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Ankara Moscow Confrontation in Caucasus: Türkiye's Support to Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh War and Strategic Acquisitions of the Duo*

Ankara ve Moskova Kafkasya'da Karşı Karşıya: İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nda Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan'a Desteği ve İkilin Stratejik Kazanımları

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Abstract

It is a widely recognised fact in the literature that Türkiye and Russia were on opposite sides in the history of the Karabakh conflict and pursued policies based on rivalry. However, Ankara could not support Azerbaijan sufficiently in the First Karabakh War due to many restrictive factors and both Azerbaijan and Türkiye were the losers of the war. However, in the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan's economic and military strengthening and changing balances ensured that the winning side was the Baku-Ankara front. In addition, one of the important factors in Azerbaijan's victory was Türkiye's military and diplomatic support. The aim of this study is to reveal the ways in which Türkiye's support to Azerbaijan was manifested in the Second Karabakh War and the acquisitions of Azerbaijan's victory in terms of Türkiye-Azerbaijan axis. In this respect, the study is important in terms of revealing Ankara's military and diplomatic support to Baku in the Türkiye-Russia rivalry within the framework of neoclassical variables. In this context, case analysis is used in the study from one of the qualitative research methods. Within the scope of this type of research, the ways in which Türkiye and Russia confronted each other in the Second Karabakh War and the means and methods of Türkiye's support for Azerbaijan are determined. The study concluded that there was a rivalry between Türkiye and Russia in the Second Karabakh War and that one of the main determinants of this rivalry was Türkiye's military and diplomatic support to Azerbaijan. In this direction, the study uses primary sources such as documents published by the official authorities of the parties and the statements of high-level officials of the countries, as well as secondary sources such as other periodicals in the literature.

Keywords: Caucasus, Second Karabakh War, Türkiye, Russia, Azerbaijan

Öz

Karabağ meselesinin tarihçesinde Türkiye ve Rusya'nın karşıt saflarda yer alarak rekabete dayalı politikalar izlediği literatürde geniş yankı bulan bir gerçektir. Ancak Ankara Birinci Karabağ Savaşı'nda birçok kısıtlayıcı etkenlerden dolayı Azerbaycan'ı yeterince destekleyememiş ve hem Azerbaycan hem de bununla bağlantılı olarak Türkiye savaşın kaybedeni olmuşlardır. Ancak İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nda Azerbaycan'ın ekonomik ve askeri olarak güçlenmesi ve değişen dengeler kazanan tarafın Bakü-Ankara safı olmasını sağlamıştır. Bunun yanında Azerbaycan'ın zaferindeki önemli etkenlerden biri de Türkiye'nin askeri ve diplomatik desteği olmuştur. Bu çalışmanın amacı İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nda Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan'a desteğinin hangi yollarla tezahür ettiğini ve Azerbaycan'ın zaferinin Türkiye-Azerbaycan hattı açısından kazanımlarının neler olduğunu ortaya koymaktır. Bu kapsamda çalışma, Türkiye-Rusya rekabetinde Ankara'nın Bakü'ye verdiği askeri ve diplomatik desteği neoklasik değişkenler çerçevesinde ortaya koyması açısından önemlidir. Bu bağlamda çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden vaka analizi kullanılmıştır. Bu araştırma türü kapsamında İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nda Türkiye ve Rusya'nın karşı karşıya gelme biçimleri ve Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan'a verdiği desteğin araç ve yöntemleri tespit edilmiştir. Çalışmada, İkinci Karabağ Savaşı'nda Türkiye ve Rusya arasında bir rekabet yaşandığı ve bu rekabetin temel belirleyicilerinden birinin Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan'a verdiği askeri ve diplomatik destek olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda çalışmada tarafların resmi makamları tarafından yayınlanan belgeler ve ülkelerin üst düzey yetkililerinin açıklamaları gibi birincil kaynakların yanı sıra literatürde yer alan diğer süreli yayınlar gibi ikincil kaynaklar da kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kafkasya, İkinci Karabağ Savaşı, Türkiye, Rusya, Azerbaycan

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INTRODUCTION

The silence and support of the international community, including the Minsk Group, to Armenia's increasingly aggressive policy further emboldened Armenia. When Armenian Defense Minister David Tonoyan made a speech in military uniform to the Armenian lobby in New York on March 29, 2019, stating that "As minister of defense, I declare that the formula 'territories for peace' will no longer exist, and we will reformulate it as 'new war-new territories,'" (Kucera, 2019), he did not face any criticism or comment from either his Western supporters or the Minsk Group. Russia's silence in tacit support of Armenia reflects the competitive dimension of the "competitive cooperation" policy that has been developing with Türkiye since 2016. Moscow's attitude also encouraged Armenia in the Tovuz conflicts. However, during the Tovuz clashes, Türkiye's loud declaration that it would stand by Azerbaijan "in case it prefers the desired solution" (Yüzbaşıoğlu & Çam, 2020) was the development that determined Baku's course.

