

**REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN**

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**A B S T R A C T**

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**PLACE AND ROLE OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS  
IN US-RUSSIA RELATIONS**

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## **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH**

Relevance of the topic and the degree of elaboration. The end of the 20th century went down in history with great geopolitical changes and the emergence of new independent states. The South Caucasus region has always attracted the attention of regional and global players due to its favorable geopolitical position and access to hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea. At the beginning of the century, in the years of the First World War and in the first years after the war, the South Caucasus, which was fought mercilessly by the great powers due to its favorable geographical and strategic position and rich hydrocarbon resources, has again become the battlefield of global and regional powers. A struggle has begun between Russia, which is trying to keep the region under its sphere of influence based on security factors, and the United States, which considers the Caucasus and Central Asia important for its global leadership. This, in turn, became one of the main factors influencing the foreign policy of the states of the South Caucasus, which had just restored their independence. In this regard it is relevant to study the place and role of the South Caucasus region in US-Russian relations.

It should be noted that this topic has been studied by many researchers from Azerbaijan and foreign countries. However, the geopolitical struggle between the two great powers is still ongoing, and the topic remains relevant in conditions where neither of these centers of power can completely subjugate the South Caucasus under its sphere of influence. There are enough problems that require study regarding the place and role of the South Caucasus in relations between the United States and Russia. Along with the United States and Russia fighting for the region, other global geopolitical and regional players that are active in the region forces us to analyze the issue from a different point of view. Conflicts in the region can be interpreted as an indirect struggle between regional and world powers for dominance in the Caucasus.

The Soviet legacy, armed conflicts, tensions between different peoples of the region, large Caspian resources without access to the world market, Moscow's post-imperial policy in the region and US

interests - all this led to the Caucasus becoming the center of confrontation. The United States began a struggle for influence in the South Caucasus and became Russia's main rival. It is also important to note that today the strategic importance of the South Caucasus is beyond doubt, and the growing international influence of the region requires deeper monitoring of complex socio-political processes.

It should be considered that over the past period since the end of the 20th century, especially in the first years of the 21st century, there have been changes in the foreign policy of the states of the South Caucasus - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. If after the collapse of the USSR there were discussions of the potential to turn the South Caucasus into a global crossroads, now this potential has become a reality. If in the 90s of the twentieth century, methods of transporting large reserves of oil and gas in the Caspian Basin, which did not have access to world markets, were discussed, now there are pipelines that bring these resources to world markets. Pipelines play an important role in global energy security. The US plans to gain access to the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Basin bypassing Russian territory have been implemented. But the South Caucasus did not unilaterally come under US sphere of influence. With the participation of such regional players as Turkey and Iran, a completely different geopolitical configuration has been formed here. The European Union, an ally of the United States in military and security matters, but a competitor in economic and financial matters, has its own approach to regional processes.

Studying the topic is of particular importance for Azerbaijan. In this regard, during the analysis carried out in the research work, special attention was paid to the place and role of the Republic of Azerbaijan in these processes. It is known that in close partnership with neighboring Georgia, Azerbaijan has become the main driving force for the development of the region. Among the three countries of the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan is the only country that has hydrocarbon reserves and access to the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. These factors played an important role in strengthening the influence and prestige of Azerbaijan. Today it is impossible to name any large-scale project in the region without the participation of Azerbaijan. Taking this factor into account,

the dissertation examines in detail the importance of oil and gas projects, the struggle for control over them, as well as the impact of this struggle on the political and economic situation of the states of the South Caucasus.

It is known that the most important problem in the region is its unresolved conflicts. The dissertation study examines the role of the United States and Russia in the conflicts in the South Caucasus and the reasons for the ineffectiveness of their policies in the direction of political and diplomatic means of settlement.

Regarding to the ongoing political processes and worsening conflicts, instability in the region, analysis of the policies pursued by each of the world states in the region remains a particularly relevant topic of our time.

The relevance of the topic is justified by a number of other factors:

- the study of this topic allows us to understand the strategies of national interests and strategic bills of the United States and Russia, and also to identify any changes in tactics and in the foreign policy course of these states;
- evaluation of activities of the United States and Russia on conflicts in the South Caucasus through political and diplomatic efforts are important to resolve these conflicts in the region;
- for the purpose of a comprehensive and systematic study of the topic, taking into account the processes occurring in the international relations.

As already mentioned, the relevance of the topic has led to numerous studies in this direction both in our country and in foreign countries. In the process of studying, the works of political scientists and researchers on this topic were collected, systematized, and studied.

The multi-volume work of National Leader Heydar Aliyev<sup>1</sup> has become a fundamental source in the study of Azerbaijan's bilateral relations with the USA and Russia, as well as with the states of the South Caucasus. These books outlined the fundamental principles of

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<sup>1</sup> Əliyev, H.Ə. Müstəqilliyimiz əbədidir: [46 cilddə] / H.Ə.Əliyev.–Bakı: Azərnaşr, – c. 1. –1997. –612 s.; –c. 12. –2004. –432 s.; –c. 25. –2008. –520 s.

the formation of relationships and foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the basic principles of the state's energy policy, oil contracts, agreements, their significance, cooperation with foreign corporations.

It is known that after 1993, Ilham Aliyev played a big role in the implementation of energy diplomacy and oil strategy of Azerbaijan. In the post-2003 period, President Ilham Aliyev shaped Azerbaijan's foreign policy, and was the preeminent political leader of the South Caucasus. Materials from the books "Caspian Oil of Azerbaijan"<sup>2</sup> authored by the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, as well as a multi-volume work<sup>3</sup>, which outlined the political concept and foreign policy of the Azerbaijani state, were widely used in this research work. A detailed analysis of the new period of formation of the oil industry was given, the details of decision-making within the framework of multilateral negotiations with Western states, as well as with Russia, on the directions of pipeline routes from oil and gas fields of the Caspian were studied.

