in the literature a certain framework was drawn for the sake of standardization of criteria while making analysis. In this context, it is argued that the minima *sine qua non* for a democracy is free and fair elections. This means people of a country do have the power of choice for the ones to govern the country for a specific period of time. Moreover, they can change this elected leaders if they are not happy with their choice when the time for elections comes. Other concepts such as freedom of media, transparency, accountability, civil rights, and the values of French Revolution *"liberté, egalité* and *fraternité"*, are the secondary requirements for a democracy that identifies the level of democracy. These requirements were stated by Robert Dahl as the political institutions of large scale democracies under six points.[6] These are: elected officials, free, fair and frequent elections, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, associational autonomy, and inclusive citizenship.

As can be seen above first and second institutions are representing the *minima sine qua non* for a democracy. However, apart from making agent level analysis like Dahl, Linz and Stepan suggest that for democracies two other requirements should be satisfied as minimal conditions. One of them is the existence of a state –or *stateness*- and the other one is democratic governance.[7] "Democracy is a form of governance of a modern state. Thus, without a state, no modern democracy is possible."[8] Actually, the existence of the state has a special importance if we talk about nationalism and democracy in the nation state. In history, nations living as minority or diaspora in a country, had to -and in some cases even today have to- face with discrimination in a society. In fact, a functioning state acts as a guarantor of civil and political rights of its citizens and has a peculiar significance in this context.

Nationalism issue is also a significant while studying the Armenian political development. Nationalism emerged out as one of the primary factors that keep the Armenian society together. Historically speaking, the debate over the state or *stateness* brought up the matter of nationalism. In fact, nationalism compared to democracy and state appears as a newer concept. The emergence of modern states dates back to the 15th century, while the concept of nationalism finds its roots in the late 18th century[9]. It was the French revolution in 1789 that brought nationalism as a main social and political phenomenon. Furthermore, after half of 19th century nationalism served as a basis for the

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6   Robert Dahl, *On Democracy*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998, s. 85.

7   Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, 'Toward Consolidated Democracies', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1996, s. 14.

8   Juan J. Linz, Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation - Southern Europe, South America, and Post Communist Europe*, Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996, s. 17.

9   Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991, s. 11.

state building process. As Linz and Stephan argues that nature of the state and nation building process cannot be separated from each other. However, the nation building process had prevailed at the end of the World War I particularly with the help of the Wilsonian principles of self-determination.[10] With the help of these dynamics, nation-state had become the major actors of politics. In contrast, the concept of globalization might be stated here to understand the nature of strengthening nationalist values. It is blamed of ruining the particular values of culture and ethnic diversity, while nationalism is evolving into something new and micro states based on nation-state ideals are emerging out in world politics. Moreover, it might be argued that strengthening nationalist values could be one of the reflexes of preservation of what is belonging to a nation.

One can argue that there can be interconnected relations between democratization and nationalism. A homogenous nation means a strong stability in the country, and that makes easier to get people together under one certain aim. Also, this nation can contribute to stateness in the country. The democratic values can be improved in such a well-functioning state that protects the rights of its citizens. Nationalism both promoted and distorted the emergence of democratic institutions. The national question itself distorts the development of democracy since it disposes the political agenda. It favors the power of the presidency at the expense of the parliament and political parties.[11] In transition processes, nationalism can also be used as a source of authoritarianism. Provided that a state fails to crystallize the certain prerequisites of democratic values, radicalization of the national dispositions would obstruct the environment of dialogue and erode the differences in a society and as a result democracy would not mature in such kind of environment. Nationalism is regarded as being potentially disruptive to the achievement of a democratic outcome since it excites the mass mobilization. Due to the ways in which nationalism taps into values, national and cultural sentiments, and assumptions that resonate with remarkable sections of the populace, it might be a potential force in mobilizing both civil society and the whole population at large.[12]

Nationalist tendencies can be radicalized easily in the absence of peace and stability. Regional and international conflicts can be stated here as a source of instability in a country. This instability creates the other and the enemy. Huntington discusses "confronted with erosion of legitimacy authoritarian leaders could and did respond in one or more of five ways. Provoking foreign conflict and attempt to restore legitimacy by an appeal to nationalism"[13]

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10 Smith, *a.g.e.*, s.23.
11 Peter Rutland, "Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 5, 1994, s. 839-840.
12 Gill, *a.g.m.*, s.618.
13 Samuel Huntington, *a.g.e.*, s. 55-56.

is one of these methods. Authoritarianism would be promoted in two ways of mechanism. International military conflict would promote radical nationalism and authoritarianism. In order to secure the interests and legitimacy of the leadership authoritarian regimes can exploit this factor. International military conflicts would cause problems in economic development and this kind of tendency would lead to further problems in transition process of country. Moreover, radicalization in national identity is another form of mechanism which promotes authoritarianism. The preservation of national sentiments, values and identity makes leaders more aggressive vis-à-vis the national question. Provided that the paths taken by the post-soviet leaders, it can be seen that they have followed the trend of nation building processes in different manners. If one looks at the names of the fifteen Soviet Republics, it could be seen that they were named with respect to the titular nationality within the borders of these countries. In contrast, there is a heterogeneous ethnic structure in different ratios for each of them. Huntington argues that "once in power most of the elites in charge of these newly independent states followed a strategy of attempting to transform their multinational demos into a nation state."[14] Several dimensions about nationalism can be presented here for each example. In the first place, nationalism could play a role of glue that brings society together to reach a common certain objective for the sake of the nation. Secondly, in heterogeneous countries like Kazakhstan, creating a concept that would embrace all of the ethnic groups can be a necessity to prevent separatist nationalist movements. Last but not the least, nationalism as a trend of modernism can influence newly emerged societies and they can follow this path in the state building process. Taking into account the post-Soviet experience, nationalism also serves as a source of legitimacy for authoritarian regimes. Creating the notion of "the other" or "the enemy" and imposing the idea that the existing regime protects the nation from these threats can serve to the interests of the elite to control the society.

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Even though one can talk about positive dimensions of nationalism, it has several risks when this factor reaches to the level of chauvinism. It can cause cracks in different strata of the society and can be used as an instrument of instability in a country. Conflicts like in Georgia among different ethnic groups of Abazkhas, Georgians and Ossets can be given as examples here. Consequently, the state had to face with problems of authority on the country's territory. In post-Soviet lands, nationalism has played a crucial role, not only in state building process after 1991, but also represented a basis for political environment to be created and mass movements to demand for broadened civil rights and even independence in the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in late 1980s. On the other hand, democracy is seen -even today- as an objective by the leaders of newly emerged countries, has become a reality, or still exists

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14 Samuel Huntington, *a.g.e,* s. 401.

as an aim to be reached or even became a "forgotten" promise of political elite. Graeme Gill describes this situation as,

> The disposition of the Post-Soviet regimes does not represent a clear and unambiguous strengthening of global democratic ranks; the overwhelming majority of regimes to emerge from the Soviet carapace have domestic political arrangements that fall significantly short of what would be considered a democratic system.[15]

