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The establishment of the US-Armenia relations and the US policy towards Armenia

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The purpose of this research is to examine the US foreign policy towards Armenia shortly after the collapse of the USSR. In that context the paper analyzes whether the US policy in the South Caucasus region had more concentration on bilateral or regional approach. The subject of a study is the period from the formal recognition of Armenia's independence by the United States Government, establishment of diplomatic relations, exchange of diplomatic notes and opening of embassies. For that purpose, the research has been conducted in the archives of the US Department of State, where recently declassified diplomatic cables were examined. This allowed to discover new facts and more detailed information regarding the priorities of the US foreign policy towards Armenia and the region at large during George Bush administration. Based on the fact that declassified documents shed a light on a number of important political processes of early 90's, an attempt is made to take into consideration the newly emerging circumstances and combine those circumstances with the existing facts available from other sources. Another important component of the research are the interviews conducted by the author with key officials involved in foreign political processes of those times.

Keywords

US-Armenia relations, the establishment of diplomatic relations, recognition of the independence, Armenia, USA.

Introduction

In a professional discourse, there is an opinion that the West does not have particular interest in the South Caucasus and Central Asia regions, as these regions have traditionally considered as a zone of its

own influence by Russia.¹ Moreover, there is an opinion that, except for the Baltic states, the former USSR countries have been considered as the zone of Russian influence by the West itself.² There is, of course, a contrary argument that the United States has a clear interest in these regions, which are not vital, even though they are extremely important. That's why the United States has tried to get some influence after various occasions, such as the collapse of the USSR, the events of September 11, 2001 or after the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008.³ There is also an opinion that the US did not have a strategy the South Caucasus region in early 90's and there was no historical experience in terms of involvement in the region until the collapse of the USSR.⁴ Certainly, the United States could not pursue interests in the region during the years of the existence of the USSR or before the USSR was formed but that does not mean that the United States, as a superpower, did not want to have any influence or any engagement in the South Caucasus region. As for the absence of a strategy, that assertion, in the case of a formal approach, is solid, but at the same time it must be taken into consideration that the United States usually doesn't adopt a separate publicized strategy for any country or a region other than, let's say Afghanistan, which strategy was adopted in 2017 under President Donald Trump. There is also an opinion that the American strategists referred to the South Caucasus as an integral part of the broader region, such as the Caspian Basin, the Eurasia, and the Greater Middle East. This, of course, is a solid approach in the sense that, particularly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, American foreign policy has dramatically changed and security has become a major priority. It was then circulated as the term "CAMCA Region" (Central Asia, Mongolia, the Caucasus and Afghanistan),

¹ **Speck U.**, Europe must stand its ground against Russia, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2014/11/30/europe-must-stand-its-ground-against-russia/hvo4> Carnegie Europe November 2014 Issue.

² Ibid.

³ **Rumer E., Sokolsy R., Stronsky P.**, US Policy Toward the South Caucasus: Take Three, Carnegie Endowment 12, 2017. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/31/u.s.-policy-toward-south-caucasus-take-three-pub-70122> p. 15

⁴ **Gevoryan N.**, Armenian-American relations in the context of the US foreign policy priorities in the South Caucasus region 1991-2001, Yerevan, 2012

presented by US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in 2001. In November, Rumsfeld visited these states to find new allies for the United States in the war against global terrorism.⁵ At the same time, while studying American interests in the South Caucasus region, it can be noticed that the US policy towards Iran (if not using the term “strategy”) includes close cooperation with South Caucasian states and these countries could have an important role in isolation of Iran. The same can be said about the struggle against the spread of Russia's influence in the region, during which the South Caucasian states, particularly Georgia, had a great importance. As its main ally in the region, the US was interested in increasing Turkey's influence in the South Caucasus and that is why the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations and the opening of the borders had a crucial importance for the United States. Only in that case closed Armenian-Iranian border could have been a possibility for the United States. In a later stage, Azerbaijan also played an important role for the United States in terms of the US strategy towards Afghanistan.

The period immediately following the establishment of Armenian-American diplomatic relations was not an object for a deeper research and analyses due to number of reasons, and that is why it has not been possible to make a solid and substantiated analysis to find out what interests US had in Armenia and the region at large. One of the main reasons was the fact that the documents related to the activities of the State Department, the White House, the Pentagon, the CIA and other governmental agencies, have been declassified only in 2016-2018. The analysis of these documents spreads light on American foreign policy principles, approaches and priorities making significant adjustments in the assessments of the processes taking place. This research also attempts to restore a comprehensive picture of the processes that took place over the years following the establishment of the Armenian-American diplomatic relations based on the facts revealed after the disclosure and to evaluate the

⁵ Rumsfeld begins diplomatic tour, November 2001, www.edition.cnn.com/2001/europe/11/01/rumsfeld/russia/index.html

declassified documents and cables. This is especially important because the above mentioned clash of ideas has existed so far almost two decades after the establishment of diplomatic relations with the new independent states after the collapse of the USSR. At the same time, it is expedient to study the cases of those countries separately in the context of regional developments. This article will mostly concentrate on the Armenia's case.

