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ABSTRACT

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GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS OF FRANCE IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance and development level of the topic. As one of the most important and vital worldwide challenges of the last 30 years, ensuring peace and security in the South Caucasus has been of scientific and political interest since the region's independence. It is particularly necessary to conduct a scientific analysis of France's geopolitical interests, as one of the world's major countries capable of playing a significant role in regional processes, as well as its capacity to influence regional peace and cooperation. It must be mentioned that research on France's geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus has a solid scientific and political foundation. These elements can be categorized as follows.

First, being one of the world's top countries, France participates in international affairs. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a major member of powerful international organizations such as the European Union (EU) and NATO, France wields significant power in practically every part of the globe. It is difficult to resolve any major political or geopolitical issue without France's participation and role in Europe.

Second, in the early twentieth century, France's long-term interests in the South Caucasus began to take shape. After the collapse of the Russian Empire, the emergence of three independent states in the South Caucasus - Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia - and their active participation in the political process as a subject of international relations has made the region an object of geopolitical competition. The interests of France, in the South Caucasus started during this time, and these interests were mostly associated with the geopolitical challenges and the oil reserves in the South Caucasus.

Third, in the 1990s of the twentieth century, a new phase in the creation of France's political interests in the South Caucasus began. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the countries of the region regained their independence, starting a new era in the development of the international relations system as a whole, laying the foundation for the systematic and long-term development of France's relations with the South Caucasus.

Fourth, conflicts in the South Caucasus, as well as substantial

interstate rivalries, have elevated the region's geopolitical significance. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which was sparked by Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan, the Abkhazian and South Ossetia disputes within Georgia, as well as the Russian-Georgian confrontation over South Ossetia, have made establishing a cohesive security structure in the region impossible. In this perspective, France is one of the few countries in the region to have established partnerships with all of its neighbors. At the same time, the growth of France's relations with each of the South Caucasus republics is based on distinct interests and the lack of a single, integrated South Caucasus policy, as well as a single platform for cooperation based on peace and mutual respect.

Fifth, The huge Armenian Diaspora in France, as well as its historical and spiritual ties to Armenians, elevates France's relations with Armenia to a new level, while also provides significant potential for the aggressor country to influence the final political settlement of the conflict. Because of France's historical and political ties with Georgia and Russia, it can help Georgia resolve internal disputes. Because of these circumstances, understanding France's geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus is crucial.

Sixth, France, as a founder and leading member of the EU, has a unique position to play in ensuring peace and stability in the South Caucasus. In this aspect, France's proactive stance based on international law has the potential to facilitate the region's EU integration. As a result, research into French policy in the South Caucasus within the EU is both scientific and political.

Seventh, the establishment of a new format in the South Caucasus led to a shift in the arrangement of French leverage in the region following the "Forty-Four Day Patriotic War". Given that Turkic-speaking countries now control China's "Belt and Road Initiative," which connects the Turkish world to the rest of the world, it is especially important to investigate France's geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus, especially in the context of shifting geopolitical interests in the region, such as increasing the region's transit role and conducting anti-Turkish policies.

According to the principle of language, we can divide the scientific works utilized in the research of the topic into four groups:

- 1) Works in French
- 2) Works in English
- 3) Works in Russian
- 4) Works in Azerbaijan and Turkish

It should be noted that this separation is not solely based on formal differences, but also represents the manner in which the topic is investigated, as well as the approach taken to each part of the problem.

The first group includes the French language works of C. Christophe, S. Yerasimos, F. Xavier, F. Mardirossian, and A. Jafalian¹ which express contradictory approaches. Thus, the French authors emphasize the importance of Azerbaijan's energy policy in the region and comment on how this policy contributes to regional development; on the other hand, they remain mute on Armenia's policy of aggression and violation of recognized international law, instead focusing on Azerbaijan's isolation and persecution of Armenia, in an attempt to portray this strategy as a barrier to regional peace. French researchers tend to portray Russia as a sinner and aggressor in Georgia's internal troubles, while viewing France's foreign policy and geopolitical action as inconsistent and unsuccessful. As can be observed, the inconsistency in French intellectuals' perspectives is mirrored in the French government's foreign policy toward the region. Another issue is that French experts tend to focus on their connections with Armenia and Georgia, which prevents them from studying and comprehending the region as a whole. Furthermore, Christian intolerance and pro-Armenian beliefs dominate the approach to the region in the works of French authors. The presence of a sizable Armenian minority in France, as well as their substantial impact on French society has hugely impacted the