The aim of this research is to clarify how Türkiye's backing of Azerbaijan was displayed during the Second Karabakh War and to determine the benefits that Azerbaijan's triumph provided to the Turkish-Azerbaijani partnership. Consequently, case analysis, a qualitative research method, was utilized in the research. Within this research methodology, the characteristics of the dispute between Türkiye and Russia during the Second Karabakh War and the ways and methods of Türkiye's assistance to Azerbaijan were identified. The research found that Türkiye and Russia were in competition during the Second Karabakh War, with Türkiye's military and diplomatic backing of Azerbaijan being a key factor in this rivalry.

On September 27, 2020, at around 06:00 in the morning, Armenia launched an almost all-out attack on Azerbaijani territory from its border positions in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding cities, using high-caliber mortars and artillery weapons against military positions and civilian populated areas. On September 27, in his address to the nation, the President of Azerbaijan, referring to the words of the Armenian Defense Minister, said: "Their military and political leaders tried to threaten Azerbaijan with a new occupation, a new policy of occupation for the sake of new territories. This is the policy of the military-political leadership of Armenia today." On the same day, the Azerbaijani Security Council, which convened under the leadership of Aliyev, decided to counter-attack Armenia's aggression in self-defense (President of Azerbaijan Republic, 2020).

From the very first seconds of the Armenian aggression that started the war, Türkiye has put its weight on the incident with its intense reaction. In a written statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the same day, Armenia's attack on Azerbaijani territory was strongly condemned and support for Baku was expressed as follows: "...Azerbaijan will surely use its right of self defence to protect its people and its territorial integrity. In this vein, Türkiye (then official name of Türkiye) fully supports Azerbaijan with unwavering solidarity. We will stand by Azerbaijan whichever way it prefers. We call on the international community also to stand by the righteous party..." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2020b). Similarly, Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a similar statement of support and Ankara's clear stance was also emphasized in Aliyev's letter of thanks sent to Erdoğan on October 3, 2020:

“Your very clear and harsh statements on the issue once again showed that Azerbaijan is not alone in its just cause. The heads of the relevant state institutions of Türkiye, members of parliament and representatives of civil society also took a firm and clear stand on the issue... On behalf of myself and the Azerbaijani people, I would like to thank you and the brotherly Turkish people for this support.” (Rehimov, 2020).

Ankara's direct and all-out support for Baku in the Patriotic War, despite its position in the First Karabakh War, which always took Russia's reaction into account, is the most important lesson learned from the first war. Türkiye's reaction must have had an unexpected effect on the Kremlin as well, as the President's Press Spokesman Dmitry Peskov implicitly sent a message to Türkiye in a statement on September 28: “At the moment, we call on all parties, especially the parties to the conflict, to show maximum restraint, to abandon military methods and to refrain from any steps that could lead to an undesirable aggravation of the situation, which is already at the stage of a military conflict.” (TACC, 2020). As a matter of fact, in his emphasis on “all parties, especially the conflicting parties”, it is seen that he made separate appeals to Türkiye and Azerbaijan. In this context, Türkiye's meeting only with Aliyev on the first day can be explained by its fraternal ties with Azerbaijan, Baku's just cause and Armenia's policy of enmity with the Republic of Türkiye. As for the “Kremlin's silence”, Moscow's stance, which is the total of both Pashinyan's adventurous pro-Western policy and the ongoing multidimensional cooperation with Azerbaijan and Türkiye, makes sense in the context of the policy of “competitive cooperation”.

It is possible to say that by November, there was an involuntary consensus among Armenia's supporters that the war and the status quo were unsustainable and that Pashinyan would lead Yerevan to disaster if he continued the war. Türkiye's deterrent stance on the issue and its extensive military and diplomatic support to Azerbaijan have been the most important factor that has ensured this consensus up to this point.