The beginning

In the evening of December 25, 1991, when Americans are celebrated the Christmas, President George Bush, in his Christmass message announced: "The United States also recognizes the independence of Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan. All states that have made specific commitments to us. We will move quickly to establish diplomatic relations with these States, and build new ties to them. We will sponsor membership in the United Nations for those not already members.⁶ The collapse of the USSR was not a slow process, but in the US there was a perception that the country would go through reforms, not a collapse. Richard Kauzlarich, who was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in 1991-1993 at the Bureau of European Affairs and coordinated US relations with the former USSR states, recalls⁷ "First of all we did not expect that the Soviet Union would fall apart, I was in policy planning staff and statement, George Shultz was a Secretary of State and there was a great hope that with personalities like Gorbachev and Shevardnadze who, you know, represented a real break from a past that it would be possible for the Unites States and Soviet Union to kind of cooperate together on common problems and hopefully the United States could help on economic reforms of the Soviet system. I can beg on was the big reform person at the time and Shultz would go to Moscow, you

⁶ End of the Soviet Union; Text of Bush's Address to Nation on Gorbachev's Resignation www.nytimes.com/1991/12/26/world/end-soviet-union-text-bush-s-address-nation-gorbachev-s-resignation.html

⁷ Author's interview with Ambassador Kauzlarich, Washington DC, 2017

know in his heart he was an economist, even though he was a very effective Secretary State. He'd love to talk about these questions of economic reform, how could the Soviet Union move forward". The Bush Administration's national security strategy for 1991 was not released until August, but its main part was already finalized by February. It had several reasons. First of all, the events in the USSR were developing very rapidly, and for the national security strategy, that process had a crucial importance. Besides developments in the USSR there were also adequate processes in the countries of Warsaw Pact, as well as the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.⁸ In the text of the strategy it was mentioned that "New Era; The bitter struggle that divided the world for over two generations has come to an end. The collapse of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe means that the Cold War is over, its core issue resolved. We have entered a new era, one whose outline would have been unimaginable only three years ago."⁹ It was also mentioned that For over 40 years, the American grand strategy of containment has reflected an era of expanding Soviet power, Soviet aggression and Soviet Communism. We now find, however, that the Soviet Union is far more inwardly focused as it wrestles with its internal crises. We do not know what path the Soviet Union will ultimately take, but a return to the same superpower adversary we have faced for over 40 years is unlikely.¹⁰ It was Zbigniew Brzezinski, who wrote in his "Strategic Vision" that the peaceful end of the Cold War, marked by the collapse of the USSR, has become the last step of the United States to become the only global superpower".¹¹ S. Knott, in his "The Foreign Policy of George Bush" article mentions that «when the Cold War ended, the United States had to take on a large role as a world leader to guard against

⁸ **Snider D.**, The National Security Strategy: Document Strategic Vision, Second Edition, March 15, 1995 issue: U.S. Army Collage, Strategic Studies Institute <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Snider.pdf>

⁹ National Security Strategy of the United States 1991, <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1991.pdf> preamble.

¹⁰ National Security Strategy of the United States 1991, <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1991.pdf> p. 1

¹¹ **Bzhezinsky Z.**, Strategic Vision, 2013, New York, p. 7.

human rights abuses, defend democratic regimes, and lead humanitarian efforts¹². At the same time there were opposite view that the creation of the unipolar world is dangerous not only for the US but also for the world order¹³. However, two factors were likely to be decisive for the US administration to choose the first option. First, it seemed that there would be no serious obstacles for the implementation of this issue, as Russia, which faced serious problems as a result of the collapse of the USSR, had to concentrate on internal political processes, not on international relations, even in the former Soviet Union or neighboring regions¹⁴. At the same time, some prominent experts claimed that the states formed as a result of the collapse of the USSR will inevitably go after the establishment of democratic regimes¹⁵.

George Bush was the last president of US history who before having been elected had an experience in the foreign policy. He was a Vice President under Ronald Reagan for 8 years, before that he was the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, as well US permanent representative to the United Nations¹⁶. It was this experience that prompted Bush, for example, to be patient and wait for the end of coup attempt against Soviet leader Gorbachev, then to make relevant statements¹⁷. During the first US-USSR summit held in Malta, Bush asked Gorbachev what the USSR would look like in a few years and Gorbachev answered that even Jesus Christ does not know the answer¹⁸. According to the State Department's analytical report, "The

¹² **Torosyan T. and Vardanyan A.**, The South Caucasus Conflicts in the Context of Struggle for the Eurasian Heartland, *Geopolitics*, 2015, **20**, 3, 559-582.