¹ Christophe C., "Le conflit Russo-Georgien", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2008/4 N°67, p. 111-115., ALEXANDRE DUMAS, "Le Caucase impressions de voyage" / Montréal-2006, -p.70 2 .., Yerasimos Stéphane, "Caucase : le retour de la Russie ", *Politique étrangère* 1994 p. 61-86., Xavier, Follebouckt, "Les conflits gelés de l'espace postsoviétique : Genèse et enjeux ", *Presses universitaires de Louvain* 2012, p. 271., Mardirossian F., "Géopolitique du Sud-Caucase : risques d'exacerbation des rivalités aux confins de la Géorgie, de la Turquie et de l'Arménie , *Outre-Terre* 2007/2 (n° 19), p. 283-302., *Géostratégie et géopolitique du Caucase du sud: l'arme énergétique et l'outil militaire* / http://www.regardest.com/home/breve_contenu.php?id=742, Jafalian Annie, "LE CAUCASE DU SUD ET L'UNION EUROPEENNE : VERS UNE COOPERATION RENFORCEE ?", *Annuaire français de relations internationales*, 2005, vol. 6, pp. 398-409

research in the field.

Second group includes the works of English language scholars including M.Ochs, M. Margaret, and E.A. Pain² which pay no attention to France's position, but they concentrate on the theoretical aspects of the problems and the analysis of Russian policy. In English-language literature, some authors attempt to portray the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh as an internal issue.

The third group includes Russian speaking scholars, – R. Mukhaev, N. Nartov, I. Pirojnik, S. Jilchov, I. M. Jeltov, A. Duqin, K. Qadjiev³ who explained and interpreted in very identical ways in their works about the French school of geopolitics, geopolitical theories, the establishment of national interests, and the process of historical and political growth of other geopolitical idea. These texts do not examine the present geopolitical competition between France and Russia in the South Caucasus. The main focus was not on the US-Russia-EU relationship, nor on global rivalry in other geopolitical zones. The above-mentioned publications, on the other hand, dissect the theoretical methodologies used by the traditional French geo-politicians Blache, Ansel, and Demajo in their writings. The knowledge of the French political establishment's perception of the region, its approach to world politics, and its values has been gathered and employed in the analysis of present French South Caucasus policy on the basis of these studies.

Scholars undertaking study on the topic in the Azerbaijani/Turkish language fall into the fourth group, which employs

² Ochs, M., "Azerbaijan: Oil, Domestic Stability and Geopolitics in the Caucasus", *Caucasus and the Caspian Seminar Transcripts, SDI, 1996*
[/https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/azerbaijan-oil-domestic-stability-and-geopolitics-caucasus](https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/azerbaijan-oil-domestic-stability-and-geopolitics-caucasus), Margaret M. Introduction: *The Self-Determination Principle and the Ethics of Secession, Oxford, Oxford University, 1998, p.277 / .. Pain E.A. Contagious Ethnic conflicts and Border Disputes along Russia's Southern- Flank. / Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, London and New York, 1999/2015, p.177-205*

³ Мухаев Р. Т. Геополитика. Москва.: ЮНИТИ – ДАНА, 2010, 623 с., Нартов Н. А. Геополитика. Учебник. М. : ЮНИТИ, 2007, 544 с., Пирожник И. И. Геополитика в современном мире. Минск, «ТетраСистемс», 2008, 272 с., Жильцов С.С., Зонн И.С., Ушков А.М. Геополитика Каспийского региона. М.: Междунар. отношения, 2003, 280 с., Желтов М.В. Геополитика мирового порядка. монография. М., Флинта, 2014, 1302 стр., Дугин А. Основы геополитики. Геополитическое будущее России. Мысли в пространстве. М.: 2000, «АРКТОГЕЯ-центр», 928 с., Гаджиев К.С. Геополитика Кавказа. М.: Международные отношения, 2003, 464 с.

more objective scientific methodologies and analyses. The French school of geopolitics was extensively researched, particularly in the writings of A. Hasanov⁴ and N. Mammadov⁵. Although these works represented French geopolitical theories, they were not applied to the Caucasus region. The value of the dissertation is demonstrated by the examination of the topic in terms of applying these principles to the South Caucasus, particularly Azerbaijan.

