Turkey's Role in South Caucasus

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Abstract

This paper will study Turkey's influence in South Caucasus. The study applies Barry Buzan and Ole Waever's Regional Security Complex Theorem (RSCT) to understand Turkey's politics in the region since the end of the Cold War. The author of this paper shares the belief with the coiners of the RSCT that it is necessary to combine systemic, regional, national, and domestic factors to provide the most accurate description and prediction of potential developments in international politics. Importantly, it is crucial to wisely combine the age-old tenets of Realist theory with important constructivist concepts to better explain security. In this regard RSCT, in the humble opinion of the author, is the most complete theorem in the field of international relations to analyze the behavior of any particular state and/or dynamics of global and regional interaction among states.

For the purposes of the research it is important to place Turkey correctly in the framework of Buzan and Waever's theory and concepts - that is, classify Turkey correctly according to their taxonomy and fortunately, they help me with this. They have devoted important part of their work to insulator states such as Turkey. Turkey's role as an insulator state is particularly interesting to me. To paint a comprehensive picture of the geopolitics in Caucasus the roles of the US, Russia and EU will be investigated from the perspective of RSCT. Again, the investigation will be detailed and hopefully, productive.

Theoretical Framework:

Following theories will be presented before the author suggests the goggles that should be fashioned for the purpose of this research:

- "Political realism theory", whose main subject is the state;
- The theory of "cooperative security" - Cohen's concept, which includes recognition of common threats by states and joint efforts on it;
- Complex theory of regional security - RSCT, which is also related to the Copenhagen school.

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Introduction

1.1. Neorealism

Different versions of realism in the field of international relations - from classical to neoclassical - distinguish military power as the most important factor determining political relations between great powers, and states in general. Neorealist scholars have proposed three theories to explain states' motivations to engage in multilateral balancing: the balance of power, balance of threats, and balance of interests theories.

According to realist scholars, states care about their military power. The increase in power by some adversely affects the interests of others. To protect their national interests, states engage in unilateral or multilateral balancing. One-way balancing implies economic growth and/or increased military spending. Multilateral balancing occurs when states enter military alliances.

Waltz suggests that balance-of-power politics is found where two and only two requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units willing to survive.[2] As Waltz and other realists suggest, states' uncertainty about each other's intentions in a decentralized and anarchic system leads to their constant fear and mistrust that states might use force against them at some point. This is a world where there are no permanent friends or allies, but, on the contrary, only permanent interests. For Waltz and others, power is a means of survival. The main concern of states is to maintain their power vis-à-vis other states.[3]

On the other hand, offensive realist John Mearsheimer starts with the same assumptions as Waltz. That is, the international system is anarchic, the states do not trust each other and take care of their power resources, which is crucial for their survival. But unlike Waltz, Mearsheimer does not think that states are status quo entities trying to maintain the existing balance of power. Offensive realism views states as power-maximizing units. For offensive realists, an anarchic international system encourages states to become more aggressive by expanding and protecting their reach and power.[4]

In his book The Origins of Alliances, Walt proposes a theory of balance of threats. Unlike defensive and offensive realists, Walt argues that states become allies against threats, not just against power.[5] In their quest for survival, states carefully consider the following risk factors:

aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and aggressive intent.[6]

Schweler proposes the theory of the balance of interests to explain the motivation of states in the international system. According to his theory, countries that can make significant gains from change are more likely to take action to achieve it. In contrast, status quo states are content with their share of the international system and seek to maintain their power. By the same token, revisionist states may prefer to increase their absolute power rather than maintain their own security.[7]

Thus, states, according to neorealist scholars, have different motivations regarding the use of military force. Above I presented three theories from the realist school: the balance of power, balance of threats, and balance of interests theories. According to Waltz, who shared the logic of the balance of power, states are concerned about their security and use force mainly for defensive purposes. In contrast, Mearsheimer believes that increasing security often requires the use of offensive force. Walt suggests that states allign agains threats. Finally, Schweller, a supporter of the theory of balance of interests, focuses on situations in which states are primarily motivated by territorial expansion and therefore willingly endanger themselves in order to increase their power in the system.

1.2. "Cooperative security" theory - Cohen's concept

After the Cold War, security in the post-bipolar global world has become diverse, multidimensional. A term like "collaborative security" entered the political vocabulary. It represents peaceful international security conditions after the Cold War, growing cooperation and harmony. The post-bipolar order trend was highlighted in the "win-win" game format.