It would be an incomplete assessment to explain Türkiye's rivalry with Russia in the Karabakh issue only with its support for Azerbaijan in the 44-day war. In the 44-day rivalry, the invisible part of the iceberg is Ankara's efforts in the 9644-day period between May 4, 1994, when the Bishkek Protocol was signed, and September 27, 2020, when the Second Karabakh War began. For this reason, this study characterizes this period as “ripe for rivalry” following Friedberg (1993). Therefore, it is useful to analyze Türkiye's military and diplomatic support in the Patriotic War separately.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Neoclassical Realism

Some developments in the 1990s challenged the validity of neorealist arguments. Despite the US victory in the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, its efforts to protect its interests and expand its sphere of influence in Europe and East Asia became inexplicable to structural realists and pure domestic policy theorists other than aggressive realism (Taliaferro et. al, 2009: 2). However, the one-sided assessment of developments by both the realist tradition and pure domestic policy theorists led to the need for new theories. It was

Gideon Rose who provided this new realist stance with a theoretical framework. In his study entitled 'Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Theories', his theory, which he called 'neoclassical realism', was enriched with more comprehensive variables while remaining faithful to some core concepts of the realist tradition (Rose, 1998: 146). This inclusive aspect of the theory is the main reason for choosing neoclassical realism as the theoretical framework for this study. Moreover, the aim of this study is not to analyse Türkiye's and Russia's policies in the Second Karabakh War only in terms of outcomes. Rose states that theories that focus only on explaining outcomes are theories of international politics and considers neorealism in this context (Rose, 1998: 145). Indeed, both Morgenthau and Waltz describe their theories as international political theories. For example, Morgenthau states that his goal is a theory of international politics (Morgenthau, 1972: 3), while Waltz emphasises that he has set out to construct a theory of international politics that overcomes the shortcomings of existing theories (Waltz, 1979: 1). In this context, since it would be more appropriate to evaluate this study in the light of a theory of foreign policy, the theory of neoclassical realism has been chosen.

Another reason why neoclassical realism is considered appropriate for this study is the flexibility of its propositions. Its flexible nature makes neoclassical realism a useful framework for achieving the best intermediate level of theorising that the social sciences often hope to achieve (Rose, 1998: 168). For example, it offers the possibility of choosing between theoretical propositions rather than hypotheses that necessarily need to be tested. The reason for this is Michiel Foulon's claim that there is no single theory of neoclassical realism, but rather a variety of neoclassical realist theories (Foulon, 2015: 646). For the purposes of this study, a number of neoclassical propositions have been carefully selected. Among these, two important concepts have a special place. The first is the struggle for influence, which is an important phenomenon in neoclassical realism, while the other is the concept of 'ripe for rivalry', which is regularly referred to in the study.

The Struggle for Influence

One of the issues related to the structure of the international system is the foreign policy moves that lead to competition or struggle for influence among actors acting with similar intentions in the same region. Again, the neoclassical realist perspective is quite remarkable. Fareed Zakaria's 'From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role' asks why states engage in politics and seek influence beyond their borders and answers that this behaviour stems from the tendency of states to use the means at their disposal to gain control over their environment. Zakaria supports his conclusion with Robert Gilpin's hypothesis that 'all states seek control over territory, the behaviour of other states, and the world economy, but rich states succeed' and notes that this thesis has been adopted by many theorists and scholars (Zakaria, 1999: 3). Gilpin even mentions that wealth-seeking states are tempted to try to increase their control over their environment (Rose, 1998: 168). The desire of great powers to build influence and control their neighbourhood leads to a struggle for influence.

'Ripe for Rivalry' Case

There are dozens of studies in the foreign policy analysis literature on the timing of countries' policy moves. This study also emphasises that increasingly powerful states will shape their regional policies by fulfilling certain governance elements and forming a grand strategy. In

this context, 'ripeness for rivalry' is one of the important issues that neoclassical realists draw attention to. While offensive realism argues that the future of interstate relations will be as confrontational as in the past, defensive realists argue that great power conflict will only be possible if military technologies support conflict. In contrast to both, neoclassical realists stress the importance of timing. Neoclassical realism sees certain situations and developments as 'ripe for rivalry' for states.

Neoclassical realists have argued that rising powers will almost always follow expected patterns of behaviour, based on China's recent policies. Rose, drawing on Friedberg, argues that when these powers are relatively weak they are reluctant to accept existing institutions, boundaries and political hierarchies, and as they gain power they seek to spread their weight around (Rose, 1998: 171). The above assumptions also apply to the powers analysed in this study. This study focuses on the politics of regional rivalry between Türkiye and Russia over Karabakh in the Caucasus in the light of Aaron Louis Friedberg's concept of 'ripe for rivalry'. Friedberg's approach, which is valuable for this study, is that states engage in regional rivalry after they have gone a certain distance in increasing their hard power elements. This is where 'ripe for rivalry' comes into play (Friedberg, 1993: 29-30).