R. Ismayilov's⁶ research is significant in the study of the history of France-Azerbaijan cultural and cultural connections. The study looks at cultural relations between the two nations in the nineteenth century, as well as the studies of Azerbaijani intellectuals in France, the translation of works by a number of thinkers into French, and the study of Azerbaijani classics by French scholars.

I. Musayev researched the involvement of the Azerbaijani delegation in the Paris Peace Conference during the Popular Front, as well as the attitude of European countries toward Azerbaijan's independence⁷. However, because France's geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus were still developing at the time, this issue was not given its own study; instead, the approach was defined in terms of broader international relations. These publications are also essential in terms of researching historical aspects of France's relations with the countries in the South Caucasus.

M.C. Gasimli's works are crucial in the study of reciprocal cultural ties during the USSR, particularly in regard to Europe's and France's reactions to Soviet Russia's conquest of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan's loss of independence. M.C. Gasimli's study on Azerbaijan's international cultural ties, on the other hand, examines literary and humanitarian relations between France and Azerbaijan in a

⁴ Həsənov Ə.M. *Geosiyasət. Dərslük*. Bakı: "Aypara", 2010, 604 s., Məmmədov N. *Geosiyasətə giriş: 2 cildə, I c.*, Bakı: "Azərbaycan" nəşriyyatı, 2011, 576 s.; II c., Bakı: "Azərbaycan" nəşriyyatı, 2011, 416 s.

⁵ Məmmədov N. *Xarici siyasət: reallıqlar və gələcəyə baxış*. Bakı: *Qanun nəşriyyatı*, 2013, 264 s.

⁶ İsmayilov, R. "Dostluq telləri" (*Fransa-Azərbaycan ədəbi əlaqələri*) / Rauf İsmayilov. – Bakı: – 1982. – 66 s.

⁷ Musayev İ. *Azərbaycanın xarici siyasəti (XX əsr) Üç hissədə: I hissə*. Bakı: *İqtisad Universiteti nəşriyyatı*, 2003, 316 s.

broader perspective⁸.

The attitude of France toward the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the activities of the Armenian Diaspora in France, and the issue of its influence on French foreign policy have all been the subject of Turkish-language scientific research⁹. The geopolitical dimensions of the European Union's policies in the South Caucasus are examined in these papers. The OSCE and the European Union have both looked into France's potential involvement in conflict resolution in the Caucasus region. In this context, R. Shahbazov and R. Ibrahimov's writings did not examine France's geopolitical interests individually.¹⁰

Thus, a review of the scientific literature demonstrates that research on France's connections with the countries of the South Caucasus has been carried out by scientists from both France and the mentioned countries. The current directions of political development, the country's political interests, and geopolitical position in relation to the geopolitical changes in the South Caucasus have not been systematically studied as a single problem, despite the fact that the mentioned works analyze the history of France's relations with the countries of the region.

The **object** of this study is to look into the regional features of France's rising geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus, and the examination of the impact of France's policies on South Caucasus conflicts on the establishment of its strategic position is the **focus** of this research.

Goals and objectives of the research: The goal of this research is to examine France's strategy in regard to current territorial and border

⁸Musayev İ. *Azərbaycanın xarici siyasəti (XX əsr) Üç hissədə: I hissə. Bakı: İqtisad Universiteti nəşriyyatı, 2003, 316s.*

⁹Elif, A. *Ermeni diasporasının Ermenistan iç politikası üzerine etkileri / A.Elif. Selçuk Üniversitesi. 2006, 201 s.*

¹⁰Ibrahimov R. *Avrupa Birliyi Güney Kafkasiya devletleri ilişkileri. Ankara 2008 // kafkasya kuzey kafkasya cerkes cerkez cerkes cerkez kafkasya kuzey kafkasya cerkes cerkez cerkes cerkez kafkasya kuzey kafkasya cerkes cerkez cerkes cerkez (circassiancenter.com); Şener, A. "NATO Neden Genişledi?"*

Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramları Işığında NATO'nun Genişlemesi ve ABD-Rusya İç Siyaseti", Uluslararası İlişkiler, Cilt 9, Sayı 34 (Yaz 2012), s. 73-97.

