

## USA CAUCASUS POLICY (1992-2000)

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### Abstract

Article was devoted to the theme of USA Caucasus policy (1992-2000). The establishment and development of the political, economic and military cooperation of the USA with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia were studied in this article.

The USA attitude to the processes happening in the North Caucasia also has been shown in this article.

It should be noted that, Washington began to give special attention to establish bilateral relations with the independent republics which appeared in the Caucasus after the collapse of the Soviet Union. After recognizing the independence of these republics USA allocated financial assistance to Armenia and Georgia in economic and technical areas. In the result of strong activity of Armenia Diaspora (Section 907 of "Freedom Protection Act") Azerbaijan was deprived of the assistance.

In order to help Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia get rid of Russian influence, to ensure integration of Baku, Tbilisi and Yerevan to West and to solve other like these important issues from the early years of independence Washington tried to achieve all-round development of bilateral relations with these countries in all fields.

At the beginning of the ninetieth years of twentieth century were signed a number of agreements in trade, humanitarian and technical fields.

The official visits of Azerbaijan, Armenian and Georgia presidents to Washington in 1994, 1997 and 2000 played an important role in the development of the bilateral relations. During the visits the presidents signed many contracts with USA in different spheres.

In 1994 all South Caucasus Republics joined NATO "Partnership for Peace" program. Agreements covering economic and military fields have stimulated the development of the relations of USA with Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.

After signing the "Century contact" in 1994 the USA attention to Caucasia increased. It is important to notice that to strengthen its position in the Caucasus in the modern era USA is interested in the further development of relations with South Caucasian Republics.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, relations, USA, policy, Georgia.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

USA the first economically advanced country of the world was to carry out a wide range of opportunities for the active foreign policy strategy in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus after the collapse of Soviet Union.

1991-1994 USA looked to the Caucasia as a Russia's sphere of influence and that is why official Washington did not pay much attention to this region at this time. During this time the United States Caucasus policy was directed to become more familiar with the situation in the republics gained independence, also to study the economic, political and military potential of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.

After signing of "Contract of the Century" in 1994 USA took the course of strengthening its economic, military and political interests in Caucasia.

### 2. US-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

#### 2.1. Political relations

From the point of view of the solution of the economic, political and military problems existing in the country, adjustment and development of the relations with influential countries after finding independence having taken important steps to strategy of foreign policy turned for the Azerbaijan Republic into an important task.

In this context establishment and development of communications with USA could matter both from point of view of the solution of the existing problems and from a position of adjustment of relations with other states.

Though in the first years after finding independence USA recognized the sovereignty of Azerbaijan and established diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan, but close cooperation was not reached. Revival in the relations between the USA and Azerbaijan more started being shown after 1993.

It should be noted that, recognition of the USA of independence of the Azerbaijan Republic took place December 25 1991, the first and important step in the direction of adjustment of the bilateral relations.

In 1992 United States Secretary of State James Baker visited Azerbaijan. During James Baker's meeting with a leadership of Azerbaijan the statement for readiness of official Washington to take steps in the direction of establishment of diplomatic relations was made (New York Times 13 February 1992).

During 1991-1993 USA did not give much attention to the relations between US-Azerbaijan. What reasons disturbed development of the relations of USA and Azerbaijan during the specified period? It can be explained with the following factors:

1. Incompetence in the sphere of foreign policy of the governments formed after finding independence in Azerbaijan;
2. "907<sup>th</sup> amendment" of Freedom Support Act approved by US Congress in 1992.

The most important step for development of bilateral relations was taken in 1994 during visit of the president H. Aliyev to USA for participation at the 49th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Haydar Aliyev answering the question of the journalist during the departure at the airport declared that recently the USA constantly shows the positive relation to Azerbaijan: President Clinton repeatedly sends me letters. Only in September I received two letters from him. All this shows that in the USA the relation to Azerbaijan changes in a positive side and I think will change and further (Aliyev, 1997, p.287).