After the restoration of state independence of Azerbaijan, relations with both the United States and the Russian Federation acquired a unique character. This policy was fundamentally different and more balanced, in contrast to the policy of Armenia, which unilaterally became an outpost of Russia until 2018, and Georgia, which became a pillar of the United States and the EU in the region after 2003. Analyzing the formation of international relations of Azerbaijan that Professor Musa Gasimli studied<sup>4</sup> in his works, he specially emphasized that despite the injustices committed in relation to Azerbaijan, the leaders of Azerbaijan took a constructive position. The author studied in detail the nature of diplomatic negotiations conducted by presidents Heydar Aliyev and Ilham Aliyev with the aim of canceling the 907th amendment, which vetoed the state-level assistance of the United States to the government of Azerbaijan, and overshadowed the bilateral

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<sup>2</sup> Алиев, И.Г. Каспийская нефть Азербайджана / И.Г.Алиев. –Москва: Известия, –2003. –712 с

<sup>3</sup> Əliyev, İ.H. İnkişaf – məqsədimizdir: [111 cilddə] / İ.H.Əliyev. –Bakı: Azərneşr, –с. 73. –2018. –400 s.

<sup>4</sup> Qasımlı, M.C. Azərbaycan Respublikasının xarici siyasəti (1991–2003): [2 cilddə] / M.C.Qasımlı. –Bakı: Mütərcim, –h. 2. –2015. –640 s.

relations. The formation of the foreign policy of an independent state since the acquisition of independence, described the difficulties that arose due to the unfairly adopted Amendment 907, and long diplomatic negotiations by the national leader of Azerbaijan in order to cancel the amendment, which cast a shadow on bilateral relations.

In the books of the outstanding diplomat Hafiz Pashayev <sup>5</sup>, who for a long time was the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United States, the formation of bilateral relations between the United States and Azerbaijan and the political struggle for the repeal of the 907 amendment, and jointly developed energy projects were described in detail. The developing regional energy projects were widely studied, especially negotiations with the United States on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project.

Elman Nəsirov's<sup>6</sup> book is devoted to a broad study of US interests in the South Caucasus and the means of their implementation, which clearly describes the relationship between the US and Azerbaijan, as well as the US strategy, and further steps taken after the events of 2001, its impact on the states of the South Caucasus as well as the government support Azerbaijan anti-terrorist coalition.

When studying the conflicts in the region, the position of professor Elchin Akhmedov<sup>7</sup>, who exposed the aggressive policy of Armenia, presented an analysis of the chronicle of events around Karabakh, and the place and role of Russia in this conflict, received wide coverage. The data reflected in these studies allows for a comparative analysis of the position of the United States and Russia in relation to conflicts before and after their resolution.

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<sup>5</sup> Paşayev, H.M. Bir səfirin manifesti / H.M. Paşayev. –Bakı: Şərq-Qərb, –2007. – 246 s.; Azerbaijan in Global Politics: Crafting Foreign Policy / H.M.Pashayev. – Baku: ADA, –2009. –115 p

<sup>6</sup> Nəsirov E., ABŞ və dünya 11 Sentyabrdan sonra. / E. Nəsirov, - Bakı:Adiloğlu, - 2003, -262 s.

<sup>7</sup> Əhmədov, E.İ. Ermənistanın Azərbaycana təcavüzü: təhlili xronika (1987-2011) / E.İ.Əhmədov. –Bakı:EİF, –2012. –912 s

Interesting, but at the same time controversial, were the opinions of the former presidents of Armenia - Robert Kocharyan<sup>8</sup> and Levon Ter-Petrosyan<sup>9</sup>, regarding the role and place of Armenia in the South Caucasus, as well as their role in the negotiation process to resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

After the collapse of the USSR, also among foreign authors, the origins of conflicts in the South Caucasus and possible ways to resolve them were widely considered and studied. In this context, attention was drawn to the reports of independent experts - Thomas and Goltz<sup>10</sup>, Thomas de Waal<sup>11</sup>, as well as Svante Cornell<sup>12</sup>, John Maresca<sup>13</sup>, and others. Stroub Talbot's works are devoted to political, economic and military relations between the United States and Russia after the end of the Cold War<sup>14</sup>.

Contemporary US interests in the South Caucasus were assessed in comparison with the interests of countries such as Russia, Turkey and Iran, and the approaches of such famous authors as Henry Kissinger<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Кочарян Р. С. Жизнь и свобода. Автобиография экс-президента Армении и Карабаха / Р. С. Кочарян -Москва: Альпина Диджитал, -2019. -276 с.

<sup>9</sup> Ter-Petrosian L. Armenia's Future, Relations with Turkey, and the Karabagh Conflict// Edited by Arman Grigoryan/ Armenian National Congress, US: Palgrave Macmillan, -2018; -p.62

<sup>10</sup> Qoltz T. Azərbaycanın gündəliyi: neftlə zəngin, müharibə dağıntuları yaşamış postsovet respublikasında dəliqanlı jurnalistin sərgüzəştləri /T. Qoltz -Bakı: Çarşıoğlu, -2016. -535 s.

<sup>11</sup> Ваал де Т. Черный сад. Армения и Азербайджан между миром и войной. Перевод: Олег Алякринский / Т. Ваал - Нью-Йорк - 2005. -251 с.