conflicts in the South Caucasus, to expose its inconsistencies, and to assess how it affects the construction of France's strategic role and position in the region. The following research objectives have been determined and implemented in order to reach this goal:

- Analyze the history of the formation of France's geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus;
- A comparative examination of France's political relations with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia during their formation and growth;
- Monitor the growth of concepts about national interests in French geopolitical theories and assess the likelihood of these objectives being realized in the South Caucasus;
- Investigate France's competing geopolitical interests and its involvement in resolving the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict;
- Analyze the geopolitical consequences of France's efforts to resolve Georgia's internal conflicts;
- Study France's policy of reconciling its geopolitical interests with other regional and global actors in resolving conflicts in the South Caucasus;
- Investigate France's role in supporting collaboration and strengthening security in the South Caucasus within the European Union;

Research methods: The geopolitical approach is the research's general methodological foundation. The study examined political and geopolitical processes by using an approach of theoretical analysis.

The study of the interaction of geopolitical elements, as well as the function and influence of these factors in determining a state's strategic potential and power, is known as a geopolitical approach. Geoeconomics is treated separately in this setting, and geographical factors are ignored¹¹.

To evaluate political and geopolitical processes, the researchers employed theoretical analysis methods, general logic procedures such as

¹¹Дугин, А. Основы геополитики. Геополитическое будущее России. Мыслить пространством / А.Дугин. М.: – 2000, «АРКТОГЕЯ-центр», – 928 с.

analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction based on a systematic approach, historical-comparative analysis, content analysis, and other scientific research approaches.

Main provisions for the defense:

The main provisions of the dissertation are as follows:

1. The difficulties of current French foreign policy toward the South Caucasus are determined by the growth of French geopolitical ideology;
2. The formation and development of French-Azerbaijani ties are in a constant state of flux.;
3. The Armenian lobby has a huge role in the development of the French-Armenian relationships;
4. The goal of France's Georgian policy is to shift the regional power balance away from the big countries;
5. The inconsistencies in France's regional policies erode the country's power and role in the region;
6. France's efforts to support the invading Armenia are against international law and its co-chairmanship commitments;
7. The EU's growing positive connections with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia help to improve peace in the South Caucasus and the region's integration into Europe.

Scientific novelty of the research: The following provisions can be presented to express the research's scientific innovation:

- In the framework of conflict settlement in the South Caucasus, the research work analyses France's geopolitical ties with other regional and global actors;
- The inconsistencies between France's liberal ideology and its South Caucasus policy were exposed, and it was concluded that France was pursuing a policy based on geopolitical goals and the interests of the Armenian Diaspora, not on human rights;
- Within the European Union, France's connections with the countries of the region, as well as the EU's impact on strengthening collaboration and peace, were extensively examined;
- According to research, the existence of a policy of double standards in France's approach to the region makes it difficult to adopt a single,

equal geopolitical approach that fully encompasses the region and serves the country's national interests;

- It has been proved that France is surrendering its geopolitical objectives and civilization ideals in the South Caucasus region because it is compelled to consider the domestic electoral element and the Armenian community's crucial impact;
- Geopolitical changes in Georgia are seen by France as a potential threat to its regional interests. These developments improve Russia's geopolitical position while also limiting democracy;
- The conflict of French geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus has undermined France's influence in the region, according to the research;
- In this research project, a variety of scientific literatures were placed into scientific circulation and used to explore the subject in more depth.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research:

The findings of the study can be used to guide further research into the subject. The research materials, generalizations, and conclusions gained can be beneficial in planning and implementing a new political path, as well as forecasting the future evolution of France-Azerbaijan relations.

Dissertation materials can also be utilized to create textbooks, instructional aids, curricula, and lecture texts related to the subject.

Approbation and application: The dissertation's key scientific provisions and results are represented in the author's scientific works published in Azerbaijan and abroad recommended by Supreme Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as reports presented at various scientific conferences.

The organization where the dissertation has been carried

out: Institute of the Philosophy of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

The dissertation's structure, broken down into divisions and volumes: An introduction, two chapters, six paragraphs, a conclusion, and a list of references make up the research paper

MAIN CONTENT OF THE STUDY

The **introduction** substantiates the relevance of the research topic, analyzes the degree of scientific research of the problem, defines the object and subject of research, goals and objectives, as well as methods,

presents the main provisions, defines scientific innovation, theoretical and practical significance.