In 2008, as can be seen from table I[16], only four of these countries can be classified as democratic, four of them as façade democracies and seven of them as authoritarian regimes. Three of the democracies are Baltic States and the last one is Ukraine. On the other hand, the Caucasus, where the national movements played a crucial role in pre-independence period, is represented by two countries in façade democracies. Certain characteristics they share are similar in these fifteen states, but as can be seen from Table I, for the democratization process of the post-Communist countries, it is hard to talk about the exact role of geographic location, culture or religion in democratization processes of these countries.[17] Central Asia and the Caucasus are represented both in façade democracies and authoritarian regimes, whereas the Eastern Europe countries Belarus and Ukraine stand in directly opposite categories. All of these countries are descendants of a totalitarian regime, but the routes followed by the political elite differed one from another. Thus, there should be some certain characteristics or dynamics that determines the success or failure of transition processes to democracy. Examining the factors behind the democratization process, political life of a country can be analyzed under several disciplines of social sciences or in an interdisciplinary fashion. However, society is an organic structure composed of many variables. Thus, it is hard to claim that only one factor directly affects the transformation of societies. Economic, social and cultural factors with historical background should be taken into consideration with other variables of the society. Moreover, transition to democracy does not follow a uniform path and so there may be many roads to democracy.[18]

Armenian case is an interesting topic, since it represents a good basis to test the aforementioned arguments on nationalism, democracy and international military conflict. The Karabakh conflict being an important part of the Armenian identity has been also influential in domestic and international politics. Karabakh conflict has its own historical background which impacted

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15 Gill, *a.g.m,* s. 613.
16 See the attachments
17 Even though Baltic States have solid democratic regimes, it is not the geographic factor, but their integration processes with the EU mechanisms that played the major role.
18 Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1970, s. 345.

the contemporary politics not only Armenia and Azerbaijan relations but also regional and international politics.

The Historical Background of the Conflict

Question of the status of Karabakh starts from 1920-21 when Soviet Empire incorporated to Transcaucasia. Both Armenian and Azerbaijani scholars have done extensive studies on both of the history of the region and in support of their respective claims on the Karabakh region. The Karabakh region is significant for two aspects. The first one is that the region has historically been considered as the center of both Azerbaijani and Armenian nationalism.[19] Richard Hovanissian indicates that "for the Armenians this region has a particular importance, in that while the rest of Armenia submerged under foreign control a flicker of freedom was maintained in Karabakh, albeit Iranian suzerainty."[20] For Azerbaijanis, this tiny region is important in the sense that it became a major center of emerging Azerbaijani cultural and political nationalism. Also, it takes a great attention due to the region's special place in Azerbaijani national consciousness. The second point is that mountainous Karabakh region mostly inhabited by Armenians became economically integrated with the Republic of Azerbaijan.[21] In Armenia, Karabakh have been influential on contemporary political atmosphere as its roots date back to history.

Armenians developed as a distinct ethnic group in the sixth century B.C. Their identity consolidated as a "unique, identifiable, ethno-religious community when they adopted an exclusive form of Monophysite Christianity" and a common language in the fourth century A.D.[22]. For some brief periods of its history Armenia was an independent state, but for the most part it was under the domination of different Empires - Roman, Persian, Byzantine, Arab, Mongol, Ottoman, Russian and Soviet. According to some historians, Karabakh, unlike the rest of Armenia, always remained autonomous or independent. While Armenians in other regions were assimilated, it was in Karabakh where they preserved their identity.[23] From the point of view of Armenians, therefore, Karabakh is considered the 'last stronghold' the 'surrender' of which will result in the loss of Armenia identity.

Another historical factor that influences Armenian perceptions of the conflict was the so called Genocide of Armenians in 1915 in. A recent poll

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19   T. Shireen Hunter,, *The Transcaucasus in Transition*, Washington D.C 2006, s. 97

20   Hovannisian, Richard. *"Nationalist Ferment in Armenia"*. *Freedom at Issue*, no 105 (Nov.-Dec. 1988):102

21   Hunter, *a.g.e.*, s. 98

22   Ronald Suny. *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, s. 7.

23   Hovannisian, Richard. *"Nationalist Ferment in Armenia"*. *Freedom at Issue*, no 105 (Kasım-Aralık. 1988): s. 29.

shows that 90.1 percent of Armenians believe that persisting memory of the genocide makes up the Armenian national identity along with the language, culture and history. Largely associating Turkish-speaking Azeris with the Ottoman Turks, Armenians of Karabakh fear another genocide if the region becomes part of independent Azerbaijan. The nationalistic public rhetoric of Azerbaijani authorities that often directly calls for ethnic cleansing does not encourage the deconstruction of those perceptions. Historical seeds of the enmity paved the way for the crystallization and perpetuation of the conflict. Both Armenians and Azerbaijanis fallen into zero-sum game.

Unlike Armenians, whose identity developed in opposition to ruling powers, people who lived in the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan tried to develop a close sense of identification with the rulers. They adopted Iranian culture and Shi'a Islam and later Turkish language and ethnicity.[24] Distinct Azerbaijani identity developed in the nineteenth century. After the conquest of Caucasus by Russians, people who lived in contemporary Azerbaijan, and who for centuries were part of the Muslim majority in Muslim empires, suddenly became a minority in an Orthodox Christian state. Tsarist policies of assimilation and of favoritism toward local Christians, and particularly Armenians, provoked the growth of Pan-Turkism, a secular form of nationalism among Muslims. Azerbaijani (or Azeri) identity developed in protest to Russian policies, but it was directed not so much against the Russian colonizer as against the local Christians – Armenians. Consequently for Azerbaijanis, who recently gained independence after two centuries of Russian rule, the Karabakh conflict represents another attempt of Russians to colonize Azerbaijan with the help of local Armenians. The Russian-Armenian military alliance and the continuing presence of the Russian army in Caucasus reinforce those fears. Hence, one of the sources of 'intractability' of the Karabakh conflict, the so-called 'primordial' Armenian-Azerbaijani enmity, is a reflection of two overlapping security dilemmas and historic sense of insecurity of Armenians and Azeris toward Turks and Russians respectively. A crucial deficiency of all peace initiatives until now has been their inability to address this underlying security concerns. As a Fulbright fellow from Armenia at Stanford University Aivazian noted that all the mediations have dealt with the Karabakh conflict "only on a super-structural level, addressing only the immediate time and territory of the hostilities. Thus, these negotiations have confined themselves to the narrowest possible framework, reaching only the proverbial tip of the iceberg, and leaving off the agenda the deeper conflicting patterns of behavior and strategic thinking of the various parties to the conflict."[25] During the years 1918 and 1920, Ottoman and

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24 Croissant, Michael P. *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications*. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998, s.7.

25 Patricia Carley, "Nagorno-Karabakh: Searching for a Solution". *A United States Institute of Peace Roundtable Report*. Aralık 1998. http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pwks25/pwks25.html

British policies played a great role in the determining the fate of the Karabakh region. In 1920, the region was made a part of new republic of Azerbaijan. This decision was not accepted by Armenians. Thus, the conflict and struggles broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Bolshevik forces were of the idea that the regions of Nakhichevan, Karabakh and Zanzegur should be part of Armenia. However, this decision was changed in favor of Azerbaijan in 1921. Nakhichevan and Karabakh region were made part of Azerbaijan. In this event, regional politics mechanism worked. The new Bolshevik government in Moscow wanted to reach a modus vivendi with the nationalist forces of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey. In 1923, the Karabakh region turned into an autonomous oblast inside the Azerbaijan. This was not a remedy for Armenian side. Both Armenians of Karabakh and Armenian Republic raised their voices in every occasion to change the status of the Karabakh oblast.

