

PROJECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS

Proceedings of the Meeting Organized by AVİM on 16 December 2015





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AVRASYA İNCELEMELERİ MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR EURASIAN STUDIES

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EDITING

Hazel Çağın Elbir
Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun
Ali Murat Taşkent
İdil Aşan

PHOTOGRAPHY

Hazel Çağın Elbir

TRANSCRIPTION

İdil Aşan

DESIGN

Ruhi Alagöz

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Foreword

On 16 December 2015, AVİM (Center for Eurasian Studies) in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, organized a symposium titled “Projections for the Future of the Turkish-Armenian Relations”.

Most, if not all of the meetings on this critical subject reflect only a one-sided Turkish or Armenian interpretations of the Turkish-Armenian controversy with select audiences and participants. These meetings lack challenging exchange of ideas, since they are in essence monologues of like-minded people instead of dialogues involving people of differing opinions. As a consequence, such meetings fail to contribute to mutual understanding of a common historical past and to serve reconciliation of differences.

Bearing this important deficiency in mind, AVİM invited five scholars from Armenia and six scholars from Turkey to address an audience attended by members of corps diplomatique, representatives of the civil society, and the academic community. The core aim in organizing such an event was to establish expert-level talks that would focus on the critical political realities and developments in bilateral, regional, and global scales structured upon the principle of egalitarian, open, self-reflexive, and rational dialogue.

The meeting was divided into two major panels: the first panel focused on the “Future of the Turkish-Armenian Bilateral Relations”, while the second panel dealt with the “Future of the Turkish-Armenian Relations in the Context of Regional Developments”. The presentations touched upon several critical and contemporary issues in bilateral relations, ranging from the post-protocols developments, ongoing occupation in Nagorno-Karabakh and its implications, increasing influence of Russia over Armenia, the closed borders, and ECHR’s Perinçek decision with a focus on the future of Turkish-Armenian relations.

The background of the participants, their presentations and the discussions that followed, and the spontaneous views expressed by Turkish and Armenian scholars reflected the inherent value of dialogue. The meeting provided a platform to exchange diverse and contrasting views, help understand points of contention and try to find common grounds on the future of Turkish-Armenian relations. It also proved that dialectics, rather than trivial propaganda and monologue, can be a powerful tool for moving towards a better future.

By publishing the presentations delivered at the symposium titled “Projections for the Future of the Turkish-Armenian Relations”, AVİM hopes to contribute to the literature and the ongoing debates, and ultimately, to the normalization and reconciliation between the Turks and the Armenians.

AVİM is grateful for the time-tested partnership of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in organizing this event. AVİM appreciates and deeply thanks the participants to this event, Prof. Dr. Levon Bogos Zekiyany, Dr. Colin Dürkop, Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, Mr. Richard Giragosian, Dr. Aybars Görgülü, Dr. Alexander Iskandaryan, Mr. Ruben Mehrabyan, Mr. Styopa Safaryan and Assist. Prof. Dr. Serdar Palabıyık for their valuable contributions to an admirable goal and their scholarly integrity.

AVİM

Center for Eurasian Studies



OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Colin DÜRKOP

Head of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Office in Turkey (KAS)

Dear Ambassador Alev Kılıç, Excellencies, dear friends, good morning to all. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all also on behalf of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. We are dealing with a very, very difficult topic today and I think whenever we speak about the prospects of Turkish-Armenian relations, we have to take into consideration quite a number of aspects, facts, issues, and circumstances. It might be necessary to recall that due to the failure of the ratification process of the so-called protocols, concerning the establishment and development of diplomatic relations which had been signed already in October 2009, the chances of an improvement or normalisation of bilateral relations between Ankara and Yerevan are still at a very low point, as everybody knows. Additionally, process of rapprochement and reconciliation is complicated furthermore by the Armenian accusations of genocide which is rejected by Turkey, again this is a fact known to everyone. But I think it still remains as a stumbling stone for bilateral relations, and more recently within the context of the memorial

events of 2015, also the rhetoric had intensified and strained the tense relations even more. I think this is also a fact known to all of us.

There are many other factors which will be discussed probably within the course of today. But on the other hand, and I would like to stress this fact, there is a more open debate going on and some concrete efforts of rapprochement and of re-establishing better ties by civil society actors from both countries. This has been observed over the course of the past few years. Therefore, I think there seems to be an urgent task for NGOs and think tanks such as AVİM and also Konrad Adenauer Foundation to undertake maybe the following steps and to maintain this momentum, to encourage processes which enable a discourse and inter-societal exchanges between the two societies, and perhaps also to establish networks and networking structures by track-two diplomacy approaches or mechanisms, platforms, or networks to create an atmosphere of understanding and rapprochement and to expand existing new channels of context and conversations.

Actually, AVİM and KAS have started this collaboration towards this aim. A joint seminar was held exactly one year ago here in Ankara with our offices in Southern Caucasus and our office in Ankara. We also organised another initiative in form of a very confidential and unofficial platform for dialogue on a bilateral basis and in the sense of a confidence-building measure. Our meeting last year, where also Mr. Richard Giragosian was present for example, provided a platform for such optimistic and constructive personalities. Unofficial forums, like this one, make it possible to discuss Armenian-Turkish relations constructively in spite of the current low point of normalisation process and to openly address historic sensitivities and national traumatic issues while directing our views and efforts to the future and not only to the past. This is all about identifying common interests and challenges and how best a normalisation of bilateral relations may be accomplished. This is to say how as a first step, interstate bilateral rapprochement in a narrow sense could be achieved. Like for example, the establishment of diplomatic relations and policies of opening borders may be taken into consideration and such steps would then constitute the necessary basic prerequisite for a process of future reconciliation and convergence of re-establishment of better relations, which hopefully will take place in the long run and which has to be supported mainly again by civil societies. This is an opinion and recommendation for the future course of action that many experts frequently stress. Track two diplomacy forums or platforms such as today with this event, are an important channel of dialogue and provide an opportunity to discuss existing innovative approaches and ideas openly. In this sense, I wish this event continues with success and valuable insights for necessary follow up steps emerge as its consequence. Thank you very much.



Alev KILIÇ
Ambassador (R)
Director of AVİM

Thank you very much, Dr. Dürkop. On behalf of AVİM, I also wish to express our appreciation of cooperation and your valuable help to the realisation of this event today. Ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies. Welcome to another meeting of AVİM, Avrasya İncelemeleri Merkezi (Center for Eurasian Studies). It is indeed a pleasure to be hosting a meeting on the future of Turkish-Armenian relations today. As Dr. Dürkop mentioned, this is not the first time that we have undertaken such a venture. For example, Mr. Richard Giragosian here has been to our meetings at least twice in the past and we have had useful valuable exchanges of views. Those meetings gave us the hope and courage to further go on this way.

Today we have four guest key note speakers from Armenia, and more or less an equal number from our side. I would briefly like to inform you about the procedure

of the meeting. We shall have two panels. One in the morning and one in the afternoon, and then a concluding panel. Let's hope that it could also serve as an opening for discussions for the future. In between the two panels, we will have a lunch break.

Now, I would like to briefly introduce our panellists. Panel one will be moderated by Mr. Richard Giragosian. He is well known to most of us here. He is the founding director of the Regional Studies Center (RSC), an independent think tank located in Yerevan, Armenia. Also, he serves as a visiting professor and a senior expert at Yerevan State University Center for European Studies. He has made many contributions to a number of important research and academic publications such as Oxford's *Analytica Daily Brief*, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, *Harvard International Review*, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, and *Demokrazia*. But he is also well read in various newspapers and press. In fact, in recent times, I have come across a number of his articles, again very insightful.

Our first panel includes Professor Kemal Çiçek. He is the dean of the College of Humanities at İpek University, Ankara. He taught Ottoman and European history courses. He has published numerous books and articles in Turkey and abroad on Non-Muslim relations in the Ottoman Empire. His publications include "Living together: Muslim-Christian Relations in eighteen-century Cyprus, as reflected by the Shari'a court records", "The Great War and the Forced Migration of Armenians, and the Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization" (four volumes).

Another distinguished participant in our panel will be Mr. Styopa Safaryan. Mr. Safaryan is the founder and head of the research programmes of the Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs (AIISA). Prior to that, for many years Mr. Safaryan headed a well known Armenian think tank; The Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS). Mr. Safaryan graduated from Yerevan State University and University of York. He is a policy analyst and a politician specialised in foreign and domestic politics and security issues. He has authored or co-authored more than 10 books.

Another prominent panelist and speaker of the first panel is Dr. Aybars Görgülü. Dr. Görgülü is the project manager at Public Policy and Democracy Studies (PODEM) located in Istanbul. He has served as the program officer at Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV). He actively participates in civil society efforts aiming to normalize Turkey-Armenia relations and has several publications on Turkey's foreign policy.

We now come to Mr. Ruben Mehrabyan. Mr. Mehrabyan is the editor of A1 Plus Media in Armenia. Mr. Mehrabyan graduated from Yerevan State Medical University. He has also served in the military forces of the Republic of Armenia.

He has been working as an expert at the Armenian Center for Political and International Studies since 2003. And as an associated fellow of the Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs since 2015, he has numerous analytical and journalistic articles and interviews on Armenia's domestic and foreign policy; Regional Security and Developments, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia's relations with Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, NATO, The EU and the U.S. He has participated in numerous regional and international conferences in EU countries.

Professor Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık; he is an assistant professor and vice chair at TOBB University of Economics and Technology department of International Relations. Dr. Palabıyık received his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree in International Relations from the Middle East Technical University. He also has numerous publications such as "Sadabad Pact, An Analysis Based on Alliance Theories" and "the Emergence of the Idea of 'International Law' in the Ottoman Empire before the Treaty of Paris". He is also author of various academic articles on Turkish-Armenian relations. Most recently, he has authored a book titled 'Understanding the Turkish-Armenian Controversy 1915', published both in Turkish and in English.

Another panelist in the second panel is Mr. Alexander Iskandaryan. Mr. Iskandaryan is a political scientist and the director of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute. Mr. Iskandaryan gives lectures at the Caucasus Institute and several universities in Armenia. He is a popular political analyst on television and other forms of media. His areas of study are ethno-political conflicts, post-communist transformations and nation-building in the former USSR in general and the Caucasus in particular. He has published and spoken on the emergence of post-Soviet institutions and identities.

And we also have the panelists from our institute AVİM; Senior Specialist Mr. Aslan Yavuz Şir, Specialist Dr. Turgut Kerem Tuncel, and Specialist Mr. Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun.

We have today very distinguished guests among us.

I would like to personally welcome Ambassador of Serbia here with us, an old time friend. We will also have with us today a very distinguished participant who I trust he will take word in the final session. He is currently on his way and he will be with us at lunch and in the afternoon. That will be Archbishop Professor Dr. Levon Boghos Zekıyan, the Apostolic Administrator in Istanbul.

What AVİM aspires is to contribute to reconciliation and better understanding of each other, Turks and Armenians. We want to serve for mutual respect of co-

existence, if not friendly and good neighborly relations. We would like to serve for these ends. We have lived together as two peoples, two nations, in good times and bad times. We neither forget nor deny them. We understand each party to have their own interpretation of their memories but we strive to contribute to prevent those to be not at the expense of each other or to be mutually destructive. We believe we can build bridges over our common historical past and create positive energy in these changed and challenging times. Once again, I wish to welcome you all to our meeting. I wish well for this meeting. I hope that we will have a fruitful opportunity and occasion to exchange views and we will at least try to understand each other's views and worries and try to come to some understanding. I wish to once more thank Dr. Dürkop and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for their very valuable cooperation and assistance. Thank you all very much for being here.

PANEL I
Future of Turkish–Armenian Bilateral Relations

Moderator
Richard GIRAGOSIAN
Director of Regional Studies Center (RSC)



Richard GIRAGOSIAN

Director of Regional Studies Center (RSC)

Good morning, as the moderator of the first panel I want to extend our appreciation for your attendance this morning in what promises to be a lively and fairly interesting discussion. Now, as one of the Armenian participants I do want to reiterate our appreciation for the invitation to Ankara. In particular, I am grateful for the opportunity to work once again both with AVİM and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

In fact, in particular, both AVİM and KAS have been partners of ours for some time in exploring the normalisation issue between Armenia and Turkey. For those speakers that are unfortunate in being on my panel, as moderator I would rather focus on less than more. In other words, each speaker will be requested to limit themselves to between 10-12 minutes in order to give us ample time for discussion and a more lively exchange of views. Now, all the speakers have been graciously introduced. At this point I will turn over to our first speaker, Professor Dr. Kemal Çiçek, but with a courteous reminder that we will aim for between 10-12 minutes for each speaker. Professor, the floor is yours.



Prof. Dr. Kemal ÇİÇEK

Dean of College of Humanities at İpek University

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. First of all, I would like to thank for their kind invitation to AVIM and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. I was told that I would talk about 30 minutes but then everything changed. Luckily I didn't prepare a text. So, I am going to summarize some of the views of Turkish historians, Armenian and American independent scholars who worked on the Armenian issue. What I am going to talk about today is not my interpretation of events or my own views; I do not agree with most of the things that I am going to raise today as a point of discussion.

For the sake of time, I should start with my points one by one. The first point I would like to make is that we should be talking to each other. We have to seek dialogue between Turkish and Armenian scholars. This is my third meeting with the Armenian scholars. First one was in Armenia in 2005, my first visit to Yerevan and I had the opportunity to meet many historians and politicians, especially the politicians. Because my visit was also a part of a project by TRT to shoot a documentary about Turkish-Armenian relations which was broadcasted under the title, "Tarihin Tanıklığında Türk Ermeni İlişkileri" ["Turkish-Armenian Relations

as Witnessed by History”] or something like that, I forgot because it was 10 years ago. Anyway, it was about the history of Turkish-Armenian relations. Also, in 2006, I met with some colleagues from America from the diaspora in Oslo under the auspices of the International Relations Department at Oslo University, and it was a very fruitful meeting because we had some Dashnak representatives, Ramgavar representatives and three colleagues from Turkey who had different opinions about the interpretation of events on the Armenian issue.