<sup>12</sup> Cornell S. E. Western strategy for the Caucasus / Cornell S., Starr F., Tsereteli M. – Washington-Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program – A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Silk Road Paper, -2015. - p.17

<sup>13</sup> Maresca J. Special report: war in the Caucasus, a proposal for settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh / J. Maresca -Washington:USIP. -1994. -7 p.

<sup>14</sup>Тэлботт С., Измена в Кремле. Протоколы тайных соглашений Горбачева с американцами / С. Тэлботт. – Москва:Алисторус. -2012. -с. 181; The Russia Hand, A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy / S. Talbott -New York: Random House, - 2002. – 531p.

<sup>15</sup> Киссинджер Г., Нужна ли Америке внешняя политика? / Г. Киссинджер. - Москва: Издательство АСТ. -2016. -391 с.



and Zbigniew Brzezinski<sup>16</sup> were taken as a basis.

Books by Ali Hasanov<sup>17</sup>, Sergei Zhiltsov<sup>18</sup> and other local and foreign politicians were used as an important source when studying energy policy in the region and choosing routes for transporting oil and gas resources.

Doctrines, bills, presidential speeches, and national security strategies adopted in this country were included when analyzing the vector of the South Caucasus in the context of its relations with the United States. Among the authors who studied Russian politics and individual issues of the topic, the works of such<sup>19</sup> authors as Kamaluddin Gadzhiev<sup>20</sup>, Noam Chomsky<sup>21</sup> and Stroub Talbott were mentioned. The book of Vladimir Kazimirov, who was the head of the Russian mediation mission, as well as the co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group from Russia in 1992–1996, contained contradictory data<sup>22</sup>. The book, dedicated to issues of conflict, war, and its peaceful resolution, is distinguished by bias and obvious propaganda of a pro-Armenian position. V. Kazimirov described the features of the Armenian-

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<sup>16</sup> Бжезинский З. Великая Шахматная доска / З. Бжезинский. -Москва: Международные отношения. -1998. -128 с

<sup>17</sup> Həsənov Ə. Xəzər-Qara dəniz hövzəsi və Cənubi Qafqazın geoiqtisadiyyatı: Azərbaycanın enerji siyasəti / Ə. Həsənov -Bakı:Zərdabi LTD. -2016. -296 s.; Həsənov, Ə. Azərbaycanın geosiyasəti: dərslik /Ə. Həsənov; elmi red. E.Nəsirov; red. V.Səlimov; Azərb. Resp. Prezidenti yanında Dövlət İdarəçilik Akademiyası.- Bakı: Zərdabi LTD MMC, -2015. -1055 s.

Zhiltsov. С. Caspian region: main directions of pipelines// Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. -1992. -р. 10

<sup>18</sup> Жильцов С. Трубопроводная архитектура в Каспийском регионе: итоги и перспективы // -Москва: Журнал PolitBook. – 2015. № 2. -с. 114-132.

Жильцов. С. Каспийский регион: основные направления трубопроводов// Дипломатическая академия МИД России. -1992. -с. 10

<sup>19</sup> Гаджиев К. Геополитика Кавказа / К. Гаджиев –Москва:Международные отношения. -2003. -464 с .

<sup>20</sup> Chomsky N. Who rules the World /N. Chomsky - London: Hamish Hamilton. – 2016. - 336 p.

<sup>21</sup> Talbott S. A Russian “Reset Button” Based on Inclusion // -Washington: Brookings Institution. -2009 February 23, -р. 22

<sup>22</sup> Казимиров В. Мир Карабаху. Посредничество России в урегулировании нагорно-карабахского конфликта/ В. Казимиров -Москва: Международные отношения. - 2009. - 456 с.

Azerbaijani Karabakh conflict through biased judgments, accusing both sides, in particular Azerbaijan, of gross violations of international humanitarian norms and failure to comply with decrees of international organizations.

Many official sources were studied and analyzed during the work on this research. Among them are the doctrines and national security strategies of the United States and the Russian Federation, adopted from the early 90s to the present time, signed agreements, UN resolutions, legislative acts, periodical press materials, archival documents. Agreements, declarations, and bilateral treaties signed between the governments of the United States, Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia separately were examined in order to analyze the bilateral relations of the United States and Russia in relation to each of the independent states. The materials studied in the preparation of this work, once again confirm that the study of the current state and prospects for developments in the South Caucasus allows us to understand not only the regional context, but also the complexity of interaction between the two great powers outside the region.

**Goals and objectives of the study.** The main goal of the dissertation is a comprehensive study of the policies of the United States and Russia towards the states of this region. Considering the diversity of the topic, the intensity of ongoing events and processes, the main attention was focused on important points. To achieve the set goals, the following tasks were accomplished:

- The scientific and theoretical foundations of the emergence of US and Russian interests in the South Caucasus after the collapse of the USSR were studied ;
- The adopted doctrines and strategies of both countries towards the region were studied, and the geopolitical influence of these countries on the South Caucasus was assessed;
- The role of the United States and Russia in establishing equal, mutually beneficial relations with each independent state in the region has been determined;
- The importance of Caspian Sea energy projects for the United States and Russia, the influence of the regional policies of the

- two states on Azerbaijan's energy diplomacy and its balanced policy were studied, the real situation in this area and prospects for cooperation were assessed;
- Separately, the main directions of bilateral trade and economic relations of the countries of the South Caucasus with the USA and Russia were studied, as well as issues related to humanitarian assistance provided by the USA to Russia and all countries of the region after the collapse of the USSR, problems in this area were identified and ways out were proposed;
  - The role of US diplomacy in resolving conflicts in the South Caucasus has been studied, and Russia's influence on conflicts in the region has been studied.