In this period struggle continued between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Karabakh conflict, and the Soviet political leadership dialogued more than three years on this issue but positive development did not take place. Finally, a long standing further discussion among the involved parties and Soviet leadership Armenia got in favor of pendulum on this issue.[26] Because of the Soviet political leadership pressure, the Azerbaijan Soviet Revolutionary Committee had to take the decision in December 1921. According to this decision, a statement was issued that Karabakh, Zangezur, and Nakhichevan territories would remain under the possession of Armenia control. Stalin government on 2nd of December 1921 transferred these areas from the domination of Azerbaijan to Armenia but Azerbaijan political leadership refused to accept the process of transformation. Azerbaijan leader Narimanov simply stated that the decision, under taken by the Stalin committee, favored to Armenia and Azerbaijan had been deprived. The tussle continued between Azerbaijan and Armenia on territorial status of Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan. Finally after four months, the situation came back on the same position on it was before 2nd of December 1920.[27] On 16th of March 1921, a positive development taken place when a treaty was signed between the Republic of Turkey and Soviet Union, determined the future status of disputed areas. According to the treaty, Zangezur would be under the control of Armenia and Azerbaijan Socialist Republic, covered the rest of the areas.[28]

In 1924, Nakhichevan received autonomous status and entities as Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (NASSR). On the other

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26 Charles van der Leeuw, "Azerbaijan: A quest for identity: a short story", Khojaly Tragedy: an International View, 13th Anniversary of London – Azerbaijan Society and Angl-Azerbaijani Youth, (Baku – Azerbaijan, 2007), ss. 51-70.

27 Svante E. Cornell, "Undeclared War: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Reconsidered", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Yaz 1997, ss:100-150.

28 Robert Cullen. *A Reporter at Large.* The New York Magazine, 15 Nisan, 1991.

hand, the Karabakh was granted autonomous status, entitled as 'Autonomous Oblast'. According to the former Soviet Union's regional hierarchy, fifteen republics of Soviet Union had the constitutional right to withdraw from Union besides this degree of the autonomy as according to the Soviet Union can be awarded.[29] In accordance with Soviet Union's regional hierarchy, 'Autonomous Republic' is higher degree of autonomy as compare to 'Oblast Autonomous'. In this period, Soviet government made efforts to accommodate the new Turkish government, headed by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk with whom managed the political leadership given the preference to have political alliance. Furthermore, Stalin and Ataturk, both had some kind of thinking to be involved in the wars against the Western Power. Stalin favored Ataturk by giving concession to Azerbaijan and by reducing the scope of Armenia. Strategically, Ataturk was not interested to watch Armenia as strong on its border because in the case of strong Armenia, Ataturk feared to face the two independent states within its own territory e.g. independent Kurdish and independent Armenian state, in future. In the result of the continuous dialogue among the participants, a settlement of the issue was finally staged. It was decided that Karabakh would remain under Azerbaijan SSR administratively but it was given the Oblast autonomous status. A few months later, capital of Nagorno Karabakh Oblast (NKAO) was replaced from Shusha to Khankendi, Armenian political leadership protested against this decision and its forces did possible efforts to retake the settlement.[30] Whenever the Moscow leadership changes, the Armenians always highlighted the issue. The issues again become the part of discussion as soon as the Soviet political leadership Mikhail Gorbachev introduced Glasnost policy, which changed the internal political sphere of Soviet Union entirely. In August 1987, thousands of people of Armenia launched a 'Signatory Movement' whose objective was to transfer of Karabakh and Nakhichevan to Armenia. The situation became more favorable when the NKAO officials request to the political leadership of Moscow to include them into the Armenian jurisdiction. Furthermore in Armenia, the huge demonstration in the favor of the NAKO official's, request was taken place. These circumstances in Armenia evolved a critical situation for the Azeris who located in Armenia.

The conflict brought massive retaliation against the Armenian by the Azeris within three days the number of Armenian casualties increased. In addition, the situation became, more terrible when the Moscow central forces did not format any security plan to reduce the level of the tension. In the long run, the inter-violence activities occurred respectively in both areas e.g Azerbaijan and Armenia. Political scholars argued that process of ethnic cleansing in both states respectively were indifferent to each other. In Armenia, the lo-

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29   Van der Leeuw, *a.g.r.*
30   Nolyain Igor, *Moscow's Initiation of the Azeri-Armenian Conflict,* Central Asia Survey, Vol. 4, No. 13, 1994, ss:70-75.

cal Armenian security forces attacked to the Azeris systematically. Whereas, in Azerbaijan, the uprising and ethnic cleansing begun abruptly against the Armenians.[31] The international human rights organizations stated that frequent massive human violence in both republics brought approximately 816 casualties.[32] From this situation to onward, the Armenians demonstrations increased and its forces captured Karabakh territory by force. The increased uprising in Armenia and further military assistance from the regular Armenian forces weakened the Azerbaijan position on Karabakh issue. In this ongoing conflict, the Moscow had kept itself aloof from the both sides. Some political experts argued that the Armenians got better position in Karabakh due to having military assistance from Soviet forces, appointed in Armenia. On the other hand, Moscow denied allegations and stated that in the absence of the ample evidence, how it can be determined that either Soviet regular forces were involved or not. Ongoing conflict introduced massive human rights violations, killings, looting and refugees in bulk. Azerbaijan had to take finally military stand against Armenian forces and Karabakh rebels who established Karabakh National Conference, which later on declared the independence of Karabakh.[33] This movement was advocated and backed by the Armenians inside and outside Karabakh. To scatter the independence movement of Karabakh, Azerbaijan government passed a parliamentary resolution to abolish the autonomous status of Karabakh and left no room for the Karabakh independence. Although, Azerbaijan government received economic aid yet the matters remained unsolved due to three important factors. First of all, in the Azerbaijan policy making process, the government has to face strong resistance from the Armenians pressure groups, placed in Azerbaijan Parliament, Second, the Western media did not depict the true picture of the event and it was projected that Azerbaijan in itself remained involved throughout the uprisings.[34] Third, the attitude of the international community was extremely passive and did not bother to take concrete steps to stop the human rights violation and Armenian aggression. Although, the Azerbaijan Parliament politically made arrangements to reduce the gravitational force of the Karabakh independence yet it was observed that Baku was losing military control of Karabakh. As compared to Armenia, Azerbaijan had no equipped trained regular forces and further no sound economic regular forces and no sound economic infrastructure. On the other side, Moscow's regular forces also assisted the Armenian forces voluntarily. In the long run consequently Azerbaijani government failed at the eleventh hour to counter the Armenian threats and lost more than 20%

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31 Ginat Rami and Vaserman Arise, "National, Territorial or Religious Conflict? The Case of Nagano-Karabakh" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, 1994, ss. 205.