The author of this theory, Richard Cohen, proposes two new concepts of international security - to the classic components of collective security and collective defense, two more important components are added: individual security and stability maintenance. The mentioned components were added to the traditional components because new threats such as cyber-terrorism, natural disasters, etc. appeared in the international arena.

Cohen's concept of "cooperative security" includes the following tools:

2 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), 76
3 Ibid., 82.
4 John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 36.
5 Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 66.
6 Ibid., 68.
7 Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): p. 76, https://doi.org/10.2307/2539149.

1) Recognition of common threats: Countries must recognize common challenges. They are unable to face challenges alone. The growing process of globalization created the need for a unified security system.[8]

2) Increasing mutual understanding of values: There should be ideological congruence among team members. Human rights are best protected by a liberal-democratic state.

3) Institutional format: the creation of common institutions creates a solid platform around common problems and provides for further development and refinement of cooperation.[9]

Collaborative security depends on the four rings of security. Ring 1: Protection of human rights at home and abroad (individual security). Link 2: Support for peace and stability in the common space (collective security). Ring 3: common defense against the enemy (collective defense). Link 4: Providing active stability in other regions; Mutual assistance between allies - political, informational, economic and military (maintaining stability). In order to achieve a strong connection and security, it is necessary to include all four links in the system. Skipping any link will have no satisfactory results.

Michael Mihalka expands the analysis of cooperative security and deepens its theoretical foundations. He traces the history of cooperative security organizations, arguing that they date back to the early 19th century, and extends the concept beyond the Northern Hemisphere to include the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).[10] Mihalka notes that many members of the OSCE and ASEAN are quasi-authoritarian or transitional democracies rather than consolidated liberal democracies. Even states that do not share common values can still cooperate, but only if their ruling elites have confidence in their common future and believe that working together is better than working alone.

However, Mihalka warns the reader that non-democratic countries have limited ability to continue cooperation. They may manage to avoid war with each other - as in the case of ASEAN - but are unlikely to develop a common position on regional threats to stability. Mihalka thus argues that the future success of cooperative security depends not only on the spread of liberal democracy, but also on strengthening economic ties with non-democracies and their sense of a "security community" that serves the interests of all its members. Mihalka, unlike Cohen, concludes that "cooperative security is possible even among states that do not share common values."[11] Richard Cohen and Michael Mihalka have done a great job of presenting their views on this topic. Their disagreement on the topic testifies to the complexity and importance of the issues they raise.

1.3 Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)

Having reviewed neorealism and cooperative security theories in the previous two sections I cannot help but feel that they are too abstract, too theoretical. They need more grounding, more geography, more gravitation and laws of physics. After reviewing RSCT my reader will know better what my rambling is all about.

From the perspective of RSCT, a key weakness of both the neorealist and cooperative security approaches to security is that they either overplay the role of the global level and/or underestimate the role of the regional one. Neorealism is a systemic theory and chooses not to lose itself in so-called levels below systemic. But as Buzan and Waever and many others have showed and what I will try to demonstrate with the case of Turkey in this study, one cannot simply explain the behavior of states through systemic factors. Regional variables might be at least as important as systemic variables in understanding state security policy. And also, in many ways regional variables shape the way systemic variables affect states.

According to the central idea of RSCT, since most threats are geographically close to each other, security interdependence is usually organized into regional clusters, which are called security complexes. It is important to note that the securitization process is inherently open and influenced by a number of factors. Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) is an international relations theory developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wever in 2003 in Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security. Buzan and Waever are perhaps best known as key figures in the influential Copenhagen School of Security Studies, where security as a social construct is a central tenet. RSCT uses a mixture of materialist and constructivist approaches. From the side of materialists - the idea of limited territoriality and redistribution of forces, which is close to neorealism. And, from the constructivists - the theory of securitization, which focuses on the political process through which the issue of security is determined, where hostility and friendship are independent variables. RSCT argues that international security must be viewed from a regional

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8 Richard Cohen and Michael Mihalka, *Cooperative Security: New Horizons for International Order* (George C. Marshall European Center for Security studies, 2001), 43.