The first chapter of the dissertation is entitled “**Formation of France’s geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus and its theoretical foundations**”.

The first paragraph of this chapter, titled “the evolution of the concept of national interest in French geopolitical theories and the South Caucasus,” emphasizes that French geopolitical theories' provisions and theses are still relevant in modern times and are reflected in the geopolitical and geoeconomic life of individual regions, including the South Caucasus. The primary difference between the French and the German and Anglo-Saxon schools of geopolitics is that the French prefer more humanistic considerations and do not recognize the geographical component, or the expansion of space, as a necessary political law. French geopolitical notions were dominated by ideas like democracy, sovereignty, human rights, and the rule of law. Blache’s geographical research concentrated on space, not the geographical location of the state, but man, in contrast to Ratzel's notion that the spatial factor had a part in the establishment of the state. Blasch looked at man as a geographical variable. Communications, according to Blache, play a significant influence in shaping the world's geopolitical environment. Blache rejected the concept of severe geographical determinism, preferring to prioritize human initiative and freedom over geographical and territorial factors. Blache and other French theorists concentrated on liberal international relations in general. Conflicts between states can be handled, according to French geopoliticians, by establishing liberal ties and alliances between them.

The second paragraph, titled “**Formation and Development of French-Azerbaijani Relations,**” examines the stages of formation of French-Azerbaijani ties and demonstrates that a new era of relations began after national leader Heydar Aliyev’s return to power in 1993. First and foremost, the Republic of Azerbaijan's foreign policy aspired to strengthen the country’s independence. Azerbaijani culture has long been a source of fascination for foreign leaders, notably France.

Nizami Ganjavi’s work was studied by French specialists beginning in the late 17th century. Although Clembol was the first

scholar to publish Nizami Ganjavi's works in 1771, it was d'Herbelot's Oriental Library, published in Paris in 1697, that first introduced French readers to Ganjavi and his poems.

A new era in the development of Azerbaijani-French cultural connections began at the turn of the nineteenth century. Ismail bey Gutgashinli's work of Rashid bey and Saadat khanum, written in French in Warsaw in 1835, was published as a distinct book.¹² As a result, through their works, Azerbaijani writers interested in the French language and literature attempted to promote a "European" way of life. The publishing of translations of M.F. Akhundov's works into French in the periodical press in France, beginning in the 1950s, sparked interest in French society to Azerbaijani language and literature.

In 1858, Alexander Duma wrote about Shamakhi in his book titled "Memories of the Caucasus" published in Tbilissi (Georgia): "Shamakhi is the capital of Shirvan. Therefore, it was a rich khanate that brought millions to the khan. It had a population of one hundred thousand instead of ten thousand."¹³ Henry Binder called Baku "the oil well"¹⁴ in his work.

By publishing M.F. Akhundov's comedies in the form of a by UNESCO, Louis Bazen, a Frenchman who studied at the Paris Institute of Oriental Languages in 1967 and took a more impartial approach to the Azerbaijani press and literature, made an important contribution to Azerbaijan-France cultural ties.

French-Azerbaijani relations grew stronger during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. A French representative was established in Baku as a result of the Popular Front's diplomatic success at the Paris Peace Conference, and the French government's decision was influenced by Azerbaijan's geopolitical location and abundant natural resources. "No region can be replaced by Baku oil," it was stressed in French official circles. "Oil is produced in the Baku oil basin in Azerbaijan in greater quantities than anywhere else on the planet, including Mexico. The

¹² İsmayilov, R. "Dostluq telləri" (*Fransa-Azərbaycan ədəbi əlaqələri*) / Rauf İsmayilov. – Bakı: – 1982. – 66 s.

¹³ALEXANDRE DUMAS, "Le Caucase impressions de voyage" / Montréal- –2006, – 305

¹⁴BİNDER H., "AU KURDISTAN" EN MÉSOPOTOMIE ET EN PERSE, PARIS-1887. P. 443

region's oil deposits are endless. As a result, Baku should be the focal point of our efforts.”¹⁵

The dissolution of the Popular Front was precipitated by the 11th Russian Red Army's conquest of Azerbaijan. A.M Topchubashov, M. Maharramov, A.A Sheykhulislamov, J. Hajibeyli, and other Azerbaijanis who attended the Paris Peace Conference were forced to remain in France as immigrants. Azerbaijanis who immigrated to France adopted a proactive approach to strengthening cultural links and promoting Azerbaijani culture in the country.