The first thing to start with is that we have to set a platform for dialogue and the initiative for dialogue as was expressed by president Erdoğan some years ago when he sent a letter to the President of Armenia. I really appreciate some of the points he raised in that letter. The first one was that Turkish and Armenian people share a common geography and history. We shouldn't ever forget that Turks and Armenians lived together for quite a long time from the 11th century to the 20th century and established good relations and built a common history. Just because the First World War destroyed the lives of many ethnic groups, and also destroyed perhaps, to a great extent, the relations between Turks and Armenians, we shouldn't let this past experiences be forgotten. We must raise our heads to start new relations.

The second point in that letter of President Erdoğan was that yes, we have diverging interpretations of events that took place during a particular period of our common history, but I think first of all we have to know what each side tells about the events that separated these two groups of people from each other.

The third point in the letter was the establishment of a commission of historians. In that wish what was very important was that it aimed at establishing a joint group consisting of historians not only between Turkey and Armenia, but with independent scholars from all over the world regardless of whether they were from Armenia or Turkey.

The fourth point was that we have to share the findings of the international historical commission with the international public.

I think this meeting and the other meeting I have attended so far served to share our views with colleagues other than Armenians, and thanks to Konrad Adenauer Stiftung initiative here, for example, we may take more initiatives to bring Turkish and Armenian scholars together in the future.

What I would say about the letter of Erdoğan and the response that came from Armenia, that historical research must go on. We should never forget that history has not ended and we must pay more attention to what historians say and we should not let this problem be handled entirely by politicians and political

specialists, because their interests are limited and most of them disregard the historical relations between the two nations.

The other point I want to raise for today's discussion is that when we met with the Armenian colleagues of us before, we tried not to talk about the word "genocide" because it is an irritating word for most of us and speaking about that word often cuts the relations and ends discussions before they even start.

Today I would like to propose instead of using the word 'genocide' for the discussions; I would like to suggest another wording for this issue which is decoupling the word genocide, or the 'g' word. We should separate this wording. We should remove it perhaps entirely from our discussions, because the relations between Turkish and Armenians historians have come to a point that one side always talks about genocide, while the other counters this thesis and puts the interpretation of events without referring to this very word. Genocide thesis is, as I said, irritating because according to the Armenian history everything is crystal clear and what happened to Armenians in 1915 and 1916 was genocide. And as they stick with this interpretation or sentence, we will not go anywhere. Also, the Turkish historians are stuck with this counter genocide thesis, and argue that the labelling of the events 1915 and 1916 as genocide was legally incorrect and morally debatable. About four years ago I attended a meeting at Sussex University which was organised by Association of Genocide Scholars, and there we all talked about genocides that occurred in world history. There, we had a long talk from the president of the Association of Genocide Scholars, who enumerated about 750 genocides throughout history.

For Armenian historians also, it is getting more difficult to label the events as genocide because it is a word not referred to the events of 1915 anymore or to the holocaust but to all similar events that took place in the past. From there, I should move to the other point which is, this is my interpretation, and perhaps a summary of what I have said, there is no consensus today of labelling the events of 1915 and 16 as genocide. As I said, Armenian colleagues of us insisted on the labelling of events as genocide and they are sure that there is a consensus among historians. But when we look at the recent historiography there are diverging interpretations about the events. First of all, a colleague and also a close friend of mine, Hilmar Kaiser, he spent a lot of time in Turkey and we shared our views at the Turkish Historical Society. He was very sure of the genocide thesis when he came to Turkey. But if you check his recent publications, he has come to a point where he thinks that genocide was not a pre-planned event but developed spontaneously during WWI. So, this is a very important interpretation because I think Armenian colleagues of us have extracted or driven their thesis much more intensively from the points of Vahakn Dadrian who is very keen on arguing that the relocation policy of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was planned long before WWI

and the decision was taken at secret meeting in 1911 in Thessaloniki. So, Hilmar Keiser's finding I think is very important for us because we shouldn't take seriously the thesis of Vahakn Dadrian anymore because what Dadrian did was, he, sort of, created a history that would much more resemble the holocaust. Therefore, he created some arguments relating to the Ottoman Armenians which never occurred and had no resemblance to reality in my opinion.

Other international scholars, like Michael Mann for example are also worth mentioning. He has written a book called 'The Dark Side of Democracy' explaining ethnic cleansing. There he said that genocide requires "intent" regarding the Armenian genocide claims, but he gives some figures about the victims of the genocide thesis and there he points that two third of Armenians died during the events. On the other hand, when we check the United Nations figures released around 1920s, we see that hundreds and thousands of Armenians survived WWI. Especially, I remember a table, which showed the total Armenian population in 1922 as 3.4 million, and 1.3 million of those surviving were Ottoman Armenians. These are important figures and shows why we should discuss the number of victims as well.

Another scholar I would like to bring to your attention is Donald Bloxham and his famous book published by Oxford, 'The Great Game of Genocide'. He is a much respected historian and his points are much valued among the followers of genocide thesis, but some of the points he makes really make me laugh. For instance, he says that Armenians were not nationalist. According to him, the Ottoman Armenians were not nationalists, but the *İttihadists* who committed these crimes were *Turanists*. Last year, I published an article in the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* where I tried to show that the *Turanist* thesis, or *Turanist* labeling of *İttihadists*, is not based on any concrete evidence.

Guenter Lewy is also another international scholar, and even the title of his book is "Disputed Genocide". He gives numerous reasons there, especially one I would like to bring to your attention, against the argument that Germany was fully responsible for what happened to Armenians for being behind the decision of relocation. Guenter Lewy, having studied German sources, disputes this argument from its very foundations.

Lately, Sean McMeekin has written a book called 'The Ottoman End Game'. There, he doesn't say Armenians were not massacred to a great extent, but what is important in his book was that he shows very clearly that the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire served as a fifth column in the First World War. He numerated many reasons which forced the Ottoman Empire to take this decision of relocation. During the discussions I would like to talk more about Sean McMeekin and Edward J. Erickson's points. But for the sake of time and to leave a window for discussion, I am stopping here. Thank you.



Styopa SAFARYAN

*Head of the Research Programs of the
Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs*

Thank you very much. First of all, let me thank Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and AVİM for organising this conference, this roundtable which is indeed some sort of dialogue that we regularly need to talk to each other, even though we have different perspectives and different approaches to Armenian-Turkish normalisation and reconciliation process. I am not a historian, I am not going to go into details of history but I would like to comment on Mr. Davutoğlu's remarks that we lived in shared common geography and had common history. Today we created quite different histories and perhaps professor Çiçek's presentation was one of them, if we had some Armenian historian speaking about those facts we will have the next history. I am not judging, I am not a judge to tell which history is true but the fact is that we created these two histories. We created these two geographies as well. The first one is where Armenia lives with its allies, friends vis-à-vis its enemies and threats. Another one is created by Turkey, again, where Turkey lives with its friends and allies vis-à-vis its fears and threats. Those conflicts -historical or even modern as Nagorno-Karabakh conflict- became another serious factor impacting our relations, we have these two significant factors framing our relations and channelling our relations as well. Certainly historicism has strong influence on

bilateral relations. But we shouldn't accept that those two conflicts of far and near history generated existential issues, security issues and threats as well. For the Armenian side, of course, it is about Turkish policy vis-à-vis Armenia and particularly Turkey's policy of blockade and isolation, which is perceived by Armenians as a hostile and punishing policy. And to some extent, this unfolded situation reminds us of the existence of a state of "no war, no peace", a term that we usually use to describe Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, but to some extent, as I said, this is the state of affairs for Armenian-Turkish relations as well. Especially when blockade is well known as a form of non-declared war. That is the perception of Armenia on Turkey's Armenia policy. I do not speak on behalf of Turkey, perhaps Turkey also has its own fears from Armenia and Armenian calls and claims to recognize Armenian genocide, but anyway, this is the world, these are two histories and two geographies where we live.

This is typical for our relations, the no war no peace situation. We have a strategy that is inherent to war or war-like situations, when the parties to the conflict dream or pursue the goal of forcing the other party to capitulate. This is what we are doing now. Because of these security threats and fears and challenges that we entered into, we created two geographies and two histories. Armenia entered into alliance with Russia as well as using international recognition of Armenian genocide to decrease the asymmetry in both conflicts that are framing and channelling our relations, and to contain Turkey and the Baku-Ankara alliance. In this term, beyond regional interests of course, Turkey uses Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a tool of leverage to contain Armenia.

But at this pattern -situation or system as mathematicians would like to formulate- is this sustainable? My answer is no. Political practice and statistics for similar cases speaks for themselves. In reality, we have not much options. Either we continue mutual containment or capitulation policy, even punishing policy or some sort of proxy wars, let's use this wording as well, because we are getting happy when the other side is suffering or causing some damages to its interest. Either we normalise bilateral relations to open a sincere dialogue. Not only Armenian genocide but possible shared interests and confidence-building policies. As I said, the third option; keeping some sort of status quo is less likely. Our mutual understanding attitude and policies are too much dependent on those conflicts. Those conflicts are asymmetric with all their inherent implications, that is openness for third parties, and we see that, involvement of third countries in our conflicts, asymmetric pattern of mutual attention. This is typical for Armenian-Turkish relations because one side is just looking carefully on the other side's undertakings and policies. While for the other side, the party to the conflict is less important in this policy. Finally, we also have a vicious circle of rhetoric that is also inherent to asymmetric conflict. Those characteristics of asymmetric conflicts are well studied in political science, I don't want to go into details and

consequences that they may have, but they prove that, as I said the middle option, just keeping the situation and living on different sides of closed borders and different geographies and different histories is less likely. If some distinguished colleagues and scholars consider that scenario likely then they should also accept that this scenario will go with the first scenario. I mean, containment or capitulation scenario hand in hand. Therefore, coming to the normalisation scenario, let me conclude with some recommendations. I would say that they are not original and unique at all. They are well known in practice and in theory.

We need to transform our conflict. This is really important. Which implies, in my understanding, first of all, changing the frame. What I mean, unless the conflict does not share interests and perspectives frame the relations, then one could not expect other positive dynamics, because those conflicts and their factors will prevail and generate security threats, security interests and they will be prioritized in our domestic and foreign policies.

So that is why widening the frame is important and starting to cooperate in different spheres (energy, transport, economy, discussions on common shared interest perspectives etc.) will broaden and widen this frame and will create another platform, for not only confidence building measures, but for changing the policy signals, messages. Otherwise, as I said, security interests and concerns will prevail and remain as the only significant factor and channel relations as now.

Third recommendation; unburden the relations from issues of third countries. It is again about Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which became a tough issue on Armenian-Turkish agenda. If we speak about bilateral relations -and I like the term used in the title of our workshop- then it is funny and really ridiculous to talk about and bring third countries into the discussion. I think just to compare - some colleagues may argue this is because of Azerbaijani-Turkish connections, brother and so on- then, I will bring another example. Will Armenia use Turkish-Russian conflict in its bilateral agenda with Turkey? Would it be funny or okay? I think it would be funny to condition its relations with Turkey with third country's interests. Unfortunately because of this connection and linkage of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenian-Turkish normalisation process, we have very concerning messages on Turkish policy vis-à-vis Armenia, because in Yerevan the perception is that either Turkey is not interested in Armenian-Turkish reconciliation or this conflict is only a pretext to avoid facing bilateral issues. This is one form of interpretation you can meet in Yerevan, either the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh is used by Turkey to jump in the Caucasus and be engaged in Caucasian affairs, therefore normalisation of Armenian-Turkish relations is not a strategic goal but a technical tool for Ankara. This is another interpretation you can meet in Yerevan. Normalisation of relations with Armenia is not seen as a priority for Turkey at all and precondition of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

settlement is just assisting the national interests of strategic partners like Azerbaijan. There are so many interpretations of Turkish policy on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

My next recommendation is about diffusing the tension, and changing the messages and policy. This is what we need now. Of course, the shortest way of reconciliation will be facing the historical facts among the recognition of the Armenian genocide and as professor advised not to use this word, I do not think that it's a matter of a number of victims of genocide, it is a number of labelling, but it is about some horrible, some terrible crimes that happened. It is not what and how to describe this, and of course the better way, the shortest way of reconciliation would be the recognition of the Armenian genocide, but as given the current circumstances and background and the official stance of Turkish state, of course no one expects that to happen in the near future. But it doesn't mean that we cannot talk normalisation and confidence-building, just in parallel with some steps that are about open debate and we see that to be frank, we appreciate that and we hear different voices in Turkey right now about this period of history.

I think that the final thing I would say is, it is necessary to create a public interest regarding Armenian-Turkish normalisation and cooperation especially today we had only calculation of interest by leadership, just within regional politics and as one my Turkish colleagues formulated this. Armenian-Turkish normalisation shouldn't derive from the Turkish regional policy, I think Armenian-Turkish normalisation should be derived from the necessity of neighbourhood, and open borders.

I think, my last point would be that of course I understand that it is impossible to return to those protocols taking into account all these troubles and intractability in both countries, and mostly in Turkey of course, but on that matter if we would like to go further and to have some positive change in our dynamics then we should deliver different messages and not to use the old rhetoric and old dynamics and to bring the parties to the conflict together to start talking and discussing not only the past but the future as well.

Richard GIRAGOSIAN:

Thank you very much and thank you for being brief. Now we will turn to Aybars, in his former capacity with TESEV and now with PODEM, who has been crossing closed borders for some time. The floor is yours.



Dr. Aybars GÖRGÜLÜ

*Projects Manager at Center for Public Policy and
Democracy Studies (PODEM)*

I would like to thank AVİM and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for organizing this very timely event. Even though Turkish-Armenian relations is not the top agenda item of Turkish foreign policy these days, we have a new regional status quo after what happened between Russia and Turkey lately. The new status quo gives us new tools to analyse both Turkish-Armenian relations as well as regional developments.