9 Ibid., 45.

10 Richard Cohen, "Cooperative Security: From Individual Security to International Stability," Cooperative Security: From Individual Security to International Stability | George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies, accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/marshall-center-papers/cooperative-security-new-horizons-international-order/cooperative-security-individual-security-international.

11 Ibid.

perspective and that relations between states (and other actors) exhibit regular, geographically clustered characteristics.[12]

Regional Security Complexes (RSCs) are defined as clear and stable patterns of security interactions between actors. They differ from each other in the degree of interaction. The level of interaction between members of the same RSC is high, and between members of different RSCs is relatively low. As the name implies, regional security complexes are geographical in nature, composed of neighboring actors and isolated from each other by natural barriers such as oceans, deserts, and mountain ranges. Individual states can also act as such "insulators" between RSCs.[13]

RSCT argues that the actions and motivations of actors in the field of international security are strongly regional in nature. The theory is complicated by the presence of actors with global security interests and power projection capabilities. However, Buzan and Weaver argue that even the security interests of global powers are fundamentally regional. Their involvement in regional security issues should most often be seen as a challenge to emerging issues in the region.[14]

RSCs can be interpreted as autonomous systems, as "micro" systems embedded in a larger, global political system. The RSC contains its own security dynamics, which under normal circumstances are largely independent of global security dynamics. This allows us to apply various IR concepts – such as balance of power, polarity and interdependence – on a regional scale.

The theory also includes the concepts of regional subcomplexes (essentially RSCs within RSCs) and supercomplexes (essentially surrounding neighboring RSCs). Buzan and Waever think that security interests are primarily regional. This contrasts with the prevailing view during the Cold War, which saw regional security policy as a reflection of the interests of the global great powers. Buzan and Weaver point to the Middle East, where the security landscape has not changed despite the end of the Cold War.[15]

Buzan and Waever call for a kind of expansion of the monolithic neorealist school of international relations. They emphasize the importance of adopting a regional perspective (as opposed to a dominant global system perspective) and call for greater attention to security actors other than states. The concept of security not as an objective fact, but as an intersubjectively constructed social phenomenon is a pillar of the Copenhagen school of IR. According to RSCT, regional security complexes cannot be identified or understood only by examining material differences between actors, attention must also be paid to how actors interpret such material facts.

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT): main variables

In an anarchic world RSCs are a common fact. They act as a trasnmission belt between global forces and their regional manifestation. As such RSCT has an important theoretical characteristic, it is agreeable with most realist, liberal or other theories that operate at system level. At the same time, like constructivism the theory recognizes that deep down their actions and interpretations are not just a reflection of the distribution of power – security is also determined by patterns of amity/enmity among states.

RSCT emphasizes the importance of a distinct middle level between state and system, which the theory like realism does not bother to explore. The theory stresses that most of the security issues arise at the regional level; states are afraid of their neighbour and they ally with other actors from the same region, and commonly regions are geographically (mountains, lakes, seas, etc.) seperated from each other, or they might be separated by inslulator states. The concept of an insulator state is unique to RSCT and signifies a location occupied by one or more unit where larger regional security dynamics take place.

In their 1998 book Buzan and Waever provide the following definition of RSC: "a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another."[16] The main idea here is that the most important process of securitisation will necessarily take place in regions. Again, these processes of securitisation will be different from global processes. And, global and regional levels need to be understood separately.

In RSCs the realist logic of anarchy and geographic proximity affect neighbour states. The mechanism of penetration allows global powers to align with regional powers.[17] It is important to note that RSCs are structures in the international system in which units are relativley interdependent, and their relations are much more intense than that of other units. But because vulnerability is often related with distance, the relationship is far from uniform. So anarchy and distance effect the relationship between states and produce regionally based patterns of relations, so called security interdependense, which are more intense

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12 Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers,* 10.
13 Ibid., 12.
14 Ibid., 20.
15 Ibid., 21.
16 Ibid., 44.
17 Ibid.

among the states in the region/complex than between those in the states and outside of it.[18]

The more power a state has the further it can extend its influence beyond its immediate region. Superpowers abide less by the logic of geography and distance – they are omnipresent. Then there are great powers that penetrate at least one more region beyond their immediate. And then there are small states that are locked in their regions with their neighbours. Outside powers to a region when they make security alignments with states inside a region are called to penetrate it.

