

Turkish Foreign Policy in Nagorno-Karabakh: The influence of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine.

An exploration of Turkish-Azerbaijani Ties

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1. List of Abbreviations

EU	European Union
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OTS	Organisation of Turkic States
US	United States

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3. Introduction

1. Problem Statement

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, causing catastrophic damage and loss of life, has significantly impacted the European continent. However, not enough attention is being paid to the similarities it shares with a significant European war that preceded it—the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War—and the ongoing skirmishes amidst the peace process. The tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan triggered the intervention of some regional powers, causing the involvement of actors such as the European Union (EU), the Russian Federation (Russia), and Türkiye, thus affecting the larger power dynamic of Europe, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. It also served as a blueprint for certain military developments, now infamous in the Ukraine war, such as the use of drones, with a special mention to the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones. Given these affinities, it seems highly pertinent to analyse and assess the power dynamics in Nagorno Karabakh by comparing it with the ongoing war in Ukraine.

However, to do so meaningfully, the research scope must be more focused. Such as researching the military aspect, focusing on drones, or utilizing a singular theoretical framework to analyse multiple actors in a short, delineated time frame. Although these methods could produce salient results, this paper chooses to focus on one specific actor, Türkiye, because of its proven influence in both the Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh wars and its recently more independent, understudied foreign policy approach. Türkiye has been a critical mediator in the Ukraine war as it has been able to close crucial agricultural products shipment deals between the warring parties of Russia and Ukraine, which ended once Russia retreated from the deal in July 2023 (Wintour, 2023) by using its position as a Western power that is allied to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while also maintaining close relations with Russia. Thus, seeing how the War affected its policies toward the conflict might shed light on how impactful it was in other regions.

Additionally, Türkiye is a valuable study subject because of its close ties to Azerbaijan and its strained ties with Armenia. It has unmistakable interests in the region, which include closer regional cooperation, energy transportation, and stability (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022a). Though Türkiye's involvement in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War is widely accepted, there are ongoing academic and political debates about what this involvement looked like and why it happened the way it did, and at that specific time. This paper chooses to further narrow the research by focusing on Türkiye's position regarding Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, which was possibly affected due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Azerbaijan is Türkiye's most prominent regional ally and has benefited substantially from increased Turkish interest and involvement in the Caucasus (Mikail et al., 2019). Finally, Azerbaijan also has significantly increased in importance for the EU due to the gas crisis set on by the Ukraine War, and it now serves as a vital energy-and-transport hub for gas coming from the Caucasus and Central Asia. This paper chooses Türkiye and Azerbaijan because of their significance in the conflict, their respective ties, and their importance to the EU.

2. Research Question

Given limited research and understanding of both Türkiye's foreign policy objectives in the South Caucasus and an academic gap on the effect of the Ukraine war on Türkiye and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the research question ensues: How did the War in Ukraine Affect Türkiye's Position towards Azerbaijan regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict?

This study endeavours to fill an essential gap in academic discourses on Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and their increasingly influential presence in the region. Because of the lack of knowledge, research and the topic's complex nature, a qualitative case study seems best suited to answer this question, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding. The paper employs a foreign policy analysis method to analyse potential changes in Turkish policy concerning Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh that might have ensued since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. More specifically, focusing on geopolitical considerations based on a neorealist understanding of power division. Summarily, this research focuses on the understudied relations in the South Caucasus region after the War in Ukraine, which has altered the status quo of the whole Eurasia region. While also highlighting Türkiye's increasingly important regional role and novel foreign policy approach.

This paper begins by reviewing the relevant literature to see what is known and what methods and concepts are prevalent. The neorealism theory is part of and builds on foreign policy studies. Secondly, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks discuss the international system level and relevant concepts such as neorealism and identity, together with introducing the two hypotheses. The following section discusses the research design, outlining the data collection method, and the method of analysis. The paper shall analyse the data using qualitative content analysis to analyse official statements, arms deals, and trade data. Afterwards, the paper will analyse the data according to the methods and operationalisations mentioned in the theoretical framework, aiming to acquire qualitative results and test the hypotheses. This research concludes with a discussion, answering the hypotheses, acknowledging research limitations, and recommending future research.

4. Literature Review

Understanding the type of system that states such as Türkiye operate in is essential for analysing Türkiye's foreign policy in Nagorno-Karabakh and how it was affected by the war in Ukraine. This paper applies the Neorealist school of thought for its pragmatic view of events and its disregard for non-interests based explanations or justifications for actions. State actors make decisions and act based on calculating power dynamics. This interpretation may offer some rather bleak insights, but they are essential in understanding unique actions that cannot be explained by other schools of thought (Waltz, 1995). Nevertheless, it does have certain shortcomings, as critiqued by Telbami (2002), who claims that the theory is too dismissive of internal factors that do not fit the inter-state perspective. This paper still opts for this theory instead of other theories such as neoliberalism because it can rationalize actions such as alliance-forming and membership in international relations as part of its desire to further national goals.

Neorealism has multiple foundational authors and concepts, but for the sake of brevity, this paper will focus on those pertaining to the subject of analysis. Kenneth Waltz (1995) popularised the

concept of the balance of power between states and actors, serving as the backbone to further additions such as “balancing” and “bandwagoning”, in accordance with one's position and aims in said balance of power. Another core tenet is the anarchical nature of international relations, meaning that there is a “world-police force” that can save states or intervene on behalf of international law (Powell, 1994). States, which are seen as the main actors in neorealism (Waltz, 1995), must thus operate in a world where there is no global referee and where everyone is playing a balancing act with each other in order to improve their own positions (Lake, 1996).

Scholars have applied these principles in case studies, including research on Türkiye's bilateral relations since 2016 (Yilmaz, 2021), where we see that Türkiye foreign policy is relatively categorical of defensive neorealist approach, indicating that security issues are paramount to foreign policy decision making. This is further evident in its policies in Syria, where due to instability, Türkiye decided to intervene militarily to contain the attacks on its territory stemming from Syria (Khan, 2018; Oztig, 2019). Similar applications of neorealism have aided in understanding Türkiye's main ally in the South Caucasus, namely Azerbaijan (Mammadov, 2022). Here, we again see that security concerns and power distribution are paramount to a state's foreign policy considerations.

1. The Reframing of Türkiye in International Relations

Türkiye has been steadily increasing its presence on the world stage, and its current foreign policy indicates an increasing desire for independent action and decision-making (Haugom, 2019), motivating a redefining and reorientation of its self-perception and relational position in the world order. There is much interest in the Neo-Ottomanist aspects of Erdogan's foreign policy (Wastnidge, 2019; Ergin & Karakaya, 2017), whereby Türkiye aspires to claim a regional leadership role, reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire. However, we also see a rise of interest in Neo-Eurasianism, often encouraged by Türkiye shifting its foreign policy away from the West, as explored by Hoffmann (2019), who views Neo-Ottomanism and Neo-Eurasianism operating in tandem in a more significant pivot away from Europe. Nonetheless, they both agree on Türkiye's foreign policy shift, which may help to explain its actions in the Eurasian region, such as during the Nagorno-Karabakh war, where it acted independently from the West, in this instance, NATO.