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan's independence was restored, paving the way for a new stage and direction in relations between France and Azerbaijan.

Following the foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the French Republic in 1992, as well as the return of the country's great leader Heydar Aliyev to the power, relations have progressed in all directions and have become durable. The Republic of Azerbaijan and the French Republic signed a friendship, understanding, and collaboration agreement on December 12, 1993.

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation of Azerbaijan and Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO and ISESCO, plays a pivotal role in the development of Azerbaijani-French cultural relations and the transmission of Azerbaijan's national and spiritual values to the rest of the world. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation was instrumental in the restoration of two monuments in Versailles, France, the establishment of the Department of Islamic Art at the Louvre Museum, and the restoration of five exhibits of a 15th-century cathedral in Strasbourg. For her contribution to the development of Azerbaijan-France bilateral relations, Mehriban Aliyeva was given the Legion of Honor, France's highest honor.

The agreements on collaboration with significant French transnational corporations made in Paris on July 19-20, 2018 during Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's visit to France were quickly implemented.

¹⁵ARDA, f. 28, sıy. 1, iş 175. v.23.

Total, one of the most prominent oil and gas firms in the world, was one of the first foreign energy companies to set up shop in Azerbaijan. In modern times, the Republic of Azerbaijan's effective strategy has created conditions for our country to be recognized as a trusted international partner and a reliable investment destination. As a result, Azerbaijan is France's greatest business partner in the South Caucasus, according to economic statistics between the two nations.

The third paragraphe entitled **“The formation and evolution of France's relations with Armenia and Georgia”** analyzes the formation and evolution of France's relations with Armenia and Georgia..

During the time period under consideration, relations between the French and Armenians improved, and international relations grew. For Armenians, France was the most appealing country.

The paper discusses the long-standing historical relationships between France and Armenia, the emergence of Armenian unions and a robust Armenian diaspora, and the establishment of France's largest Armenian community in Europe.

France established diplomatic ties with Armenia in 1992, and on March 12, 1993, the French Republic and the Republic of Armenia signed an agreement on mutual understanding, friendship, and cooperation. The French Republic's government and Armenia's government signed an agreement on investment promotion and mutual protection in 1995, as well as an intergovernmental agreement on cultural, scientific, and technical cooperation.

The French Development Agency, which has been working in Armenia since 2012, funds projects in the fields of agricultural and territorial development, energy efficiency, and infrastructure through sovereign and non-sovereign financing. However, bilateral trade relations between France and Armenia have deteriorated in recent years.

The earliest documented records of French-Georgian history and cultural relations originate from the ninth century. The French are mentioned in Georgian written monuments from the IX-X centuries. In his works, the historians of King David IV (1089-1125) mention the French and France. Shota Rustaveli, a Georgian writer, wrote about the French in his novel *The Wrestler in Tiger Skin* in the 12th century.

France was one of the nations with whom the Democratic Republic of Georgia (GDR) established diplomatic ties when it was founded in 1918. As the final anti-Soviet stronghold, the Entente strove to preserve Georgia in its sphere of influence. Georgia was cut off from Western European countries when it was a part of the Soviet Union.

Georgia gained independence from the Soviet Union in April 1991. Following Georgia's restoration of independence, relations with France continued to evolve at a new pace and in new ways. On August 21, 1992, France recognized the Republic of Georgia, and on March 18, 1993, France established an embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia's capital. The agreement of January 21, 1994 encourages military, economic, cultural, parliamentary, environmental, judicial, consular, and humanitarian cooperation between France and Georgia.¹⁶ The Agreement on Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments was signed on February 2, 1997, by the governments of the French Republic and Georgia.¹⁷ On February 3, 1997, France and Georgia signed a cultural, scientific, and technical cooperation agreement, which went into effect on June 1, 1999¹⁸.

The French Development Agency, which was established in Tbilisi following French President Francois Hollande's visit to Georgia in 2016, plans to mobilize about 483¹⁹ million euros in loans, technical assistance, and grants to Georgia by 2024 through a new cooperation program to renew support for Georgia's development projects.