As mentioned before, RSCs are characterized by patterns of amity/enmity taking place in a geographically specific area. Amity-enmity variable in RSCT is based on Wendtian constructivist social theory. Wendt offers three social structures of anarchy: Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian.[19] The idea is based on what kind of roles states play in the system, whether they are enemies, rivals or friends. What is important to consider here is that RSCT is a healthy mix of constructivist and realist theory, meaning that only realist take on distribution of power is not enough to predict the security dynamics in regions. Amity/enmity is very important to understand relationships among states. And learning history can contribute decisively in the process as well as factors like culture, religion and geography.[20]

RSCT consists of four levels: 1) domestic 2) state-to-state relations/regional 3) interregional 4) the effect of global powers in the region.[21]There are also subcomplexes, which if complexes are very big can exist as relatively autonomous parts of a larger complex. It is very important to keep in mind that all levels of analysis are very important and in different scenarios different levels of analysis can be more important than others. But what is important to mind is that the regional level will always be very important and should be part of analysis.

According to RSCT every RSC has an essential structure which consists of following variables: 1) boundary 2) anarchich structure 3) polarity with attendant distribution of power 4) social construction/amity/enmity among states. Given the developments there are three possible outcomes: 1) maintenance of status quo 2) internal transformation, for ex. regional integration 3) external transformation, when for ex. the boundaries of RSCs merge.[22]

It is also important to categorize security complexes according to their polarity and types, in terms of amity/enmity ranging from conflict formation to security regime to security community. These are similar to Wendt's Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian worlds. But there are also standard and centered RSCs. In a standard RSC there are at least two powers whose security agenda is military-political. Such complexes are anarchic. Polarity is defined here by regional actors.[23] Centered RSCs come in a few forms. In two forms they are unipolar with a power being a superpower or a great power.The third variant can be a region, like for example the EU, integrated by laws, rules, norms, institutions and etc. The EU is a sort of security community with certain actor qualities. Legitimacy is an important variable designating the degree of acceptance.[24] Having too many powers scattered around the world makes it possible for the world populated with great power regional security complexes or supercomplexes. Great power regional security complex implies that there is more than one great power inside it and naturally, the security dynamic within it is virile. Also, intense spillover might bind discrete complexes into supercomplexes with one or more great powers at their core.[25]

Shortly, it needs to be mentioned why sometimes RSCs fail to form. Such conditions are overlay and unstructured complexes. Overlay implies that an outside power comes to dominate the region so that local security patterns do not develop sufficiently. For example during the Cold War, Europe was overlaid by the US-USSR rivalry. Unstructured regions occur for two reasons, either when states are so weak that they cannot exert power beyond their borders or where their geographical borders isolate them from other states.[26]

As mentioned before, a region can undergo internal or external transformation or get overlaid; rarely does it unravel back to an unstructured region. To understand internal transformation it might be handy to check material conditions for changes of polarity conditions contributing to changes of amity/enmity. The potential for external transformation can be observed by observing interregional security. Where such dynamics are intense change is more likely. Using variables such as interaction capacity, power differentials and system polarity will refine the research.[27] Interaction capacity, which stands for

18 Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi, "The Future of the South Asian Security Complex," *South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers*, 1986, pp. 246, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-07939-1_9.

19 Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 50.

20 Ibid.

21 Barry Buzan and Eric Herring, "The Arms Dynamic in World Politics," January 1998, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781685854003, 201.

22 Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 62.

23 Ibid., 62.

24 Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2010), 145.

25 Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 62.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 67.

technological and social infrastructure for transportation and communication influences regional securi-ty.[28] With low interaction capacity regions will probably be unstructured. Standard RSCs would require high interaction capacity.

Again, Buzan admonishes us that it is important to avoid the fallacy that orthodox Waltzians fall for. That is not to make the error of explaining what happens in any given region directly from the perspective of the global distribution of power. Because the relevant power distribution for local actors in the region is of course local.[29] But Waltzians are used to thinking globally not regionally and thus, they are prone to such omissions. Realist theory forgets historical and geopolitical in its abstract systemic theorization and it ignores that states are non-mobile.