**Research methods.** The research methodology was formed in accordance with the objectives set above. First of all, in the process of researching the work, an integrated approach was used - political analysis, synthesis, generalization, comparison, methods of deduction and induction, without which, one way or another, it is impossible to consider this issue, as well as methods of systemic and comparative analysis and other methods.

**The main provisions of the defense are:**

- In the first years after the collapse of the USSR, an atmosphere of short-term cooperation was created between the United States and Russia, but later this process weakened amid mutual accusations. Currently, competition and struggle for interests for supremacy in the South Caucasus continues;
- Continued NATO expansion and plans to move closer to Russia's borders increase the importance of the South Caucasus states for both the United States and Russia, which in turn creates opportunities for regional states to maneuver between the two centers of power;
- The US has for many years tried to oust Russia, which has vital security interests, from this region by increasing its economic presence in the South Caucasus, especially in the energy sector, as well as by using elements of soft power, and this direction in fact currently remains the main direction;

- The need for hydrocarbon resources in the South Caucasus has increased after the sanctions imposed against Russia by the USA and the EU, especially after the ban on the purchase of natural gas from this country. The current significance of the South Caucasus for Russia lies in the fact that this country considers the countries of the region as the main trade and economic partners in the context of Western sanctions and tries to carry out import and export transactions both with these countries and through them.

**Scientific innovation of the research.** This problem was comprehensively studied for the first time. Considering the wide relevance of the research topic, some theses can be formulated. So, for the first time in the research work there were:

- the theoretical foundations of cooperation were carefully studied, the real practical situation of relations between the United States and Russia in the political sphere was assessed in relation to the states of the South Caucasus;
- The essence of the economic problems of all three states of the South Caucasus region is revealed;
- the issues of laying energy pipelines and the struggle for pipeline routes between the USA and Russia, their geopolitical and geo-economic significance were studied;
- A comprehensive analysis of the formation and dynamics of trade and economic relations between the United States and Russia with each of the independent states of the South Caucasus was carried out, forecasts were put forward for the future development of relations;
- The United States and Russia proposed steps to resolve conflicts and security problems in the region.

**Theoretical and practical significance of research.** The results of research work can be used in further research in this area, in the preparation of textbooks, scientific articles or dissertations. From a practical point of view, this work is useful for researchers and diplomats trying to study geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus, as well as for those who want to study the foreign policies of the United States, Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.

**Approbation and application of the research.** The main provisions of the research work were reflected in seventeen scientific articles and theses published both in Azerbaijan, in various issues of the magazines “Geostrategiya”, “Sivilizasiya”, “Dövlət İdarəçiliyi”, also in Russia, in the journals “Questions of Political Science”, “Scientific Aspect”.

The provisions put forward in the dissertation were discussed at various scientific and practical conferences and international forums, and were also presented at various international and republican conferences.

**The name of the institution where the dissertation work was completed.** The dissertation work was completed at the Department of International Relations and Foreign Policy of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**Structure and scope of work.** The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, seven paragraphs, a conclusion and a list of references. The volume of the dissertation is 160 pages (223.976 characters). Introductory part – 19.930, first chapter – 51.816, second chapter – 70,739, third chapter – 75,764, final part – 6.416 characters.

## THE CONTENT OF THE WORK

**The introduction** substantiates the relevance of the topic, indicates the goals and objectives of the research, puts forward proposals, and substantiates the scientific novelty and practical significance of the results obtained.

**The first chapter**, entitled “**Geopolitical interests of the United States and Russia in the South Caucasus**,” examined the theoretical and practical foundations of the regional policies of both centers of power.

The first paragraph is called “**Theoretical issues of foreign policy relations between the USA and Russia in the South Caucasus**” It is known that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, new trends arose in the concept of US foreign policy, and the concept of Russian foreign policy and security was reformed in accordance with the conditions of geopolitical realities. After the formal end of the Cold War, relations between the United States and Russia rose to a new level - the

United States no longer considered Russia a threat to its interests, and a weakened Russia was unable to resist the United States. Until the end of the 90s of the 20th century, the United States and Russia took steps to develop relations of partnership and cooperation, but since the first years of the 21st century the situation has changed. Russia has begun to take steps to prevent the United States from increasing its influence and dominance in strategically important areas. It should be noted that this process is not one-way. The strengthening of Russian resistance was also due to gradually increasing US pressure.

There were significant differences in US national interest strategies between 1994 and 1998 . So, if in the 1994 strategy<sup>23</sup> mentioned only “supporting democracy abroad,” then in the 1998 strategy this phrase was replaced by “creating democracy in other countries<sup>24</sup>. ” Thus, the United States gave itself grounds to interfere in the internal politics of other countries, violating the framework of international law.

After Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia, significant changes occurred in foreign policy. As Russia became more active, the United States made every effort to prevent the revival of its ambitions in the South Caucasus. After the well-known events of September 2001, the United States made a sharp transition from a policy of protecting its own security to a policy of promoting democratic values through intervention, which was reflected in its policy in the South Caucasus.

Currently, Russia plays a complex role in the South Caucasus; on the one hand, it is trying by all means to protect its influence in the post-Soviet territories, and on the other hand is trying to ensure the stability of its southern borders.

**“Practical issues of bilateral relations between the USA and Russia in the South Caucasus”** practical issues of bilateral relations between the United States and Russia in the South Caucasus were analyzed in the second paragraph. The practical responsibilities of the United States in the region include the following: protecting the sovereignty of regional states, resolving regional conflicts.