The commercial turnover between Georgia and France is expected to reach 195 million euros in 2020. The commercial turnover

¹⁶ COMMISSION DES AFFAIRES ETRANGERES RAPPORT 453 (97-98)//

// https://www.senat.fr/rap/197-453/197-453_mono.html

¹⁷ *Accord entre le gouvernement de la République française et le gouvernement de Géorgie sur l'encouragement et la protection réciproques des investissements*
<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000384404> 1 dekabr 1999-cu iltarixli, 99-980 sayliqanun

¹⁸ *Décret n° 99-530 du 25 juin 1999 portant publication de l'accord de coopération culturelle, scientifique et technique entre le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement de Géorgie, signé à Paris le 3 février 1997* 27/06/1999 tarixlifərmanla

¹⁹ *La France renouvelle son soutien aux projets de développement de la Géorgie à travers un nouveau programme de coopération pour 2021-2023*//
<https://ge.ambafrance.org/La-France-renouvelle-son-soutien-aux-projets-de-developpement-de-la-Georgie-a/25/06/2021>

between France and Georgia in the first four months of 2021 was 74.9 million euros, up 19.2 percent over the same period in the previous year.²⁰

The second chapter of the dissertation is entitled **“France's geopolitical interests in resolving conflicts that lead to territorial and border changes in the South Caucasus”**.

“France's policy of participation in resolving internal issues in Georgia and its geopolitical ramifications,” the first paragraph of this chapter, examines France’s geopolitical interests in regard to the conflicts in Georgia, one of the South Caucasus countries grappling with separatists. The 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia sparked widespread concern around the world. Despite having a number of alliances, the US and NATO did not have a legal mechanism to protect Georgia militarily against Russia in the face of the war. Despite the fact that the European Union had a vital role in the 2008 events in Georgia, important members of the bloc, like as Germany, France, Italy, and Spain, having considerable economic relations with Russia, strong action against the country has been avoided. It is vital to examine France’s involvement in Georgia’s internal disputes as a crucial member of the European Union and NATO, as well as its position within these organizations and other nations’ attitudes toward the subject.

Is the French presidency of the European Union assisting in the resolution of this dispute? The French intervention is viewed in two ways. Nicolas Sarkozy first created the condition for a cease-fire. Their actions caused Russia to withdraw to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, preventing the Russian army from approaching the Georgian capital. Second, “everything would have been precisely the same if the French had not intervened,” although the Russian army had ceased advancing on Tbilissi (Georgia) before to any French action. In fact, Russia was able to officially validate its military triumph and assume control of the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia thanks to the intervention of France and the European Union. In other words, Nicolas Sarkozy's

²⁰GÉORGIER relations bilatérales <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Pays/GE/relations-bilaterales>

assistance enabled the Russians to convert their military victories into political victories.

The second half of the chapter, titled “Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict and France's Contradictory Geopolitical Activity,” examines the formation of the Armenian Diaspora in the 1980s and early 21st century through churches, political parties, various organizations, and other similar institutions, as well as its active role in life as an indicator of the Armenian Diaspora’s development in France.

In France, an Armenian represents a group of interests in the host country's authorities, protecting the ethnically related Armenian state's interests.

The process by which the Armenian Diaspora in France influences French political structures is quite complex. Armenians in France had the right to vote, and the Armenian media had a lot of opportunity to influence public opinion. Participation in election campaigns is one of the most powerful of them. Simultaneously, civil officials of Armenian heritage in key positions around the president are intimately involved in and influence significant French decisions²¹.

The increased influence of the Armenian diaspora in France in shaping some foreign policy decisions has contributed to the closer rapprochement between France and Armenia in recent years. All of this has hampered the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Armenians had been making a major push to seek worldwide support before to the conflict. The Armenian lobby's resources were also put to good use. The French Senate and the Armenian lobby in this country had a very strong relationship. The Republic of Azerbaijan joined the United Nations as a full member on March 2, 1992. As a result, the United Nations recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan. In response to Armenian takeover of Azerbaijani territory, UN Security Council Resolutions 822, 853, 874, and 884 in 1993 supported our country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of borders, as well as the inadmissibility of using force to acquire territory. The invader was ordered to evacuate from the Republic

²¹*Армяне Франции // <http://ia-centr.ru/expert/8941/> 15.09.2010*

of Azerbaijan's territory immediately, completely, and unconditionally.²²

Despite the fact that the second round of talks between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia began in January 2001 at the urging of French President Jacques Chirac, little progress was made due to Armenia's non-constructive stance.