Türkiye has also undergone a significant shift in its international outlook; it went from a relatively isolationist republic under its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and subsequent presidents to a regional power flexing its military and diplomatic muscles in the region (Kesgin, 2019). This evolution is evidenced by the republic's hard and soft power actions and ambitions.

2. Soft Power

Soft power is understood here as the ability to influence others' preferences, perceptions and, thus, actions by non-military means (Nye, 2021). As Oğuzlu (2007) argued, Türkiye has been steadily trying to increase its soft power throughout its neighbourhood, especially in the Middle East, Balkans, Caucasus, and Central Asia. However, according to (Çevik, 2019), Türkiye's democratic backsliding has led it past its peak, losing its soft power appeal, especially towards Western Europe.

For example, Turkish schools and lyceums have fulfilled a vital niche in the Balkans and Central Asia, serving as high-quality educational facilities and offering Turkish language classes. However, these are subject to internal power struggles within Türkiye, which has led to some of them being permanently or temporarily closed (Balci, 2003; Rašidagić & Hesová, 2020; Pannier, 2016). The Turkish movie and series industries have also flourished in recent years, with international viewership steadily increasing, reaching countries as diverse as Peru, Bulgaria, and Saudi Arabia. (Kantarci, Basaran, & Özyurt, 2016; Bilgin, Demir, & Labaš, 2016; Tali, 2016). More recently, interventions in Syria and Libya and the role of arms exports convey that hard power is still a prominent foreign policy tool.

3. Hard Power

Türkiye practised a relatively inactive international military intervention policy before the 2000s, with some notable exceptions such as the intervention in Cyprus in 1974 (Camp, 1980). Nevertheless, more recently, multiple military incursions have occurred into its southern neighbours, Iraq and Syria (Kösebalaban, 2020; Kutlay & Öniş, 2021). Additionally, Türkiye decided to militarily intervene in the second Libyan civil war on behalf of the UN-backed Government of National Accord, saving the Tripoli-based government from attacks from the Tobruk-based government headed by General Khalifa Haftar (Quamar, 2020). Finally, in the build-up to the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, Türkiye took an active role in training Azerbaijani troops, supplying the army and reconnaissance. In recent years, it seems that Türkiye has embraced hard power as a tool to achieve its foreign policy objectives. This, combined with an increase in soft power, has partly contributed to Türkiye's relatively more independent foreign policy as it has more space to manoeuvre than it had before.

4. Turkish-Azerbaijani ties

Türkiye and Azerbaijan are both parts of what some consider the larger Pan-Turkic world (Hyman, 1997), together with the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and other Turkic peoples. These states share ethno-linguistic ties, which motivated some to try and unify these regions and peoples into a union of Turkic states (Levent, 2016). However, this vision did not materialise due in part to the incorporation of a majority of the states into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. When the Soviet Union fell, the prospects of a political union or closer ties seemed feasible again. Although this philosophy is not the primary motivator of Turkish foreign policy, it helps to demystify the nature of its current bonds and alliance with Azerbaijan.

Both states have recently endorsed Turanism, a Pan-Turkic nationalist ideology which emphasises the Turkic republics and peoples' historical and linguistic ties. This ideology aspires to unify all Turkic peoples, both in each of these independent republics, as well as the Turkic peoples living in Russia and elsewhere, such as the diverse group of Tatars, depending on interpretation (Hyman, 1997).

However, Turkish-Azerbaijani ties are more profound than regular Turanist sympathies. A large segment of both countries claims that they are "1 nation, 2 states", eluding that the ties of the two peoples traverse current borders (Subasi, 28AD). Nevertheless, these claims of common bonds and ties do not align with the neorealist theory, where individual self-interests are definitive factors in

making political decisions and, thus, foreign policy (Waltz, 1990). With this perspective, the focus on a shared history, culture and language seems to be a method of furthering cooperation, with the primary goal being economic and strategic gain. Both republics benefit from their alliance in the region, as their security and economic interests align concerning energy corridors and perceived threats from Russia and Iran, and their mutual bad ties with Armenia (Yesevi & Tiftikçigil, 2015; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022a). So, these serve as justifications for furthering their respective interests rather than a true ideological goal. This lens may then help us understand the purpose of such rhetoric.

5. Türkiye's Aims in the South Caucasus

Azerbaijan is part of the larger Pan-Turkic group (Hyman, 1997) and is of interest to Türkiye given these ties and its strategic importance in the Caucasus. The special interests of Turkish foreign policy accord with both the shared ties interpretation and the realist politics interpretation. Recently, this shared view of each other as 'one nation, two states' has gained prominence with both states' public opinion and governments, elaborated further in the analysis. When considering the scale of Turkish involvement, we see it was mostly via armament supplies (Keddie, 2020). However, there are allegations of further Turkish involvement in transporting Syrian rebels to the front, claims that Türkiye has denied (Kucera, 2020).

Türkiye's main aims in the South Caucasus are to maintain stability between the republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan under a favourable umbrella while promoting regional cooperation (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022b). It aims to increase its influence through regional partnerships while balancing other regional powers such as Iran and Russia. Additionally, as part of its energy diversification policy, Türkiye seeks to create gas routes that connect Azerbaijani or Central Asian gas to Türkiye and Europe, thus becoming a regional energy hub. Another more concrete aim of Türkiye that pertains directly to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a direct transport route to Azerbaijan, running through Armenia to connect the Azerbaijani mainland and its exclave of Nakhchivan and Türkiye. This connection would allow for a more secure logistical connection, as the current routes pass through Georgia and Iran due to political issues with Armenia. This so-called Zangezur corridor was part of the peace deal made after the ceasefire of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war. However, there has been resistance from the Armenian side as they disagree with the corridor's legitimacy and how it would operate (Sofuoglu, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023).

Furthermore, the South Caucasus is a crucial connecting point to Central Asia, where Turkish ambitions have steadily increased in recent years. The main obstacle is the inability to reach these markets without having to pass through regional allies such as Iran and Russia, thus making a direct connection ever more crucial (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022c; Erşen & Çelikpala, 2019). Finally, Türkiye's defence industry has grown considerably and seeks to expand its clientele (Mehmetcik & Çelik, 2021). The sales of its Bayraktar TB2 drones, which have become infamous after the Ukrainian-made song about them (Kronika24.pl, 2022), had already increased significantly after their use by the Azerbaijani armed forces in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war (Kinik & Celik, 2021).

6. The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

This conflict's roots date back to the Soviet period when the current borders were drawn, contributing to a dispute surrounding the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, both before and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These unresolved territorial disputes instigated the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, wherein Azerbaijan and Armenia fought to control Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions. The war resulted in Azerbaijan reconquering the surrounding provinces that Armenia had taken in the first war and some parts of Nagorno-Karabakh. It is worth noting that all the territory taken during the first war continued to be internationally recognized Azerbaijani territory, regardless of the ethnic makeup of the region (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023).