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<sup>23</sup> Стратегия национальной безопасности США. Июль 1994 / –Вашингтон: Белый Дом, –1994. –34 с

<sup>24</sup> Стратегия национальной безопасности США для нового столетия. Декабрь 1999 / –Вашингтон: Белый Дом, –1999. –49 с.

strengthening its influence in the region by promoting initiatives; preventing complete Russian domination in the South Caucasus; as well as expanding security relations; implementation of joint measures to strengthen the military personnel of the countries of the region; fight against terrorism.

The reasons of failure of US policy in the South Caucasus in the late 2000s are the lack of proper attention to the region, ignoring the realities and unique characteristics of each of its states, and the inability to assess the conflicts the region is at the proper level, as well as the financial crisis that hit the USA and Europe in 2008. At that time, the US was completely focused on solving its internal problems in the financial system.

Since 2001, Russia's relations with the states of the region have been built on the basis of a more pragmatic military-geostrategic policy. From a certain point of view, this can be seen as Russia's defensive reaction to NATO expansion. According to experts, the “reset” announced between the United States and Russia did not change the tactics of their relations, but simply transferred them to a secret phase. At the beginning of the 21st century, relations began to gradually return to their previous conflict state. The United States did not want to put up with the return of a new powerful player in world politics in the person of Russia and continued to limit the expansion of its influence in the post-Soviet space. Russia, in turn, refused to recognize the dominance of any other power over its former spheres of influence and considered it a threat to national interests. The events of August 2008, the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, which ended with the annexation of Crimea, and the Ukrainian war of 2022 proved that Russia is ready to take radical steps to protect its national interests. The Russian authorities are well aware that if the United States and NATO are able to gain a foothold in regions vital to Russia, then Russian influence in the South Caucasus and the Black Sea will be lost.

One can clearly observe the indecision in US policy in the South Caucasus in comparison with such a tough and decisive policy of Russia. For example, after the outbreak of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, the United States sent only statements and criticism to Russia and did not actually take any effective steps to prevent the aggressor, which

seriously undermined its reputation in the region. This process created the impression that the United States did not intend to fight with Russia over the republics of the South Caucasus or even Georgia, which was trying with all its might to get rid of Russian influence. It should also be noted that the West's desire to help the countries of the region strengthen their political and economic independence is not due to the desire to include them in the Western bloc, but rather to the weakening of Russia's position here.

US influence in the region was negatively affected by its approach to conflicts in the South Caucasus, based on double standards. USA are more interested not in resolving conflicts, but in freezing them. The assistance provided by the United States to countries in the region in strengthening their political and economic independence also stems from their goal to weaken Russia's position through third countries, without entering into direct confrontation. Despite the presence of serious problems in bilateral relations, the establishment of Russian-American relations has always served as a guarantor of stability and a solution to problems in international relations, such as disarmament problems, conflict prevention, terrorism, and cooperation in the economic field.

This paragraph argues that the current situation in the South Caucasus is the result of a number of strategic and tactical mistakes made by the United States, as well as a lack of US strategic vision for the region in recent years. The United States did not take into account the realities and specifics of the region and each state separately. This deeply undermines the West's position in the South Caucasus .

In the second chapter - **“Economic and humanitarian cooperation of the USA and Russia with the states of the South Caucasus and mechanisms for their implementation”** information about economic and humanitarian activities is provided both centers of power in the South Caucasus and the mechanisms for its implementation, from which the priorities of relations in the economic, energy and humanitarian spheres emerge, the leading directions for the development of these relations are determined, energy projects and ways of their implementation are discussed.

An analysis of the first paragraph of the second chapter, **“Priorities of modern trade and economic relations between the**



**United States and Russia in the South Caucasus,”** shows that political and security issues prevail in American-Russian relations, while economic relations are less important. Poor economic interaction between the United States and Russia limits the ability of policymakers to use trade as a tool for geopolitical struggle. When the volume of trade between two countries becomes very small, it does not matter whether the country profits from this cooperation or not. But this also affects the risk of confrontation, since both sides have little to lose.

This situation creates both opportunities and threats for the South Caucasus, which is a strategically important trade crossroads between Russia, Iran, Turkey, Europe and Central Asia. The clash of strategic interests of leading global and regional players, on the one hand, can create conditions for accelerated political and economic development of the South Caucasus, on the other hand, this rivalry can significantly increase the already extensive conflict potential of the region <sup>25</sup>.

The second paragraph of the second chapter is called **“Energy interests of the USA and Russia and the South Caucasus”** Today, the growing importance of energy resources is one of the most important factors determining the policies of states, regions and world powers in general.

After the collapse of the USSR and the loss of Russia's monopoly on the rich hydrocarbon resources of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, the question arose about ways to transport these resources to the world market. However, Azerbaijan, the main oil and gas producer in the South Caucasus, which had restored its state independence, did not have sufficient financial resources. This opened up new opportunities for the United States. Russia, which tried to prevent the states of the region, including Azerbaijan, from independently exporting their oil and gas resources to world markets, did not offer an alternative. As a result, the leadership of Azerbaijan was faced with a choice - either to submit to Russian pressure and

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<sup>25</sup> Кудряшова, Ю. Государства Южного Кавказа в европейской политике соседства // – Москва: Аналитические записки НКСМИ МГИМО (У) МИД России, –2008. -№ 66, –с.10.

postpone oil and gas projects indefinitely, or to ignore the opinion of the “big brother” and cooperate with Western corporations <sup>26</sup>.