I have been following Turkish-Armenian relations since 2006-2007. I worked my PhD thesis on the South Caucasus with a particular emphasis on the Turkish-Armenian relations. I have been involved in many civil society initiatives since 2007. I can say that we are passing through the most desperate times in Turkish-Armenian relations at least for the past decade. There is no enthusiasm whatsoever in either side to take the necessary steps and break the two-decades long deadlock. The Zurich Protocols can be seen as the apex of the bilateral relations so far; but the texts are ancient history now, so we should not lose time to find out who is to blame for the failure of this process. In my opinion, both sides have their legitimate excuses. But actually the protocols were not the top of the Everest Mountain, they

were just the first step. The final result would be the opening of the border and the establishment of diplomatic relations. However, both sides thought that it was the apex and they started to climb down. So the post-protocols process is where we see both sides started to distance themselves from each other.

From the very beginning, not from 1991, but when Turkey closed the border with Armenia in 1993, Nagorno-Karabakh has been the key pre-condition for the Turkish side. This was maybe the only pre-condition. We talked about the genocide issue, in my opinion the genocide is not the main problem in Turkish-Armenian diplomatic relations. Of course it is a problem between Turkey and Armenia and between Turkish-Armenian societies, but this issue can be solved in the long-term. In other words, it is a part of the reconciliation process, not the normalisation issue where Armenia and Turkey try to open the border and establish diplomatic relations. So the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict seems as the key problem. Our Armenian colleagues do not agree with the fact that we relate these two issues but they are apparently connected from Turkey's point of view.

I always argued that Turkey's foreign policy towards the South Caucasus is not determined by ideational factors such as brotherhood ties or cultural affinity. It is more like the material elements of economy, energy, and security that are the driving elements. From this perspective, the good relations with Azerbaijan are not only because of both countries share ethnic and cultural ties but it is rather material factors that are more influential. Azerbaijan is the biggest investor in Turkey and we should keep in mind that Turkey will never normalise relations with Armenia at the expense of relations with Azerbaijan.

So, these are things you all know so let us move on. I will not get into the details of civil society initiatives. There are many good initiatives happening on the ground, for example there is an ongoing Armenia-Turkey civil society consortium supported by the European Union. The previous one was supported by the USAID and it is good to see that international donors still support Turkish and Armenian civil societies that work to build ties between the two countries. The added value as well as the methodology of these projects are something we can discuss today. From my observation their impact is quite limited especially in Turkey. On the other hand, I can say that Turkish-Armenian civil society relations are much more developed than Turkish-Georgian or Turkish-Azeri civil society relations. But again, the impact of these initiatives is something that we have to discuss, what kinds of projects are approved, what is the added value, these are all open to discussion in my opinion.

Two important developments happened in the past two weeks. One is the Armenian Constitutional change; Armenia does not have a presidential system anymore, it is a Parliamentary republic now. Georgia has also made a similar

change in the past. The participation to the referendum in Armenia was not that high, almost 50% of the voters went and 63% said yes, so it is not a powerful victory. However, Armenian domestic politics was dominated by this referendum issue for quite some time. Since it is over now, there won't be any elections for at least 2 years in Armenia. I think there is room for more positive forces to come out and there can be some room for normalization in Turkish-Armenia relations.

The second important development was of course the Russia-Turkey crisis. This is something that we cannot ignore. We know Armenia is always regarded by Russia as its key ally in the South Caucasus. Armenia is the only member country to the Collective Security Treaty Organization and Eurasian Economic Union. In addition, Russia has a military base in Armenia and Turkish-Armenian border is protected by Russian soldiers. Armenia has always been a close ally to Russia. But after the latest developments, we feel that Armenia is no longer a part of the West. This is the feeling that we have in Turkey, actually. People talk about the start of a new Cold War. For a second, let us assume that it is true; Armenia will definitely be in the “Soviet Union” if there is such a war. Russian soldiers are stationed on Turkish-Armenian border and, according to what we hear in the media, 7000 additional soldiers are moved there as well. So under these circumstances, what is the added value of Turkey to normalise relations with Armenia? I think this is the question that we should ask ourselves.

After the Georgian-Russian war of 2008, there was a room for manoeuvring in the region. In other words, there was an international atmosphere facilitating the Turkey-Armenia rapprochement. The West was supporting the normalization, even the Russian Federation pretended that they gave their consent. There was some possibility there. Things have changed a lot since then. The EU and the US no longer push for the Turkish-Armenian normalisation, especially the EU is very much frustrated with Armenia with the failure of the association agreement. These days Armenia is trying to rebuild some ties with Brussels. Two weeks ago there was a delegation from Armenia visiting Brussels to improve the relations and open a new page. But on the same day there were skirmishes on the Azeri-Armenian border, it's a conspiracy theory, but it seems that Russia will not be happy about Armenia starting another round of rapprochement with the EU.

So, the status quo has changed, Turkey supports more out loud Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and also along with the worsening relations, Russia started to voice more pro-Armenian statements. A bill came for example to the Russian Parliament Duma criminalising the denial of the genocide. It is very obvious that Russians are making use of the genocide against Turkey. In my opinion such a blunt instrumentalization of the genocide issue harms the Armenians' struggle as well. I want to quote a Russian politician's sentence, he said; “Armenians hate Turks and if we allow them to liberate their Western

territories”, which is Eastern Turkey as you know, “they will do that will pleasure”. It is very apparent that Russia is making use of Armenia and they have done this in the past several times and each time it resulted in losses for Armenia. Even Russia’s presence in Eastern Syria is a security threat for Armenia today. In sum, the Armenian-Turkish puzzle is more complicated than ever.

To summarize my intervention, I would like to repeat my question: After the Russia-Turkey crisis and with the new regional status-quo, what is the added value for Turkey to continue the normalisation process with Armenia? There is no available regional atmosphere; Russia is supporting Armenia and Turkey is supporting Azerbaijan more openly than ever. I was reading a war simulation couple of days ago, this is of course the nightmare scenario but it was saying that if a war happens between Russia and Turkey, the Turkey-Armenia border will be the first line of contact. I would like to underline that we do not have a bright picture at all. There is a new regional status quo so we have to re-think Turkish-Armenian from these new lenses.

Thank you very much.



Ruben MEHRABYAN

Associate Fellow at the Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs; Editor of the First Armenian News and Analyses

Normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations: why not now? Armenia-Turkey border is the last closed one after the Cold War. The well-known football diplomacy attempt was not only abortive, but was doomed to failure just from the very beginning. Because, firstly, it's necessary to clearly separate the issue of establishment of Armenia-Turkey interstate relations from Armenian-Turkish reconciliation process. And it's worthy to mention, time has showed, that both parties, i.e. Armenia and Turkey, were pursuing different goals. Armenia was interested in a touchable and measurable result and Turkey in that process, ended with a zero result. Turkey gained the process, and Armenia gained nothing, moreover, the occurrence considerably increased mutual distrust in political ties. Armenia needed the result only existentially to considerably strengthen country's security, as well as to have an overland route to the West. The process was necessary for Turkey to reduce international pressure by the Armenia-Turkey agenda, to exert leverage on Armenia in connection with a positive image as well. Time has showed that in practice, centralizing interests of the parties failed, and

couldn't have been successful, if approaches remain the same without any tendency for a change. This refers to Ankara.

Establishment of a single-party government as a result of November 1 elections in Turkey seemed to open new possibilities to start normalization process of Armenia-Turkey interstate relations. However, it is not the case. Armenia, like before, is ready to establish interstate relations, without any preconditions. The same cannot be said of Turkey, as relations are overwhelmed by other, quite miscellaneous contexts and pretexts. These are different issues. There is an exaggerated perception in Turkey on the influence of Diaspora on Armenia's policy and Armenia's influence on Diaspora too, as well as the urgency of Russian presence in Armenia-Turkey relations. The possibility, that in Turkey's political circles likewise rhetoric with exaggerated assessments is applied to exert additional pressure on Armenia, is great. The problem of establishing interstate relations is, of course, overloaded with unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Turkey's regional policy, i.e. by unconditional support of Azerbaijan's position in that conflict, also by direct or indirect factual support of Russia's regional strategy.

Finally, do Yerevan and Ankara consider Russia an advantageous factor for normalization of ties or, however, a hindrance? And, generally, what's Russia's role in normalization of our relations and especially between us?

After the shoot-down of Russian Su-24, it's obvious that the situation has changed. And, if we regard the political process rationally, further steps to take are very simple. Turkey, which is interested in Armenia's not becoming a platform for Russia's possible activities, can take non-standard steps towards Armenia. What is more, probably, it's not preferable for Armenia, that Russia took some steps, involving Armenia in its confrontation with Turkey. Official Yerevan through Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan declared, on the one hand it's spoken of Armenia's ally and its neighbor on the other, and that Yerevan continues to follow up the developments. But in Armenian leading media, Russia was criticized for its empire policy, especially, when in Russian Duma a bill about the criminalization of the Armenian Genocide was introduced into the agenda, and Russian politicians appeared with an idea, upon which Armenia should be made a "tool" against Turkey. In fact, any Russian "bait" failed to work here. There is no any impetus from the side of Turkey yet. There are only stock announcements made in Baku by high-ranking Turkish officials, which like before, with their one-sided direction differ from OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs' joint approaches. We have what we have. And we see that the issue has not only a rational component. Otherwise clear signals could have come from Ankara on readiness of such actions, as a result of which Russian presence in Armenia would be nonsensical. Unfortunately, we don't see that, and in some cases we see just the contrary. And

Yerevan goes on holding Russia's side and Russian propaganda, in the target of manipulation of exaggerated Turkish threat, continues being a hostage of Moscow's policy.

Intrinsic trends in Turkey are of utmost importance, which don't create the necessary favorable background, which would allow provision of some shifts for establishment of Armenia-Turkey interstate relations. They include: intensification of rhetoric against the West and Europe, rise of populism in political discourses based on nationalism and Islamic factor, "Putinization" of the governing system. Turkey remains not a "solution to the problem", but "a problem itself" in the South Caucasus region and for Armenia, which is an obstacle for the EU and the US strategy, by that strengthening Russia's positions, Moscow's political and propaganda argumentations. It's not a secret that for the Putinist Russia, which has taken the road of neo-imperialism, keeping the region fragmented is of vital importance for maintaining its influence. Turkey's likewise inertial policy directly stems from Russia's, and not from the region's and Armenia's interests.

Recent developments in Russia-Turkey "divorce" lead to a revival of Turkey-EU ties, and in Turkey-USA relations the balance declines to rapprochement. These trends can have a positive background for Armenia-Turkey relations. But, of course, this is just a background, and not a process in itself.

For success in normalization of interstate relations, first and foremost it's necessary to directly clean up from adjacent issues and processes. It's very hard, but not impossible though. As I have already stated, first of all Armenia-Turkey interstate relations shouldn't be mixed with Armenian-Turkish relations. These are different issues. Nagorno-Karabakh conflict shouldn't be shuffled with it, letting it to the parties and Minsk group, mandate of which is granted by OSCE. The third party shouldn't be considered, let it be Russia, Azerbaijan or any other party, especially when it was initially clear, that the third party is not interested at all in normalization of ties between our countries. Finally, there are quite many problems in Greek-Turkish ties, but it doesn't hinder general development of Greece-Turkey relations, which comes out of interests of both states. Moreover, it doesn't put an obstacle for the two to be members of the same strategic ally, i.e. NATO. However, as we observe, this argument doesn't work in case of Armenia. And this surely has its reasons. The generated "brotherhood" rhetoric of Heydar Aliyev, Putin's former institution KGB cadre, was turned into a practical policy from pure PR. What is more, Turkey's authorities, by borrowing this rhetoric, have become its actual hostage, as a result of which Azerbaijan obtained a serious leverage in Turkey's domestic policy. And how this could be brought into action, became apparent during the football diplomacy, when Baku was directly threatening and accusing Ankara for "betrayal of its brothers." This is a more influential leverage, than the energetic one. All these obtained inertia, which have

directly conserved the conflict at large, thus Armenia-Turkey closed border has also become Armenia-NATO closed border, obtaining instead strengthening Russian military base, Armenia, which is in the center of Russian manipulations' attention, and which goes straight to receding its sovereignty. Who is the beneficiary of all these? Turkey?-No! Armenia?-No! Armenia-Turkey relations and their furthering or the region?-Again no! Does likewise order of things facilitate or approach to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution?-Just the contrary!

Radical review of approaches is needed. Speaking of brotherhood, it's noteworthy to take into consideration, that values of freedom, equality, and brotherhood are universal and refer to everyone without any discrimination, and not selective. Value and value-systemic grounding is also necessary for Armenia-Turkey relations' normalization. These are universal values, as well as common sense. But are any of these trends and warning signs noticed today?-Judging from current developments around us, unfortunately, no!

The above mentioned gives ground to expectations that, in short-term or middle-term perspective, possibilities of establishment of Armenia-Turkey relations remain at the minimal level. The circumstance of Armenian-Turkish reconciliation process is quite different. It's a lasting process, and needs continual and consistent work, periodic exchange of opinions, extension of horizontal ties—political and expert, scientific, news, cultural and other fields, requiring forbearance and optimism to realize the view and reach the final result. But the issue of Armenian Genocide is complicated, overcoming of which requires time and tolerable work.

I refrain from historical excursions, as history of Armenia-Turkey interstate relations coincides with just the second half of my life, not more. I give more importance to the future, but, at the same time, we are like a poet, who should end a quatrain, the first two lines of which have already been written. These are very sad lines. But the next two lines, continuing the written lines with sense and rhyme, should, as Americans say, have a happy ending. This is our common duty before Civilization.

Richard GIRAGOSIAN:

Thank you very much, now we will turn to the final speaker on the panel and appropriately an AVİM prominent staff member. We are doing well on time but we are aiming for 10-12 minutes. The floor is yours my friend.



Mehmet Oğuzhan TULUN
Specialist at AVİM

Listening to my Armenian colleagues, I have noticed just how differently Armenian and Turkish experts view the nature of the closed border between Turkey and Armenia. My Armenian colleagues have described Turkey's closing of the border as a "hostile and punishing policy of Turkey against Armenia" and as a "tool of leverage to contain Armenia" that promotes instability. From the Turkish perspective, however, the closing of the border between the two countries is seen as something starkly different.