32 Cornell, *a.g.e.*

33 www.humanrightswatch.com/helsinki,Azerbijan,pressrelease

34 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "Türk-Batı İlişkilerinin Geleceğinde Ermeni Sorunu: Yeni Yöntemler ve Olası Sonuçlar", *Ermeni Sorununa Son Nokta*, Başkent Üniversitesi, 28 Şubat 2012.

of its territory.[35] Armenian forces controlled the geo-strategic, geo-economic and human capital forces of Azeri territory including Karabakh. This situation led to a Refugee Crisis in Azerbaijan and approximately more than 300,000 refugees arrived Azerbaijan from Armenia in 1998 to onwards.[36] In the same as followed, approximately 600,000 to 800,000 people were dislocated and displaced in Karabakh in Azerbaijan, the government failed to provide shelter to 1,000,000 to 1,200,000 people.[37] In this massive refugee flow, the international community did not support Azerbaijan and most of the refugees had to live their lives without basic need of life. The international human rights organizations did not make possible arrangements to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced and missed Azeris. In 1993, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees planned to provide humanitarian assistance to Azerbaijan and allocated financial aid to the displaced persons. The aid was conditional only to those refugees who crossed the international border from Armenia to Azerbaijan.

The conflict itself illustrates the tension between the principles of self-determination and the inviolability of frontiers. Armenians are of the view that the enclave was unfairly handed to Azerbaijan in 1923[38]. They also argue that it was an injustice which was compounded during the Soviet era by a deliberate campaign to foster the number of Azeri settlers while encouraging the Armenians to leave. They think that they have the right to choose their own destiny with regard to Azerbaijan's population management efforts. On the other side, Azerbaijanis maintain that the breakdown of the Karabakh would be an insupportable blow to its survival as an independent state. In connection with the Karabakh conflict's perpetuation until now, USSR's nationality policies have remarkable effect.

USSR's Nationality Policy

Karabakh dispute inherited from the Soviet Union, and has caused intractable political, economic and social unrest both in Azerbaijan and Armenia. Although the conflict over the Karabakh region had become known as a bloody war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the problem itself actually dates back to Soviet nationalities policy and other territorial disputes over the Caucasian region[39]. The Karabakh problem is an ethno nationalist and a regional issue. It has also an international dimension. Karabakh case is also a major unsettled

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35   Charles van der Leeuw, *a.g.e.*

36   www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/rs.html

37   Cornell, *a.g.e.*

38   Goldenberg, Suzanne, *Pride of Small Nations*, Caucasia and Post-Soviet Disorder, New jersey, 1994, p.155

39   Graham Smith, "Nationalities Policy from Lenin to Gorbachev", in Graham Smith (Ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union, (*London: Longman, 1993), pp. 5

legal problem of OSCE area[40]. All attempts aiming at peaceful settlement of the dispute has mostly concentrated and stalled on the issue of the final status of the Karabakh region[41].

Karabakh problem in the Caucasian region is not a new matter for the Soviet Union during its establishment in the 1920s.[42] Tsarist Russian rule led to the creation of grounds for ethnic nationalities, and regional problems as Karabakh[43]. In the belief of socialist ideology, national enmity and antagonisms can be eliminated through internationalism of socialism. With respect to Leninist ideology, in order to minimize the national antagonism, sovereign states should have been established on the basis of a contract aiming at achievement of a common purpose.[44] Without losing any borderlands of the former empire, the Bolshevik regime had to initiate a federal structure as the basis of the Soviet Union.[45] In the light of this idea, political and administrative policies were applied in April 1922 as the 12th Congress of the Russian Communist Party. In the first place, separate ethno-territorial republics and autonomous regions are going to be established on the basis of ethnic unity inside a Soviet state. Furthermore, in order to back up national territorial principle, Communist Party for each republic should be created. And finally, as an important title of the agenda, nativization (*korenizatsiia*) program implemented, which aimed development of the nations in terms of cultural and language, and the recruitments of non-Russian cadres into the working class, trade unions, and state bureaucracy and the Communist parties[46]. In spite of the fact that each nationality maintained its own republic and autonomous region practicing their own language, culture and cadres in the local administrations owing to the policy of nativization, Stalinist revolution had left little political autonomy for republics and autonomous regions[47]. As a result of the Stalinist autonomization, sovereign states of soviet republics had very limited autonomous status. Influx of Russian workers specialists into the autonomous republics to improve their economy and education paved the way for long term development in the areas of economy, industry and education[48]. The

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40   Razmik Panossian, *The Irony of Nagorno-Karabakh: Formal Institutions versus Informal Politics* s.143
41   Guner Ozkan, *Nagorno-Karabakh Problem: Claims, Counterclaims and Impasse*, USAK, OAKA, Cilt 1, No: 1, 2006 s. 120
42   Guner Ozkan, *Nagorno-Karabakh Problem: Claims, Counterclaims and Impasse*, s. 121
43   Gregory Gleason, Fedaralism, and Nationalism: The Struggle for Republican Rights in the USSR, (Boulder: Westpress, 1990), p.19
44   Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*, Curzon Press, England, 2001 s. 40
45   Cornell, *a.g.e.,* s. 40
46   George Liber, "Korenizatsiia: Restructuring Soviet Nationality Policy in the 1920s," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 14, No.1, Ocak 1991, s.16
47   Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Ethnonationalism and Political Stability: The Soviet Case", World Politics, Vol.36, No.4, (Temmuz 1984) s. 558
48   Graham Smith, *"Nationalities Policy from Lenin to Gorbachev"*, in Graham Smith (Ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union,* London: Longman, 1993, içinde s. 5.

increase in economy and education facilities in the less developed republics paved the way for the emergence of a substantial native intelligentsia. They were critical of administrative affairs due to the fact that they have little responsible positions in comparison with outsiders. Thus, emergent local elites started to question their limited control over local government. Stalin's Soviet Union became hardline centralized and was ruled by force. Stalinist nationality and territorial solutions had fallen into such a dilemma that was far from presenting a peaceful solution to nationalities question, but rather ignited the national resistance against central authority. During Khrushchev era, in contrast, as a result of less control by center, limited political control culminated with strengthening of local authorities. Inverse developments between central and local authority in the Soviet Union ignited the nationalist responses in the 1960s and 1970s. The Crimean Tatars' and Karabakh Armenians' protests could be given as examples of the nationalities problem. Having federative structure based on territorially defined and ethnically based entities, it might have granted different levels of nominal self determination to various minorities in which it could have the potential to dissolve the federation[49].Soviet authorities have realized and admit the fact that they could not foresee the forces of nationalism and separatism which are hidden deep within the Soviet Union[50]. Also, it might be stated that Soviet authority, on the one hand, did not response adequately to the ambitions of established nations, but on the other hand, it somehow prepared the grounds for the formation and creation of some nations who actually previously presented merely a clan identity.[51]In connection with the Azerbaijan and Armenian dispute on Karabakh, encouraging cultural development, introducing mass education and establishing of local governments and legislative system by Soviet Union have made it possible for the development of national consciousness.