The US idea to transport oil and gas along a new route bypassing Russia had primarily political motives. Azerbaijan has become the center of a geopolitical conflict between the United States and Russia. Azerbaijan rejected Russia's proposal to build a single oil pipeline to a Russian port on the Black Sea and managed to build a major export pipeline to Turkey, passing through Georgia <sup>27</sup>.

Pipelines have become the most pressing political problem in Russian foreign policy and, at the same time, one of the main tools in the struggle to maintain a dominant position in the region by the United States, which sought to see post-Soviet states less dependent on Russia. In the first years of independence, the growth of oil and gas production was seen as one of the main means of overcoming the economic and social problems facing the country. Under these conditions, limited financial resources made attracting foreign investors to the country a strategically important decision <sup>28</sup>.

With the signing of the “Contract of the Century” in 1994, the entire Caspian region, including Azerbaijan and Georgia, became an area of vital US interests. The main export pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan was an ideal option for the United States, reducing Russian influence in the region and not passing through Iranian territory.

One of the important moments in the energy policy of our country was the decision to choose a route for transporting gas to Europe after the discovery of the Shah Deniz gas field. The possibility of unhindered delivery of natural gas along the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline route and the strengthening of friendly relations with partner countries have created great opportunities for the development of not only Azerbaijan, but also the entire South Caucasus region, especially Georgia, through whose territory oil and gas pipelines pass. The

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<sup>26</sup> Алиев И. Г. Каспийская нефть Азербайджана / И. Г. Алиев -Москва: Известия, -2003. -712

<sup>27</sup> Бжезинский Зб., Великая Шахматная доска / Зб. Бжезинский. -Москва: Международные отношения -1998. -128 с.

<sup>28</sup> Azərbaycan nefti: [Elektron resurs] / Azerbaijan.az, -2020. URL: <https://azerbaijan.az/related-information/267>

construction of the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) is a strategically important project in the energy strategy aimed at maximizing the diversification of gas supplies to Europe.

The importance of Georgia, which has become the main transit country in transporting energy resources from the Caspian Sea region to world markets, has doubled for both the United States and Russia. The offside hit forced Armenia to turn to Russia.

The third paragraph, called “ **Main directions of humanitarian activities of the United States and Russia with the countries of the South Caucasus,**” analyzes that after the collapse of the USSR, the United States began preparing a policy of humanitarian assistance to the newly independent states. This policy meant that the United States would provide them with various forms of assistance. However, after some time, under the influence of the Armenian lobby in the United States, a decision was made to ban humanitarian aid to Azerbaijan. As a result, the Freedom Support Act, as amended by Congress on October 24, 1992, was signed into law. Azerbaijan, having just become independent, faced difficulties, having lost US humanitarian assistance as a result of the adoption of the unfair 907th Amendment. The assistance that came to Azerbaijan from the United States in various forms was carried out through non-governmental organizations. Of course, it is impossible to compare it in volume with what neighboring Armenia received. It should be noted that the powerful Armenian lobby and its successful activities played a decisive role in the adoption by Congress of the 907th Amendment to the Freedom Support Act. After national leader Heydar Aliyev came to power in 1993 and the signing of oil contracts with US oil companies in 1994, activity against the 907th Amendment intensified.

In the third chapter of the dissertation “**Relations between the USA and Russia and territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus**” the approach of the United States and Russia to territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus was analyzed, the policies and each of the parties in the direction of resolving the conflict were assessed. One of the important means of influence of the United States and Russia on the politics of the South Caucasus was participation as a mediator in the settlement of the Karabakh, Abkhaz and Ossetian conflicts.

In the first paragraph, **“The position of the United States and Russia in resolving the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict”** it is mentioned that Armenia's military aggression against Azerbaijan marked the beginning of one of the bloodiest conflicts since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The failure to resolve the conflict through political and diplomatic means for almost 30 years has led to instability in the South Caucasus region. As one of the three co-chairs of the Minsk Group, which was not interested in resolving this conflict, Russia tried to maintain the influence that it had during the Soviet era over the states of the South Caucasus.

Although the United States, acting as one of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group since 1997, tried to take targeted steps towards resolving the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, the Russian factor on the one hand and Armenian lobbying in the United States did not allow them to take an objective position. As a result, under the administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, the United States did not put forward a single initiative that had a strong resonance as one of the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Ambassador John Maresca, who was the country's representative in the OSCE Minsk Group, also mentioned in one of his interviews that the US was not proactive in its approach to the conflict and could not counter Russian efforts to control the process <sup>29</sup>.

It should also be noted that the position of the first President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan regarding the resolution of the conflict was completely objective. He argued that the Armenian authorities had mocked the international community for many years and openly declared that they were showing artificial interest in a quick solution to the Karabakh problem, but in fact their goal was to slow down and disrupt this process <sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Blair B. Forging a Lasting Peace. The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict. An Interview with John J. Maresca, Former US Ambassador to the OSCE // - Baku: Azerbaijan International. -1996. -p.52

<sup>30</sup> Ter-Petrosian L. Armenia's Future, Relations with Turkey, and the Karabagh Conflict// Edited by Arman Grigoryan/ Armenian National Congress, USA Palgrave Macmillan, -2018; -p.62

Since 2000, trilateral meetings between the presidents of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia to resolve the conflict have intensified. This resulted in the signing of the Moscow Declaration on November 2, 2008<sup>31</sup>. According to this statement, the parties stated that they would support a political solution to the Karabakh conflict based on the principles and norms of international law by continuing direct dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia through the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group. However, like the United States, such Russian initiatives have not borne fruit. This was influenced by both objective and subjective factors arising from the interests of the parties in the region.