TÜRKİYE'S SUPPORT TO AZERBAIJAN

Military Support: Bayraktar's Role in the War

It is a well-known fact that the most important variables determining the fate of the Second Karabakh War were political will and military power. Türkiye's support to Azerbaijan in the Patriotic War is the harmonization of these two elements. In this context, the history of Türkiye's military cooperation with Azerbaijan is a well-known fact. Azerbaijani President Aliyev summarizes the stage reached in the Second Karabakh War in the context of the outcome of Türkiye-Azerbaijan military cooperation as follows:

"We are a country with an ally like Türkiye. We are a very happy country to have an ally and a brother like Türkiye. Of course, the moral support that Türkiye shows us, but also the fact that we have the products of the Turkish defense industry strengthens us and the whole world sees this. Today the Turkish army is the second army of NATO. No one can stand in front of the Turkish army. Everyone has seen this, everyone understands this. We are building a smaller model of the Turkish army, and hopefully we will do it together." (Xalq Cəbhəsi Qəzeti, 2021).

It is agreed by all realist theories that competition between countries is driven by changes in the material power capacity of states. However, the first determinant factor in this study is the special emphasis that neoclassical realists place on the technological change of countries (Rose, 1998: 165). In this context, Türkiye's evolution in the defense industry, and in the technology of unmanned aerial vehicles, is the most significant issue to be evaluated. The second important factor in the reference to Neoclassical Realism is the theorists' understanding of power as being "as strong as countries are able to reflect the technological change they experience in foreign policy" (Friedberg, 1993: 29-30). It can be said that Ankara harmoniously

reflected the understanding on the ground within the framework of the “competitive cooperation” policy it pursued with Moscow during the Patriotic War.

The Patriotic War is considered by analysts as the first comprehensive postmodern war in terms of drones defeating an established ground army (Hecht, 2022: 31). Eado Hecht, a military analyst, notes that during the Tovuz attacks, Armenian General Balayan stated that “...the Armenian army destroyed more than a dozen Israeli attack drones in Azerbaijan’s arsenal in a matter of days. These UAVs were made of the best technology and were considered indestructible” (Hakobyan, 2020), and answers the question ‘What changed in the nearly seventy days from July 2020 to the Second Karabakh War?’ in one sentence: “Azerbaijan added Bayraktar TB2 to its inventory.” (Hecht, 2022: 32). In the Patriotic War, Türkiye continued to compete with Russia not only through military equipment but also through the Azerbaijani army officers it had trained for nearly 28 years. However, the Bayraktar TB2 had such an impact on international security and military literature that after the war, “Foreign Policy” magazine wrote that the US military went to school on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to research the Bayraktar TB2 (Detsch, 2021), while “MIT Technology Review” included it in its list of breakthrough technologies (Atherton, 2023).

Comparing the list of military equipment destroyed by Azerbaijan against the Armenian army (President of Azerbaijan Republic, 2020b) shared by Azerbaijani President Aliyev at the end of the Patriotic War with the data of the independent open source “Oryx”, Hecht concluded that 75% of the Armenian fortifications destroyed by the Azerbaijani army in the Second Karabakh War were destroyed by the UAVs (Hecht, 2022: 32-33). In this context, considering the data of the mentioned source, Bayraktar TB2 destroyed 89 T-72 tanks, 29 armored vehicles, 131 cannons, 61 rocket launchers, 543 trucks, 9 radar systems and 15 Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) systems, mostly Russian-made weapons, in the Patriotic War (Mitzer et al., 2022). On the other hand, Russian strategists acknowledge that the Turkish drones have brought about a proto revolution in the war, noting that the Karabakh victory has meant a geopolitical catastrophe for Russia (Макиенко, 2020), while greatly increasing Türkiye’s prestige. On the other hand, analysts draw attention to the ability to use these drones in an organized manner. Indeed, the Russian state agency TASS, one of the propaganda tools that carried anti-Türkiye allegations throughout the war, wrote that “unlike the Azerbaijani side, the Armenian army is unable to ensure the mass use of even technically simple UAVs of its own production” (Новичков, 2020).

In addition to Türkiye’s military support to Azerbaijan, Ankara’s other important effort was its diplomatic mobilization during the Patriotic War. In this respect, it should be emphasized that the Türkiye’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs undertook the other pillar of the Türkiye-Russia rivalry during the war.

Diplomatic Support: The Diplomacy Traffic of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The second important element in Türkiye’s support to Azerbaijan in the context of its rivalry with Russia in the Patriotic War is its active diplomacy. Carl von Clausewitz (1832) stated that “war is the continuation of politics by other means”. According to a Russian doctrine that starts from the opposite of Clausewitz’s statements, “diplomacy is the continuation of war by other means.” (Унанянц, 2023). In this framework, Ankara blended the two doctrines and

developed the vision of “strong on the ground and at the table”. This approach, which was emphasized more frequently, was integrated with Türkiye’s role in the Patriotic War and became more associated with the Karabakh victory (The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, 2023).