¹³ Ibid..

¹⁴ See also

¹⁵ **Huntington S.**, the Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1991).

¹⁶ **Goldgeier J.**, George H.W. Bush: America's last foreign policy president, <http://theconversation.com/george-h-w-bush-americas-last-foreign-policy-president-77513>, The conversation journal, June 12, 2017

¹⁷ **Knott S.**, "The Foreign Policy of George Bush"

["https://millercenter.org/president/bush/foreign-affairs"](https://millercenter.org/president/bush/foreign-affairs)

Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia. "George H. W. Bush." December 20, 2018.

¹⁸ Short historical review and report of the US State Department <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short->

State Department was unable to follow the rapid changes in the Soviet Empire neither by a dialogue nor by analyzing the internal inner Soviet monitoring system. The State Department was essentially out of the "race" with the US National Security Council, which already advised the president on the US-USSR relations. State Secretary James Baker claimed that before the final division of Europe, the State Department had to announce the end of the Cold War¹⁹. The collapse of the USSR meant that the US could easily establish direct relations with the former Soviet Union states. It was obvious that Russia, which was the legal successor to the USSR, was economically, politically, socially discredited, and had a very limited opportunity to pursue its national interests, as well as regional interests, even in those countries which had been considered Russian influence zones since the Russian Empire. If the Russian Empire in 1905 was 23 million km², the USSR was 22.4 million km², then the Russian Federation - 17 million km². The post-soviet and soviet territories (states) were not accessible for any other country from the point of view of cooperating and establishing direct relations. The collapse of the USSR was a new opportunity both strategically and economically. The establishing of business relations and developing trade was very crucial. It was natural that many of these opportunities could be used, by the US, as the only superpower, as well as American business which was seeking new markets. The 15 newly independent states were not only the opportunity to form a new world order, but also huge markets, rich with natural resources and available to reach without negotiating with Moscow. After the dissolution of the USSR, there was no need for Moscow's consent to acquire Turkmen gas, Azeri oil or Kazakh mineral resources, and the newly independent states were more interested in selling their energy and natural resources to American or European companies. At the same time, the United States did not have to get agreement with Moscow to pursuit strategic interests towards Iran, Afghanistan or Iraq. In order to create military bases or other

history/bushi

¹⁹ Short historical review and report of the US State Department
<https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/bushi>

infrastructure in the former USSR states, Washington could just speak directly to Yerevan, Bishkek, Baku, Dushanbe and capitals of other sovereign states. Taking into consideration all these realities as well as Gorbachev's speech on the collapse of the USSR, President George Bush recognized the independence of a number of USSR states, including Armenia. Former US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Richard Kauzlarich in his article "The Time of Changes: The US policy in the Transcaucasus" mentions the following: "During this period, the United States became deeply involved in this area for the first time and helped to keep these states afloat and preserve their independence from Moscow because we attributed geostrategic importance to the area. We have maintained interest in the area's energy resources and sought to keep them out of the hands of Russia and Iran—and equally to get the energy to market in ways not dependent on Russia or Iran."²⁰

Establishment of diplomatic relations

As a result of the collapse of the USSR and the recognition of Armenia's independence it was necessary for the Republic of Armenia and the United States to sign and exchange official notes on the establishment of diplomatic relations. On January 7, 1992, a meeting with Armenian Foreign Minister Raffi Hovannisian and Secretary of State James Baker was held in the State Department during which the two countries exchanged notes on establishing diplomatic relations²¹. Armenia was the first country in the South Caucasus region that formally exchanged notes on diplomatic relations with the United States two weeks after the recognition of independence on January 7.

²⁰ **Kauzlarich R.**, Time for Change? U.S. Policy in the Transcaucasus, <https://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-Kauzlarich.pdf>, The Century Foundation, NY, 2001.