During his visit the president of Azerbaijan held a number of meetings with the U.S President and other representative of the American government.

All these steps taken by Haydar Aliyev helped to the development of US-Azerbaijan relations.

## **2.2. Economical relations**

After gaining independence the Republic of Azerbaijan began to attach great importance to the development of economic relations with the United States. The signing of "Contract of the Century" increased the interest of USA to Azerbaijan.

A number of oil contracts signing with USA during visits of Haydar Aliyev to Washington stimulated the US-Azerbaijan economical relations.

In 1996 US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce was opened. In the opening ceremony President Haydar Aliyev said that the Chamber would play an important role in the development of relations between two countries (Hasanov, 2000, p.186-187).

On August 1 1997 there was signed "Absheron" contract among the Chevron Company of USA, Total Company of France and the Azerbaijan Sate Oil company in Washington. According to this agreement the US Company Chevron has 30% stake. Alov, Sharq and Araz oil fields agreements were signed in 1998. The Ekon/Mobile Company of US has 15% stake in this project. According to Zafar and Mashal contracts signed in Washington the Ekson Mobile Company was the owner of 20% stake (Cemilli, 2007, p.73).

All these contracts helped USA to strengthen its position in oil sector of Azerbaijan.

## **2.3. Military Cooperation**

US administration has taken the first important steps to ensure its military and political interests in the South Caucasus in the framework of NATO.

From the beginning of 90<sup>th</sup> years of XX century Republics of the South Casasia especially Azerbaijan and Georgia began to give importance to cooperation with NATO.

In 1994 Azerbaijan joined NATO's "Partnership for Peace" Program. This step opened opportunities for the establishment and development of military cooperation with Washington.

During visits of Haydar Aliyev to Washington there were series of talks on bilateral military cooperation.

In 1997 on the 31st July it was signed "Joint Statement on the future relationship in defense and military spheres" between USA and Azerbaijan. (Hasanov, 2000, p.330)

The visit of Deputy Commander of US European command of the Armed Forces Admiral Charles Abbot to Azerbaijan in 2000 played a special role in expanding military cooperation between the two countries. Admiral Charles Abbot in the meeting with the minister of defense of Azerbaijan said that the aim of the visit is the foundation of the cooperation between the armed forces of two countries. (Azimli, 2001, p.168)

It is important to notice that, US did not allocate military aid to Azerbaijan between 1993-2002 according to the "907th amendment" of Freedom Support Act. It began only from 2002 (Gurbuz, 2012, p.416).

### **3. US-GEORGIA RELATIONS**

#### **3.1. Political relations**

Georgia, one of the republics gained independence in the South Caucasia after the collapse of the Soviet Union taking important steps in the foreign policy strategy began to give special attention to creating wide range relations with world's leading countries and established relations with USA.

It should be noted that, the USA-Georgia relations developed in different levels in the nineties years of XX century and began more intense in the second half of the 90<sup>th</sup> years. So the nationalist policy of Zviad Gamskhurdiya government, formed after gaining independence, also the occurrence of riots inside country (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) strained the political situation in Georgia. All these processes prevented the active foreign policy. In this regard Z.Gamsakhurdiya government pursued a policy against Russia, but couldn't establish relations with the west as well.

USA recognized the independence of Georgia on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1991. Despite the diplomatic relations between two countries, official Washington did not have close relations with Tbilisi. This can be attributed to the following reasons:

1. The strong influence of Russia over the republics formed in the South Caucasia after the collapse of the Soviet Union;
2. The Russia-oriented policy of the governments formed in the independent republics;
3. Middle East region was playing a more important role in the US foreign policy.