In the footsteps of Buzan and Waever this study looks at security through concrete political geo-graphic dimension, without unjustified abstraction of Realism. In RSCT security is viewed through the prism of geography. However, just like in Realism, power politics will be an important component that RSCT will be built on. But along with power it is important to add constructivist method and the concept of securitisation to RSCT. Buzan and Waever have included more than military-political security in secu-rity studies. For them security is not only state-centric but also societal, that is the referent object is any collectivity whose identity is threatened.[30] The authors eloquently distinguish the whole system of refer-ent objects and securitising actors, that is those who securitise. What is significant in this vision of security is that a securitising actor assumes a role of breaking regular rules for the sake of security. What is crucial here is that the matter has turned constructivist and the questions are when and under what conditions who securitises what. It is important to realise that this whole reality is a process. Again there are condi-tions that help but the theory is not causal but rather a performative act, it produces genuine novelty.[31]

To understand security in constructivist RSC framework it is important to look at the following points: is the issue securitised successfully? If yes, then how does this security action effect the other and where? If there are many chains clusters can form. As such, it is decisive to remember that security in RSCT is a discursive phenomenon and cannot be explained solely by objective geographic and/or power considerations.

To sum up, the strenght of the RSCT is in its bottom-up approach, which captures the specifics of regions and how they determine regional and regional effect of global politics. Buzan and Waever provide excellent taxonomy which allow just that also the theory might lack Waltzian parsimony and elegance it certainly compensates the lack of which in relevance. The theory, what is important, allows to compare regions because it provides thoretical concepts; it also describes connections and mechanisms in its theo-retical frame. The theory distinguishes global from regional as two separate levels and allows researchers to study their interaction. Regions are seperated into different regional security complexes (RSCs). And RSCs can have different nature: some unipolar, bipolar and etc. Complexes can have insulators between them, or they can be divided into sub- and supercomplexes. Moreover, intense dynamics could lead to the transformation of regions.

Unlike Waltzian theory which is largely static and permits only structural change via power, RSCT allows for the study of change in much richer and more realistic typologies. Except for power and geog-raphy- those material factors, RSCT employs securitization, a constructivist concept, which allows to dis-tinguish regions from each other. It is important to remember that one cannot infer from objective factors to following developments. The security actors fight out among themselves is the security they make out.

Having explained in details the theoretical framework used in the research it is due time to proceed to applying its empirical counterpart and namely to understanding Turkeys's role in Caucasus.

Turkey and South Caucasus

During the Cold War Turkey wanted to be European, modern, Western. It was a member of NATO, OECD and the Council of Europe. It had aspirations to join European Union. The relationship towards Russia was that of a NATO country. It also did not engage much in the Middle East and Central Asia. As an insulator state Turkey avoided to be drawn into wars around it. After the Cold War Turkey lost its im-portance for a while. It was not needed anymore, Eastern and Central Europeans rose in rank and Turks started to have an identity crisis. Soon Turkey started to project its influence towards Central Asia and Caucasus. Especially, Caucasus was elevated in the international project over pipelines.[32]

By the end of 1990s Turkey seemed to realize its role towards different regions. It did not want to accept its role as an insulator state and defined itself as the center of European and Asian continents but it is only a proclamatory statement for Turkey does not possess neither power nor legitimacy to play such

28 Barry Buzan and Richard Little, "Beyond Westphalia?: Capitalism after the 'Fall,'" *The Interregnum: Controversies in World Politics 1989–1999*, 2000, pp. 89-104, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511599767.007.

29 Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 69.

30 Ole Waever, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 27.

31 Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 69.

32 Ibid., 393.

a role. But de facto Turkey understands its regional role, its insulator position and has increased interest in regions and regionalism.[33] Turkey has started to label itself a 'Bermuda triangle' between the conflict regions of the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East.[34]

Normally, insulator states are not active policy-makers. But after the Cold War Turkey has acted contrary to this notion. And, it is actually possible for states like Turkey to be active insulators. At the same time it remains an insulator between different regions because it is not powerful enough to bring different regions into one. So other powers, like for example Greece, Russia, Syrria and others do not see so much threat coming from Turkey that would make them get together. If they did then regional politics and its geography would change and Turkey could cease to be an insulator. And there is one more but, if Turkey becomes powerful enough, that is if it becomes the regional great power it claims it is, it might trigger its neighbouts to coalesce against it. But for the forseeable future it seems Turkey will remain an insulator state, because although it is very active in its foreign policy, it has neither actual power nor potential resourses to change the status quo, and it will stick to many of the policies traditionally adopted by insulators.