²¹ "Republic of Armenia", daily, January 17, 1992, issue 10 (355)

Relations with Georgia were established in 1992, March 24,²² and with Azerbaijan in 1992, February 19.²³

From the study of the archived documents declassified by the State Department, it becomes clear that the first Foreign Minister of Armenia, Raffi Hovhannisian, who was in the US for a Christmas Holidays, requested a meeting with Secretary James Baker. According to the report,²⁴ Hovhannisian wanted to take the next step in establishing diplomatic relations, formally exchange notes on diplomatic relations and discuss bilateral economic relations. R. Hovhannisian also wanted the US government to provide Armenia the status of “most favorable nation”, which provides more favorable trade conditions to one state from the other state. Hovhannisian asked 20 minutes for the meeting. The State Department agreed to hold a meeting and on January 7 at 2 pm the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and the State Secretary meet for the first time in the history and the meeting lasted 35 minutes. Alexander Arzumanyan, the representative of Armenia in North America assigned by the joint decision of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers, and Van Grigoryan who represented the Armenian Assembly of America, also participated in the meeting as members of delegation. Hovhannisian gave the reply letter from Armenian President Ter-Petrosian's by which Armenia agreed to establish formal diplomatic relations with the United States.²⁵ Besides the formal establishment of diplomatic relations, during the meeting, the James Baker raised a number of issues. First, James Baker asked Armenia to assist the US in opening an embassy in Yerevan. Then, in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the American side urges Armenia to make additional efforts for the establishment of peace through direct negotiations. Baker also said that in a few days humanitarian aid will be sent to Armenia, by

²² Official Website of the State Department, US-Georgia relations history; <https://history.state.gov/countries/georgia>

²³ Official Website of the State Department, US-Azerbaijan relations, history; <https://history.state.gov/countries/azerbaijan>

²⁴ The talking points at the State Department declassified cable- *U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604215*

²⁵ *Ibid*

American C-5 cargo planes. At the same time, the American side informed that they are aware that the President of Georgia Zviad Gamsakhurdia sheltered in Armenia the day before and asked Armenian delegation to provide more information on their future plans. During the meeting, James Baker suggested to regulate the Armenian-Turkish relations, informing that not having territorial claims against Ankara and making a statement on the recognition of the borders will be a serious step from the point of view of regulating relations with Turkey. Secretary of State noted that if the Armenian side raises a question of deploying peacekeepers in Artsakh, then the US position is that it is outdated and ineffective²⁶.

Thus, during the first official meeting the American side immediately raised the issue of regulation of the Armenian-Turkish relations, which continued to remain in the agenda of the US regional policy for all upcoming administrations. The regulation of the Armenian-Turkish relations meant opening the borders, which could help Armenia to have less dependence on Russia and Iran, to facilitate Armenia's external communications, in particular with the European states, and to give access to the sea. Actually in the US there was a perception that Russia would soon try to return to the status of a regional superpower. That was, of course, a matter of time, and that time was to be used effectively.

On January 9, the US State Department sends a more detailed cable²⁷ to US embassies in Yerevan, Ankara and Moscow, submitting the results of the meeting. From the declassified cable it becomes clear that the Secretary of State mentioned that Armenia should clarify its position regarding the Armenian-Turkish border. Hovhannisyan informed the Secretary that he is planning to visit Ankara soon. (The State Department informed embassies that Hovhannisyan is actually going to Istanbul, not Ankara), where he will clarify Armenia's position on the border. According to the document, Baker also expressed willingness to support the Armenian-Turkish negotiations,

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ U.S. Department of State, Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604531

if needed. In response, Hovhannisyán said that the Armenian government has never submitted any territorial claims to Turkey. Raffi Hovhannisyán also informed Baker that if Azerbaijan does not negotiate over Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia will ask the US to assist in the deployment of international peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. Hovhannisyán also expressed concern with the work of Radio Liberty's Armenian service, informing the Secretary that the activities of the radio station do not reflect the US government's position towards the Armenian government. State Secretary Baker replied that Radio Liberty is independent, but that does not mean that its activity should be contrary to the US policy towards the Armenian government and the consideration will definitely be addressed (by the way, the State Department informed the embassies that the Foreign Minister's concern has been transferred to Radio Liberty). Armenia was one of the countries where Radio Liberty had a large number of followers, mainly due to the lack of information and the lack of alternatives to news flows. Regarding the request about the plans on Zviad Gamsakhurdia, according to the US Central Intelligence Agency's report, Gamsakhurdia, after living in Armenia for a while, tried to recruit supporters and return to Georgia at the end of January but was not able, and moved to Chechen-Ingush Republic of Russia, where he remained until 1992, April 12.²⁸

Raffi Hovhannisyán remembers: "When I was appointed a Minister of foreign affairs, there was no mechanism to submit me a copy of a memorandum. I brought the templates of memorandums, diplomatic notes. However, I was also a beginner in practical diplomacy - it was my first diplomatic experience after graduating from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. And gradually building the Foreign Ministry with its deputy ministers, departments, heads of divisions, etc. First of all I tried to resolve the issue about the establishment of diplomatic relations. At the end of November, we were recognized first by Lithuania, then by Romania,