President Erdogan’s rhetoric and efforts in the context of diplomatic support to Azerbaijan are well known to all layers of the international community. The statements of Azerbaijani President Aliyev during the war and his letter of thanks to President Erdogan highlighting Ankara’s diplomatic support are detailed above. In his message to Türkiye when the Republic Day on October 29, the year after the Karabakh victory, President Aliyev reiterated his gratitude for Ankara’s support during the war: “The decisive political and moral support of you, the brotherly Turkish state, and people, played a major role in Azerbaijan’s struggle for the liberation of its territories. Our people will never forget this support, which once again showed the solidarity of Azerbaijan and Türkiye to the whole world.” (Rehimov, 2021).

In addition, it is necessary to open a special parenthesis on the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to support Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh War on three axes. The support movement includes official statements in support of Azerbaijan’s just position, support and publicity efforts before international institutions and organizations, and direct field work of the ministry. The first of these is the official statements made by the Ministry in support of Azerbaijan. In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made 10 official statements of support to Azerbaijan during the 44-day war. Considering that the total number of statements made during the same period was 65,¹ it is seen that Turkish diplomacy mobilized more than 15% of its efforts for Baku. Moreover, considering the existence of 8 hot conflict zones (Iran, Libya, Syria, Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen) in the world in 2020, which directly or indirectly concern Türkiye’s interests, the importance of this data is even more evident (Anadolu Agency, 2020).

The second diplomatic support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Azerbaijan during the war was to keep Azerbaijan’s just position arising from self-defense consistently on the agenda before international institutions and organizations. In this context, the Second Karabakh War issue was one of the main agenda items during the visits of high-level diplomatic representatives from various parts of the world to Türkiye, including Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbaev and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. The diplomatic traffic of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which also means the consolidation of Türkiye’s rising position in global governance, has taken an important place among the political moves that strengthen Ankara’s hand in the competition with Russia.

The third most important pillar of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ diplomatic support to Azerbaijan in the Patriotic War was the direct involvement of the Foreign Minister in the field. Within the framework of diplomatic support to Baku, the then Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu visited Azerbaijan twice during the war. Accordingly, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu first visited Azerbaijan on 6 October 2020, where he was received by President Ilham Aliyev

¹These figures are taken from regular official statements made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 27 September and 10 November 2020. See in detail, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sub.tr.mfa?3fc6582e-a37b-40d1-847a-6914dc12fb60>

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2020). Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu, who reiterated Türkiye's support to Azerbaijan during the meeting, used the following expressions:

“I have come here to show the support of Türkiye and the Turkish people once again to brotherly Azerbaijan to the whole world... We, as Türkiye and the Turkish people, are ready to provide all kinds of support to Azerbaijan in every field it needs. President Erdogan and we explain and emphasize this on every platform.” (President of Azerbaijan Republic, 2020c).

Azerbaijani President Aliyev underlined that Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu had visited Azerbaijan many times, but this visit was of special importance as it took place in a period that was not easy for Azerbaijan and described the visit as a manifestation of the obvious support of the brotherly country (President of Azerbaijan Republic, 2020c). The second visit of the Foreign Minister to Baku took place on 1 November 2020. During this visit, Çavuşoğlu was received by President Aliyev and the following statements he made here reveal the anatomy of the support for Baku in the Patriotic War:

“I have come on the instruction and duty of Mr President (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan). You talk to him every day, at least twice a day, but he still sends his greetings to you. Our President has a duty for us, do not leave brotherly Azerbaijan alone in this process and constantly go there, to Baku, act together... We are proud of your victories on the battlefield. We are proud that you have shown the power of Turks to the whole world.” (President of Azerbaijan Republic, 2020d).

The visits of the Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the eve of the beginning and end of the Second Karabakh War and the above-mentioned statements, which are the opening and closing speeches of a victory, are reflections of the vision of ‘strong Türkiye on the ground and at the table’. On the other hand, one of the most prominent outcomes of that support was the affirmation of the position that ‘the Karabakh problem cannot be solved without Türkiye’, which was also reciprocated by Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's Position: “Karabakh Problem Cannot be Solved Without Türkiye”

Whenever Türkiye has attempted to find a solution to the Karabakh issue, Russia has pointed to the OSCE and the Minsk Group in response. In fact, the main objective of the Kremlin, which adopted the ‘no solution for a solution’ formula, has been to consolidate its presence in the region through the status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh and to maintain its favorable situation in rivalry with Ankara. However, the Second Karabakh War showed all stakeholders of the issue, including the international community, that such understanding was no longer sustainable. One of the most important issues that the Patriotic War has brought into question is Russia's current position towards the problem.