Subsequently, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan has also acknowledged Azerbaijani territorial integrity, hoping to secure a certain degree of autonomy for the ethnic Armenians who live in the region (Avedian, 2022). Azerbaijan's President Aliyev, on the other hand, has stated that he would not discuss internal matters as part of a peace deal (AzeMedia, 2022), so the dispute is still ongoing. Since the end of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, there have been multiple skirmishes and cross-border raids, as well as a blockade of the Lachin corridor, the only road between Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, by so-called Azerbaijani eco-activists (Aghayev & Aghayev, 2023).

Türkiye's position follows Azerbaijan and international law in asserting that Armenia occupied internationally recognized Azerbaijani territory and that Azerbaijan had the right to seize control through military intervention. Military measures were implemented only after a more than two decades-long failure to reach a diplomatic settlement. Currently, multiple peace talks are taking place with organizations and mediating states, including those led by the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, Russian-president Vladimir Putin, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operations in Europe (OSCE) MINSK group talks. However, as of writing, there has not yet been an outcome from any of these talks (International Crisis Group, 2023).

5. Theoretical Framework

To address the research question: "How did the War in Ukraine Affect Türkiye's Position towards Azerbaijan Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh?" foreign policy analysis offers three analytical levels of analysis. These are the international system level, the state level, and the individual level (Hudson & Vore, 1995; Holsti, 1989; Hudson, 2005). Nonetheless, only the international system level will be discussed and expanded upon for focus and brevity. The paper could have also integrated the state and individual level, focusing on a state's perception of oneself and individual leader's perceptions and motivations, to this analysis, but opted not to do so for brevity.

Additionally, the conceptual framework utilises concepts such as regional hegemony, balancing and identity to further aid the paper in answering the research question. Finally, this part concludes with two hypotheses based on concepts expanded upon in the theoretical and conceptual framework.

1. International System Level

Foreign policy studies answer questions about why states do or do not enact certain foreign policy behaviours. It does so by utilizing three levels of analysis and focus. The highest one is the international system level which consists of multiple parts. However, given the scope, this paper only elaborates on aspects that overlap with the theory of neorealism, excluding considerations such as the role of international institutions and norms and the role of other international actors, such as non-state actors. Nonetheless, it is necessary to note that there is no consensus on the utility or validity of neorealism in foreign policy analyses, as some argue that it too strongly disregards internal factors (Telbami, 2002).

Additional aspects that overlap with the school of neorealism include the balance of power, the distribution of resources, and the nature of the system. Further, the current geopolitical makeup of the South Caucasus is relevant as regional state actors exemplify these theories and concepts.

2. Nature of System

All states operate within a larger international system; thus, it follows that the rules and characteristics of the system affect state behaviour. According to neorealism, our current system has an anarchical nature, as explained in the literature review (Powell, 1994). However, an aspect worth mentioning is whether a system is unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar in its makeup. Moreover, it is crucial to regionally and internationally assess the nature of its polarity. (Mansfield, 1993). Internationally, the United States (US) and China might be the strongest actors, but when it comes to the South Caucasus, actors like the EU and Russia might be more relevant. Implementing this logic to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict hints at the multipolar nature of this evolving system. Even though the region has in recent history been under Russian and Soviet control, in the past decades following independence, there has been a steady increase in other actors' activities and overall presence (Broers, 2021).

These are the EU, the US, Iran, Türkiye, and to a certain extent, the People's Republic of China. These states allow the three South Caucasus republics more leverage in their interactions with Russia due to the variety of possible actors to cooperate with (Semercioğlu, 2021). Importantly, Russia is still the strongest actor within this regional multipolar dynamic, as evidenced by its invasion of Georgia in 2008 and its more recent role as a mediator and peacekeeping force after the end of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (Abushov, 2009; Lewis, 2022). Meanwhile, Türkiye occupies the place of a forthcoming challenger to Russian hegemony but is not yet capable of taking over the role of hegemon (Hayrapetyan, 2022; Jovic-Lazic, 2022).

3. Distribution of Resources

Secondly, the distribution of resources, including natural resources but also people and land, is a decisive factor influencing how states behave towards each other as they seek to maximize their economic potential. It is also generally easier to support a larger population on a more extensive

territory if the climate allows for agricultural production, thus increasing labour productivity (Dannreuther, 2013). Finally, natural resources are a source of income that can allow states to increase their revenue and thus increase their defence spending (Billon, 2001).

Historically Türkiye's relative population to the South Caucasus republics has been favourable when viewed separately. The same goes for Azerbaijan compared to Armenia. However, Armenia and Azerbaijan were part of the larger Soviet Union, which eclipsed the Turkish population. Land-wise, Azerbaijan's internationally recognized borders are more extensive than those of Armenia. Nonetheless, the most decisive factor is the resources. Azerbaijan utilized its natural gas reserves to increase military spending following the First Nagorno-Karabakh War in the Nineties, which allowed its armies to be better equipped than the Armenians during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. Moreover, concerning the Ukraine War, due to the EU's decision to divert from Russian natural gas, Azerbaijan has become an attractive trading partner and alternative source. Evidently, natural resources can be vital in securing favourable alliances that can be decisive in a war's outcome, both militarily and politically (Lambert et al., 2022; Al Jazeera, 2022; Ibrahimov & Öztarsu, 2022).

4. Balance of Power

Finally, the international system level argues that the specific balance of power within a region or the wider world can influence a state's foreign policy behaviour. Suppose a state perceives itself as relatively weaker than the other state and its allies. In that case, it will be more careful in its foreign policy actions to avoid creating an environment where tensions rise, and the stronger side can confront the weaker side. Thus, it becomes more likely to be accommodating to other states and their wishes not to upset them (Haas, 1953). The same applies in reverse; when the balance of power favours a state (and its allies), it will feel more emboldened to act upon its wishes and enforce agreements or trade/peace deals that favour them (Parent & Rosato, 2015).

Russia was also the unquestioned regional hegemon until a consortium of actors tried to establish a presence there. However, recently Türkiye has managed to challenge its absolute dominance, together with the EU and the US, it seems that the South Caucasus, for the first time in a while, may enjoy a balance of power that does not benefit the Russian Federation as much (Broers, 2021).

6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework serves to more efficiently visualize how some concepts mentioned above relate to the Ukraine War's effects on Türkiye's foreign policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The first concept is identity, which refers to how the Turkish state regards itself and its role on the world stage, especially in the South Caucasus. One popular concept in both academia and outside is that of Neo-Ottomanism, which claims that Türkiye nostalgically looks back on its imperial Ottoman past as a kind of golden era where it played a more prominent role on the world stage (Yavuz, 1998). This view has garnered criticism from researchers such as Wastnidge (2019), who claim this is an oversimplification. Another important identity-related concept is Turanism, which, as mentioned

earlier, has risen to prominence in domestic and foreign policy popularity, not unlike Neo-Ottomanism (Fidan, 2010; Mamo, 2021; Köstem, 2016).