I should state here very clearly that the border between Turkey and Armenia *should* be open. This is a necessary condition for the establishment and maintenance of good relations between the two neighboring countries. The opening of the border and the improvement of bilateral relations would also be of benefit to the stability of the Caucasus region and beyond. The opening of the border would present a win-win scenario for both countries.

I have to say, though, that this win-win scenario would be much more to the benefit of Armenia. The opening of the border would allow Armenia a direct route of

access to the Western world, a chance to pursue closer ties with the EU and (however far-fetched it may seem now) perhaps one day attain EU membership. It would also be a chance to create an alternative to a Eurasian formation dominated by Russia and its interests. Relations between Russia and Armenia are so asymmetrical that it threatens to turn Armenia into a garrison state for Russia. Unlike Armenia, in the current context, Turkey does not stand to gain much out of the opening of the border either in political or economic terms. I shall elaborate on this below.

Going back to the historical background, the situation was very different when the Soviet Union collapsed and Armenia achieved its independence in 1991. Turkey, showing no reservations, was one of the first countries to recognize the newly independent Armenia. Moreover, Turkey was willing provide support in the development of Armenia and its integration to the international community. The border between the two countries was open.

This situation changed dramatically with the advent of the hostilities over Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Armenia's invasion of 20% of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory forced Turkey into taking action. Turkey responded to Armenia's invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh by closing its border with Armenia in 1993.

At that time, it was the most powerful response Turkey could give to Armenia short of resorting to force, which would have dragged Turkey into a war that it did not want to become a part of. This was Turkey's way of showing solidarity with Azerbaijan and was an attempt to induce Armenia to give up its territorial claims against Azerbaijan's territories.

Since the situation over the occupation of Azerbaijan's territories by Armenian forces continues to this day, the border between Turkey and Armenia remains closed. This is the sole reason why the land border between the two countries has remained closed for the last 22 years, *nothing less and nothing more*. This stance of Turkey on the opening of borders has been confirmed at the highest level by both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey.

The protocols of 2009 signed between Turkey and Armenia seemed to offer hope that the border could be opened and bilateral relations could be improved. The protocols contained a provision for the opening of the border within two months of the protocols entering into force. There was also a provision about establishing a historical sub-commission to shed led on past events and restore mutual confidence. Turkey signed these protocols with the expectation that such a sub-commission would be established and also with the expectation that there would be a breakthrough in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This was not well-received either by diaspora Armenians or politicians in Armenia, who considered these

protocols as selling out Armenia’s position. The interpretation of the protocols by the Constitutional Court of Armenia further complicated the situation, whereby the sub-commission would be barred from discussing the nature of the 1915 events and, in essence, the opening of borders would not entail the recognition of Turkey’s territorial integrity. Obviously, this was not well received by Turkey. In the end, Armenia’s stance on these issues meant that the protocols could not be ratified, and a significant chance for opening of the border was lost.

In the current situation in which we find ourselves in, from the perspective of Turkey, there is *no incentive* for the border to be opened either in economic or political terms.

Speaking within a political context, nothing has changed in terms of the occupation of the Azerbaijan’s territories. In fact, the situation has become tenser with an increase in the sporadic border clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the build-up of both countries’ military capacity.

Armenia has made no serious attempt to withdraw its presence from Nagorno-Karabakh or the adjacent territories. Despite Armenia’s claims that Nagorno-Karabakh is a separate entity and a party to the conflict, the ECHR has established in the *Chiragov v. Armenia* case that Armenia maintains “effective control” over Nagorno-Karabakh, thereby debunking the argument that Nagorno-Karabakh is a separate entity. The Draft Resolution prepared by the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe builds up on ECHR’s assessment and heavily criticizes Armenia’s position over Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia has ran out of arguments for maintaining its occupation of Azerbaijan’s territories.

I should add that the failure regarding the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict cannot be attributed to Armenia alone. The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (US, Russia, and France) have failed to pursue a common, coherent strategy regarding the resolution of this conflict. They have not made any meaningful contribution to this issue.

Any decision by Turkey to go ahead and open the border without a breakthrough in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would shatter its relations with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan not only constitutes a brother nation to Turkey, but it also constitutes a critical economic partner and a key regional ally for Turkey. Going ahead and opening the border would mean an attempt to improve relations with its problematic neighbor Armenia at the cost of pushing the friendly Azerbaijan away – possibly to the arms of Russia. In essence, Turkey would be trading Azerbaijan for Armenia. The problem with this is, for Turkey, Armenia simply does not carry the same political, economic, or cultural weight of Azerbaijan.

What would Turkey get for trading Azerbaijan for Armenia? What kind of Armenia would Turkey win over? Currently, Armenia has turned away from the West and its values, and has turned its face firmly to Russia and its sphere of influence. It has failed to make any notable gesture of good-will, like withdrawing from any one of the occupied districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. It has produced a “Pan-Armenian Declaration” that aims to use the tragedy of 1915 as a club to beat over Turkey’s head. Its state policies, for about the last three years, have been hijacked by the “State Commission on the Coordination of Events Dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide” and the Armenia Diaspora that has an unhealthy obsession with constantly marking Turkey as an enemy.

And let us be honest, we can forget about a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh if the Turkey-Armenia border is opened, for if the border is opened, Armenia will break its regional isolation and will thus have no incentive to come to the table for a resolution to the conflict.

As it stands, opening the borders now would make it look like Turkey is bowing to the demands of an uncompromising and unfriendly Armenia.

Taking all of this into account, is it reasonable to expect Turkey to open its border prior to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

People supporting the immediate opening of the Turkey-Armenia border (without a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) like to point out that Turkey and its border cities in particular stand to make economic gains from this opening. However, this argument is invalid.

Armenia’s economy is tiny compared to Turkey’s, the trade between the two is insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

Armenia has a shrinking population (and thus workforce) of about 2.5 million people. Armenia has a GDP of about 10 billion dollars, Turkey’s is 820 billion dollars. This means that Armenia’s GDP is about 1.3% of Turkey’s GDP. Armenia’s main exports include agricultural produce and some basic materials. In the event that the border opens, Armenia lacks the resources and capital necessary to invest in any sector in Turkey. The goods that it exports are not the ones that will be of much use to Turkey. It could be argued that Armenia could act as a transit route for goods into Turkey from other countries, but this is uncertain.

Looking into the matter of trade, Turkey’s imports from Armenia amount to about 40 million dollars, while its exports to Armenia amount to about 170 million dollars. So, the current trade volume between the two countries is about 210

million dollars. This amounts to about 0.05% of Turkey’s foreign trade. As it stands, Armenia constitutes an insignificant market for Turkish foreign trade.

We could try to determine what would happen if the border was open. We could use the example of the Armenia-Iran trade volume. Like Turkey, Iran is a neighbor to Armenia. Turkey and Iran also have similarly large populations. Although not as large as Turkey, Iran nevertheless has a relatively large economy. Furthermore, Iran enjoys good relations with Armenia. So what is the trade volume between Iran and Armenia right now? 330 million dollars. So the changing of the status of the border results in a difference of about 120 million dollars in trade volume. Meanwhile, the trade volume between Turkey and Azerbaijan amounts to 4.2 billion dollars.

Is it really sensible to expect Turkey to discard its 4.2 billion dollar trade with Azerbaijan and billions of dollars’ worth of investment for the insignificant gains to be made by opening the Turkey-Armenia border -without a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

As it stands, the opening of the border between Turkey and Armenia is not on Turkey’s agenda in any way. One only has to evaluate what I have so far said to understand why this is so.

Regarding the opening of the border, some people like to appeal to emotions and argue for the opening of the border in terms of morality. They argue that people on both sides of the border are cut off from each other, preventing society to society interaction. However, we are dealing with state-to-state affairs here. The border was closed for a very specific reason. It is easy for individuals such as sitting around this table to talk, without any consequences, about the opening of the border. Put yourself, however, in the place of statesman tasked with running a country and compelled to explain his/her policies to a skeptical public, and ask yourself what you would do. When changing any policy, a state must put aside sentimentality and evaluate its actions based on their political and economic implications.

In the current context, Armenia needs to take some steps forward, and provide Turkey with political and or economic reasons to reconsider its policy on the closed border. Armenia must come to the realization that its occupation of territories rightfully belonging to Azerbaijan does not in any way bring Armenia any benefits or serve any sensible purpose. It instead hurts Armenia’s future prospects. Armenia must evaluate its Nagorno-Karabakh policy in practical terms and make changes accordingly.

Thank you for listening to my presentation.

PANEL II
**Future of Turkish–Armenian Relations in the
Context of Regional Developments**

Moderator
Ömer Engin LÜTEM
Ambassador (R)
Honorary Chairman of AVİM



Ömer Engin LÜTEM
Ambassador (R)
Honorary Chairman of AVİM

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the second session of our meeting. I will not make an introductory speech, although I want to raise some questions. First of all, we owe thanks to our Armenian colleagues who accepted our invitation and came here to discuss with us. This morning, in my opinion, we had a very good session and discussion. I hope that it will be the same this afternoon as well.

I should also thank the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, without their help and assistance this meeting could not have taken place.

The research on the Armenian question in Turkey began years ago within the Turkish Historical Society and was later continued by some NGOs, among them the Institute of Armenian Research, which later changed its name and became AVİM, the Center for Eurasian Studies. Today, half of AVİM's works is on Armenian issues. As there are many difference of views on the Armenian question, it is extremely difficult to study this subject, it's like climbing the Mount Ararat, but by working very hard we are trying to do it. However, I should say that after

fifteen years we haven't reached the top of the mountain, not even the half of the way. But we keep on going.

You know that we are publishing two academic journals on Armenian issues. The first one, in Turkish, is named *Ermeni Araştırmaları*. First published in 2001, this journal has now reached 53 issues. Altogether, it is about 10,000 pages. We have also an English version of it, *Review of the Armenian Studies*, with 32 issues, totaling about 5,000 pages. It seems huge, but I have the impression that we have still not done enough.

This is because Turkish-Armenian relations are very complicated, and first of all, very old.

We are accustomed always to talk about the last century, but Turkish-Armenian relations are much older than that, going back about nine centuries. Consequently, the field of research is very wide and diversified.

Returning to present day, I should say that on the official field, I mean on the state-to-state relations, there is not much in terms of developments. In fact, our relations are more or less frozen. That's why it is very important that non-official bodies, NGOs, try to contact each other to exchange views etc. That is what we are trying to do now. I learnt this morning that the number of meetings between Turkish and Armenian NGOs are much more than the meetings between Turkish and Azerbaijani and Georgian NGOs. I am glad to hear that, and I find it very normal because we do not have much problems with Azerbaijanis or Georgians, but have difficult and very serious ones with the Armenians.

The new developments in Armenia will most probably create news problems for our relations. Nobody raised it this morning, but Armenia's membership to the Eurasian Economic Union will affect our relations. For instance, it will be more difficult in the future to export to Armenia because of the new custom tariffs. On the other hand, new developments on the Turkish-Russian relations will influence our relations. It's probable that the normalization process between our countries will be further delayed and the much expected reconciliation could almost disappear from our agenda. Briefly, it will be more difficult for Turks and Armenians to find solutions to their already very difficult problems. These are the points that I wanted to raise for the moment.

For this session we have five speakers. I will be more generous than Mr. Giragossian who allowed 10-12 minutes for each speech. As we have more time I will give about 20, with tolerance, 25 minutes to each speaker.

The first speaker will be Assistant Professor Dr. Palabıyık.



Assist. Prof. Dr. Serdar PALABIYIK
TOBB ETU International Relations

Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to thank AVİM and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for inviting me to this conference on Turkish-Armenian relations. In the next 20 minutes, I would like to analyse the post-protocols era in Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. What I will do briefly is this: I will, first of all, focus on the international and domestic environment that led us to the 2009 protocols and then I will briefly focus on the 2009 protocols which were signed but not ratified, then I will focus a bit on the unilateral attempts from Turkey after 2009 and the Armenian policy of ‘complementarity’, in other words, trying to find a balance between the West and Russia. And then, I will focus on the current situation, mainly the centennial, hundredth anniversary of the “Armenian genocide” and “Battles of Gallipoli”, which is commemorated on a similar date. And then, I will tell briefly about the prospects for the future and what can be done. I am one of the few optimists in Turkey with regard to Turkish-Armenian reconciliation, so the main idea of my presentation will be that we have made something until now and we can proceed based on what we have done.

Well, to start with the international transformation, first and foremost, in the 2000s, developments at the international level made the Caucasus a very significant region in world politics and the basic reason for that is the transformation of the Caucasus region into an energy hub for Western markets. In other words, the pipeline projects which are designed to transport the Central Asian natural resources to the Western markets make the Caucasus a very significant region. This also increased the rivalry between Russia and the US over energy transportation projects and this rivalry has dramatic implications on Turkish-Armenian relations as well. Coming to the domestic level, in the 2000s, Turkey changed its orientation from Central Asia to the Caucasus and there are several reasons for that. In the 1990s, Turkey's main focus was not the Caucasus but Central Asia, but in the 2000s the Caucasus became more prominent in Turkish foreign policy. One reason was the famous 'zero problems with neighbours' policy. Since the Caucasus is a neighbouring region of Turkey, and since there are some neighbours with which we have problems, Turkey attracted its attention on this region. Secondly, Turkish participation to the energy transportation projects, the most significant of which, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project is very important, and this directs Turkey's attention to the Caucasus. Finally, to a great extent after 2008, with the Russian-Georgian war, Turkey's concern for increasing Russian influence in the region is very important in directing Turkey's attention to the region. Coming to Armenia, indeed, in the 2000s Armenia has problematic relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan and therefore its security concerns made Armenia a very significant ally of Russia and therefore Armenian dependence on Russia increased tremendously, and these insecure borders, the Armenian-Georgian border, because of the Russia-Georgian war, makes Armenia a more isolated country. Also, there are increasing domestic problems within Armenia, particularly there are some protests with the demands of democratization or anti-corruption. Of course there is the famous frozen but unresolved crisis, the Karabakh problem. Therefore, these domestic factors have significant implications of Turkish-Armenian relations as well.