On 21 October 2020, on the eve of the Azerbaijani army advancing and retaking many occupied cities, the then Vice President Fuat Oktay stated in a statement that Russia could not solve the Karabakh issue, that Ankara's absence at the table (in the Minsk Group) from the beginning was the negligence of the actors in question and that the problem could not be solved without Türkiye (News.ru, 2020). In response to Vice President Oktay's statements, Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the participation of third countries in the

existing settlement formats depends entirely on the political will of the parties to the conflict and that participation in the settlement of the conflict is possible only with the consent of both sides (Известия, 2020). This attitude of Russia, which is part of the problem by referring the consent for a solution to Armenia, is in essence an approach that documents the Kremlin's rivalry with Ankara. It is known that Azerbaijan, which Peskov pointed out as one of the parties to the problem, insists on Türkiye's presence at the table. On 14 October 2020, in an interview with Habertürk, Azerbaijani President Aliyev used similar statements with Fuat Oktay. Aliyev emphasised that if the conflict is to be resolved, countries with interests in the region should take part in the Minsk Group and summarized the importance and influence of Ankara as follows:

“The main thing is that Türkiye should be at this table. And it already is. Because we have repeatedly met and talked about the Karabakh issue with my respected brother Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Mr Putin. It is an issue that has been on the agenda of Türkiye-Russia for many years, more than 10 years. I was also aware of this. Both the President of Türkiye and the President of Russia told me about the issue. Here, there is already Türkiye. Now there is more. In a larger volume, on a larger scale. And today the Türkiye's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu is meeting with Mr Lavrov. The Türkiye's Defence Minister is meeting and talking with Russian Defense Minister Shoigu. Who can say that there is no Türkiye? If there is no Türkiye, what are you talking about? There is Türkiye, and we will do our best so that there will be Türkiye in the future. Without Türkiye, this issue cannot be solved. Everyone should understand this.” (Habertürk, 2020).

Aliyev's statements above contain examples of both the concepts of 'competitive cooperation' and 'ripe for rivalry' used in this article. In fact, the fact that Russia's political and military bureaucracy continued negotiations on the Karabakh issue despite disagreement with their Turkish counterparts represents 'cooperation with red lines', while the fact that the negotiations lasted for more than a decade corresponds to the classification of 'ripe for rivalry' for Ankara. Baku's approach is also an important factor that facilitates 'Türkiye's presence on a larger scale' at the table, as the Azerbaijani President put it. This sub-heading, which is directly quoted from Azerbaijani President Aliyev's statement, is a summary of Azerbaijan's view of Türkiye in the Second Karabakh War. On the other hand, by November, the victorious and defeated ranks in the war started to become more apparent. Just like in the First Karabakh War, the factor determining the outcome of the war on the field in the Second Karabakh War was the situation of Shusha.

STRATEGIC ACQUISITIONS

Baku Victory Parade

The Victory Parade, which took place on 10 December 2020, was the venue where the 44-day victory of the Patriotic War, achieved with Türkiye's decisive and comprehensive support, was displayed. Türkiye was the only special invitee from outside Azerbaijan to the military parade in “Azadlıq Square” in Baku. Another special guest of the parade, which was attended by President Erdoğan and the state officials of the Republic of Türkiye, was the

Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). At the Victory Parade, where Turkish and Azerbaijani soldiers appeared shoulder to shoulder accompanied by the “Mehter March”, the President of Azerbaijan reiterated Türkiye’s support in the war with the following statements:

“From the first days, or rather from the first hours of the Patriotic War, we felt the support of Türkiye. President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan supported the just cause of Azerbaijan from the first hours. His clear, precise, and unequivocal statements delighted the Azerbaijani people. My brother said that Azerbaijan was right in this war, Azerbaijan was not alone, and Türkiye was always on Azerbaijan’s side. This is a manifestation of our unity and brotherhood. Türkiye’s political and moral support to Azerbaijan makes every Azerbaijani citizen proud and happy. Today, by participating in the Victory Parade together, we once again show our unity both to our peoples and at the same time to the whole world.” (President of Azerbaijan Republic, 2020e)

Speaking at the ceremony, which was a joint show of the political and military bureaucracies of the two countries, President Erdoğan underlined that the guide in Ankara-Baku relations was the statements of Heydar Aliyev and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, “One nation, two states” and “Azerbaijan’s joy is our joy, its sorrow is our sorrow” and said ‘...For thirty years we have had Karabakh wounded in our chest. Today we are here to share the happiness of healing this wound and to celebrate this glorious victory together’ (President of Azerbaijan Republic, 2020e). In addition to the TAF Special Forces Unit greeting the Presidents of Türkiye and Azerbaijan with the announcer’s cry of “How nice that you have a Turkish brother”, another element that marked the ceremony was Bayraktar TB2. Indeed, in addition to the active and unusable military equipment captured from the Armenian army in the Patriotic War, technologies that were effective in the war were also exhibited. In this context, a special parenthesis was opened for the Turkish UAV and Bayraktar TB2 was presented at the ceremony as “the most modern unmanned aerial vehicle that makes the enemy tremble with fear and delivers shaking and dispersing blows to the enemy” (AZTV, 2020).