The Patriotic War, which began on September 27, 2020 in reaction to the Armenian onslaught, ended with the protection of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. During the war, France, co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, tried to foster separatist by not taking a fair attitude to the parties to the conflict and making statements that were contradictory with his mission. France's attempts to sway Azerbaijan's political will, both during the war and afterward, were ineffective.

Although France has worked to peacefully resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute as a co-chair of the Minsk Group, its pro-Armenian position and backing for Armenian separatists has contributed to perpetuate the status quo. One of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, France, did not approach the parties to the dispute from the same distance, made statements in support of the aggressor, and prompted the Azerbaijani people to make reasonable and justified demands to remove him from the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

The continuation of Armenia's aggressive policy as a result of French presidents' visits to the region validates this notion, making it impossible for France to remain as co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group. In short, France's attempts to sway Azerbaijan's political will, both during the war and after the battle, were fruitless.

The third chapter, "**France's role in the development of South Caucasus cooperation within the European Union,**" underlines the importance of links with the European Union, as well as France, for the South Caucasus countries from a political, economic, social, and cultural standpoint.

Because of its geostrategic importance and hydrocarbon resources, the South Caucasus has traditionally been a focal point for major powers

²²Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin İşlər İdarəsinin Prezident Kitabxanası «Azərbaycan diplomatiyası» Ermənistan-Azərbaycan, Dağlıq Qarabağ münaqişəsi https://files.preslib.az/projects/azdiplomacy/a2_4.pdf (səh.8)

and international organizations. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, France, as one of the founding members of the European Union (EU), reestablished its interests in the South Caucasus. The EU's overarching foreign and security policy shapes France's future geopolitical objectives in the South Caucasus. During this time, the European Union developed a special interest in the South Caucasus, and a number of projects and programs were launched to that end. The recurrence of territorial and border conflicts in the South Caucasus has had an impact on the European Union's strategy toward this region. The European Union has aided changes in the South Caucasus through material, technical, and political assistance. Azerbaijan's role in EU-French ties is to secure regional security in the South Caucasus, energy cooperation, and the establishment and development of links between Central Asian and European countries.

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement agreed by the European Union with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia on April 22, 1996 serves as the legal foundation for relations with the European countries of the South Caucasus. The agreement becomes effective on July 1, 1999. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement's most notable aspect was that it was signed bilaterally not only by the European Commission and the countries of the South Caucasus, but also by EU member states. The deal also provides the groundwork for future collaboration with EU member states, especially those in France's South Caucasus. The methods for the South Caucasus states to live in a friendly, stable, and secure environment are outlined in this text, which takes into account international law principles, the transition to a market economy, and political communication with EU member states. Relations between the European Union and the South Caucasus entered a new chapter with the agreements coming into force in 1999. The European Union announced during "the Caucasus Summit" on the same date that it would support the growth of regional cooperation in order to strengthen peace and security in the South Caucasus. The EU, on the other hand, has been largely ineffective in settling territorial and ethnic issues in the South Caucasus, which have hampered regional cooperation. The European Union accepted the territorial integrity of all three states under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, but

stated its support for OSCE decisions in dispute resolution. This has a negative influence on France's actions in the region as part of the European Union, and makes the country's South Caucasus policy episodic.

The EU's chances for collaboration with the countries in the region have grown in the post-war period of the "Forty-Four Day War" between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus region.

The possibility of applying the European Union's worldwide expertise to the post-war reconstruction of liberated regions has grown.

The research is summarized in the dissertation's Conclusion section, and recommendations of theoretical and practical significance are given based on generalizations. The author finds that French geopolitical theorists' principles, views, and ideas do not find practical application in modern France's foreign policy, particularly in relation to the South Caucasus. The existence of a policy of double standards in France's approach to the region has hampered the implementation of a geopolitical strategy that encompasses the entire region and is based on a single, equal basis that serves the country's national interests.

The content of the dissertation is reflected in the following published articles of the author.

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