This new Turkish foreign policy outlook and the Armenian desire to balance increasing Russian pressure in the region, increased the attempts of reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia in the 2000s. There are both official channels of dialogue and civil society dialogue between Turkey and Armenia. If we start with the civil society dialogue, we have the 2001 Turkish-Armenia Reconciliation Commission attempt and 2004 Vienna Turkish-Armenian Platform. Although both have failed, they were good starting points for getting know each other. And also, in 2007 the assassination of the eminent journalist Hrant Dink resulted in a very significant emotional atmosphere in the Turkish side and although they might disagree and sometimes misunderstand his talks and writings, most of the Turks felt the grief emanating from his assassination. Therefore, Hrant Dink turned out to be a figure for further Turkish-Armenian reconciliation.

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There were official dialogue channels as well, particularly from 2001 onwards. There were bilateral talks at ministerial level. Foreign ministers came together at various international fora to discuss particularly the Karabakh issue. Also in 2003, an Armenian Chief of Staff participated into a NATO exercise in Istanbul, this was symbolic but still an important attempt for reconciliation. And in 2005, this famous Turkish Grand National Assembly offer to Armenia to establish a joint historians' commission to discuss what happened in 1915 came to the fore. All of these developments evolved into the 2008 'football diplomacy', in other words, the invitation by President Sargsyan towards Turkish President Abdullah Gül to watch the football match between Turkish and Armenians soccer teams. Similarly, Abdullah Gül invited Sargsyan to the return match held in Bursa. Therefore, the 'football diplomacy' had started.

Then came the protocols, indeed there were two protocols, one for the establishment of diplomatic relations and the second for the development of bilateral relations and, in very brief, these protocols attempted to establish diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia, and to open borders between Turkey and Armenia in two months after ratification. Third, establishment of bilateral commissions, the most significant of which is this famous historians' commission, for various fields was also decided. Finally, the protocols opted for establishing good neighbourly relations. These were the essence of the 2009 protocols.

As you all know, they were signed but not ratified. One of the most significant reasons for this non-ratification is the reactions coming from both Turkish and Armenian opposition parties. They perceived the protocols as a great concession to the other side. Therefore, Turkish opponents argued that without Armenian withdrawal from the occupied territories in Azerbaijan, opening borders should be impossible. For the Armenian opponents, joint historians' commission and the pledge not to implement policies hampering good neighbourly relations might mean abandoning the policy of working for the international recognition of the Armenian genocide, therefore, both the Turkish opposition and the Armenian opposition thought the same: many great concessions were given in these protocols. Also, there are significant reactions from Armenian diaspora and Azerbaijan and particularly for the Turkish non-ratification, Azeri reactions were very important.

Then came the decision of the Armenian Constitutional Court, which argued that these protocols could not be interpreted in a way to be in conflict with the Armenian constitution and particularly the declaration of independence and finally in February 2015, Sargsyan withdrew the protocols from the Assembly and the process came to an end. The process came to an end, but it is not the end of Turkish-Armenian relations. Although the protocols were the peak point for

Turkish-Armenian relations, and although Turkish-Armenian relations have never reached such a peak point after the protocols, there were still significant developments after 2009, I guess.

Let me briefly mention about these significant developments. First of all, let me focus on what Turkey has done after 2009. Indeed, Turkey developed several policies not only for the Armenians living outside Turkey but also for the Armenians living in Turkey as well. To start with these official policies, first of all, there was less and less reference to the Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code which regulates the punishment for insulting Turkey, the Turkish nation, or Turkish government institutions. Generally, this article was referred to for trying those recognizing the 1915 events as genocide previously, but after 2009, although not abolished, this article was never consulted. Secondly, Turkey tries to contribute to the restorations of Armenian monuments, the Armenian heritage in Turkey. The restoration of Holy Cross Church in Akdamar Island and the organisation of annual masses in September, was a very significant step I guess. Also, the Ani Citadel and Ani Cathedral were planned to be restored in collaboration with the World Heritage Organization. Also, another significant development was the returning of the properties of Armenian foundations. Not all of them have been returned yet, but there were very significant steps for the return of confiscated Armenian properties to the Armenian foundations.

These were the steps that the Turkish government have taken. Also, with regard to the Karabakh question, it was rumoured that Turkey might rejuvenate the protocols. In the Black Sea Economic Cooperation meeting held in Yerevan, it was rumoured in the Turkish press that the foreign minister offered that if Armenia withdrew from at least two rayons of Azerbaijan, then the border re-opening could be reconsidered. This was another significant step because Turkish position with this regard has been softened. And finally, the famous condolence message of, that time he was the prime minister, Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2014. It was very important, this condolence message, for the heirs of those Armenians who had lost their lives in 1915 relocation. This was again a symbolic but a very significant step taken by the Turkish decision makers. Also, the civil society dialogue has continued after 2009.

First of all, there is increasing number of Armenians visiting Turkey. The number of Armenians visiting Turkey in 2000 was below 5,000 people; in 2013 this number reached 73,000. So the number of Armenians visiting Turkey increased tremendously in this last decade and a half.

Secondly, the number of flights from Yerevan to Turkey increased and there emerged some seasonal flights from Yerevan to Antalya and from Yerevan to Bodrum. And of course, the civil society organisations organised many meetings

gathering together Turkish-Armenian and other regional stakeholders. At least, I remember two of them last year, one of them was this famous Sealed Gates conference by Hrant Dink foundation and the Political Science Faculty of Ankara University. The second one was again an AVİM-Konrad Adenauer Stiftung meeting held in December 2014 which I also attended. These conferences are a very significant for for us to discuss what we think about this issue.

What about Armenia? Indeed, Armenia followed its policy of complementarity after 2009 protocols as well. So Armenia did not give up its dialogue, it is very, very limited, but still it is a dialogue, with Turkey. Particularly after 2008 Russian-Georgian war, Turkey softened its policy towards Armenia and Armenia tried to have negotiations for an association agreement with the EU. In July 2010 the negotiations started, but as a part of this policy of complementarity, one month later, Armenia extended the Russian military presence in Armenia until 2044. So, Armenia must follow this balance between the West and Russia.

Then, in 2013 Armenia signed onto the Eurasian Economic Union which, indeed, contradicts the association agreement because of this tariff debates, therefore many commentators argued that with the Armenian participation to the Eurasian Economic Union, Armenia chose its side and ended this policy of complementarity and strictly aligned with Russia.

So, what is the current situation? We have already passed April 2015. April 2015 was a date that was very much waited in Turkey and Armenia as well. Indeed, today there are very significant problems both domestic and international, both in Turkey and Armenia and in the region, therefore my optimism is a bit decreased as a result of these developments.

The first is the change in Turkish foreign policy orientation from ‘zero problems with neighbours’ to ‘zero neighbours without problems’. So, the problems in Turkish foreign policy resulted in a very significant contradiction. Secondly, the Russian influence in Armenia after the Ukrainian Crisis of 2014 increased. Armenia experiences what could happen if a former Soviet republic insisted on participating in Western international institutions. So, like Ukraine who wanted to be a member of the European Union or NATO, this was a very significant warning for Armenia. And this upsurge of clashes in Karabakh region raised up the existential security concerns of Armenia once again.

Of course, the current Turkish-Russian contention over Syria exacerbates the situation to a great extent; particularly under these circumstances, Armenia could not risk a Russian reaction against reconciliation with Turkey. In other words, if Armenia wanted to ameliorate the relations between Turkey and Armenia, Russian approval is a must. Therefore, under these circumstances this is very hard to achieve I guess.

We have already passed the centennial quarrel between Turkey and Armenia. There were new recognitions of 1915 events as genocide and a huge commemoration at the genocide memorial to which Putin and Hollande have participated. And in Turkey you know, the Turkish government changed the commemoration of the Gallipoli wars. Traditionally they were commemorated in April 18 but it was changed. Many commentators argue that this was just a distraction, but still Erdoğan issued his message of condolences once again, this time as president, and also invited Sargsyan to Turkey because all the participants of WWI was invited to Turkey to attend this commemoration. Also the Perinçek case at the European Court of Human Rights is very important for Turkey because at least the Turkish decision makers evaluate this development as this: Denying 1915 as genocide is as legitimate as accepting it as genocide. So, at least this was a very important development. And this was my final slide. These are my proposals about what could be done. Indeed, one of the major reasons of the failure of the protocols was this; Turkish-Armenian relations are not just Turkish-Armenian relations, we have to increase the stakeholders.

Therefore, the civil society dialogue and official dialogue should be increased not only bilaterally, but also regionally. Therefore, without Azeri contribution or without Russian contribution, I guess, a Turkish-Armenian reconciliation is not much possible. So, the exclusion of Russia and Azerbaijan from regional rapprochement or reconciliation schemes is not a case. And also, we should avoid too ambitious plans for rapprochement. In other words, we should focus more on small but continuous incremental steps. For instance, opening up new fields of cooperation such as removal of hatred speech in history textbooks, organizing joint art exhibitions, concerts, technical cooperation in various fields... These small but continuous incremental steps that may contribute to a greater understanding between two sides and also we should again, as I said, enlarge the number of stakeholders in this issue. So, at the end, a stable Caucasia would create great opportunities, not only for the regional actors but also for global actors as well. Thank you very much for your attention.



Richard GIRAGOSIAN

Director of Regional Studies Center (RSC)

Thank you very much. I'm sorry I do not have a power point. But I don't have that much to illustrate. As there are five speakers, and the previous speaker did a very good job in laying out the foundation as well as the previous panel which set the context, I am going to be brief. Also, because there is not much to add specifically, but if we look at the nature of the morning panels, the morning panel on the future of Turkish-Armenian relations, we talked a great deal. This panel is the future of Turkish-Armenian relations in the context of regional developments, or I should say, *despite* regional developments in many cases. But first, I do want to reiterate a few points that my colleague made, because it is a rare example of how we fundamentally agree much more than we disagree. First is the fact that we are not talking about Turkish-Armenian relations, it is more about Turkey-Armenia relations, it is state-centric, it is state-to-state, which also means that I think, as Aybars laid out particularly, this is about normalising relations. In the words of Davutoğlu 'normalising the abnormal', but that means not reconciliation, in my opinion, nor rapprochement. Reconciliation is great, but right now it is unattainable, it is a generational investment in change. Normalisation, I see as a prerequisite or first step towards reconciliation. At the same time, we've passed what many on both sides have seen as weathering the storm of 2015. The 100 anniversary of the genocide raises expectations in many areas, from many

directions, within the Armenian government as well as the Turkish government. In many ways 2016, the passage of the 100 anniversary represents an opportunity for return to normalcy. The need to return to normalcy. Especially given a very polarised Turkey today, and in fact we are ever more hostage to Turkish domestic politics on this foreign policy issue. Another observation is the border remains closed, but we do have significant bilateral trade and direct air links. This is very important in terms of understanding the nature of the relationship. It is neither zero-sum relationship nor as black and white as some would imagine. Moreover, the lack of diplomatic relations; I would argue that Turkey suffers more than Armenia from the lack of diplomatic relations.

To be honest with you, as good as the Turkish foreign ministry is, the lack of diplomatic relations means that Turkey does not understand, nor is aware of, nor has a deep knowledge of developments in Armenia today. In many ways, the importance of civil society contacts is actually doubled or enhanced by the lack of official understanding, by the lack of official contacts and knowledge of developments in Armenia. In fact, with little contact, the lack of information tends to promote disinformation. Moreover, it prevents Turkey from having more advocates for normalising relations. Now, my other argument in support of normalisation is that for the Turkish perspective, normalisation is an attempt to correct a failed policy that has not worked. In other words, Turkey's policy of keeping the border closed, denying diplomatic relations hasn't led to any concession or compromise from Armenia, just the opposite, it promoted a siege mentality, Stalingrad style. And in fact, in many ways this has made the situation worse, not better, in terms of an environment conducive to compromise and concession, especially over Nagorno-Karabakh.

But we also see, I would argue, how far we have come. The earlier PowerPoint presentation chronologically devoted time and space to show how far we have come over the years, but also psychologically. We have come a long way, in fact, in two ways Turkey and Armenia, both sides have come too far to go backwards now. Moreover, it is probably now impossible to return to the status quo before the protocols. Because in many ways I would argue it was never supposed to be that easy or that quick. Realistically, progress to date is building momentum. It was not supposed to happen overnight, despite the bluff and bluster of diplomatic protocols. And in many ways, I would argue, the protocols are dead. It is now a time for a strategy that focuses on implementing the terms of the protocols in a more graduate way based on one key lesson learned. The key lesson learned was that Turkey underestimated Azerbaijan's reaction. And in fact, Azerbaijan in many ways, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, I'll be honest with you, is no longer directly linked, it is de-linked from Armenia-Turkey normalisation. But it is not decoupled. In other words, the indirect significance and relationship is the real challenge. In many ways, I would go as far as to say that the current burden, the challenge of

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Armenia-Turkey normalisation is not really in Yerevan, nor is it really in Ankara. It is much more in Baku, and in terms of squaring the circle, at the same time there are several factors that renew my optimism. One is the Armenian government, and to be honest this is one of the few issues I support the Armenian government, but on this issue, a policy of no pre-conditions is a rare example of prudence and statesmanship.