The Victory Parade, which should be attributed special importance in Ankara’s favor in terms of Türkiye-Russia rivalry in the Karabakh issue, also represents the evolution of Baku from a period when Baku was threatened by the Russian Ambassador in the First Karabakh War: ‘Azerbaijan is our ally of 200 years. Whoever does not accept this cannot sit in his seat’ by the Russian Ambassador in the First Karabakh War, it represents the evolution of a period in which Türkiye-Azerbaijan cooperation was declared. On the other hand, the absence of any official statement from Moscow about the ceremony, which was carefully covered by the international media, is quite remarkable and should be considered as an expression of acceptance. In addition, the Victory Parade, which is considered by Russian analysts as the ‘march of the winners’ (Березовский, 2020), may cause discomfort in Russia by displaying Russian-made military equipment captured from the Armenian army in the Patriotic War, although no official comment was made. On the other hand, the fact that the Kremlin, which tried to steal a role with a ‘fait accompli’ ceasefire on 9 November without inviting Ankara, was not invited to the Victory Parade is the backfire of Russia’s competition-oriented effort. In this context, the absence of Moscow, from the Victory Parade can be explained by Aliyev’s words ‘we are showing our unity to the world’.

Shusha Declaration: The Culmination of Türkiye-Azerbaijan Cooperation

The Shusha Declaration, which is a direct projection of the Türkiye-Russia rivalry in the Caucasus with a special focus on the Karabakh issue, is also the summit of Türkiye-Azerbaijan cooperation. President Erdoğan paid a visit to Azerbaijan on 15-16 June 2021 in response to President Aliyev's invitation, which had special symbolic meanings in terms of time and place (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2021). On Azerbaijan's National Liberation Day, the two heads of state met in Shusha, liberated from Armenian occupation, and signed the 'Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan'. It is noteworthy that the Declaration, which envisages high-level cooperation in many fields from security to culture, directly refers to the Karabakh victory: 'With great pride, the Parties declare that Azerbaijan, having triumphed in the 44-day Patriotic War, has stopped Armenia's 30-year aggressive policy, liberated its territories from occupation, and restored historical justice and international law.' (Permanent Representation of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, 2021). The fact that the declaration of alliance, the content of which is full of messages in terms of Türkiye-Russia rivalry, refers to the 1921 Treaty of Kars, the 100th anniversary of which will be observed, represents a centuries-old vision of brotherhood and alliance of both states. The document draws special attention to Türkiye's role in the region, where Russia is also present, by stating that "The Parties emphasize that Türkiye's contribution to the activities of the Türkiye-Russia Joint Centre in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan plays an important role in ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the region." (Permanent Representation of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, 2021). In this context, the Zangezur Corridor was another issue that was emphasized in the Shusha Declaration. The importance of the Zangezur Corridor, which has a priority position for Ankara in the ongoing Ankara-Moscow rivalry in the Caucasus, is expressed as follows:

"The parties note that the opening of the corridor connecting Türkiye and Azerbaijan between the Western provinces of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Zengezur Corridor) and the construction of the Nakhchivan-Kars railway as a continuation of this corridor will make a significant contribution to the intensification of transport-communication relations between the two countries." (Permanent Representation of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, 2021).

The inclusion of the Zangezur Corridor in the Declaration has also gained a special meaning with the 100th anniversary of the transfer of Zangezur to Armenia by Russia. Russia's point of view on the Shusha Declaration was stated that 'it is considered at the highest level, although it is considered within the scope of Azerbaijan's relations with third countries. In this context, at a press conference held in Moscow on 17 June 2021, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova commented on the Kremlin's position in response to a question about President Erdoğan's visit to Shusha as follows:

"I think it is wrong to confuse the two issues directly related to Nagorno-Karabakh or Azerbaijan's bilateral relations with third countries. In this regard, we evaluate Azerbaijan-Türkiye contacts at the highest level. We think that it is very important that bilateral relations, including military ones in the region, are not established against other states." (МИД России, 2021).

The Shusha Declaration, which points to a new dimension both in terms of Türkiye's position in the Caucasus and in terms of competition with Moscow, is a post-war order-establishing document. Another issue to be evaluated in this context is the Zangezur Corridor.