²⁸ DI IM-Post-Gamsakhurdia Georgia: The Crisis of Legitimacy, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005403091.pdf

and after the official collapse of the Soviet Union, on Christmas Day, December 25, 1991, there was President Bush Christmas message, which we watched with the whole family. It was a pride, because the president of America, the leader of the free world, recognizes the countries among which there was Armenia but not Azerbaijan. Of course, it opened the doors to the Western world. Armenia was newly independent, and Artsakh, after the huge losses, declared its independence. And we had a task to achieve the recognition of the Republic of Armenia by the international community and through it, also to pursue the interests of Artsakh. On March 2, we raised our flag in the UN headquarters in NY and Armenia became a member state of that organization, but the issue of Artsakh remained unsolved. And so, the government had adopted the approach that the issue, during a certain period of time, in appropriate conditions, it should be internationalized, and if necessary, at the “International Conference”. At that moment, we were thinking about the forum where Armenia had at least the right to veto. This forum was the OSCE and not the UN. So there was also the question of the peacemakers, but when the ceasefire signed and it was clear that Armenian and Artsakh together can protect the borders without the peacekeepers, which was more preferable. Because whoever came in as a peacekeeper, be it Russia or any other state, would use that presence for its own interests. We had the experience of that by "Koltso" operation and so on.”²⁹

About a month after the recognition of the independence of Armenia, on February 3rd, the US opened its embassy in Yerevan and Steven Mann was appointed as a Charge d'Affaires. He had been in office for about a month, until the new Chargé d'Affaires Thomas Price replaced him. And before US Charge d'Affaires Stephen Mann arrived in Armenia, US embassy's former employee in Moscow Richard Norland had been appointed US Charge d' Affaires to Armenia and held that position for two weeks³⁰. He worked only a

²⁹ Author's interview with former Foreign Minister of Armenia Raffi Hovannisian, Yerevan, 2017

³⁰ Official resume of the Ambassador Norland, <http://www.jcs.mil/Leadership/Article-View/Article/1019954/ambassador-richard-b-norland/>

few days in Yerevan. “I remember about Armenia from the days of earthquake, when a part of our embassy in Moscow we left for Armenia to participate in rescue operations. And they were told terrible stories about that time. I also remember the Sumgait events in 1988. It was a very difficult time. I also remember when we were in Yerevan, Jirayr Liparityan called and said that it could be necessary to evacuate the embassy in the case of emergency. The entire embassy was located on one floor of the hotel IN Yerevan.”³¹

The Soviet Union no longer existed *de jure* and *de facto*. This reality brought new political, economic, military challenges and a necessity of new approaches in the sphere of security. The United States and the European states wanted to have no violent process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and not to let the situation to go out of control. The only chance to avoid negative processes was to provide Russia and other newly independent states with the necessary support for the development. This was the only possible way for peaceful division not only the territory of the Soviet Union, but also the Soviet army, military property, including the nuclear arsenal, which for decades had been located in Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. Furthermore, in the newly independent states it was necessary to develop democracy and democratic institutions, as the lack of effective governance and the political vacuum, the formation of authoritarian regimes would be very possible like those in Arab states. For that purpose, a conference titled “International Humanitarian Assistance to the Former Soviet Union” were held in Washington DC, on January 22, 1992 to support Soviet states. The goal was to support the newly independent states with food, first aid and other assistance. The conference was attended by representatives from 47 states. In his opening remarks US President Bush, presenting the situation in the former USSR, touched upon Armenia, saying that³²

³¹ Author's interview with Richard Norland, Washington, 2017

³² Speech of the President available from here;

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=20522&st=central+asia&st1=>

And video version from here; <https://www.c-span.org/video/?23944-1/international-aid-former-soviet-union>

“In Armenia, a former prisoner of conscience, President Ter-Petrosyan, has led an extraordinary national effort to transform his country's economic system and liberate its people from political oppression.”³³

In the West it was correctly perceived reality that the processes taking place on the territory of the former USSR should be resolved as soon as possible, as if postponed, these challenges would lead to the deepening of the current socio-economic and political crisis, and every postponed day it would bring irreversible consequences for the people. Additional challenges were the problems of ethnic minorities, including peoples struggling for self-determination and minority rights. Guided by the need to act as quickly as possible, the US Government developed its relations with the former USSR republics, including the newly independent Armenia.