I am also complementary of Turkey, because Turkey's approach to normalisation is a sincere recalculation of Turkish national interest. It is not simply to please the Americans or to appease the Europeans, it is a realistic recalculation. To be honest, I am glad the American turned uninvolved. It would ruin the process, let's be honest. At the same time, let's look at Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is a unique opportunity, for me from Armenia, to actually defend Azerbaijan 100%. Azerbaijan is completely justified in two regards, at being neglected, at being insulted by Turkey during the normalisation process. In many ways, in the beginning Azerbaijan was not opposed, because in the beginning they thought it would never work. But when they did oppose, it was something where Turkey was a bit too arrogant in assuming that they could persuade the Azerbaijanis to go along. The long term benefit for Azerbaijan is helpful. Normalisation does help to build more conducive, more confident Armenia capable of concession and compromise over the occupied territories. But, at the same time, we need to understand Azerbaijan better. Azerbaijan is completely justified in its frustration from the lack of progress from the peace process. There is no progress for Azerbaijan whatsoever. We have to understand that. In fact, we also have to sometimes remind Turkey that, by the way, it is a member of the Minsk Group. Sometimes Turkey seems to forget it does have a role to play. One country proposal we are working on is to have Turkey help facilitate a Cold War style hotline, back channel line of communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan. To be honest we had, as recently as Safar Abiyev's dismissal, as Azerbaijan's longstanding Defence Minister. Now perhaps Turkey can help facilitate. At the same time, if we move on new regional context to which, to be honest, I am mandated to talk about. It is not all bad news, in other words Armenia being forced into the Eurasian Union, honestly, is much less dangerous much less punitive than I feared. The Eurasian Union is not necessarily the prison many of us feared it would be. Moreover, Armenia's position in the Eurasian Union is attractive to some in Turkey. As more than just a small Armenian economy, but Armenia as a platform to engage in the broader Eurasian Economic Union. Moreover, the closed border between Armenia and Turkey is now also a closed border between Turkey and the Eurasian Union, which is significant. At the same time, the broader positive trend in the region, Iran's re-engagement with the world, the Western brokered nuclear agreement makes this failed policy of 'no diplomatic relations and closed borders' less tenable and much less feasible. If we look at the words of President Erdoğan this week, there is now perhaps a chance for normalisation of relations between Turkey and Israel, there is perhaps room for

developments over Cyprus that actually can contribute to a more conducive environment for Armenia and Turkey. But, in many ways we have the crisis between Turkey and Russia. But actually it is not a crisis between Turkey and Russia. It is a crisis between two middle aged male politicians who are remarkably similar. In many ways, this is about egos and the two leaders who are far too similar to back down or back off. This is the problem.

It is also, in my opinion, an inherent return to a historic rivalry. The relationship, the close nature of the previous Russian-Turkish relationship, I would say was an aberration, it was an exception. That is not the norm or the default position in history of the Russian-Turkish relationship. Moreover, the crisis between Putin and Erdoğan was inevitable. It was only a question of how and when. Moreover, even the shoot-down of the aircraft was inevitable. If we look at the military conditions, the dangerous proximity of airspace, I am surprised that it wasn't an American involvement in some cases, in other words it is only a matter of time before the dangerous escalation of tension adds another round of escalation. What we see between Turkey and Russia now, however, is much less a military conflict and much more an economic, political and of course, personal conflict or clash of egos of the Titans. What we also see is in terms of our own outlook, what we are focused on. Now, we are focused on broadening the constituency for normalisation. Beyond simply liberal sectors or sectors of Istanbul or big cities like Ankara and Izmir. The constituency in terms of geography, demographics and diversity needs to be addressed. Moreover, we need to argue better why this is good for Turkey, why this is important for Turkey and the real challenge is Nagorno-Karabakh. In many ways, what Turkey needs or seeks is at least something to demonstrate progress over Nagorno-Karabakh to justify normalisation in terms of domestic Turkish politics.

In many ways, looking at the message from Erdoğan and Kalın, like Nixon going to China, Erdoğan may at some point, based on a political recalculation, take the Armenian issue and make it his, away from Gül. Because in many ways Erdoğan is a good populist politician, a street politician. Which means, he will do or say anything for political power. I can get away with saying that, but what this means in a positive way, is it depends on political recalculation. But at the same time, realistically, as tension escalates over Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan's frustration from the peace process is manifested dangerously through the force of arms and military attacks and makes us much weaker on our side to be able to give something to offer or deliver some kind of progress. But, maybe we need to think out of the box or pretend there is no box. Perhaps an Armenian unilateral withdrawal of snipers. Perhaps, beginning a series of gestures good will to build more trust and confidence. And of course, as usual, in conclusion, there is no conclusion. It is too premature for a conclusion and this is a dynamic, not static process. So now, I turn to the next speaker. Thank you.



Dr. Alexander ISKANDARYAN

Director of Caucasus Institute

So much has been said about Armenia-Turkey relations in the last 6-7 years, including by myself, that it doesn't make sense to speak at all unless one is able to find a new angle on the issue. Serdar did part of my job just 10 minutes ago. I am confident that we are familiar with the term 'rapprochement', so I am not going to present the chronology or describe the current status in detail. Rather, I would like to speak about the levels and areas in which motives for the impediments to rapprochement are concentrated in both countries. Let us start with the motives. Armenia has several major incentives for rapprochement with Turkey. One lies in the area of economics and communication. Having two of its four borders sealed is clearly a handicap. In Armenia's case, its border with Turkey is also its border with Europe, and its potential main communication route to European markets. Routes to Georgia and Iran are insufficient to serve Armenia's economic ambitions. Another major incentive, one not often mentioned but deeply understood by Armenia's elites, lies in the sphere of regional politics. Just Iran and Georgia create a very limited political environment for Armenia. Establishing ties with Turkey would include Armenia in a more varied and stimulating political context.

This is especially pressing given the special format for Georgian-Russian and U.S.-Iranian relations, and the fact that Russia and the U.S. are leading external players in the region and Armenia is keen on relating to both in the most positive way possible. I am not a great supporter of nightmare scenarios about the Eurasian Economic Union. The Eurasian Economic Union is not Eurasian, is not economic, and is not a union. We had the CIS, now we have the Eurasian Economic Union: those are formats of loyalty to Russia. We were not, are not, and will not be very interesting for Russia economically, and it is hard to find something we have in common with the Kyrgyz, or Kazakhs, or Belarusians.

Turkey's motives appear less imperative, I would say. In terms of economics or communication, Armenia does not matter a great deal for Turkey except for its less developed Eastern areas. Turkey's motivation in the rapprochement is almost entirely political and concerns Turkey's regional and European policies.

Where regional politics are concerned, the so-called 'zero problems with neighbours' doctrine has worked better for Turkey in some regions and worse in others. In the Caucasus, it has not worked and it is not going to work unless Turkey sorts out its relations with Armenia. You either relate to the Caucasus in all the complexity of its contradictions and tensions, or you do not relate to it at all. One can have brotherly relations with Azerbaijan and very nice progressive relations with Georgia but one does not become a regional player in the Caucasus unless one is able to communicate with all its countries. As far as we can see from Armenia, Turkish leadership understand this. With its size and potential, Turkey is eligible to become a key regional player in the Caucasus, at least in theory. Potentially, this can affect Turkey's successes in other geographical areas.

As to the European dimension, Turkey-Armenia relations have become part of Turkey-Europe relations due to the genocide issue. I realise that here in Turkey, many actors now believe it to be a form of manipulation by the Armenian diaspora. Yet, the fact is there: Armenia-Turkey normalisation is unlikely to disappear from the negotiation table between Turkey and the EU. My point here is that, while Armenia's incentives for rapprochement are strong and practical but also rather pressing, Turkey's potential gains from it lay on a different level. They are about Turkey's international image and success as a regional power.

In a way, it can be argued that Armenia's motivation is tactical, whereas Turkey's motivation is more strategic. I am using the present tense, although I am well aware that the normalisation process has been stagnating since 2010. When the two nations launched it, they were aware of the extent of its complexity. However, something else has been achieved. The path that Armenia and Turkey travelled to the signing of the protocols and the protocols themselves represent a new level in its relations between the two countries, and whether or not the stagnation persists

for a long time, the protocols have laid the foundations on which Turkey and Armenia can continue to build a future.

Potential impediments to normalisation were quite obvious for both countries from the very start and nothing radically different emerged during the years from the first diplomatic moves and until the freezing of the rapprochement project. What made the process especially difficult, and what I consider the main reason why it stalled, is that the impediments which were much more about *foreign* policies at the time when the process was launched, gradually became important issues and bargaining chips in the *domestic* politics of both countries. In fact, the incentives, especially in Turkey's case, lay in the field of foreign politics, whereas the main impediments arose in the domestic realm. From the very start, it was clear that Azerbaijan would be radically opposed to any kind of thaw in Armenia-Turkey relations. Indeed, it was clear even before the start of rapprochement. It was solidarity with Azerbaijan that made Turkey seal its border with Armenia in 1993 at the peak of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Until that point, Turkey-Armenia interaction had been going rather smoothly, if not very actively. Although it was quite clear by that time that the sealing of the border has not worked for Azerbaijan the way it had hoped, the very probability that the border may be unsealed was certain to cause resentment in Azerbaijan and impair its relations with Turkey. This was indeed what happened. Once more, it caused domestic repercussions in Turkey amongst actors and groups with strong feelings for Azerbaijan, and became part of domestic political discourses. As a result, part of Turkey's establishment is insisting that the settlement over Nagorno-Karabakh on terms that are favourable from Azerbaijan's perspective should be made a precondition with normalisation with Armenia. Meanwhile, the very project of 'football diplomacy' was based on the vision of normalisation without preconditions and would not have started at all had the preconditions been on the negotiation table. Something of a similar nature, if of a lesser scope, has happened in Armenia where hostility to rapprochement was originally concentrated in the diaspora, the majority of which resented the idea of Armenia having ties with Turkey until it recognizes the genocide. However, domestic Armenian elites were almost unanimously in favour of the project. As time went by, the issue also became a part of domestic politics: the Dashnaktsutyun party even stepped out of the ruling coalition in protest against the Armenia-Turkey roadmap agreed in April 2009.

One can argue that the Dashnaktsutyun had stronger ties with the diaspora than any other party in the Armenian landscape, but political moves did not end there. Attitudes to rapprochement with Turkey have by now become a symbol in Armenian politics, causing tensions and regroupings. The resulting discourse has stimulated the rise of nationalist groups, until then very marginal in Armenian society, which insist that recognition of the genocide by Turkey should be a precondition for normalisation. However, this has not yet reached the level of the

establishment, leaving hopes that Armenia may still be ready to become involved should the process resume.

Summing up, one can say that the Armenia-Turkey rapprochement is hostage to the domestic politics of both countries. Opposition groups on both sides of the border use it to criticize the authorities. It is especially handy for accusations of insufficient patriotism. In Armenia, there are widespread suspicions that Turkey has fallen prey to Azerbaijan's lobbying efforts and is suiting its policy with regard to Armenia to Baku's needs rather than its own. In the same spirit, people in Turkey suspect the Armenian diaspora of interfering with Armenia-Turkey reconciliation efforts.

Reality is more complicated, as usual. The lobbying efforts inside the two countries affect their societies and elites, meanwhile, the discourses that exist inside of each our countries about the other country are chiefly emotional. They are anything but rational; the result is a viscous circle. Mutual lack of trust and a circulation of myths and stereotypes prevent the kind of change that could potentially lead to more trust. We can see it even here, even now today. The vicious circle needs to break. In today's highly turbulent environment, there is little we can do to unseal the border between our countries, unfortunately. The mental borders are different; they can be unsealed and need to be unsealed. Otherwise, the stagnation can persist for a very long time. Thank you.



Dr. Turgut Kerem TUNCEL

Senior Analyst at AVİM

First of all, let me express my pleasure for having the chance to be in the same conference hall with prominent scholars and researchers from Turkey and Armenia to discuss matters that concern our countries and our region. Today, I will try to reflect on Turkey-Armenia relations from within a geopolitical perspective. I believe we cannot speak about Turkey-Armenia relations without taking into account the geopolitical context. Such an approach is methodologically wrong and can lead us to nowhere but wishful thinking. Therefore, instead of de-contextualizing, hence talking about Turkey-Armenia bilateral relations *per se*, I will try to contextualize Turkey-Armenia relations within the wider Eurasian geopolitics. Upon that contextualization, I will try to discuss the factors that effect and motivate the Turkish-Armenian ‘dialogue’ and make predictions about the future of Turkey-Armenia relations. But before these, I would like to bring some criticisms against the current state of Turkish-Armenian ‘dialogue’.

Since the last 7-8 years, quite many civil society initiatives targeting the facilitation of normalization between Turkey and Armenia and reconciliation between Turks and Armenians have been undertaken. By these initiatives, channels of

communication have been established between the civil societies of the two countries. As such, the importance of these initiatives cannot be ignored. However, the limits of these initiatives and the communication between Turkish and Armenian civil societies have to be acknowledged. First and foremost, although there is communication between Turks and Armenians, it is hard to say that there is a real dialogue. Indeed, monologue prevails in the communication between Turkish and Armenian civil societies.

Looking at the 7-8 years of interaction between Turkish and Armenian civil societies, we almost always see the same popular public figures that almost always replicate the same ideas and the rhetoric of empathy, conscience, and other concepts that target sentiments rather than intellects. Instead of discussing different interpretations of history and political matters that lay at the very heart of Turkish-Armenian controversy in an open, self-reflexive, and rational way, most of the time like-minded people come together and exchange their similar views. This creates an illusion of a progress in Turkish-Armenian rapprochement. However, the reality is that only a limited number of people from certain socio-cultural and political groups have engaged in these interactions and no or little real rational debate has been carried out. As such, not a dialogue, but a hollow monologue has dominated the field without a real transformative power on the societies. This is the reason why, despite so many initiatives and events, I regret to say, the distance that has been covered so far is not that great and the achievements are not solid, but actually quite fragile. Some developments that took place in this year such as the “Pan-Armenian Declaration on the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide” proclaimed ceremonially by President Sargsyan, helped nothing but to render the Turkish-Armenian relations more volatile.

In my point of view, political analysts should leave the comfort zone created by the ‘reconciliation industry’ and begin asking and reflecting on questions, which might, however, not be so comforting. To do that, we need to leave the discursive space that is built upon sentimental and moralistic elements and talk about real politics on factual bases.

We may begin an effective communication and dialogue between Turkey and Armenia probably by asking the basic questions. One of the basic questions could be whether we really need Turkey-Armenia normalization. Of course, we may ask the same question for Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. If normalization and reconciliation are short-term and long-term necessities, then we may question ‘for whom?’. In fact, this is the question I will try to reflect on today.