On the other hand, it should be noted that, Eduard Shevardnadze cabinet, formed after the failure of Z. Gamsakhurdiya government began to give importance to relations with USA. The revival of the relationship began in the second half of the 90<sup>th</sup> years. What were the main reasons of revival in US-Georgia relations in this period? This can be explained by the following factors:

1. The claims of Georgian politicians by the fact that Russia is behind the assassinations against E. Shevardnadze in 1995 and 1998.
2. Russia's preference pressure in the policy towards Georgia.
3. Remain on the sidelines, when one of the most important projects which will emerge after signing the "Contract of Century" in 1994.

All the foregoing reasons resulted with the preferred direction to US in the foreign policy strategy of Georgia.

#### **3.2. Economical relations**

When Eduard Shevardnadze came to power US attention to Georgia increased. Signing important agreements during visits of Georgian president E. Shevardnadze to Washington in 1994 and 1997 played an important role in the development of mutual relations not only in political, but also economic and military spheres.

During the visit of Eduard Shevardnadze to Washington in 1997 the two presidents agreed on the need to expand commercial relations between the United States and Georgia, including higher levels of trade and investment. In support of these goals the instruments of ratification for the US-Georgia Bilateral

Investment Treaty were exchanged during the visit. The two sides agreed to continue close cooperation in support of Georgia's rapid accession to the World Trade Organization on commercial terms generally applied to newly acceding members, which will further Georgia's integration into the global economy (Clinton, 2005, p.983).

It is important notice that with the support of USA Georgia accessed to World Trade Organization in 2000.

### **3.3. Military cooperation**

In order to strength its positions and also to protect Georgia from Russia's threats US was interested in military aid to Georgia.

Following a visit by Shevardnadze to the United States in 1997 military cooperation started to intensify. The US government approved a Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program that facilitated Georgian purchases of US military hardware and other defense-related improvements. From 1997-1999 to 2000 the United States spent about \$17.5 million on FMF-related programs. (Darchiasvili, 2000)

In 1998 with the support of USA Georgia was able to give the control of Black Sea coast to its border controllers (Cemilli, 2007, p.120). In 1999 USA allocated \$12.3 million to Georgia for protection sea coast (Nesibov, 2006, p.45).

All these aids played important role in the development of the military system of the Republic of Georgia and military cooperation between USA and Georgia.

## **4. US-ARMENIA RELATIONS**

### **4.1. Political relations**

The United States recognized the independence of the Republic of Armenia on December 25<sup>th</sup> 1991 and established diplomatic relations with official Yerevan on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1992. In February 1992 the USA embassy was opened in Yerevan. Thus, the political relations between Armenia and the United States were founded.

US Secretary of State James Baker's visit to Armenia in 1992 played an important role in forming bilateral relations.

Levon Ter-Petrosyan government formed after independence along with Russia tried to establish relations with United States and other Western countries. It should be noted that in the result of activity of Armenian lobby official Yerevan achieved to get full support from USA.

In accordance with the Freedom Support Act approved by US Congress Armenia received humanitarian and technical aid from USA.

### **4.2. Economical relations**

After the collapse of the USSR in terms of strengthening its economic interests USA began to give special attention to the development of economic relations with Armenia as well as other South Caucasian countries.

At the beginning of the ninetieth years of twentieth century were signed a number of agreements in trade, humanitarian and technical areas.

Since 1992 USAID (United States Agency for International Aid) has provided a broad range of development programs in Armenia. Presently, the program is working to (USAID):

1. Increase the country's economic competitiveness;
2. Promote civic participation and access to a wide range of media outlets;
3. Expand access to quality health care and special services;
4. Support Armenia's efforts to US-Armenia relations.

In 1999 in order to provide the development of economical relations US-Armenia Joint Economic Taskforce was formed.