These identities are both expansionist in nature, especially concerning the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan is considered Türkiye's principal "Turkic brother" and is a former Ottoman Empire province. However, it is vital to relativize this by stating that these identities are not necessarily the most prominent foreign policy drivers, as Türkiye usually opts for a more pragmatic foreign policy approach (Basbugoglu & Korkut, 2023; Kubicek, 2022). Nevertheless, they might help explain why Türkiye would feel entitled to intervene more proactively in the region and understand why it sees itself as a legitimate regional hegemon and power broker.

Secondly, the concept of regional hegemony complements the discussion on identity as it might help understand why Türkiye would want a regional hegemony in the South Caucasus. Regional hegemony describes a state's abilities or desires to influence a region or part of a region (Cox, 1983). However, according to neorealism, any state logically should want to expand its influence as much as possible (Waltz, 1995). Thus, there needs to be some caution when applying the concept of regional hegemony so as not to be too one-sided in viewing Türkiye's perceived desire to shape and influence the South Caucasus as a so-called proof of its expansionist sentiment. Instead, it is another manifestation of the theory of neorealism, situated in the South Caucasus region.

Lastly, the concept of balancing, discussed in the literature review, applies to Türkiye's more considerable rivalry with Russia, which encompasses countries and regions such as Libya, Syria, and the South Caucasus. Historically, Russia was the undisputed regional hegemon in the South Caucasus, leaving Türkiye no option but to balance, meaning to ally with another power to level the playing field (Balci, 2014). However, recently Türkiye has been able to manoeuvre through the US-Russia rivalry by enacting a more independent regional policy (Haugom, 2019), which means that Türkiye continues to balance Russia regionally, but not by siding with its traditional allies, but rather by increasing its standing in the region.

1. Hypotheses

Hypotheses aid in answering and clarifying certain aspects of the paper while also contributing in the analysis. They thus serve as tentative answers to the research question. This paper opts for the following two hypotheses because of their pertinence to both the topic and the field of study in general.

- 1) Türkiye's pragmatic neorealist foreign policy outlook suffices in explaining its policy towards Azerbaijan in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.
- 2) Türkiye's view of itself as a regional power and brother nation of Azerbaijan led it to intervene on the side of Azerbaijan in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

7. Methodology

This study decided to employ a qualitative and comparative case study research approach to analyse the impact the War in Ukraine has potentially had on Türkiye's foreign policy towards Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It did so because it best suited the aims of the research, aiding in answering both the research question and the hypotheses, as will become clear in this section.

1. Research Design

The paper chose for a comparative case study analysis, where it focused on two time periods. This was done so because it offered a nuanced analysis of possible changes and continuities that happened within that time frame. These were accompanied by a comprehensive contextualisation, on top of the overview already provided in previous parts of the paper.

The analytical framework served as a theoretical foundation that guided the analysis, shedding light on power dynamics and security considerations that underlie Türkiye's foreign policy towards Azerbaijan. It was accompanied by the conceptual framework which consisted of tools from the foreign policy toolbox, both aiding in interpreting any possible shift in foreign policy. The main body of the framework is thus composed of neorealist aspects within the international system level. Which is then complemented by the concepts of identity, regional hegemony, and balancing.

Additionally, two hypotheses were tested through a comparative analysis: both asserting what possibly influenced any potential shift in Türkiye's foreign policy. The first is a pragmatic neorealist assessment of the situation and the second a perceived identity of having a legitimate right to a more prominent regional role.

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The choice for a qualitative study originated from the need of a deeper analysis of both the Nagorno-Karabakh War and Türkiye's foreign policy. As its nature allows for a more nuanced and in-depth understanding (Bryman, 2012, pp. 374-406). As this is a qualitative research paper, the paper used induction instead of deduction, induction here is interpreted as inferring general theories from specific cases instead of deduction which seeks to test theories on specific cases (Bryman, 2012, p. 380-413). This paper chose for a single holistic research design (Yin, 2009, p. 39-50), that is also exploratory because of the relative recentness of this war there has not yet been a lot of research which leaves for a lot of ground that still needs to be covered. It was also a typical case meaning that its findings apply to similar situations and thus prompt for a deeper study of the case (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). However, Case studies have certain shortcomings such as selection bias, as well as a reduced usefulness in generalising (Yin, 2009).

2. Document Analysis

Secondly, there was the document analysis, here the gathered documents and material were examined on their content, tone, and possible indications of a shift in policy, based on Türkiye's stance regarding Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict following the most recent episode of the War in Ukraine. This was done by thoroughly reading each document, acknowledging the context in which it was written and who it was written or published by. Concerning more quantitative data such as weapons sales, gas deals or general economic transactions, the analysis is more straightforward, comparing the data and highlighting relevant developments and changes.

However, there are some downsides to using this method as well, such as gaining access to undisclosed documents is rare due to their sensitive nature or current strategic importance. Thus, hampering the ability to gain a complete understanding of the thought processes. Secondly, there is always the possibility, if not a certainty, that there will be a clear bias in these documents. For example, joint statements or statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) may be politically coloured. Nevertheless, the awareness of this fact may lead to interesting research as it allows for a view of the vision and ideology of the involved and discussed parties (Bryman, 2012, p. 543-562)

3. Data Collection

Firstly, the paper collected primary sources from before the most recent episode of the War in Ukraine. The exact dates are from the outbreak of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War to just before the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, so from 27/09/2020 until 23/02/2022. The second period starts with the beginning of the invasion and ends in July 2023, in order to be able to incorporate as many new developments as possible. It also is a comparable time period as the first one. So, the range is from 24/02/2022 until 08/08/2023. These included sources such as international reports, official government statements, and trade data among others. These were chosen because they best help in gaining a better understanding of a state's official viewpoint. These were complimented with secondary sources which seemed fit to create a more well-rounded and contextualised understanding of official statements or positions. These were Academic and journal articles, news reports, and policy papers, among others. The sources were only selected if they helped in answering the research question, helped contextualise, and if the origin of the sources were trustworthy. Meaning that snippets from social media or internet fora were avoided as a precautionary measure.

4. Considerations

Finally, considering ethical considerations, the paper attempted to the utmost extent to uphold an objectivity concerning relevant data. Meaning that data was selected based on its potential in aiding answering the research question and hypothesis, rather than fitting a certain argument or viewpoint. This is also why the paper opted not to perform interviews as the interpretation and selection processes are more susceptible to human subjectivity (Nunkoosing, 2005), while an analysis of documents is more quantifiable and easier to replicate. However, it can be argued that the selection and interpretation process can fall prey to subjective biases (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000). The paper

tried to counteract this by looking up as much varied data as possible, choosing them strictly on relevance, after which the interpretation was done with the goal of answering the research question in mind.