On February 11, 1992, Secretary of State James Baker paid a visit to Armenia as a part of his regional trip. This was the first ever visit of the highest-ranking US official to Armenia, and the next visit of such a level would only take place 18 years later when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Armenia in 2010. In Yerevan James Baker had a dinner with Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan. As the journalist Thomas Friedman, who was accompanying James Baker during his trip mentioned in the article published in the New York Times.³⁴ “In Yerevan, Mr. Baker had dinner with President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who told the Secretary that Azerbaijan, where Mr. Baker will be going Wednesday, has not yet met the criteria for United States diplomatic recognition because of its harsh treatment of the Armenian minority in Nagorno-Karabakh, a region of Azerbaijan populated by Armenians”. The American reader from Friedman's article not only learned about the details of the visit, but also gained information about the newly independent Armenia.

“In Armenia small crowds gathered at the airports to greet Mr. Baker, the first United States Secretary of State to visit this part of the

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Baker opens tour of the Caucasus, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/12/world/baker-opens-tour-of-the-caucasus.html>

world. Because most of the republics of Central Asia are not accustomed to accommodating a visiting American Secretary of State and his 50-person entourage, Mr. Baker's blue-and-white Boeing 707 is crammed with supplies. Crates of bottled drinking water are stacked in Mr. Baker's private cabin. A mobile phone link is being carried to each stop to bounce calls and faxes off orbiting satellites from republics without international phone lines. Food is stored in the hold, and staff and reporters are sleeping three to a room in Yerevan in the only building in town with enough heat."³⁵ The Armenian press also touched upon this historic visit. "On February 12, at 18:53 Boeing-707 American airplane landed at Zvartnots airport in Yerevan, and the US Secretary of State James Baker arrived in Armenia on a working visit from Moldova. Charge d'Affaires Steven Mann, Armenian Foreign Minister Raffi Hovhannisyán and other officials, welcomed the US Secretary of State at the airport. After greeting about forty journalists gathered, Mr. Baker moved to a government guesthouse where he was welcomed by the President of the Republic, Levon Ter-Petrosyan. A state dinner was served. After the dinner, Ter-Petrosyan and Baker gave a press conference for local and foreign journalists. James Baker assessed the meeting with Levon Ter-Petrosyan as an effective one. He said that they supported the efforts of Russia and Kazakhstan in the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh issue. Baker said that will also discuss the Karabakh issue in Baku. In the next morning the Secretary of State left for Baku on a working visit."³⁶ A part of the conversation during the dinner was declassified by the Department of State. Accordingly, President Ter-Petrosyan, Raffi Hovhannisyán, Babken Ararktsyan, Zhirayr Liparityán, Ashot Manucharyán and Ruben Shugaryán participated in the meeting. According to the cable all the reforms implemented in Armenia were a subject of a discussion. After that, Ter-Petrosyan stressed that Armenia considered Nagorno-Karabakh an internal Azerbaijani affair and Armenia would support any solution that satisfies the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. He

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ "Azg" daily, February 12, 1992, Issue No. 10 (102)

viewed positively the prospect of Russian/Kazakh mediation as well as peacekeeping forces. Secretary Baker stressed the need for both Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve this conflict peacefully so both can focus on the task of building their new states. He stressed that the US would support Russian and Kazakh mediation efforts as well as the CSCE rapporteur mission. On regional issues, Ter-Petrosyan saw benefits of good relations for Armenia with Turkey, Iran, and Azerbaijan and that these good relations would help to resolve Nagorno-Karabakh, also.”³⁷ During his visit to Yerevan, Secretary of State Baker visited the “Closed Market” on Mashtots Avenue. Alexander Arzumanyan remembers: “The whole visit lasted a couple of hours. Baker went to the “Closed Market”, saying: "What a good thing! This is the result of your privatization that you have such a rich market" and so on. It was a formality. In general, the reaction of Russians was checked at that time. The Russians were very weak making quite a few concessions. They thought they would start sharing the Caucasus between each other”.³⁸ Raffi Hovhannisian summarized the visit. “It's clear that I was trying to have my contribution due to the growing relationships which were created with Secretary Baker. During that period, official meetings with President Ter-Petrosyan and separately with me, as well as the visit to the “Closed Market” were very beneficial for Armenia”.³⁹

Since the US had an embassy in Armenia, there was an agreement that Armenia should also establish one of its first embassies in Washington DC. The Embassy of the Republic of Armenia opened in Washington in March 1992 and did not have a resident ambassador due to the limited financial resources. Taking into account the financial difficulties Armenia's political leadership decided that acting Ambassador to the United States in Washington DC should be appointed Alexander Arzumanyan who was a permanent

³⁷ Department of State Case No. F-2unnaN-na:AlTh Date:07/22/2016 C17604519.pdf
www.state.gov

³⁸ Author's interview with the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia A.Arzumanyan in Yerevan in 2017