On September 27, 2020, after numerous provocations on the part of the Armenian side, the conflict escalated into a full-scale war. The 44-day Second Karabakh War began. Since the United States was preparing for the presidential election the day before, attempts by official Washington to influence the processes were fruitless. Seeing Azerbaijan's quick and significant victories in the region, Russia has repeatedly tried to stop the war. The goal was also to maintain its influence in the region. Finally, in November 2020, a tripartite statement was signed with the participation of the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as the Prime Minister of Armenia. The document became the first important step towards ending the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. The statement says that Russian peacekeeping forces will be stationed in Karabakh for a period of 5 years. By doing this, Moscow tried to maintain its influence in the region.

Numerous high-level meetings were held in the following months. However, Armenia did not fulfill the conditions for the withdrawal of its armed units from the territories of Azerbaijan for a complete resolution of the conflict. An important role in this was played by the support that certain political forces in the USA and Russia tried to provide to Armenia. After numerous high-level negotiations without any progress, as well as flagrant violation by Armenia of the terms of the 2020 declaration, Azerbaijan was forced to conduct a local anti-terrorist operation in September 2023. Thus, Azerbaijan regained full

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<sup>31</sup> Əliyev İ. İnkişaf – məqsədimizdir. [111 cildə] / İ. Əliyev -Bakı:Azərneşr. -23-cü kitab -2016, -392 s.

control over Karabakh.

It should also be noted that Armenia's one-sided bias towards the West, tension in Russian-Armenian relations, and Russia's participation in the war with Ukraine also had a positive impact on the resolution of the conflict.

The second paragraph of the third chapter analyzes **“The policies of the United States and Russia in resolving the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts”** It is known that the next bloody conflict in the South Caucasus is taking place on the territory of Georgia - in Abkhazia and in the Tskhinvali region, where Ossetians live. The conflict consists of the first South Ossetian war of 1991–1992 and the wider Russo-Georgian war of 2008. The White House administration has always supported and defended the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. Regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia, which has its own interests in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, acted as a mediator in these conflicts in the 90s and sent its military units there under the guise of peacekeepers. Thus, the Sochi Agreement, signed in 1992, led to the deployment of Russian, Georgian and Ossetian armed forces in the Tskhinvali region.

Although negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Abkhaz conflict were entrusted to the UN, Russia acted as a mediator here too. UN Security Council Resolution 896 of January 1994 clearly stated that the status of Abkhazia should be determined with respect for the “sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia<sup>32</sup>.”

Georgia's disappointment with Russia coincided with growing Western interest in the South Caucasus since the mid-1990s and the region's growing importance for independent supplies of oil and gas to the world market. The West was convinced that the prospect of further integration, up to full NATO membership, would prevent any Georgian desire to use military force to resolve internal conflicts, as this could harm Georgia's prospects for NATO membership.

By 2008, tensions between Georgia and Russia were growing. Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's former ambassador to the Russia-NATO

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<sup>32</sup> Миссия Организации Объединенных Наций по наблюдению в Грузии МООНГ// 24 августа 1993 –Нью Йорк. -1993. – 23 с.

Council, warned that Georgia's NATO membership would destabilize the Caucasus region<sup>33</sup>. Other Russian officials have expressed the view that inviting NATO to participate in Georgia's Membership Action Plan (MAP) would lead to Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the establishment of Russian troops in these regions<sup>34</sup>.

In August 2008, as the conflict between Russia and Georgia escalated, Bush administration officials were adamant that they had warned the government in Tbilisi not to allow the conflict to escalate into a full-scale war. After the five-day war, Dmitry Medvedev stated that *“the goal of Russia’s operation to forcing the Georgian side to peace was achieved, and it was decided to complete the operation. The aggressor is punished.”*<sup>35</sup> Russia proved to the world and to Georgia that Georgia was under the mistaken impression that in a one-on-one fight with Russia, Georgia would not have more concrete American support.

To sum up, Russia will always play a critical role in the Caucasus. They have always been involved historically, and they play a strategic role in the balance of power in the region. In order not to lose its former influence in the region, the United States should make considerable efforts to promote the process of signing a peace agreement, together with the EU states.

## CONCLUSION

The Conclusion reflects the main scientific results obtained during the research work.

The South Caucasus is a region that has been subject to significant

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<sup>33</sup>Nichol, J. “Georgia (Republic) and NATO Enlargement. Issues and Implications.” //CRS Report for Congress. - 7 March 2009, p. 4. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306091790\\_Georgia\\_Republic\\_and\\_NATO\\_Enlargement\\_Issues\\_and\\_Implications](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306091790_Georgia_Republic_and_NATO_Enlargement_Issues_and_Implications)

<sup>34</sup>Nichol, J. “Georgia (Republic) and NATO Enlargement. Issues and Implications.” //CRS Report for Congress. - 7 March 2009, p. 5. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306091790\\_Georgia\\_Republic\\_and\\_NATO\\_Enlargement\\_Issues\\_and\\_Implications](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306091790_Georgia_Republic_and_NATO_Enlargement_Issues_and_Implications)

<sup>35</sup>Медведев завершил принуждение Грузии к миру «Агрессор наказан!»: [Электронный ресурс] / Комсомольская правда, –2008. URL: [www.kp.ru/daily/24145/362333/](http://www.kp.ru/daily/24145/362333/)

external influence from world powers for centuries. The region remains in a complex geopolitical landscape, with multiple players vying for influence and pursuing their own interests. It is important to note that the geopolitical interests of Western countries and Russia in the South Caucasus may overlap or conflict with each other. The vision of the states of the region that the South Caucasus is a zone of strategic interest of the West was erroneous. But because of Russia's war in Ukraine, the West is increasing its influence in all regions where Russian policies have dominated, especially in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. By doing this, the West is trying to further weaken Russia and ensure its energy independence. The United States should prioritize maintaining ongoing reforms, preventing the escalation of conflicts in the Caucasus, staying out of Russia's vital interests, and not encouraging regional states to counter Russian influence. But at the same time, completely abandoning the region would mean providing greater leverage to pursue a more assertive policy.