8. Analysis

1. The Pre-Ukraine War Period

1. The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War

The Turkish government seems to have taken a pro-Azerbaijani stance since the first outbreaks of violence. This is evident from the statements made by the MFA, then headed by the previous Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu; on the generally agreed upon start date of the war, 27/09/2023, the MFA made a statement condemning Armenia for its attacks on Azerbaijani Territory, reiterating Türkiye's full political support of Azerbaijan and its territorial integrity (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020a). Türkiye's MFA continues by condemning Armenian attacks on Azerbaijan, reiterating its stance on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and accusing Armenia of continuously violating the ceasefire agreements (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020b; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020c; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020d). Furthermore, President Erdoğan criticized the OSCE Minsk Group for being unable to solve the issue (Deutsche Welle Türkçe, 2020), showing Türkiye's more vocal and independent foreign policy tendencies.

Following Azerbaijan's victory, President Erdoğan attended a military parade in Azerbaijan's capital of Baku, where Turkish commandos and drones were displayed. President Aliyev praised Türkiye, stating that when both countries unite, they can overcome any challenge, as they are brotherly nations, referring to the pan-Turkic idea (Associated Press et al., 2020). Additionally, President Erdoğan congratulated Azerbaijan and its President İlham Aliyev on multiple occasions. At an Organisation of Turkic States (OTS) summit, President Erdoğan presented President Aliyev with the 'Turkish World Order of Ali', congratulating him once again on the victory (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı, 2021).

Even though, Türkiye is not a signatory party concerning the peace deal, leaving Russia as the undisputed peace broker and the only foreign power with a say over the state of affairs. Türkiye still managed to gain much from the new status quo, which can be considered a foreign policy victory (Duclos, 2020). Nevertheless, when analysing the principal articles of the peace deal, Türkiye's real gains could be considered a stronger allied Azerbaijan and a possible Zangezur corridor that could link Türkiye and Azerbaijan through Armenia (Independent Turkish, 2020; Helvacikoylu, 2020).

2. Establishing Azerbaijan's Importance

Türkiye's favourable position towards Azerbaijan can be explained by a multitude of factors, but we should first define what exactly Türkiye's position is.

Aforementioned sources indicate the following two main components:

- 1) Azerbaijan's Territorial integrity is the core issue.
- 2) A desire to create a more favourable status quo.

Thus, how can these components of Turkish foreign policy be explained?

According to Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign affairs (2022d) both countries enjoy close economic ties, with Turkish investments between 2002 and 2020 amounting to twelve billion US Dollars, while Azerbaijan's in Türkiye amounted to 19,5 billion US Dollars in the same time frame. Additionally, Azerbaijan is the 24th biggest importer from Türkiye, amounting to 2,504,423,109 US Dollars in 2022 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2023). However, according to the same export statistics, Azerbaijan does not make the top twenty list, so a strictly economic explanation does not suffice.

A look at arms sales statistics show that Azerbaijan has been a consistent client of Turkish arms, with sales rising in the last ten years (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, n.d.-a), accompanied by a significant transfer of major weapons (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, n.d.-b). Nonetheless, according to the same Dataset, Türkiye is not Azerbaijan's largest arms supplier, it follows countries such as Russia, Israel, and Ukraine. Additionally, Azerbaijan is not one of the top five arms importers of Türkiye (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, n.d.-a), contradicting the narrative that Turkish arms deliveries were the reason Azerbaijan secured a military victory. A belief popularised by the aforementioned popularity of the Bayraktar TB2 Turkish drones (Mirovalev, 2020; Yalçınkaya, 2021). Interestingly, Türkiye has enjoyed a significant rise in its overall arms exports in the past ten years, securing the number twelve spot with a 1,1 percent share of global arms exports, while its share of global arms imports fell from 2,4 to 1,3 percent over the same time period (Wezeman & Wezeman, 2023). indicating the local industry's rising ability to meet Turkish arms needs.

A field where Azerbaijan's importance becomes clear is energy. Here, Azerbaijan is the second largest supplier of gas to Türkiye, where approximately twenty percent of energy originates from natural gas. However, Azerbaijani-Turkish energy ties are even more comprehensive as the various pipelines such as the Trans-Anatolian gas Pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and the cancelled Nabucco pipeline offered Türkiye and Europe an alternative to Russian gas (International Energy Agency, 2021). Moreover, SOCAR, the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan has made investments worth eighteen Billion US Dollars in Türkiye in the past fifteen years (SOCAR Türkiye, 2023). Additionally, Azerbaijan fits into Turkish desires to become a regional energy hub distributing gas from Russia, Azerbaijan, and Central Asia to the European market. The creation of a Zangezur corridor would aid in this (International Energy Agency, 2021; Topuz, 2019; TRT WORLD, 2022).

2. Neorealism Applied

Neorealism, as explained in the literature review and theoretical framework, starts from the assumption that states act in their own interests and that alliances serve to further one's own interest.

Applying this framework to the analysis, there seem to be certain neorealist power dynamics and considerations that might have influenced Türkiye's decisions.

The first is relatively straightforward, namely increasing its own power. Türkiye's support for Azerbaijan follows this principle in multiple ways, the first one being the regional rivalry with Russia. Even though Russia played the role of mediator, the frozen nature of the conflict suited its interests as it could keep a peacekeeping force and be the intermediary partner, thus maintaining a military and diplomatic presence (Blank, 2008). Azerbaijan's actions countered this by weakening Armenia's position: this relates to another aspect, namely the Armenian lobby. The lobby's aims run counter to Türkiye's foreign policy objectives by attempting to discredit Türkiye and challenge its hard and soft power as can be seen in Bolsajian (2018), and through an Armenian lobby's successful attempt of cancelling Disney+ from airing a documentary series on Türkiye's first President Atatürk (Snell, 2023; Al Jazeera, 2023).

Furthermore, due to their close ties Azerbaijan can serve as a gateway for Türkiye—and by extension, Europe—to reach the Central Asian markets. Here it can access energy resources and have a direct Caspian route, thus bypassing regional rivals like Iran and Russia. Lastly, there are the security and territorial integrity aspects. There is an overlap in this case as Türkiye's main concern is its own territorial integrity, as the country has faced a separatist uprising headed by the internationally recognised terrorist organisation, the PKK (Kurdistan's Workers' Party). Thus, by assuring that Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is safeguarded despite minority breakaway republics, such as Artsakh, Türkiye can maintain its position on Kurdish autonomy and territorial integrity (Aydin, 2003; Ergil, 2000).

3. Turanist Aspirations and Ottoman Nostalgia

In addition to a strict neorealist understanding of Turkish-Azerbaijani ties, there are the Identity narratives of Turanism and Neo-Ottomanism, as discussed in the literature review and theoretical framework. These can serve as helpful tools to complement or even refute certain assertions from neorealism.

Firstly, it is important to note that modern-day Azerbaijani territory did use to be part of the Ottoman Empire, but they were so only for a relatively short amount of time. So, it would not make much sense to attribute much weight to Neo-Ottomanism in this particular case. However, it can partly be helpful in explaining why Türkiye would want to expand its regional influence. This can derive from a perception of past glory and desire to increase its strategic autonomy and standing on the world stage (Yavuz, 2022). Nevertheless, this does not mean that Neo-Ottomanism cannot have analytical worth in other foreign policy regions such as the Balkans or the Middle East, which were part of the empire for longer periods of time.