Karabakh conflict is a good example of increasing Azerbaijani and Armenian nationalism. Soviets' nationalities policy gradually made the tiny problems bigger and bigger. Soviets' policies could not handle to eliminate the barriers among ethnicities and nations, but rather feed the national hatred and enmity[52]. In the mid-1980s by the Communist Party First Secretary, Gorbachev initiated the *Glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) policies. These policies aimed at social, economic and political transformation of the Soviet Union[53]. However, these policies unleashed the already existed, deep and hid-

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49 Cornell, *a.g.e.,* s. 41
50 Ronald G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union,* (California: Standford University Press, 1993), s.35
51 Margot Light, *"Russia and Transcaucasia"*, in John F.R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg and Richard Schofield (Ed.), *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, London: UCL Press, 1996, içinde, s. 38-39
52 Mikhailovic Khazanov, *After the USSR: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States*, London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, s.18
53 Guner Ozkan, "Nagorno-Karabakh Problem: Claims, Counterclaims, and Impasse", *OAKA,*

den nationalistic and territorial enmities in the Soviet Union[54]. Losing center-periphery links within the Soviet Union via *glasnost* led to the ignition of the already hidden, deep rooted confrontation between Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic and Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic over Karabakh. In 1987, the conflict over the Karabakh region began. Karabakh Armenians wrote a petition asking the annexation of Karabakh region to Armenian lands. They were of the opinion that a historical mistake were made in 1921 when Bolsheviks transferred the Karabakh to Azerbaijan[55]. However, the central authority rejected this demand. Thus, demonstrations and ethnic violence started between Azerbaijan SSR and Armenian SSR. The process of glasnost and perestroika has pushed Armenians to take the advantage of the liberalization policies in the Soviet Union. Armenians were of the view that Gorbachev government would have end up the problem on the advantage of Armenians. On the contrary, in the first place Armenians demands were seen as a reaction movement against *glasnost*, and therefore, the center tried to stop it before it represented an example for the rest of the Union Republic secession[56].Indeed, the idea that socialist system could eliminate the national antagonism failed in the Soviet case. The strict control over the Union republics culminated with delays and suppress over the disputes. The nationalities policy of the Soviet Union have provided internal stability in connection with center government, but it paved the way for creation of ethno-nationals maintaining their region and enmities towards each other. The application of *glasnost* and *perestroika* has given the chance of revival of old claims with regard to independence and national identity in the expense of each other within their own specific region during the post-independence era.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and the Post-Independence Era

The post-Soviet states did not become independent overnight. Soviet Union, being the other big brother of the Cold War era, had serious problems when Gorbachev came into power in 1985. There was a war going on in Afghanistan and the condition of the economy could not be viewed as a smooth one. Corruption, inefficiency and scandal within the political elite were the main problems.[57] Gorbachev presented his *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies and a new process began which turned into an uncontrollable dissolution of the Union. Gorbachev was aiming to change the inefficient economy and turn back to golden years of the Union with *perestroika* and *glasnost* was representing the ide-

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Cilt.1, No.1, 2008, s.124.

54   Ozkan, *a.g.m.,* s.125.

55   Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity Under Russian Rule,* California: Hoover Institution Press, 1992, s.195-96.

56   David Rieff, "Nagorno Karabakh: Case Study in Ethnic Strife" *Foreign Affairs*, Mart/Nisan, 1997, s.118.

57   Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, s. 55.

ological basis of these reforms which would broaden the political rights of Soviet citizens with the principle of openness. However, implementation of such radical policies of liberalization in a society, which lived in an environment of repression for more than sixty years, brought unexpected results and paved the way of nationalist movements to gain ground in the Caucasus and Baltic States.[58] Post-independence period was such an era that ethnic, religious, regional and international conflicts increased.[59] Armenia was among these states, where the popular movement played a vital role in pre and post-independence period. Nationalism is not something brand new for Armenians. It is one of the actors that keep together this society with influence of the Apostolic Church.[60] Apostolic Church playing a constructivist role both abroad and in the country shapes the Armenian identity with Christianity and mythologies that describe the superiority of Armenian nation. Moreover, the well-known nationalistic rhetoric of Armenians mainly based on *Hay Tad* (Armenian Cause), and 1915 events are other two important parts of Armenian identity and nationalism. *Hay Tad* is the aim of reunifying Armenia and creating the *Great Armenian Homeland*, which lies from, Javeheti in Georgia, and includes Armenia, Nakhichevan, Karabakh and Eastern Anatolia.[61] *Hay Tad* and 1915 events with the help of the Apostolic Church have shaped the political thinking of Armenians especially in the 20th century. However, Laçiner argues that claiming that Armenian nationalism is a reaction against Abdulhamid II's policies or 1915 events would be misleading. According to him the main factor behind Armenian nationalism is the Armenians who went to Europe and Russia for education in the 19th century and returned back to Ottoman Empire[62] Influenced by modernist trends of that period in Europe, these people would establish clubs, associations and shape the basis for ideological activism of Armenian nationalism. These ideological movements later would give birth to the Armenian Revolutionary Front (ARF), known as the Dashnaks are the main advocates of *Hay Tad*. In a sense, with the revival of nationalist movements in Armenian communities, these issues started to be used as the main pillars of Armenian nationalism and chauvinism. Even though it is ARF that played the major role in the first half of 20th century, in the political sphere, it is the Armenian National Movement (ANM) that played the main role in Armenian politics in the late 20th century both in Soviet and post-Soviet period. The roots of this movement go back to 1960s. In 1965 more than

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58 Güner Özkan, *a.g.m.*, s. 123-124.
59 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, Şafak Oğuz, Nato ve Kriz Yönetimi, "Nato ve Kriz Yönetimi", Mehmet Seyfettin Erol ve Ertan Efegil, der., *Krizler ve Kriz Yönetimi*, Barış Kitabevi, Ankara 2012, s.347.
60 Vahe Sahakyan and Arthur Atanesyan, "Democratization in Armenia: Some Trends of Political Culture and Behavior", *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 14, No. 3, *Yaz* 2006, s. 348.
61 Gerard J. Libaridian, *The Challenge of Statehood: Armenian Political Thinking since Independence*, (Cambridge: Blue Crane Books, 1999), s. 83.
62 Sedat Laçiner, *Ermeni Sorunu, Diaspora, ve Türk Dış Politikası*, Ankara: USAK Yayınları, 2008, s.6-8.