In spite of all these realities Washington did not achieve to establish large sphere economic relations with Armenia. What are the main reasons? We can explain it with the following factors:

- **Armenia's isolation policy.** Thus, official Yerevan after gaining independence did not take steps towards the formation of mutual beneficial relations with neighboring (Azerbaijan and Turkey) countries. As a result Armenia missed out on big projects which would have great importance for the weak economy of Armenia. This in turn had a negative impact to the US-Armenia economical collaboration. Because USA is the participant of important projects in Caucasia
- **Armenia's economy is under the control of Russia.** As Armenia in debt of bandage of Russia official Yerevan has to give the control of many important sectors to Moscow. It should be noted that Sevan-Razadnski hydropower station and Armenia airline are under the control of Russia. As for banking system Vnesdor bank of Russia has a large part of Bank of Armsber (Valeyev, 2008, p.143).

All these facts show that Armenia depends on Moscow in the economic sphere as well as in other spheres. Also Armenian author Samson Maritosyan notice that one of the factors which influences the lack of US investment in the Armenian economy is that many of the strategically important sectors are under the direct control of Russia. (Maritosyan, 2014)

### 4.3. Military cooperation

The official visit of Armenian president Ter-Petrosyan to Washington in 1994 played an important role in the development of bilateral relations. During this visit Pentagon agreed to send military experts to Armenia. In 1994 Armenia joined NATO's "Partnership for Peace" Program.

In 2000 Armenian defense minister Serge Sarkisian signed an agreement on technical assistance in the areas of service of customs and border control with US Ministry of Defense. Agreements covering military field have stimulated the development of US-Armenia relations in this sphere. But close cooperation in military sphere was not reached. What were the main reasons? Why did not the United States reach the close cooperation with Armenia in military sphere after the independence of the Republic of Armenia? It can be explained by the following facts:

1. **Armenia depends on Russia in military sphere.** It should be noted that the base of mutual relations between two countries was established with the Russia Federation-Armenian friendship contract which signed on 29th of December 1991 by Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Boris Yeltsin. According to the contract when one of the parties is in danger, can get any help from the other. On 16th March 1995 a contract was signed about the Russian military units on the territory of Armenia. As a result of these contracts covering military sphere Russia subjugated Yerevan. (Hekimoglu, 2007, p.182-183 )
2. **Unlike the United States, Russia provides Armenia with large quantities of arms and ammunition.** One of the facts showing this was statement quoted by chairman of the Russian state Duma Defense Committee, General Eva Roxlin. According to him Russia gave one billion dollars worth of weapon to Armenia in 1996-1998 (Cemilli, 2007, p. 147).

## 5. USA STANCE ON NAGORNO KARABAKH, ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA CONFLICTS.

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict emerging as a result of Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan is the most important problem for official Baku. Settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the restoration of the territorial integrity is the priority direction of foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In this respect, from the first years of independence, Azerbaijan tried to get the support of USA in this Issue.

It is important to notice that, the US position on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be divided into two phases:

1. **1991-1993**
2. **The stage after the end of 1993**

So until the end of 1993 the US made the statements reflecting the position of Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh issue, put in action various mechanisms of pressure concerning Azerbaijan (Hasanov, 2001, p.167).





The successful foreign policy pursued by Haydar Aliyev after 1993 resulted in changes in the position of USA on the settlement of the conflict. From this time official Washington began to pay much attention to this issue.

During visits of Haydar Aliyev to Washington in 1994, 1997 and 2000 Nagorno-Karabakh issue was discussed for several times.

In 1999 with support of USA a meeting was held between Azerbaijan and Armenian presidents about Nagorno-Karabakh problem.

It is important to notice that, the problem has been not settled as a result of Armenian unconstructive position.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflict have serious consequences for Georgia after independence. The separatist sentiments tensed the internal political situation of the country.

E. Shevardnadze has been taken a number of steps to get the support of the United States on the solving this conflict.

In 1994 B. Clinton said that he support the international peacekeeping forces in Georgia.

During his visit to Washington in 1997 E. Shevardnadze again discussed these problems with President of USA Bill Clinton.