Turanism, on the other hand, does seem to apply more to the case of Azerbaijan as the two states often refer to each other as brothers. This applies to the Presidents, media, and general population. A succinct example of this fraternity occurred during the victory parade held in Baku where President Aliyev said the following:

I would like to end my speech with a well-known saying. Everyone knows that the Armenian leadership said a year ago that “Karabakh is Armenia and full stop”. I said, “Karabakh is Azerbaijan and an exclamation mark”. Today, the whole world sees that Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Long live the Azerbaijani Army! Long live Turkish-Azerbaijani friendship and brotherhood! Long live Azerbaijani soldiers! (News.AZ, 2020)

Here, there are clear themes of brotherhood, as can also be seen from a speech from the then Turkish Minister of Defence Hulusi Akar where he said that through the principle of one nation two states, the liberation of Karabakh was achieved (Çelikbaş, 2021). The media and companies follow this narrative with videos such as SOCAR Türkiye’s ¹video commemorating the one-year anniversary of the victory in Nagorno-Karabakh. Where they show the Turkish people’s support for Azerbaijan as a continuation of the Azerbaijani people’s support for Türkiye during the Turkish war for Independence (SOCAR Türkiye, 2021). Additionally, Erciyes Anadolu Holding, a large Turkish holding, made a similar commercial where they depicted Azerbaijani volunteers in the Turkish war for Independence, Turkish soldiers liberating Baku in 1918, and Turkish and Azerbaijani people jointly celebrating Azerbaijan’s victory in the Second Karabakh War (Erciyes Anadolu Holding, 2021).

The song they used is noteworthy as it is based on a poem romanticising the Turkish army, modified to include parts of how the army will cross the Caucasus and add glory to Turkishness, ending with a prophetic statement about how the Azerbaijani flag will wave over Karabakh (Yücelen, 2019; Öksüz Güneş & Eliuz, 2016). This song is significant as it has been played over 36 million times as of writing (TRT Avaz, 2018), thus indicating that a large amount of Turkish and Azerbaijani people listen to this song. Another song expressing a sense of brotherhood and oneness is Ahmet Şafak’s song called “Azerbaycan Türkiye” (Ati Müzik, 2014). This is relevant according to Pierobon (2013) and He (2023) as music can be used to mobilise a population to convince it to support a specific cause or ideology.

Summarily, there does seem to be a strong identitarian aspect in Turkish-Azerbaijani ties, as has been demonstrated. However, this does not apply to Neo-Ottomanism, which does not tie Azerbaijan and Türkiye as much as the Turkic ties of both states. Thus, it seems important to not discard the identitarian aspect of Turanism and one nation two states as a powerful political and cultural movement that mobilises both people and politics.

4. The Ukraine War Effect

The effects of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine have reverberated throughout the region. The West attempts to isolate Russia on the world stage, while Russia tries to recalculate its international standing by re-evaluating certain regions and policy objectives. This can be seen in the South Caucasus region where the status quo in and around Nagorno-Karabakh has evolved. Azerbaijan finds itself in a

¹ Azerbaijani state owned company

stronger position, while Armenia is stuck in a less favourable one due to Russia's preoccupation in Ukraine. The OSCE Minsk group seems to have stalled any meaningful work, while the EU tries to be pragmatic with its energy diversification, favouring Azerbaijan, while still accommodating Armenian wishes (European Parliament & Zovko, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2022).

Russia has perhaps been affected most by the war as its political and military reach has significantly been hampered. A clear sign of this is the decrease in the number of peacekeepers deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh. This evolution has led to Armenia feeling less secure about the region's stability, with Azerbaijan filling up the void left by Russia. Azerbaijan has grown more daring in its demands and might even refuse to extend the five-year mandate (ending in 2025) of the Russian peacekeepers amidst growing anti-Russian sentiment in Azerbaijan. Additionally, Armenia has not been able to rebuild its military capabilities, on top of continuing internal instability concerning Prime Minister's Pashinyan handling of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (Reuters et al., 2022; Panorama.am, 2023). While Azerbaijan has tirelessly worked to consolidate its hold over the reacquired territories (International Crisis Group, 2022; Fults & Stronski, 2022).

The Lachin Corridor blockade can be considered a direct result of Russia's weakening position, with Azerbaijan acting against Russian interests in order to close the main transport route between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. A similar dynamic can be seen from Türkiye, who is jointly responsible for ceasefire oversight, alongside Russia. With Armenia having already conceded the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, the question concerns the future of the Armenian minority's future in Azerbaijan. Thus, indicating that Azerbaijan has taken the opportunity of a distracted and busy Russia to achieve its goals (International Crisis Group et al., 2023; Setrakian, 2023).

However, the war also led to the EU and OSCE Minsk Group to reconsider their approach. The OSCE Minsk Group has become stuck due to the parties' opposing side in the Ukraine War, thus making it obsolete. While the EU has changed its narrative and policy to be more favourable towards Azerbaijan. This results from an urgent strategical need to diversify its energy imports away from Russia. These factors all led to Azerbaijan having gained political victories in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Lastly, it is interesting to note that despite the War in Ukraine, Russia and the EU continue to share the desire for peace and stability in the South Caucasus (International Crisis Group, 2022; International Crisis Group, Atwood, et al., 2023).

1. Türkiye's Rethinking of Policy

Aforementioned shifts to the status quo also affected Türkiye, due to its intermediary role in Ukraine it had frequent high-level interactions with Russia, which related to other regions such as Libya, Syria, and Nagorno-Karabakh. With Russia occupied in Ukraine and in a weaker position than before, Türkiye could negotiate better deals. Russia could not risk alienating Türkiye so it became more accommodating to certain demands. Additionally, Europe's closer cooperation with Azerbaijan was welcomed by Türkiye. Interestingly, the normalisation of Turkish Armenian ties, which have been on the policy agenda for multiple decades, seemed promising as the main obstacle of the Karabakh issue seemed to have been resolved. However, currently there seems to be little truth to this assessment as the relations are still not at a desired level.

Türkiye, now emboldened by the more favourable power dynamic, has increased its efforts in advocating for energy and trade routes connecting the European market with Central Asia. This would benefit Türkiye, making it a vital energy transport hub, bypassing volatile routes going through Russia and Iran. One of these proposed energy routes is the so-called Southern Gas Corridor, which has been proposed and discussed in the EU, Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan (Southern Gas Corridor, 2023). However, this energy route has to pass through the Caucasus region, so stability and security are desired. Which can be hard with Azerbaijan continuing to put political pressure in order to reacquire its land, raising tensions not just regionally but also within Europe and Türkiye. As both would benefit from this corridor, Europe in the sense of diversification and Türkiye with normalising its strained ties with its biggest trade partner the EU, as well as acquiring increased strategic value and autonomy.