³⁹ Author's interview with the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia R.Hovhannisian in Yerevan in 2017

representative of Armenia to the UN. This was not very common thing in diplomatic practice. Alexander Arzumanyan remembers: "It was a difficult situation. We had no building in New York. We were having our office in our Primacy on the East 34th Street. It was very convenient there, near the UN headquarters. From the very beginning, I was a Permanent Representative to the UN. Levon Ter-Petrosyan said, "I want to appoint you as an Ambassador to DC". I did not want it. I was told by the State Department, "You have an ambassador diplomatic rank. Let's write you an ambassador, give an accreditation, because it's not nice to give you a "chargé" card with "Ambassador" written in it. I said no, it's a temporary thing. We have another person to come". Ruben Shougarian was a the candidate, we thought about it. After all, I should decide which of the two I would choose. Permanent representative to the UN or ambassador to the US. But the UN was more interesting to me, there was much to do in the United Nations because Azerbaijan was already getting very active. At that time I was visiting Washington DC at least once a week. I had an employee there. Then we settled some of the consular services. We shared the floor with the Armenian Assembly of America. We had a separate entrance, but the entire staff of the Assembly were helping us. In Washington, I chose the building of our embassy, and I was present at the opening ceremony. When we chose a building of our mission to the UN in New York, Gevorg Hovnanian bought it for us. His brother Hrayr Hovnanian was also present at the opening ceremony. He felt very bad. He said, "How did it happen that I did not participate?" We said, "You can help us to buy a building in Washington." He said, "Find a building!"⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Author's interview with the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia A.Arzumanyan in Yerevan in 2017

Section 907 in the Context of Armenian-American Relations and US Regional Interest

In August 1992, the US Congress adopted the “Freedom Support Act” (Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992), which was foreseen to support Russia and other newly independent countries to form a democratic governance and liberal economy. The Act was a package of actions that the US authorities should have done, taking into consideration the new political realities created after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was a comprehensive legal act and foresaw consistent work in all directions. The necessity to adopt it was also conditioned by the fact that in the previous fiscal year, for the year of 1992, no assistance was provided to the newly independent states of the USSR, as the USSR existed at that time and such funding could not have been foreseen. During those years Armenian lobbying organizations in the United States were quite active and influential. Taking into consideration the military aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh and due to the work of the Armenian community and lobbyists, in the text of the “Freedom Support Act” the section 907 was initiated⁴¹ prohibiting the US government to provide any assistance to Azerbaijan mentioning that “United States assistance under this or any other Act (other than assistance under title V of this Act) may not be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Senator John Kerry (D) (MA) was the co-sponsor of the section 907.⁴² It was adopted with 14/4 votes. From the moment that President Bush signed it into law it became an obstacle for the Azerbaijan-US relations, remaining in force for nearly 10 years. It

⁴¹ The full text is available from here; <https://www.congress.gov/bill/102nd-congress/senate-bill/2532/text>

⁴² The Co-sponsor information available from here; <https://www.congress.gov/amendment/102nd-congress/senate-amendment/2686/text>

turned out that during those years Azerbaijan was the only CIS country that could not get direct support from the US government. Many attempts by diplomats or lobbyists were carried out, but Armenian lobbyists succeeded in leaving the section in force. The President did not have any right to waive the section. Later, Ambassador Armitage remembered that the administration was against this resolution and because of it there was a lot of discussions over mitigating the textual formulations. However, the resolution was adopted.⁴³ Alexander Arzumanyan remembers: "The Armenian Assembly of America has done a great deal of work for the adoption of the section 907. We have always been in touch. There was no such case when I would say about it in the House of Representatives or in the Senate during an official talks, but for example, at the receptions, we said that we find it a good contribution for the stabilization of the situation, and the section will hamper the appetite of Azerbaijan. That is how we showed that our state is interested in the section".⁴⁴ In spite of the fact that the Congress had already passed the law with those formulations, there was another opinion in the executive body. Ambassador Richard Kauzlarich recalls: "Oh, we were angry. All desiries always blame Kerry for everything, so whether he gets full credit, but, look, Biden was involved. So yes it's nice to blame Kerry, but there was... In short hand it was called the Armenian lobby on how it was very effective and at that time I had no idea that I would end up being based in Azerbaijan, but we were very worried that this was going to undercut our ability to influence where Elchibey and than later Heydar Aliyev was going, because as they did successfully, convince the Azerbaijani people that this was unfair, they would be discriminated against and I think a lot of us in the State Department we understand political realities but just didn't go down well in order

⁴³ Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, May 20, 2004 □ International Relations Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division the Former Soviet Union and U.S. Foreign Assistance in 1992: The Role of the Congress https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20040520_RL32410_23e493efaa2c03d6229406332f0480d5213f4c53.pdf