The author concludes that if Russia is given control over the post-Soviet space, in particular over the South Caucasus, it will most likely refrain from seeking to have Eastern European countries in its zone of influence. The United States should make concessions and not penetrate into the sphere of Russia's vital interests, especially in relation to Georgia and Ukraine. In this case, the escalation of the conflict could be avoided.

A very likely scenario in this case would be an increase in Russian influence in the South Caucasus, accompanied by a decrease in US interest. It should also be noted that supporting energy and transit projects in the region for many years has been one of the main means for the United States to reduce Russian influence in the region.

It is no exception that in the current conditions, the intensification of the struggle between the United States and Russia for the South Caucasus may create additional problems for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. The stability of the states of the South Caucasus is closely related to the stability of these great states. Taking this into account, the states of the region should discuss and resolve a number of regional problems, eliminate conflicts, strengthen economic ties, and reduce the influence of foreign powers in the region. This region should become a



place of peace, a free trade zone, and acute conflicts between peoples and states should be avoided. In this case, the region will gain real prospects. If all conflicts in the region are resolved, the three independent states integrate more closely, the role and place of the South Caucasus in the world will increase significantly, and the United States and Russia will cooperate with a strong region that has restored its role and has real prospects for the future.

**The main content of the dissertation is published in the following articles:**

1. Военно-политические интересы в регионе Южного Кавказа // “Heydər Əliyev Azərbaycanın milli dövlətçilik siyasətinin banisidir” doktorant və dissertantların elmi konfransı, Dövlət İdarəçilik Akademiyası, –2014. –s.200-210.
2. Энергетическая Политика В Регионе Южного Кавказа // – Bakı: Dövlət idarəçiliyi jurnalı, –2015. №2, –s. 245-252.
3. Борьба мировых держав за трубопроводы на Южном Кавказе // –Bakı: Dövlət idarəçiliyi jurnalı, –2018. №2, –s. 289-297.
4. Оккупационная политика Армении на Южном Кавказе // “Qafqazda deportasiyalar” respublika elmi konfransının tezisləri, –Bakı: AMEA Qafqazşünaslıq İnstitutu, –2018. –s.142-143.
5. Столкновение интересов США и России. Южный Кавказ // Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyətinin 100 illiyinə həsr olunmuş “Qafqazda dövlətlərarası münasibətlər: 100 il əvvəl və müasir dövr” mövzusunda beynəlxalq elmi konfransın materialları, – Bakı: AMEA Qafqazşünaslıq İnstitutu, –2018. –s. 245-252
6. Посредническая роль России в урегулировании Южно-осетинского конфликта // –Bakı: Sivilizasiya, –2019. №4 –с. 22-26
7. Azerbaijan in the pipeline politics // Qafqazşünasların II Beynəlxalq Forumu, –Bakı: AMEA Qafqazşünaslıq İnstitutu, – 2019 –s. 320-326.

8. The role of the United States in resolving territorial disputes, its mediation role in negotiation processes // –Самара: Научный аспект, –2019, №2, т. 2,–с. 234-242. **(Rusiya)**.
9. Гуманитарные связи между США и Азербайджаном после распада СССР// «Общественные науки в современном мире: политология, социология, философия, история» XXIII международной научно-практической конференция, – Москва, –2019. –с. 37-42. **(Rusiya)**.
10. Особенности торгово-экономического развития Азербайджана после распада СССР // –Москва: Вопросы политологии, –2020. № 2(54), –с. 628-634. **(Rusiya)**.
11. Теоретические вопросы национальной безопасности США в американо-российских отношениях // –Bakı: Dövlət idarəçiliyi, –2020. №2, –s. 289-297.
12. Посредническая Роль России В Урегулировании Нагорно-Карабахского Конфликта // –Bakı: Geostrategiya, –2020. №1 (55), –s. 22-27
13. Посредническая Роль США В Урегулировании Нагорно-Карабахского Конфликта // -Bakı:Qafqazşünaslıq elmi-nəzəri jurnalı, –2021. №1 (2), -S.-65-76
14. Борьба интересов США и России в Разрешении Нагорно-Карабахского Конфликта // «Сənubi Qafqazda ərazi-sərhəd problemləri: Qars müqaviləsindən Şuşa bəyannaməsinə» respublika elmi konfransının tezisləri, -Bakı: AMEA Qafqazşünaslıq İnstitutu, –2021. –s.112-114.
15. Новые геополитические реалии на Южном Кавказе // –Bakı: “Qafqazşünaslıq” elmi-nəzəri jurnalı, –2023. №1 (4), –s.18-24.
16. Возобновляемые источники энергии как возможность реинтеграции на Южном Кавказе // «Сənubi Qafqaz: mövcud vəziyyət və perspektivləri» respublika elmi konfransının tezisləri, – Bakı: AMEA Qafqazşünaslıq İnstitutu, –2023, –s. 88-89.
17. Геополитическое влияние Европейского Союза на Южный Кавказ // –Bakı: Dövlət idarəçiliyi jurnalı, –2023. №3 (83), –s. 237-246.



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