Moreover, Turkish trade with Azerbaijan is only somewhat larger than Turkish trade with Georgia, with total trade (exports and imports) differing by just a little over 300 million US Dollars, from a total of 3 billion, so just ten percent. Even though Georgia has a smaller population and economy (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2023). This pertains to Armenia, as normalising ties would lead to a new market for Turkish goods and a potentially less hostile Armenian Lobby. Thus, both countries' interests might diverge if Azerbaijan would continue to undermine Türkiye's attempts for normalisation, which depend largely on the Karabakh dispute.

However, this must be balanced with the objective signs that the relation has not deteriorated as of writing. With the possibility of opening the Zangezur Corridor on the table it seems likely that Türkiye will continue to unequivocally support Azerbaijan in its Karabakh policy (Zaman, 2023; Zorlu & Dag, 2022), which when combined with economic, military (Azertac, 2023), and political ties improving, paints a positive, rather than a bleak picture for the future of their cooperation (Daily Sabah, 2023; Toksabay & Kucukgocmen, 2022; Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2023; Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022).

5. Türkiye's Renewed Balancing Act

Since becoming a key mediator between Ukraine and Russia, Türkiye's relations with Russia changed considerably, with President Erdoğan enjoying a stronger negotiating position. This can be seen by multiple actions undertaken by Türkiye, Ukraine, Russia, and other actors.

The War created a sudden break through a relative period of status quo in and around Nagorno-Karabakh (Broers, 2023). These changes are all interconnected, with for example the applications for NATO membership by Finland and Sweden, allowing Türkiye to gain concessions from the EU and NATO (NATO, 2023; Wilks, 2023). Additionally, Russia's dependence on Türkiye, concerning international isolation, made Russia more prone to accommodate Turkish demands in the South Caucasus (Notte, 2022).

Russia is a clear example of the changed status quo, with Türkiye managing to change its relation with Russia in its favour. This can be seen in the 3+3 format proposed by Türkiye, to discuss issues relating to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Caucasus, together with Iran, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Thus, side-lining the EU and the US. However, Georgia refuses to participate because of Russia's occupation of 20% of its territory (Javakhishvili, 2022). Türkiye has also become

more crucial in the transport links as Russia seeks to diversify its export routes (Broers, 2023). Moreover, the opening of the Akkuyu nuclear energy plant in Türkiye also shows how strong the relations with Russia continue to be (Akkuyu Nuclear, n.d.) despite the certain setbacks. Nevertheless, these relations recently soured with Russia leaving the vital grain shipment agreement after Türkiye's rapprochement with Europe and Russia's disappointment with the West's commitment to it (Reuters & Jones, 2023).

Iran has similarly changed its position, to a lesser extent, regarding Türkiye, as it still opposes the opening of a Zangezur corridor, but also sees the worth of not completely discarding Türkiye as they are both partners in the 3+3 platform and Astana Process. This road is heavily desired by both Russia and Iran, as they both face imposed isolation by the West (Kaleji, 2023; Javakhishvili, 2022; Cengiz, 2020). Similarly, China is eager to keep both Azerbaijan and Türkiye close as it hopes to open the Middle Corridor connecting China with the European market, passing through Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Türkiye. The demand for this road became more pressing as the Northern Route passing through Russia is currently not an option (Chang 2023).

Türkiye's approval of Sweden into NATO, came with valuable concessions to Türkiye concerning delivery of F-16 fighter jets and Visa policies (Wilks, 2023). This allowed for a shift towards the West, after a period of worsening ties. There are multiple possible explanations for this, with the Ukraine War being the most straightforward one. However, the passing of the election period in Türkiye, as well as a dire economic situation, might help explain Türkiye's move closer to its largest trading partner (Altayli & Karakas, 2023). Relations with the US also were set to improve recently due to Sweden's accession into NATO and the agreement to supply Türkiye with the F-16 fighter jets, tying Türkiye closer with its traditional Euro-Atlantic allies. Nonetheless, due to senatorial vetoes and the efforts from congressional Greek-Armenian Caucasus, this delivery and Turkish-US rapprochement could be in jeopardy (Holland & Pawlak, 2023; Zengerle, 2023; Harris, 2023).

1. Century of Türkiye

With Türkiye's centennial anniversary fast approaching, President Erdoğan hosted an event in honour of the upcoming Century of Türkiye. Here he outlined a more daring, independent, and influential Türkiye that will top the lists in fields such as technology and economy (Daily Sabah, 2022). This vision accompanied with recent developments in Ukraine, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as recent developments in the arms sector indicate a continued desire for an independently minded dynamic foreign policy (Robinson, 2023). To meet these goals, Türkiye faces certain obstacles, but also opportunities, relating specifically to the Ukraine War and Türkiye.

Its ties with Armenia have long been an issue as it lessens its regional influence, decreases its trade potential, and causes international backlash originating from the Armenian lobby's efforts. Thus, finding a solution which ensures peace and stability is in Türkiye's best interests. The devastating Türkiye-Syria earthquake led to the reopening of the border with Armenia, for the first time since 1993, thus opening possibilities for further cooperation (Chikhladze, 2022; Çakmak, 2023). On a similar note, concerning Libya and Syria, Türkiye's continued interaction and cooperation with Russia is still required, explaining Türkiye's careful balancing approach towards Russia (COAR, 2021).

Finally, Türkiye has increased its activity in the OTS, organising and attending more conferences and improving its overall ties with all member states. This process started even before the Nagorno-Karabakh War, but saw an increase in interests following it. It continued to increase cooperation despite and because of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine (Mammadov, 2022; Bekmurzaev, 2023). While the Central Asian members, especially Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, sought to push for more cooperation with the EU and Türkiye (Soutullo & Rinaldi, 2022; Pannier, 2022; Matveeva, 2023).

As things currently stand, both Azerbaijan and Türkiye's leaderships are content with each other and see each other as their most valuable ally in the region. Due to similar concerns surrounding the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, their ties with Armenia, Russia, and Iran, as well as their ambitions in transport, energy, trade, and security.

To conclude, President Erdoğan, a few months after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, perfectly sums up Türkiye's views on Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, "With Azerbaijan, we are laying the foundations of a new era in the region. Things will accelerate as Armenia shows progress in peace, security and tranquillity," (Daily Sabah with AA, 2022).

6. Testing the Hypotheses

Attempts at explaining a foreign policy decision focusing on just one theory or one level of analysis are often futile as these decisions are made with a plethora of considerations and factors in mind (Hudson & Vore, 1995). However, this research has outlined multiple periods of Turkish-Azerbaijani ties and how it evolved throughout. The changes all led to further cooperation and deepening of their ties, with Türkiye becoming more outspoken in maintaining its unwavering support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh War. The two hypotheses presented in the theoretical framework argued that this change could better be explained through either the theory of neorealism or the concept of identity.

1. Neorealism

Türkiye's foreign policy actions seem to have followed a pragmatic neorealist logic, as it used the War in Ukraine and the subsequent changes to the status quo to its advantage. Portraying itself as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia allowed it to be crucial for both Western and Russian policy, resulting in the concessions following Sweden's NATO accession and Russia's more accommodating stance on Türkiye's Caucasus ambitions. Discarding identity and ideology, Azerbaijan is crucial for Türkiye's more independent foreign policy ambitions as it serves as the gateway to the Caucasus and Central Asia, allowing Türkiye to access new energy and commercial markets.