Considering just Turkey and Armenia, it is Armenia more than Turkey who needs a breakthrough in Turkey-Armenia relations. Surely, Armenia has proved that it can survive without normalized relations and an open-border with Turkey. However, given that two of the four state borders of Armenia are closed, and as

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Mr. Iskandaryan has mentioned, Turkish border is indeed Armenia's border with Europe, in order to improve its economic situation, to break its isolation, to connect with the West, and to gain a space for maneuvering vis-à-vis Russia, Armenia needs normalization with Turkey. Certainly the psychological factors related to the isolation of Armenia in the region should also be taken into account. Certainly, Turkey might benefit from a better conduct with Armenia, particularly with respect to diversifying its connection routes to the Caucasus and Central-Asia, and probably to debilitate the abuse of the historical disagreements between Turkey and Armenia by third-countries. Also, Turkey may benefit from diplomatic relations in terms of gaining a better understanding of Armenia and gaining a deeper knowledge of developments in this country. Yet, the same holds true for Armenia. For example, it is startling to observe that some in Armenia believe that with some ridiculous 'dialogue' projects such as "Repair Future", Turkish society would come round to Armenian point of view on the 1915 tragedy. There are some arguments about the positive economic impact of an open border between Turkey and Armenia in the underdeveloped Eastern Turkey. However, economic data does not verify these claims. Moreover, such a move may significantly deteriorate the economic relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan from which Turkey benefits a lot. The data shows that Armenian market is too small to compensate the benefits of Turkey from the Turkish-Azerbaijani economic cooperation. Likewise, Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union is not likely to be an opportunity for Turkey to access to the Eurasian Economic Union for economic, geographical, and political reasons. Overall, when compared, normalization between Turkey and Armenia is a much more essential priority for Armenia.

However, from a wider geopolitical perspective, it is the West, whose geopolitical interests have necessitated the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations. That is why particularly by means of large-scale funding of certain civil society organizations in Turkey and Armenia, the West has become the 'hero behind the curtain' of normalization and reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia. By the financial and moral support of the West, a discursive and an operational space was created within which Turkish and Armenian civil society actors are maneuvering.

Let's have a quick look at geopolitical context and the actors that hold stakes on Turkey-Armenia bilateral relations. The two conventional gate-keepers are the West and Russia. There are the newcomers, namely, China and Iran. China is the forerunner of the very ambitious project of the New Silk Road that stand for changing the Eurasian geopolitics. Iran has been an absent player for a very long time. However, following the P5+1-Iran Nuclear Deal, Iran is likely to return to the stage. The probable impact of the return of Iran is yet to be seen. Azerbaijan and Georgia are the regional stakeholders. Georgia could be conceptualized as an opportunist stakeholder; it makes the best out of the conflicts between Turkey and Armenia, and between Azerbaijan and Armenia as most of the regional trade is performed through Georgia, which, for Georgia, means transport fees and other

economic benefits. Furthermore, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia all pay very considerable attention not to create tensions with Georgia. Azerbaijan, the other regional stakeholder, is a very anxious stakeholder because of understandable reasons. Azerbaijan aims to maintain the isolation of Armenia in the region to pressure this country to end the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding regions. For this reason, attempts targeting Turkish-Armenian rapprochement are viewed with great suspicion by the Azerbaijani authorities. Although until now this policy has not brought any results, Azerbaijan still sticks to it. There is no sign showing that Azerbaijani authorities will review their approach any time soon.

Despite the plenty of actual and potential stakeholders, as I mentioned, the West, i.e., the EU and the US, have been the main facilitator of not only the civil societal interactions between Turkey and Armenia but also of the state-to-state contacts. Certainly, in that there is nothing personal; it is all about ‘business’. For the West, Turkey-Armenia normalization is important because the Turkey-Armenian fracture is the missing link for the East-West geopolitical connection. This perception developed particularly in 2000s, when pipeline projects to carry petroleum and natural gas from Central Asia to Europe emerged as real prospects and concerns over East-West connection got more intense after the 2008 August War. This is the reason why the West invests so much in normalization between Turkey and Armenia, and reconciliation between Turks and Armenians, in the long run. By that, the West also seeks to confront and confine the deepening Russian hegemony in the South Caucasus.

The Western strategy has been parallel to Turkish ambitions to regain the strategic significance it lost after the Cold War, particularly by becoming an energy hub and a transit country between the West and the East in general, and between the hydrocarbon rich countries in Asia and the consumers in Europe, in specific. The Western strategy has also complied with Armenian’s foreign policy of “complementarity”, which is a policy of balance between the West and Russia and nourishing friendly relations with the global and regional powers to situate Armenia at a central place within the network of relations among different powers by becoming a hub of convergent interests. It is these converging interests that confined and enabled the inflow of huge amounts of funds to facilitate communication and joint projects between Turkish and Armenian civil societies and open or confidential state-to-state contacts between Turkey and Armenia moderated by Western countries.

However, the crisis in Ukraine that began in November 2013 by the then Ukrainian President Yanukovich’s suspension of the preparations for the implementation of an association agreement with the European Union, followed by the Euromaidan events and the war between the Russia-backed rebels and the Ukrainian forces in

the East of Ukraine, and the Russian annexation of Crimea has dramatically disrupted the balance and the established geopolitical context in the region. In fact, the crisis in Ukraine might be one of the early reflections of the ‘new cold war’ between the West and Russia. During this process, Armenia openly supported the Russian aggression on Ukraine, hence gave clear hints about its position vis-à-vis Russia and the West.

In addition to its support to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Armenia’s U-turn to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union at the expense of its association agreement with the European Union, may lead Europe to make new assessments about Armenia. Indeed, some reports recently published by Western think-tanks show signs of such a reassessment.

Actually, at the face of such recent developments, the West may change its approach, in terms of both perceptions and conduct, to the South Caucasus and to regional countries. Actually, critical voices against Western policy towards the South Caucasus, and, particularly, EU’s European Neighborhood Policy have gotten louder recently. Experts began voicing that Europe failed to take up the challenges in the East and that EU’s East has turned into a much more unstable and insecure region, and conflicts began to threaten political and economic reforms. Critics argue that the West has fallen short to grasp the nature and importance of the regions unresolved conflicts, i.e., Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, and that it failed to come to terms with the significance of security, territorial integrity, statehood, and sovereignty for the countries in the region. Consequently, according to many, the West lost its credibility in the region for its double standards, for example, with respect to the territorial integrity of Georgia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan. At this point, we must also recall the ineffectiveness of the OSCE Minsk Group for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict throughout the years.

Overall, both the general assessments on the West’s failure in the South Caucasus and the specific assessment of the position of Armenia within this newly emerging geopolitical context may lead the West to revisit its perceptions and policies and to attain a less sympathetic stance towards Armenia.

Likewise, the situation in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, and Turkey’s Syria policy may lead the West to new interpretations about Turkey. It seems that currently Turkey and the West have different perceptions and priorities in Syria, particularly with respect to the Kurdish entity in this country. If those disagreements reach to an irreconcilable level, the West may begin questioning the Western identity of Turkey and searching for alternatives as the substitute of Turkey as a pro-Western force in the region.

To sum up, it seems to me that we are entering to a new geopolitical epoch. In this epoch, hard political realities and reasoning is likely to override the soft moral discourse. This will also be true for the Turkish-Armenia relations. In such a context, I afraid, the Russian military base in Armenia will be an issue of significance, besides other concerns, given that this base is one of the Russian assets that is encircling Turkey from all directions; by its armada in the Black, Aegean, and Mediterranean seas in the North, West and South-West, land troops and air force in Syria in the South, and the military presence in Armenia, in the East. Besides that, one must note that in 2015, Armenia have heightened the stakes with respect to the 1915 events too high. I mentioned the “Pan-Armenian Declaration on the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide” earlier and this declaration openly referred to Sevres Treaty and “Woodrow Wilson’s Arbitral Award”, the connotation of which is quite obvious. Within such an emerging geopolitical discourse, we need a new mode of communication between Turkey and Armenia; this time a real dialogue based on realistic political reasoning and self-reflexivity. I believe our meeting here today is one of the first step towards this direction.

Thank you very much for your attention. If there are unclear points in my presentation, I would be happy to reflect on these points in the Q&A session.



Aslan Yavuz ŞİR
Senior Analyst at AVİM

Thank you ambassador.

My presentation will be about the Perinçek case and its implications for the future of Turkey-Armenia relations. We have been ignoring to speak about this particular issue for a while now, although the Court has reached its final verdict almost two months ago.

But let me begin by saying that I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the future of Turkish-Armenian, I am a staunch realist about the essence of the issue at hand.

I guess you might have heard about the alleged experiment of five monkeys in a room? I might have mentioned this before, this was an experiment made in 1970s where the positivist methodology was at its height within the social sciences. The experiment included a setting where there was a banana tree and, as you might have guessed, five monkeys. Scientists put the first monkey in the room and naturally monkey climbed the tree to reach a banana. When it did, a mechanism on the tree triggered an electric shock which caused the monkey to fall down in pain. The monkey tried to climb the tree again for a second time, got electrocuted

again, and fell down again. This continued until the monkey gave up trying. While this first monkey was in the room, a second monkey was put in the same room. When this second monkey tried to climb the tree, the first monkey, having already experienced the pain that was caused by the mechanism on the tree, beat the second monkey down the tree. The second monkey, after several attempts to climb the tree but beaten by the first monkey, finally gave up trying. The scientists extracted the first monkey and put a third monkey in the room, which tried to climb the tree until the second monkey, knowing that whoever tries to climb the tree had to be stopped, beat the third monkey, which never met the first monkey who had the actual experience about the tree and the bananas. The only experience this third monkey had about its intentions to climb the tree came from the second monkey, which also did not know anything about the experience of climbing the tree. Any monkey that got in the room after that was beaten down without even knowing why.

I think we have been beating ourselves in a similar manner, and we are disconnected from the real experience. So, I am a realist in that sense. We have to understand and remember why we have to climb that tree, however painful and shocking it might be, and not forget that the memory we think we have about the past might be crippled. We are in a position to build a future for ourselves and not get lost in the past.

We went to Yerevan two months ago, we talked to you about this, and we thought that we have to reach the other monkeys in the room and that we have to talk with each other, and so, here we are.

The Perinçek Case is a very critical thing to build that future on an everlasting basis. It has been developing over time and Perinçek as you know had been convicted of a crime in Switzerland and then appealed, which in turn was rejected.

In this presentation I will first try and analyze the criminalization of the rejection of genocide allegation as a foreign policy tool. The second issue will be the essence the Perinçek Case, the initial phases of the case before the Swiss courts. The third issue will be the Judgment by the European Court of Human Rights and finally, implications of this judgment for the future of Turkish-Armenian relations.

First, I can say that the criminalization of the rejection of genocide allegations has been a foreign policy tool, and not only for the diaspora, but also for the Armenian state per se. So why and how? After 1998, the recognition of genocide allegations has clearly become a topic in the foreign policy of Armenia. This became more significant after 2004 and after the protocols with the establishment of the 100th anniversary committee, the recognition policy was at its peak.

There is a high degree of complementarity between the Diaspora’s policy and Armenian state’s policy. They are not mutually exclusive, they are harmonized and both sides use this today, despite the fact that this has not been the case in the past. The Armenian state took this current position only after the protocols. The second Pan-Armenian Forum of Lawyers in 2013 which was followed by a Pan-Armenian declaration in 2015 were the results of this harmony.

The Perinçek decision has been a serious blow to one of the main pillars of Armenian foreign policy. There are in fact two decisions before the European Court of Human Rights, but there is only one unique verdict. The Grand Chamber decision of 2015 does not refute any of the points made in the Second Chamber decision of December 2013, but confirms, details, and reinforces it. The two decisions are basically one verdict: Dr. Doğu Perinçek’s right to freedom of expression, guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights, was violated by the Swiss Government. It is final. Furthermore, it constitutes an important case-law. It also establishes a strong basis for how, in the future, European countries -it is applicable to 47 countries in Europe- should interpret the right to freedom of expression and balance between the right and its exceptions. The ECHR took the case on the basis of violation of Article 10 and concluded that;

- 1) Dr. Perinçek had never questioned the massacres perpetuated and or the relocation process during the years in question, and because his rejection of the characterization of those events as genocide is lawful, he cannot be convicted on those grounds and the Swiss courts were wrong in doing that.
- 2) He had never in fact been persecuted or convicted for inciting hatred.
- 3) He had not abused his right to openly discuss such questions, however controversial or sensitive they might be, and had not used his right to freedom of expression for ends which were contrary to the text and spirit of the convention.

The Court also said that it had not been necessary in a democratic society to subject Mr. Perinçek to a criminal penalty in order to protect the rights of the Armenian community.

In its judgment, the ECHR weighed up protecting rights of third parties and on the other, Mr. Perinçek’s freedom of expression. ECHR also had to strike a balance between two principal rights protected by the Convention; the right to freedom of expression and the right to respect for private life, taking into account the specific circumstances of the case and the proportionality between the means used and the aim sought to be achieved.

On the issue of historical debate, the Court said that the speeches made by Perinçek were of a historical, legal, and political nature that was “part of a heated debate”, “a matter of public interest”, and they did not amount to a call for hatred or intolerance.

The ECHR also said that genocide is a precisely defined legal concept, and “intent to destroy” had to be proved very clearly, thus recognizing the concept of genocide as a very narrowly defined and specific legal concept.

The Court said that there was no international law obligation for Switzerland to criminalize such statements.

Maybe most importantly, the Court declared that there is a clear difference between the Holocaust case where the applicants had denied historical facts, denied the crimes perpetuated by the Nazis for which there had been a clear legal basis, and on the other hand the 1915 events. The Court states that there was no direct link between Switzerland and the events that took place in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and the following years. This has been defined as the geographical and historical factor by the ECHR in this verdict. Thus, it also shows that the Court gave a lot of serious thought to this verdict, clarifying and detailing both the Convention and its applicability.

The Court said that the authorities had to clearly show that the decisions against Dr. Perinçek were in fact based on a social need to maintain public order, to prevent social unrest in Switzerland that might arise because of Dr. Perinçek’s statements. In its judgment, the Court says that Switzerland had failed to show this social need and there were no heightened tensions or special historical overturns in Switzerland.