But it is important to understand with regard to whom Turkey will not be able to change the status quo. And here when we concentrate on Caucasus it is crucial to mention another power, namely Russia who has a claim to the region. And again this region should be understood from the perspective of Eu-Europe and US, because the first is an expanding RSC bordering with Caucasus and the second is the only superpower with global interests, and specific interests in Caucasus. So, in our classification system, Turkey is an insulator Russia is a regional great power, EU-Europe is a RSC which is expanding into Caucasus and the US is the only Superpower. Now that we have a more or less full roster of actors (again, this theory is state-centric) it is easier to understand the following.

The RSC in which Caucasus is located is centred on a great power – Russia. It was a superpower as a Soviet Union. Now, a few words about discursive element of Russian policy: Duma, Russian parliament securitises the issue of ethnic Russians in the neighbouring states. There are over 25 million Russians living in neghboring states and according to the Russian government threat to their lives is threat against the Russian state. Putin's policy has been to consolidate the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a means to gaining control of the RSC.[35] But it is evident that the CIS has failed to develop which speaks poorly to Russia's image of the RSC's leader.

The second important organization in Russia's RSC is GUAM. As an organization it faces even more problems than CIS. But it is important to take it into the picture for our purposes to have a full understanding of Russia's and Turkey's role in Caucasus. Existence of GUAM is an indicator of the participants' dissatisfaction with Russian influence.[36] If the members manage to cooperate among themselves and the US and EU they will be able to escape Russian dominance, just like Eastern Europeans did. And the same logic applies with regards to Turkey, just in case it decides to bully around. GUAM's importance is making Black Sea Region and namely, Caucasus open to NATO and EU membership, at least open to some of the GUAM members. And, if GUAM countries follow through on their commitment, that is if their domestic governments remain pro-Western, Russia a weakened great regional power can do little to obstruct it.

Caucasus is a subcomplex in the RSC of Russia, and it has two parts North Caucasus, which is part of Russian Federation and South Caucasus consisting of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. For the sake of this research South Caucasus is the region of primary concern. The region is of external interest for Turkey, Iran, the USA and EU.[37] South Caucasus (Trans-Caucasus) is battered by secessionist conflicts and issue of alignments out of the region. Georgia is plagued by the secession of three regions: Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adzharia. Russia uses these conflicts to seal its influence on the region.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a region in Azerbaijan mainly settled by Armenians which Stalin made an autonomous region within Azerbaijan.[38] Conflicts in the region have been on and off since 1987, latest being 2022. Russia and Turkey have, of course, played the central roles in brokering the peace. But the settlement of the conflict is not close in sight. What has been stable is the relationship between Turks and Azerbaijanians, who continue to be allies, and the same is true about Russians and Armenians. Surrounded by Muslim states Armenians do not have much choice. What is important is that Russia and Turkey have come to see that their powers are limited in South Caucasus, but even so they have not given up their position in the region. What is surprising is that they have means to control the region, not unilaterally, and in coordination with each other, but still, they have.

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33 Ibid., 394.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., 411.
36 Ibid., 412.
37 Ibid., 419.
38 Paige Sullivan and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Documents, Data and Analysis* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 598.

As EU enlargement has been rolling east after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it has come to play one of the major roles in the region. Just like the Unites States it has interest in pipelines. Especially so, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 when EU's dependence on Azerbaijani resources has increased. Caucasus is important for its oil and gas and Turkey, EU and US recognize it. For countries like China it is because of energy, for Turkey and EU it is because of economic importance, for others like Russia and the US it is mainly because of influence. For Russia oil and gas resources are a matter of national security.

Caucasus is a mini-complex and an insulator, but still where Russian influence is strong and it remains a sub-complex within Russian RSC. At the moment the complex has more or less Russian component: 1) Russia actively helping secessionist governents 2) Russia encouraging spillover between North and South Caucasus among ethnic groups 3) Russian policy regarding Energy and Pipeline.[39] But what is worrisome for Russia are possible developments which can make South Caucasus a more insulated mini-complex with a bipolarised structure on one side Turkey and the USA supporting Azerbaijan and Georgia and on the other, Russia and Iran supporting Armenia.