Türkiye trained the modern Azerbaijani army and is accredited with supplying crucial arms such as drones, which proved to be decisive in the outcome of the war. Furthermore, this perception of Turkish arms quality and effectiveness has only increased due to the War in Ukraine, leading to a surge in demand for Turkish made arms, including but not limited to drones. Meaning that it is in Türkiye's best interests to have a strong Azerbaijan as it reflects on its military and regional power capabilities (Çelik & Kınık, 2021; Büyük, 2023). Additionally, Türkiye's ambitions are not limited to the Caucasus,

tying its foreign policy victories here with more leverage over for example Russia in Libya. The most recent shift towards the West also confirms neorealist theory as it is Türkiye's largest trading partner and was made possible due to Türkiye's pragmatic foreign policy calculations. Concerning its rivalry with Russia, Türkiye also has to consider Libya, Syria, its energy needs, tourism, and investments, thus its decision not to antagonise it too strongly also follows a similar logic (Hill, 2022).

2. One Nation Two States

The degree to which this perception of brotherhood between Azerbaijan and Türkiye affects people is harder to objectively assess, but it can be done in comparison to other similar cases. Georgia, for example, enjoys similar trade relations with Türkiye (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2023), combined with a shared distrust of Russian presence in the South Caucasus. However, this similar economic relationship is not published as much in the Turkish or international press, indicating that identity and narratives might be a determining factor. Additionally, the idea of Turkish Azerbaijani brotherhood fits Türkiye's other narratives of being a regional power and a leader of the Turkic world. As it gains legitimacy in its Caucasus endeavours, as well as its Central Asia expansion. Thus, this idea of brotherhood seems to fit Turkish policy interests, for now. Thus, it is more likely that the idea of Turkic brotherhood serves more as a convenient ideology. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the population or even leadership do not believe it, rather that it is not the main driving force of foreign policy.

The clearest example of this is Türkiye's relations with Russia and China, both have significant Turkic minorities with certain levels of political repression (Akçay, 2022; (Finley, 2020; Yusupova, 2017), but Türkiye does not antagonise either of them enough to irreparably strain ties. Similarly, Azerbaijan does not offer significantly cheaper gas prices to Türkiye, neither do both states propose "brotherly trade deals" to their Central Asian counterparts. Additionally, all actions that do indicate a preference towards Azerbaijan, including diplomatic support, can be explained by a pragmatic neorealist policy. This can be done without disregarding the very real emotional ties the Turkish and Azerbaijani people have for each other, as can be seen by volunteers fighting for both sides.

In conclusion, even though the ideas of Turkic brotherhood and one Nation two States are popular and may affect people and policy preferences, Türkiye's attitude towards Azerbaijan is still better explained by the theory of neorealism, as is the case in its other regional policies, cases where both ideas may overlap, and the lack of significant proof to suggest Türkiye acted against its foreign policy objectives, as understood at the time and according to its abilities, for the sake of Azerbaijan.

9. Conclusion

The Ukraine War's effect on Turkish policy in Nagorno-Karabakh relates to multiple crucial developments in Europe and beyond. Highlighting a change in status quo ranging from Brussels to Stepanakert/Khankendi, and even Tripoli. This research has shed light on some of these developments through a case study of how Turkish policy regarding the South Caucasus, focusing on Nagorno-Karabakh, was affected. This allows for a deeper understanding of the politics of Türkiye, which has chosen in recent years to follow a more independent-minded foreign policy. This topic was previously

under-researched, creating an academic gap; the aim of this study sought to fill that void, especially considering the most recent episode of the War in Ukraine. Moreover, with Türkiye playing a significant role in the War in Ukraine as a mediator, understanding its foreign policy allows for a deeper understanding of the War in Ukraine as a whole.

This study has many valuable findings, although key takeaways include concretising Türkiye's views on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, its views on the region's potential future, and how the change in status quo allowed Türkiye to adopt a more daring foreign policy. Furthermore, two plausible reasons for this potential change were proposed, namely neorealism and identity (Turanism). These hypotheses were tested for their validity, with neorealism scoring better than Turanism in explaining the reason for Türkiye's policy shift as well as overall regional policy changes. Subsequently, these results indicate that Türkiye's main goal is strategic autonomy, and it accomplishes this by balancing interests between the West and Russia. Contrary to conjunctural changes and sensational headlines, Türkiye does not seem likely to leave the Euro-Atlantic political group, and neither will it antagonise actors such as Russia despite pressure from NATO states.

Concerning the efficacy of the analytical framework, it was helpful in elucidating Türkiye's transforming stance towards Azerbaijan, with its neorealist core being enriched by identity dynamics. Thus, adding to foreign policy studies, where neorealism and international system level of analyses are criticised for being too one-dimensional. When combined with another concept like identity, it can be made practical and enriching due to its novel approach. For instance, highlighting identity ties through music and poems illustrates the populace's solidarity with a cause whilst complementing a more pragmatic justification of how this might be harnessed in foreign policy.

Methodological rigour was maintained throughout the analytical process, starting from data collection, analysis, and interpretation of statistical data from both primary and secondary sources. In spite of this rigour, it was often challenging to provide credible sources or access crucial documents due to the fact that not much data or literature has been produced as this is a relatively new development in world politics. This represents a significant limitation of this research. In addition, the sensitive nature of high-level policy documents also presented a challenge. Additionally, the focus on state-level analysis may have constrained the scope of analysis. This was corrected by strictly staying within the bounds of what was both accessible and credible, thus maintaining academic integrity. The choice of theoretical framework and methodology may also affect the generalisability of the findings. Nevertheless, these aspects were all taken into account before starting the research, allowing for creative ways to limit the impact they had on the findings. For instance, narrowing the scope allowed for a more precise focus of certain aspects which—when combined with a temporal dimension—were instrumental in answering the research question. Finally, the volatile and dynamic nature of the War in Ukraine and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict did prove a challenge, as keeping the thesis up to date meant rewriting multiple parts throughout the process.

In addition, this research also contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay of Türkiye's power dynamics, its use of identity narratives, and other factors that underpin its foreign policy recalibrations. This can be applicable to other states and conflicts, thus aiding in navigating the current state of international affairs, as well as interpreting different applications of international relations and foreign policy theory.

Finally, the pertinence of the research topic in contemporary developments, combined with the research scope, and a remaining lack of relevant research and understanding, leaves a gap in academic research. This can be filled through researching cases such as the change in the European Union's stance towards Armenia, or Iran's stance towards Azerbaijan. Furthermore, Türkiye's policy developments are relevant in other geopolitical conflicts, such as those in Libya and Syria, where the impact of its relationship with Russia also plays a major role.

This research contributes to an overall better understanding of how the War in Ukraine is affecting regional dynamics elsewhere, states' policy ambitions, and influencing the new order of the international system.

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