100.000 Armenians gathered together to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1915 events in Yerevan and the main reason was they wanted "…. Armenian authorities to commemorate these events in the same fashion".[63] This rally paved the way of National Unification Party to be established in 1966. Among its founders, two people, Levon Ter-Petrosian and Vazgen Manukian, who would be the new leaders and forthcoming politicians of Armenia were arrested as the members of this initiative. However, these two Armenian nationalists would reappear in 1980s as the igniters of nationalist movement in Armenia with the *glasnost* policies.[64] As suggested earlier *glasnost* brought openness and issues could be discussed in an environment relatively freer than the past. Graeme Gill talks about two types of organizations in the first phase; mass based politics of voluntary autonomous organizations or *informals* which began to emerge starting in 1986, and popular or national front organizations in 1988.[65] These organizations turned into a kind of opposition party and national movements played the role of an umbrella organization in this process. When the political landscape in the pre-independence period is examined, a similar pattern can be seen in Armenian SSR. Reflection of these voluntary organizations could be seen while a group of environmentalists protesting Medzamor nuclear power plant near Yerevan due to threats created by the reactor in 1987.[66] Then, in line with Gill's assumption, the Karabakh Committee appeared as a nationalist movement. However, this movement got popular aftermath of 1985 earthquake, in which more than 28,000 Armenians lost their lives and Soviet authorities were blamed for "…poor building decisions"[67]. Previously, the City Council of Khankend (Stepanakert) adopted a resolution and demanded Karabakh to be a part of Armenia in February 1988. This demand found supporters in Yerevan and in the Karabakh Committee[68]. Especially after the earthquake in December, support of people for the Committee got stronger. The Karabakh Committee, institutionalized its activities as Armenian National Movement in 1989 and this organization acted as an umbrella organization and it became the Government of Soviet Armenia in 1990[69]. Levon Ter Petrosian, as being one of the prominent leaders of Karabakh Committee became the new head of Supreme Soviet and Manukian designates as the Prime Minister[70]. As can be imagined, after this, the degree of sovereignty of Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia increased and resulted with in-

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63 Stephan H. Astourian, *From Ter-Petrosian to Kocharian: Leadership Change in Armenia*, Berkeley: University of California, 2000, Working Paper, s. 22.
64 Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, "Armenia's New Autocrats", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1997, s. 79.
65 Gill, *a.g.m*, s. 617.
66 Libaridian, *a.g.m.*, s. 5.
67 Bremmer and Welt, *a.g.m.*, s. 79.
68 Libaridian, *a.g.m.*, s. 7.
69 Jonathan Aves, "Politics, Parties and Presidents in Transcaucasia", *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1996, s. 6.
70 Libaridian, *a.g.m.*, s. 7.

dependence in September 1991. Ter-Petrosian was elected as the new President of the Republic and stayed in power until 1998. Tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia increased gradually with the demand of independence and turned into a military conflict which could only be stopped by a ceasefire in 1994. Until then, Armenians in Azerbaijan and Azeris in Armenia had to leave these countries, and also more than one million Azeris had to leave their home and take the status of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP).[71] Even though there is a ceasefire between the parties of the conflict, stability in the region can only be defined as *de facto*. Both of the parties continue allocating high portions from the government budgets for military expenditures to be able to get prepared due to a possibility of a war in Karabakh. This is something two-sided effect and increase in military expenditure in one country triggers the increase in the other. In 2006, Armenian military expenditure was 16.3% of the state budget[72] and in Azerbaijan this figure was 13.6%.[73] Starting from independence in 1991, the economy and Karabakh issue have been two critical issues on Armenia's political agenda. Due to the conflict, Armenia has had to allocate its resources mainly on military expenditures and additionally Turkey and Azerbaijan closed their borders with the country and the latter cut the energy supply, which is one of the vital components of Armenian economy due to lack of natural resources in the country.[74] Moreover, after the collapse of the Union, Yeltsin's shock therapy in the economy caused traumatic results, not only in Russia, but also on CIS countries, which were still economically dependent on mainly Russia. On the other hand, the Karabakh conflict has been one of the major issues since *perestroika* period. It acted as a catalyst of national revival thanks to suitable environment of the *glasnost* reforms. National movement of the Karabakh Committee was a mass movement and the main objective was transfer of the Karabakh to Armenia. It turned into an institutionalized structure as ANM and the rhetoric evolved into a mass movement for democracy and independence.[75] The ANM in the post-independence period played the major role in the state building process of the country. However, as will be discussed in the next part on democratization and state building in Armenia, Karabakh issue was one of the key factors that would cause Ter-Petrosian to leave the office in 1998 and pave the way for Karabakh oriented politicians to become dominant actors in Armenian politics. Karabakh conflict necessarily

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71 Svante E. Cornell, 'Turkey and the Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: A Delicate Balance', *Middle Eastern Studies,* Vol. 34, No. 1. s. 51.

72 Emil Daniyelyan, 'Armenia Adopts Landmark Budget for 2006', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 14 Kasım 2005.

73 The State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan.

74 Turkey closed its border with Armenia after the Armenian troops invaded Kelbajar and killed Azerbaijani civilians in 1993.

75 Ara Sahakyan, 'The Politics of Independence and Transition', *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 14, No.   2, *İlkbahar* 2006, s. 183.

emerged as a significant denominator Armenia's democratization and state-building process yet it gave a push to nationalism.

Nationalism, Democratization Process and the State-Building in Armenia

Armenia demonstrates the close connection between democratization and revival of nationalism. It was one of the emergent states of post-Soviet era the nationalist tendencies were strongest in which witnessed the immense widespread of mass movement for democratization. Karabakh dispute and enmity with Azerbaijan was the predominant factor determining the acts of all social and political activists in Armenia. These groups included various sects of society from dissidents and intellectuals to established communist elites.[76] In connection with the Armenian case democratization, nationalism and state-building relationships are controversial. Nationalism deflected the emergence of democratic institutions. The national question stalled the improvement of democracy since it eliminated the political agenda that aimed to consolidate and construct state institutions with respect to democratic ideals.

Democratization process goes hand in hand with state–building process. Any diversion in former's progress, it negatively affected the latter. This also has negative influence on the economy of the state. There is a close relationship between nation, state and economy that it affects the stability of country. Economic disadvantages, and all faced ethnic struggles that deepened their crisis and complicated state-building process. Karabakh dispute remains as unresolved today and lacks Armenia's economic and democratic improvement due to high degree of nationalist pressure over the political elites.

The main challenge for the leaders of the newly emerged states in the post-Soviet space was state building, which requires several policies to be implemented to transform the state structure, introduction of economic reforms for passing to a liberal economy from a command economy and also in some cases, like Russia and Kazakhstan, taking measures to prevent the state from splitting into new parts due to ethnic diversity. Nation building, which differs from case to case is the other dimension of this process, so it also overlaps with state building efforts. Armenia represents one of the most advantageous cases among the Soviet republics, due to its homogeneous structure. "As many as 93,3% of the republic's inhabitants were Armenian, 2,6% Azerbaijanis, 1,6% Kurds and 1,6% Russians.[77] Thus, there was no serious threat like inter-ethnic conflicts. However, the government of the new republic had to deal with the Karabakh conflict, which would become one of the top priorities of the political agenda.

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76   Rutland, *a.g.m.*, s.839
77   Peter Rutland, *a.g.m.*, s. 841.