As mentioned before Russia is a great power in a centered region. And it is also part of a weak supercomplex with EU-Europe.[40] Three transformations are possible regarding Russia's role. 1) Russia's global position can change 2) Its RSC can transform from centred to balanced 3) External transformation is possible regarding the border to Europe.[41] Regarding its role as a global power Russia as we see is doing utmost to keep itself among great powers. Regarding the second point if GUAM evolves it can transform the complex into a more balanced one. And this is quite possible. Turkey could help here too. Regarding the third point, as mentioned before the ever expanding European Union will reach Caucasus and it will no longer be only Russia's RSC.

As the picture shows Caucasus is a part of Russia's RSC and EU RSC is slowly but surely has been growing in its influence since the end of the Cold War. One RSC is centered on EU, another one is centered on Russia. Turkey is an insulator state between the two RSCs. The EU RSC is a security community and it is highly legitimate among its members. On the other hand, the Russia's RSC is dominated by Russia's power and Russia's legitimacy is constantly challenged. It is likely that if EU's RSC continues to grow externally and cohere internally, Russia will be challenged in its RSC more and more, to the point that two RSCs will merge into one supercomplex.

It is unlikely that Russia will be able to reestablish an imperial/Soviet control over Caucasus. As mentioned before it is possible that groups like GUAM form a counterweight to it. And, what is more likely is that with the involvement of external powers like the US and Iran a minicomplex will form as part of a EU-Russian supercomplex with countries siding either with Russia or the US/EU.

But how about the insulator role of Turkey or such mini-complex as Caucasus? Insulator separates from each other two or more distinct regional security dynamics. In case of Turkey it is two: EU-Europe and Russia RSCs. It is important to remember that in its most basic exposition RSCT consists from RSCs, insulator states, and global level powers. That is all states are part of RSCs excluding global level powers and insulator states. The latter belongs either to no region or to several.[42] As mentioned there are special cases of insulators called mini-complexes. Now, typical insulators differ from mini-complexes in that they face complexes around them but do not link them, while mini-complexes do. For example, Turkey in this regard is a typical insulator, whereas Caucasus is, of course, a mini-complex. Mini-complexes are normally small and weak. But if the Russian power continues to diminish Caucasus will probably grow to be an insulator.[43] However, at the moment the Caucasus is very weak, and despite its weakness Russia is still strong enough to make sure that Caucasus is a subcomplex which functions as an insulating mini-complex inside Russia's RSC. But with the passage of time, there are all signs that Caucasus will gain its insulator status.

Conclusion

As this study tried to demonstrate RSCT is an excellent tool to study regional security. RSCT suggests that the regional level is the most important or at least as important as the global or domestic levels. But it does not require it to be the only level, or the only important level to study international security. RSCT differentiates global and regional levels and dynamics and allows for a more nuanced explanation of security developments, better explanation of how global and local dynamics interplay to produce the endproduct.

For the given study RSCT has been used to investigate the role of Turkey, Russia, EU and the US in the security of South Caucasus. While the emphasis in this research is on Turkey, the reader, the one who has read so far, would have realized that the RSCT is interactive and as such requires drawing a world

39 Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 423.
40 Ibid., 435.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 484.
43 Ibid.

apart of an individual world of each actor, if you allow me the frivolity of expression. Anyhow, the final work described the European Union, the US, Russia, along with Turkey in creating the reality in South Caucasus.

Important observation is that South Caucasus is a centered RSC, with Russia as its center. And, according to RSCT in centered RSCs classical balance of power dynamic is suppressed. But an important development here is that with the passage of time Russia will be more and more challenged in its RSC, by growing EU-Europe complex bumping into it and producing one supercomplex, or GUAM contries uniting and producing a counterweight. As a reminder the first scenario will lead to the following development: with the involvement of external powers like the US and Iran a minicomplex will form as part of a EU-Russian supercomplex with countries siding either with Russia or the US/EU. Here, Turkey will be just an insulator state among two complexes which will lose its insulator function and will side with either one of the parties.

As mentioned beforehand, Turkey has been an unconventional insulator by being quite an active one. But being weak it has been unable to bring the different RSCs together into one arena. If regional powers qua potential enemies like Russia, Greece, Syria and etc., start taking Turkey seriously then transformation of RSC could be expected. Insulator states are good candidates for transformation theoretically. However, historically and empirically such cases are quite rare.[44] As such in the near future Turkey will not be able to command enough power to disturb the status quo of the Russian RSC and have to wait for developments in the EU-Europe and Russian supercomplex and the US foreign policy towards Caucasus.

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44 Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 487.