Zangezur Corridor

The issue of the Zangezur Corridor, one of the strategic gains of the Karabakh victory, was also included in the 10 November Agreement that ended the Patriotic War. The Corridor, which is addressed in the last article of the 9-article Agreement, is a vital bridge in terms of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations as well as Ankara's relations with other Turkic republics. In this respect, the Zangezur Corridor initiative is considered within the scope of order-building mechanisms after Türkiye's victory in Karabakh. The 43 km long corridor, which will connect Nakhchivan with mainland Azerbaijan, is also one of the important subjects of Türkiye-Russia rivalry. Russia does not want to leave that initiative, which is a special gain for Türkiye, to Ankara's monopoly. This attitude of the Kremlin can also be observed in the 10 November Agreement. As a matter of fact, Article 9 of the 10 November Agreement, which regulates the purpose and nature of the Zangezur Corridor, stipulates that the transport control in the corridor will be carried out by the organs of the Border Unit of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSS) and the construction of new transport routes connecting the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic to the western regions of Azerbaijan will be ensured by the agreement of the parties (Администрация Президента России, 2020). This article is a legal document of Moscow's rivalry with Ankara.

By 'staying true' to the general logic of its policy of rivalry with Türkiye in the Caucasus, Russia aims to limit Ankara's gains after the Karabakh victory. However, one of the best responses of Türkiye, together with Azerbaijan, to the mentioned step of the Kremlin was the transfer of a significant part of the construction of the corridor to Turkish construction companies. On the other hand, just like the Victory Parade organised in Baku at the end of the Karabakh war, Türkiye, and President Erdoğan were the sole guests of the groundbreaking ceremony that started the construction of the eastern link of the Zangezur Corridor. (President of Azerbaijan Republic, 2021). As the 10 November Agreement shows, Russia, although it consents to the Zangezur Corridor in principle, opposes it procedurally. Its main objective has been to prevent Ankara's control of the Corridor and Türkiye's opportunity to establish direct links with the Turkic Republics in Central Asia. Therefore, Russia supports Armenia's tendency to avoid its obligations towards the Corridor. Another reason for Moscow's negative attitude towards the Zangezur Corridor in its competition with Ankara is directly related to Armenia. In fact, based on the assumption that the Corridor, which will provide significant economic advantages to the countries in the region, will not bypass Armenia, Moscow also does not want such Armenia, which is economically strong and pursues independent policies. (Memmedov & Hasanoğlu, 2023). In fact, the mentioned attitude between Türkiye and Russia, which can be considered within the scope of 'competitive cooperation', has mainly manifested itself in the form of competition due to the Kremlin's extreme pragmatist approach.

CONCLUSION

Ankara's initial reaction to the Second Karabakh War, which started in September 2020, also contains important lessons from the First Karabakh War. It should be emphasized that this situation is closely related to the country's material power capacity, political will, and system-level variables in two different periods. Nevertheless, the fact that the Ankara government, headed by President Erdoğan, uniformly declared that it was on the side of Azerbaijan with all its capacity from the first minutes of the war is one of the most important issues that determined the fate of the Second Karabakh War. Türkiye has become a country that can say 'we stand by Azerbaijan with all our means from a country that said 'there is no road to take helicopters, there is no practice' in the First Karabakh War. At the same time, Türkiye, which has supported Azerbaijan with its full capacity in real terms with both military and diplomatic means, has also reaped the fruits of more than a quarter of a century of 'ripe for rivalry'. It is widely recognized in the literature that Ankara was the winning side of the Türkiye-Russia rivalry in the Second Karabakh War. It is worth emphasizing Bayraktar TB2, which was a paradigm changer especially during the war. Bayraktar's role in the Second Karabakh War also vindicated neoclassical realists such as Rose and Friedberg, who referred to the fact that actors who succeeded in realising technological change would come to the fore in the competition. On the Azerbaijani side, the belief that 'without Türkiye, the Karabakh problem cannot be solved' has become entrenched and this belief has been shared by the leadership of the state.

With the victory at the end of 44 days, Türkiye reinforced its presence in the Caucasus, and the participation of the state officials of the Republic of Türkiye as the sole invitee in the Baku Victory Parade organized in Azerbaijan after the war was an important message to the region and the world. After the Second Karabakh War, Ankara continued to make efforts for the establishment of order-building mechanisms in the Karabakh issue. In this context, the Shusha Declaration, the document symbolizing the summit of Türkiye-Azerbaijan strategic cooperation in the year following the Karabakh victory, is an important example of such mechanisms. In addition, the Zangezur Corridor, which was one of the important gains for Türkiye on paper in the 10 November Agreement that ended the war, can also be evaluated in the context of post-war order-building mechanisms. It should be noted that the process regarding the Zangezur Corridor has not yet been completely finalized, but Ankara and Baku continue their struggle on this issue.

Author Contribution

The study has a single author, and the responsible author has 100% contribution to the study.

Ethics Committee Permission

There is no data or data set in the study that requires ethics committee permission.

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