⁴⁴ Author's interview with the acting Charge d'Affairs in the United States, Alexander Arzumanyan, March 7, 2016, Yerevan

to get this package passed, and you know the real target was Russia and Ukraine getting emergency assistance there, that the price of that had to be section 907.”⁴⁵

Section 907 essentially hindered normal development of US-Azerbaijan relations in economic, political and military spheres. It was an unique legal act that dictated a political agenda for the US bilateral relations with Azerbaijan. Section 907 remained in effect for about 10 years. Despite the prohibition the American side was able to send some humanitarian aid to Azerbaijan. In particular, Azerbaijan was provided with assistance through humanitarian NGOs, mainly to support refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh.⁴⁶ However, the US could not provide direct financial aid or assistance to Baku, which could not have serious leverage on that country and Azerbaijan's dependence on the US was limited.

Conclusion

In the first years following the collapse of the USSR, the United States had clear interests in the region. This is evidenced by the Bush administration's active involvement in regional processes and declassified official documents and cables. In particular, the study of these documents shows that the United States highlighted both the rapid settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and the establishment of the Armenian-Turkish relations and the opening of the borders. The US clearly realized that for having an effective influence in the region there must not be unregulated conflicts. Accordingly, the United States encouraged Armenia to use its influence over the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to stop hostilities and start negotiations. The documents also prove that Washington has

⁴⁵ Author's interview with Ambassador Kauzlarich, Washington, 2017

⁴⁶ **Curt Tarnoff**, Specialist in Foreign Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division U.S. Assistance to the former Soviet Union 1991-2001: A History of Administration and Congressional Action CRS Report for Congress, U.S. Assistance to the Former Soviet Union 1991-2001: A History of Administration and Congressional Action, January 15, 2002, Congressional Research Service the Library of Congress <http://congressionalresearch.com/RL30148/document.php>

played a role of a "secret" negotiator to regulate the Armenian-Turkish relations, trying to settle Yerevan-Ankara contact. The examination of declassified documents allows us to conclude that Washington gave an importance for the involvement in the South Caucasus region, during that period of time. The unprecedented financial support provided to the newly independent states had humanitarian approach as well possible tool for gaining influence. The main aim of the activity of the US in the region was to spread its influence as quick as possible, until Russia was in a difficult economic situation and could not fully serve its foreign policy in the South Caucasus region and the former USSR. The United States was trying to be as active as possible and involved as much as possible in the South Caucasus. That is the reason why diplomatic relations were established soon after the recognition of Armenia's independence, and a State Secretary Baker arrived in the South Caucasus capitals for a regional visit. The United States was trying to play an active role in resolving regional conflicts and problems, realizing that their unregulated condition is a serious opportunity for the restoration of Russian influence. This was conditioned by US active involvement and active support to the negotiation process in the OSCE Minsk Group. This was what State Secretary Baker pointed out during separate meetings with President Ter-Petrosyan and Foreign Minister Hovhannisyan.

The next important direction was the activation in the process of regulation of Armenian-Turkish relations. The regulation of the Armenian-Turkish relations was one of the most important priorities of Bush's and later also Clinton's administration in the region, and it was viewed as an additional opportunity to reduce Russia's influence. Turkey as a NATO member state and a strategic ally for the United States could have been useful to Washington in that regard. The Armenian-Turkish open border would give Yerevan more independence from Moscow and would be an exceptional opportunity for economic development. However, the Turkish side directly linked the Armenian-Turkish relations with the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, which more restricted Washington's opportunities for spreading

influence in the South Caucasus. Finally, resolving regional issues and expanding presence in the region, the United States could have acted more effectively in bringing Iran to international isolation.

In the context of bilateral relations, the volumes of unprecedented support provided by the United States were important, which grew year by year. Of course, the Armenian lobbying organizations had a serious impact here, but it should be taken into account that the Armenian lobbyists and US state interests coincided in this respect. By 1994, Armenia has received about half a billion dollar support from the US. At the same time, Armenia appeared in the focus of US political elites for a number of reasons. First of all, the fight for independence was considered a national liberation struggle against the USSR dictatorial regime, besides, after the earthquake of December 7, 1988, US acting Vice President Bush personally made a great contribution to Armenia in the earthquake-affected country. He even sent his son to Armenia to distribute American aid. These years have especially been marked by the unprecedented American assistance to Armenia and from the point of view of the United States' unique involvement in the region. The US viewed the collapse of the USSR as new opportunities but at the same time also as challenges. The countries of the South Caucasus were also viewed as Iran's neighbors, and in this respect it was also important for deepening bilateral relations in all directions. Finally, the United States had a great need of success stories, which would give a wider opportunity to spread the impact, in the case of specific examples. In this respect the first 2-3 years after the collapse of the USSR can be considered as the most active period of Armenian-American relations.