As can be seen from graph I[78], it is hard to say that Armenia and its democracy has improved in a serious manner since independence. Even though there are some signs of transition to democracy, especially starting from 1994 the situation worsened in the country in terms of political rights. Even though the situation in Armenia is described as *partly free* by Freedom House, any deterioration in any of these scores would categorize the country under the classification of *not free countries*.[79] If we make a simple analysis looking at the graph above both Ter-Petrosian's and Kocharian's terms reflects close similarities. However, the first term of Ter-Petrosian is relatively more democratic than the other periods of Armenian political life. There are some improvements in civil liberties and political rights in this period. Several factors preventing democracy to gain basis in the country can be indicated here. First of all, Armenia is an ex-Soviet Republic and due to totalitarian culture in the country that lasted for 70 years, there is rigidity in the transformation into a democratic regime.[80] This can be identified as an explanation based on path dependency. In a sense, it is not easy to change the political culture overnight in a country. Moreover, due to the communist experience and repressive policies of the Communist party in the country, it is also hard to talk about an institutionalized civil society that would foster democracy. Last, but not the least, the president is equipped with strong powers, which leaves decisions to be taken in favor of democratization mostly to the initiative of the president. This concept is known as *superpresidentialism* in the literature[81] and similar symptoms of authoritarianism related to this issue can be seen in other countries like Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. Sahakyan claims that super-presidentialism is a product of the current situation and argues that in 1991 and while preparing Constitution of Armenia, which was ratified in 1995, it was essential to give such an authority to the president "…in order to secure the manageability of the situation". Even though Sahakyan, does not go into the details on the "manageability of the situation"[82], he does elaborate on state building process. He argues that in democratic sense, the state building process should be governed with the consensus of the society. However, due to aforementioned reasons, like lack of civil society, underdeveloped political culture and impacts of a totalitarian background, one cannot talk about a suitable environment in Armenia. On

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78   See the Attachment

79   Each pair of political rights and civil liberties ratings is averaged to determine an overall status of "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free." Those whose ratings average 1.0 to 2.5 are considered Free, 3.0 to 5.0 Partly Free, and 5.5 to 7.0 Not Free

80   White Wyman and Kryshtanovskaya, in John Ishiyama and Ryan Kennedy, "Superpresidentialism and Political Development in Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan", *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 8, 2001, s. 1178.

81   Bkz. For details of the term superpresidentialism please see: John Ishiyama and Ryan Kennedy, "Superpresidentialism and Political Party Development in Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, and Kyrgzstan, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 8, 2001, s. 1177-1191.

82   Sahakyan, *a.g.m.*, s. 177.

the other hand, the political struggle in Karabakh also has prevented such an environment to be created. Even in the early years of independence, in terms of democratic gains, Armenia showed a good performance in broadening political rights. After the independence, political parties other than ANM have become the main interest groups and the source of opposition against Ter-Petrosian.

Influential parties in Armenian politics can be grouped into three. These are parties established on the communist legacy, like Communist Party of Armenia (CPA) and Democratic Party of Armenia (DPA), and parties supported by the Diaspora like ARF (Dashnaksutiune), Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) and Social Democratic Hunchakian Party (SDHP) and newly parties emerged parties as the descendants of ANM. The last group that is formed by offshoots of ANM are National Democratic Union (NDU) and Civic Union of Scientists and Industrialists (CUSCI)[83]. The years of instability have become more problematic in terms of politics as the opposition's criticisms gained ground against the President. Main criticisms of the opposition were on the Karabakh policies of Ter-Petrosian. He was accused of being too passive in the issue.[84] He neither did recognize the independence, nor the unification with the oblast. In 1994, six months before the elections, the president closed down one of the main opposition parties, the Dashnak Party, on the grounds of drug trafficking and running a military organization.[85] Then, just before the elections the constitution approved by the parliament would equip Ter-Petrosian, being the president, with super-presidential powers. For instance, according to the 1995 Constitution, the President of the Republic has the power to issue orders and decrees which shall be executed throughout the Republic (Article 56). Thus, he can act as a legislative body himself. Moreover, the 1996 presidential elections is blamed of being unfair and corrupted.[86] Thus, starting from 1995, the democratic gains have started to disappear in the country, as Ter Petrosian trying to preserve his authority and broadening his powers to tackle with the criticisms against him. In 1997, the Minsk group gathered to resolve the Karabakh conflict. In this meeting, parties got so close to a solution and Ter-Petrosian draw a pro-solution profile during the meetings. His reasoning was firstly, the Karabakh issue prevents the regional development of Armenia, secondly, time is not in favor of Armenia, but that of Azerbaijan and lastly,

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83 Libaridian, *a.g.m.*, s. 23.

84 Edmund Herzig, "Politics in Independent Armenia" in Edmund Herzig and Marina Kurkchiyan, *The Armenians: Past and Present in the Making National Identity*, Oxon: Routledge Curzon, 2005, içinde, s. 69.

85 COVCAS Bulletin, Vol. 5, No 1, 4 Ocak 1995 in Jonathan Aves, "Politics, Parties and Presidents in Transcaucasia", s.12.

86 John S. Dryzek and Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communist Democratization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, s. 135.

the favorable environment of 1997 may not be on the table on the next time.[87] However, this attitude of the president prepared a suitable environment to force him to leave the presidential office. Not thinking similarly about resolution by giving compromises, head of the government, Robert Kocharian with Serge Sargsian and Vazgen Sarkisian joined the opposition and as a result Ter-Petrosian resigned in February 1998. Kocharian became the new President of Armenia after the controversial elections in the same year. Even though the opposition claimed that the elections had been rigged, international observers, considered the elections were reflected several improvements when compared with 1996 presidential elections.[88] Even though, Kocharian was a popular leader, his popularity was undermined after the 1999 parliamentary elections. Vazgen Sarkisan became the Prime Minister and his popularity seemed to undermine that of the president's. Suspiciously, the course of events changed when Vazgen Sarkisian with several other influential politicians were assassinated "…in parliamentary chamber in October 1999 by [militants who are thought to have] alleged ties to Dashnaks".[89] Sarkisian's brother, Aram, was appointed as the new Premier of Armenia, but his governance was also did not last long when Kocharian dismissed Aram Sarkisian and appointed Markarian as the new PM with Serge Sargsian as the Defence Minister of the government in 2000. The reasoning was rumors about ex-PM's intent to sell out Karabakh to Azerbaijan.[90] As a result, with the new government appointed by Kocharian, the support of parliament for the President increased gradually, while dominance of Karabakh oriented politicians becoming more obvious in politics. 2003 and 2008 presidential elections were among the popular topics in international media because of having similar controversies like corruption as in previous elections. Kocharian was accused of increasing governmental pressure on the media on the eve of elections in 2003[91]. Closure of A1+ and Noyan Tapan websites were big blows on freedom on media. 2008 elections on the other hand, were criticized due to KGB like censorship implementations and blackout on media[92]. Moreover, these elections were criticized again being rigged and unfair. OSCE Report indicates that "the conduct of the count did not contribute to reducing an existing suspicion amongst election stakeholders".[93] Moreover, placing ballots on the wrong candidate's piles, indications of ballot stuffing, attempts to impede some International Election Observation Mission observers were reported with other problems. Even though election results show that

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87 Libaridian, *a.g.m.*, s. 65.
88 Herzig, *a.g.e.*, s. 175.
89 Dryzek and Holmes, *a.g.e,*, s. 135.
90 Herzig, a.g.e., s. 177.
91 Freedom House, Nations in Transit – Armenia, Retrieved from: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2005/armenia, accessed on 28.12.2012
92 RFERL, *Armenia: Censors Block Printing Of Opposition Newspapers*, 14 Mart 2008.
93 OSCE, *Post Election Interim Report: Republic of Armenia*, 20 February – 3 Mart 2008.