President Bill Clinton reaffirmed U. S. support for Georgia's territorial integrity and peaceful settlement to the tragic conflict in Abkhazia. The United States and Georgia support the early resumption of negotiations on Abkhazia under the aegis of the UN, with Russia as a facilitator and the participation of the

OSCE and the other friends of Georgia countries- France, Germany, the United Kingdom and United State(Clinton, 2005, p.983).

It is important to notice that, USA supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Georgia in the settlement of the conflicts.

## **6. USA ATTITUDE TO EVENTS TAKEN PLACE IN NORTH CAUCASIA REGION.**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union several countries in the Caucasus region gained independence. As a result of the struggle of the people living in North Caucasia for restoration of their sovereign rights expanded. The struggle for freedom began from Chechnya. It seriously disturbed Russia. Because the independence of Chechnya would give an impetus to struggle of the other people of the region.

Therefore, Russia gave strong response to events in Chechnya. Official Moscow used military force against Chechnya. The processes that occur in North Caucasia, including the freedom struggle of the Chechen people could not stay away from the Washington's attention.

Chairman of the State Committee on Foreign Affairs J. Helws reproached Russia for the use of force against Chechnya.

But the Clinton administration's initial reaction to the Russian invasion of Chechnya in December 1994 was muted and sent the messages that the United States had no intention of involving itself in the conflict. On 11<sup>th</sup> December at Miami Press conference, President Clinton announced that the ensuing war was "an internal affair and we hope that order can be restored with a minimum amount of bloodshed and violence"(Bagot, 2009.)

But after 1999 there was a change in US Chechnya policy. From this time official Washington began to apply a policy to solve the problem at the international level. In this respect the US administration was trying Chechnya crisis to be a topic of discussion in the OSCE Istanbul summit. In this way USA was going to influence Russia on crisis.

Therefore, on the eve of summit the changes took place in the position of Washington about mentioned issue. B. Clinton refused to consider the war of Chechnya as "an internal affair" of Russia. US Secretary of State Madlen Olbrayt clearly stated it in Istanbul summit.

In 1999 US provided \$ 10 million to respond to unexpected urgent needs associated with the situation in Russia's north Caucasus region. (US Information Agency)

On July 20, 2000 the G-8 summit took place in the Naha city of Japan. During the summit US senator Mr. Paul make speech about Chechnya Issue. He said that during the meeting with Russia president B. Clinton must make clear to President Putin that while the United States fully supports the territorial integrity of Russian Federation and is fully aware of the evidence of grave human rights violations committed by soldiers on both sides of the conflict, we strongly condemn Russia's conduct of the war in Chechnya and will continue to publicly voice our opposition to it. (idee.org)

It should be noted that Washington supported the territorial integrity of Russia and considered Chechnya as an integral part of Russia during this crisis.

In general during the Clinton administration attaching importance to relations with Russia USA did not impose any serious pressure on official Moscow regarding the processes taking place in the North Caucasus.

## **7. RESULT**

One of the main priorities of the US foreign policy after the collapse of the USSR was recognizing sovereignty and establishing relations with new independent countries. In this regard the official Washington recognized the independence of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia in 1991 and established diplomatic relations with them in 1992.

From the beginning of 90<sup>th</sup> years of XX century USA tried to establish cooperation with region states in different areas.

A number of contracts signed in oil sphere strengthened the economic position of USA in the region.

In spite of all these realities United States couldn't strengthen its position in the region. The main reasons are the following:

1. The strong position of Russia in the region, especially in Armenia.
2. The close relation of Iran with Armenia.
3. Unsettlement of existing conflicts in the region.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In order to expand its influence in the Caucasia region official Washington must:

1. Expand relation with Azerbaijan and Georgia in all spheres.
2. Help Armenia get rid of Russian influence, by setting the policy of isolation to ensure integration of Yerevan to West.
3. Crackdown on the behavior of invader Armenia in the framework of international law.
4. Play a major role in the settlement of conflicts in the region and try to eliminate these problems.

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