Sargsian won the presidential race with 53% and Ter Petrosian got 21.5% of the votes, after 2008 elections, opposition led by Ter Petrosian claimed that the real winner were himself and protested the results. During these protests 8 people were killed, Ter Petrosian was put under house arrest and a state of emergency announced by Robert Kocharian. Human Rights Watch charged Armenian security forces with using "excessive force and violence".[94] While discussing a possible colored revolution in Armenia like in Ukraine or Georgia, suddenly clashes out broke in Karabakh. This represented a good basis for Yerevan to take the control of the events going on in streets. Presenting an outside threat would unite people against this and domestic issues will become a secondary topic, in an ethnically homogeneous country like Armenia. Consequently, the clashes stopped and Serge Sargsian sworn in as the new President of Armenia on 9 April 2008. As a result, Karabakh played a major role in Armenian politics, and helped stability so be sustained in the country.

Regional and International Developments' Reflections

The aftermath of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 had a remarkable impact upon the regional conflictual issue. Russia's role in the Southern Caucasus region had increased in such a way that it took the upper hand with regard to Karabakh dispute's resolution. Turkey's rapprochement with Armenia in October of 2009 was another significant development in which had influence on the settlement of Karabakh dispute. In 2010, Karabakh Dispute had directed the regional countries' relationships with both regional allies and global actors.[95] As an expert on Southern Caucasus region De Waal identifies the overall picture of the regions as: *"the notion that the region is a "Great Chessboard" where the big powers push the locals around like pawns to serve their own goals. That is not what actually happens. In actual fact, however the geopolitical weather changes, the locals always manage to manipulate the outside powers at least as much as the other way round."*[96] This perspective might be right, but the essence of the problem was uncertainty about the actual player of the resolution. Regional countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran has emerged as the important regional players. However, their national interests included many reservations in path ways of the resolution scenarios.[97]

As being one of the main actors of the Karabakh dispute, regional and international developments hampered Armenia to take more steps forward, and along with preserving the national interest, used the nationalist instru-

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94   RFERL, *Armenia, Eight Killed After the Clashes Between Police and Protestors*, 2 March 2008.

95   Zaur Şiriyev, *2010 Yılının Diplomasi Trafiğinde Dağlık Karabağ Sorununa Çözüm Arayışları*, OAKA, Cilt 5, Sayı 10, 2010, s. 119.

96   Thomas De Waal, *Call off the Great Game*, Foreign Policy, Eylül 13, 2010, http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/09/13/call-off-the-great-game/, (Accessed on 20.04.2015).

97   Siriyev, *a.g.m.*, s. 121.

ments to halt the resolution process.[98] Russia supported the rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia because this has led to a rupture between Turkey and Azerbaijan.[99] Russia's increasing role in the region had paved the way for its upcoming strategies over the region. Turkey was of the view that settlement of the dispute should be underpinned through Russian support. By demonstrating moderate tendencies towards the rapprochement process with Armenia, Turkey had been sensitive in connection with the relations with Azerbaijan. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Russia in 12 January 2010 has been considered as such that Russia would take a part in the resolution process. As a matter of fact that immediately after Erdoğan visit to Russia, foreign minister Sergei Lavrov visited its counterpart in Armenia. These developments gave a push to serious expectations about plausible resolution process. However, on 12 January 2010, Armenian Constitutional Court's decision stalled the rapprochement process because Armenia put forward a condition unless Turkey accepts the so called "Genocide" issue protocols signed in 2009 between Armenia and Turkey will be null and void.[100] One of the basic motivations behind this decision was the beneficial usage of nationalist instruments; so called "genocide" issue and the Karabakh conflict.

Conclusion

In this study, it is tried to be analyzed the role of nationalism on Armenian political life in the context of the Karabakh issue. It appears that it played a crucial role in the post-independence period of the republic by acting as a magnet that gathers people together to reach a specific objective. Ethnic structure of Armenia was crucial at this point with its homogeneity. Furthermore, the Karabakh issue also created a favorable political environment for Armenian politics in the same period. In this sense, umbrella organization ANM played a crucial role in state building process. The Karabakh issue has always been high on Armenian political agenda and it was used as an instrument that controls and dominates the political elites' decisions. However, in the last analysis, looking at the reports of Freedom House and implementations in recent elections, one can say that the situation in Armenia have not improved in terms of democracy and stuck in a regime type that stands between the category of authoritarianism and semi-authoritarianism. As seen in Armenian political life, political elite has gained legitimacy by using this nationalism instrument since independence and it has evolved into one of the major factors that pre-

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98 Göktürk Tüysüzoğlu, *Farklı Dış Politika Seçenekleri Bağlamında Ermenistan Dış Politikası'nın Değerlendirilmesi*, Yeni Türkiye Dergisi, Cilt 60, 2014, s. 4.

99 Siriyev, *a.g.m.*, s. 121.

100 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "From Arab Spring to Eurasian Spring: The Changing Geopolitics of the Caucasus and the Future of Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations", *Debates on Democratic Development and Bilateral Relations of Azerbaijan and Turkey*, Leila Alieva, Elkhan Mehtiyev, Center For National and International Studies (CNIS) Publications, Qanun Publishing House, Baku-Azerbaijan, s. 98.

vent democratization process to go forward and democracy to get consolidated. To conclude, democracy needs a dynamic environment and using nationalism as an instrument can promote lethargy as well as undermine prospects for democratization and cause authoritarian regimes to become stronger. As catalyst nationalism can work well in a relatively homogenous society. However, pushing too much and turning nationalism into an ideology can cause that dynamism to be lost. As a result in this nationalism can work as an instrument that promotes anti-democratic implementations in this static situation.

Attachments:

Democracies	Façade Democracies	Authoritarian Regimes	
Estonia	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Tajikistan
Latvia	Georgia	Belarus	Turkmenistan
Lithuanna	Krgyzstan	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan
Ukraine	Moldova	Russia	

Table 1: Categorization of countries Post-Soviet countries in 2008 according to regime type[101]
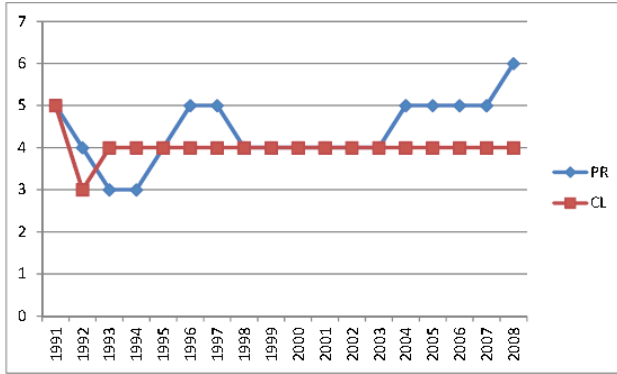
Graph 1: Status of Democracy in Armenia-Civil Liberties (CL) and Political Rights (PR) since Independence[102]

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101 This table prepared according to data in Freedom House database, *Freedom in the World 2007: Country Subscores*; Retrieved from: http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=276.
102 This graph was prepared according to data from Freedom House, *Freedom in the World Historical Data:Comparative Scores for all countries from 1973 to 2006*, Retrieved from: http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15.

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