The Court stated that Dr. Perinçek’s statements were not a call for hatred violence or intolerance towards the Armenians. There were no evidence that the atmosphere in Switzerland had been tense and no signs at all of a possible friction between Turks and Armenians there.

It is necessary to talk about the future implications of the Perinçek Case. An attempt to criminalize the rejection of genocide allegations is a very important pillar of Armenian foreign policy. This has failed. In the past, we have seen political, social, and legal pressure against those who do not agree with the Armenian narrative. Let’s remember some of the renowned people who suffered from such initiatives: Dr. Doğu Perinçek, Professor Bernard Lewis in France, Professor Stanford Shaw in the U.S, Prof. Justin McCarthy wherever he goes, Maxime Gauin in France and elsewhere, Sırma Oran (daughter of Prof. Baskin Oran, who himself does not hide that he accepts the Armenian narrative) -who is a politician in France, and Mahinur Özdemir -again a politician in Belgium, all of whom were very recently subjected to political pressure and discrimination caused

by a forced one-sided narrative. If there will be changes in education curriculums abroad, like in France, where children are forced to study a one-sided historical narrative, and face disciplinary action if they refuse, remains to be seen. The Court had very clearly drawn a line between the need to express yourself and make a meaningful historical discussion about the events in the past. The Court's judgment reminds us that there has to be an impartial historical debate from now on. It also shows that this is not an issue of the past, but a problem that we have to deal today.

When it comes to the implications for Turkey-Armenia relations, it is now more than evident that the Armenian Diaspora also needs a renaissance. The diasporan anti-Turkish narrative, which functions as a tool to maintain and maybe protect the dissolving Armenian identity, does not help either Armenia or the Armenian people abroad. On the contrary, this line of thinking condemns Armenia to political, economic, and strategic isolation and pushes it further away from the diaspora.

To conclude, I would like to quote a passage from a book by a renowned professor whom I presume you all know from his writings, i.e. Prof. William Schabas, which becomes more relevant today;

“...often, there is confusion between factual underpinning and its legal qualification. The term genocide has become such a loaded label that those who may disagree on its application specific facts, find themselves called deniers, even if there is little or no disagreement about the reality of events themselves, thus some who speak of crimes against humanity in Bosnia or Darfur or Cambodia, but who resist the term genocide may find themselves described as ‘deniers’, and what of disputing whether the Ukrainian family of 1930s, whose cause may have been a combination of natural and artificial, should be branded as genocide? Or the argument as to whether the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as genocide or a lawful act of war? There is a lot of abuse of language, and it is not just the racists who are responsible. Well-meaning activists for groups of victims sometimes indulge in their own forms of hyperbole. This can poison both historical and legal debate. At what point does legitimate discussion about the appropriate terminology to describe historic atrocities start to merge with vulgar racism? Law does not have to provide absolute clarity, but it should aspire to norm of some degree of predictability so that sincere academic discussion can be clearly demarcated from hate propaganda...”¹

Thank you.

1 William Schabas, “Preface,” *Genocide Denial and Law*, eds. Ladovic Hennebel and Thomas Hochman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ss. xiv-xv.

PANEL III
**Open Discussion on the Future of
Turkish–Armenian Relations**

Moderator
Alev KILIÇ
Ambassador (R)
Director of AVİM



Alev KILIÇ
Ambassador (R)
Director of AVİM

Esteemed participants, dear guests, we are now about to start the third panel of our workshop. The title is “Open Discussion on the Future of the Turkish-Armenian Relations”. Open discussion would allow, in my understanding, what could not be expressed in the two previous panels to be brought up here in this panel. Since we did not have a question and answer period for the second panel, maybe we could take it up from there and start with the question and answer focused on the second panel, and move on to a more general discussion.



Halil AKINCI - (R) Ambassador:

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman for noticing me. I have a question. Mr. Giragosian said that the key is Baku, for the improvement of Armenia-Turkey relations. I agree that the key is Baku. If we think otherwise, we will not be able to reach a solution; none of the mechanisms will start functioning. Now, if Baku is the key, at the same time we have to remember here the international law. Besides Karabakh, seven districts of the state of Azerbaijan is under occupation. Since it is Azerbaijan's territory which is under occupation by Armenia, there is little that Azerbaijan can do in the form of reconciliation, because they think that international law is on their side, they are trying to reincorporate the lost territory. Now, in order to activate the key of Baku, what does Armenia plan for reconciliation with Azerbaijan so that it can be followed by reconciliation with Turkey?

Richard GIRAGOSIAN:

Thank you for the question. The easy, short answer is that Armenia plans nothing. To be honest with you, Armenia-Azerbaijan is an unrelated separate track, from an Armenian perspective. When I am talking about Baku as key, as the obstacle being much less in Yerevan, much more in Baku than in Ankara or Yerevan, I am

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referring to how to square the circle, how to deliver a degree of progress, over Karabakh, to allow the Turkish government domestically, politically to justify implementing normalisation.

The good news is that the Turkish official position of the foreign ministry is much more flexible than what you stated. There is actually a differentiation between Karabakh on the one hand and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan on the other. I don't speak for the Armenian government, clearly. Fortunately, the Armenian government's official position in the Minsk Groups peace process is that the occupied territories are subject to the return to Azerbaijan within the negotiating process. What is not on the table is Karabakh or the Lachin corridor. Therefore, the Turkish foreign ministry has been flexible in lowering expectations, not five not three, but perhaps one or two of the occupied territories.

From the Armenian perspective, that is extremely unlikely at this point. In fact, analytically I would say the real challenge is as the escalation of the tension and military hostilities increases, that is not only a threat to regional security and stability, but it is also undermining any kind of realistic progress over any of the occupied territories. Therefore, a suggestion would be twofold; unilateral moves by Armenia, perhaps a unilateral withdrawal of snipers. Not reciprocal, but unilateral. Perhaps something to show at least as a gesture of goodwill, a half step



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forward. It probably won't be enough, regrettably. A second idea would be perhaps, re-examining the offer of a railway link to Azerbaijan. Through the occupied territories to Nakhchivan. That's perhaps unrealistic currently because that would require a reconfiguration of military positions and planning on the Armenian and the Karabakh sides. The other interesting challenge, is new.

In this peace process, the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents will meet again, fortunately. But expectations are so low that we are simply happy that they are meeting at all. Moreover, the diplomacy is the lowest minimum it has ever been. Back to basics; preventing war and keeping the peace process alive through the Minsk Group. When I was talking about Azerbaijan being justified in its frustration over the lack of progress, perhaps there is there a greater role for Turkey, as a Minsk Group member. But the other problem is, if we are looking at Nagorno-Karabakh, first or separately in terms of unlocking Armenia-Turkey normalisation, I do not think it is going to work. Because in many ways we may have to refreeze the conflict and focus more on democratization in the states of the conflict. In other words, realistically, we do not have the statesmanship in the leadership anywhere, in Armenia, Azerbaijan certainly, or Nagorno-Karabakh, capable of conceding or compromising.

So I am thinking more to tackle the Nagorno-Karabakh by exaggerating the level of progress enough to give the Turkish government the political cover. But at the same time, I disagree with the premise because in many ways, normalisation for Turkey is correcting a failed policy. In the long-run, normalisation is good for Azerbaijan, it's not a threat to their interest. This is isn't a reward to Armenia, it is a corrected policy. Or perhaps we can focus on one but not both, in other words, perhaps establishing diplomatic relations first as a standalone initiative. But overall, if we look at the military situation, this is untenable and increasingly dangerous. Moreover, one thing we didn't talk about; Russia may be more of a key than Baku now, under the current context. And to be honest, I do not expect any real breakthrough for 10 to 15 years at least. It requires a generational change of leadership of elites. For too many of the powerful, vested interests in the Caucasus ruling elites, they either came to power from Nagorno-Karabakh, came to power because of Nagorno-Karabakh, and in the Azerbaijani case, the elites are especially vulnerable since every leader until İlham Aliyev has either come to power or fell from power because of the events on the Nagorno-Karabakh battlefield. Other than that, I do not have an answer to be honest. But it should not be giving up on, it is worth fighting for.



Dr. Colin DÜRKOP:

Following up on the idea of the railway line, would it make sense to expedite this idea, to raise in the BSEC, Black Sea Economic Cooperation where all three sides come together regularly and they have an official working group on transportation? If this could be made as one of the projects to discuss, maybe this would be a way of getting something moved within this context. Apparently, BSEC is always a platform where different ideas and new initiatives can be discussed between the three sides.

Richard GIRAGOSIAN:

If we look at what was being discussed under the auspices of BSEC, under the cover of BSEC, Araz Azimov from Azerbaijan and Foreign Minister Nalbandyan from Armenia were working with the Swiss on this railway idea link to Armenia-Turkey. The Swiss were behind looking at the restoration of the railway link. The Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Azimov, he is very candid, rather prickly, but very honest. He simply said “we are not interested at all in the railway link to

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Nakhchivan, but what we are interested in is the offer of a railway link through the occupied territories to unlock the closed occupied territories”. At the time, the Swiss were also looking to the Russians as the owners of the Armenian railway network, to see if this could work as an incentive. That was before the Russian-Turkish crisis. But in terms of a broader package of regional re-integration and restoration of trade, energy and transport, it’s worth exploring.

Alev KILIÇ:

Thank you. I would like to follow up on what Dr. Dürkop said about the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation. Indeed, it is a mechanism that needs to be used or that used to be exploited, in a way. Because that is where Armenia has an office, Armenia has an ambassador, Armenia can raise its flag. So in terms of diplomatic communication, Armenia does have an ambassador in Turkey, not bilaterally in Ankara but in Istanbul within this BSEC organisation. And BSEC indeed is a mechanism, I mean everything is political nowadays, but it is predominantly an economic oriented organisation. And here we have a forum to speak of our mutual regional interests. BSEC unfortunately has been dysfunctional for some time now because of a number of crises in the region. More than one country not addressing the other country, and with this latest Russian crisis it has even become maybe worse. But from another point of view, this could bring into focus again how we can mend our ties in this very tense political situation, where do we start, we can start from again basic economics in our relations. So, I do follow up what you are thinking and I think it is worth pondering.

Styopa SAFARYAN:

Thank you very much. Three questions to three Turkish distinguished colleagues. First question goes to Dr. Serdar Palabıyık; you said that in your recommendations you stressed the importance of increasing stakeholders and with this respect some others stressed that we should increase the number of issues on our agenda, Turkish-Armenian agenda, just to add the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. We are increasing the number of issues, we are increasing stakeholders. Will we succeed in that if we are not able to, I will bring the example that Mr. Iskenderyan brought, if we are unable to deal with the lost passport of Armenian Turkish citizens, if we cannot even handle these kinds of issues and we are increasing the number of stakeholders and the number of issues as well.

My second question goes to Mr. Turgut Tuncel, you hinted that the main players are the West, the EU, the US, and Russia. If we look at all presentations, the destiny of Armenian-Turkish relations are dependent on everybody except us.



Some people say it depends on the keys in Baku, the other may say that if the key of Armenia-Turkey relations is Nagorno-Karabakh and depends on Baku, and others may say that Russia is the major player of the conflict then the key is not in Baku at all, it is in Moscow, or the Armenian side will say that if the key is Nagorno-Karabakh then go to Stepanakert. In fact, if your approach is just to wait and to expect some solution, some change in geopolitics, you said that we should follow if the major players are the EU, Russia and the US, then I can conclude that it means that nothing is dependent on us. If this enthusiasm comes from outside, how might this kind of process be sustainable for long-term or even for mid-term, if there are no internal incentives, domestic interest, and everything is dependent on other players?

My third question goes to Mr. Aslan Yavuz Şir. You interpreted the case of Perinçek and in one of your slides you stressed that genocide is a legal concept. If this is so, then why is Ankara claiming for historical commission. What can historians do if this is a matter for lawyers? And with this respect, I would like to remind that the talk in 2004 applied to the international court of transnational justice and there is a definition of legal instance, like the transitional justice court; they said that it was genocide. If this is a legal concept, if this is a legal issue and if we consider all these legal decisions in combination, then why are we still debating this issue, whether it was genocide or not. And with this respect of course, the question is this. If you are offering, it is good that we are all considering the

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implication of all kind of factors among them this decision of the ECHR. If we consider the implication of that decision then it doesn't mean that it was not genocide. It said that Perinçek has a right to express his opinion, but it didn't say that it was not genocide. So again coming to that point, it is good that we are interpreting or analysing these decisions, but even in the case of this tough problem of the Armenian genocide, they are not helpful at all, even for Turkey. Don't you think?

Alev KILIÇ:

Thank you very much. I think we have three questions and we start with Dr. Palabıyık.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Serdar PALABIYIK:

Let's start with the question of increasing the number of stakeholders. Indeed, let me simplify the problems between Turkey and Armenia. There are indeed two problems. One is the lack of diplomatic relations and the second is the closed borders. Lack of diplomatic relations depends on the negotiations between Turkey and Armenia. We need no third parties, but the Armenian Diaspora, Azerbaijan, and Russia, these three extra actors are very important because I cannot clearly imagine an Armenian foreign policy totally independent of Russian or diaspora thinking. Also, I cannot think of a Turkish foreign policy totally independent from the Azerbaijani point of view, particularly with regard to the Karabakh issue. We can talk about the lack of diplomatic relations.

The Turkish side argues that Armenia did not recognize the territorial integrity of Turkey by claiming Western Armenia, or the efforts for the international recognition of genocide is a problem for not establishing diplomatic relations between two states. These can be talked between Turkey and Armenia. Maybe Armenian diaspora might have a say on these issues because the genocide issue lies here. But the closed borders, I mean without taking into consideration the Azeri perspective, Russian perspective, and diaspora perspective no conclusion can be reached, unfortunately. Of course, the focal point is Turkey and Armenia, but the reason of the failure of the 2009 Protocols is this; we ignored Azerbaijan, Armenia ignored diaspora and Russia, and the result is nothing. So, we have to take into consideration the thinking of these extra actors as well. Whether we accept their views or not, but we have to take into consideration.

Therefore, I say for confidence building, for understanding regional politics we need each other. Not only Turks and Armenians but also Azeris, diaspora members,

and Russia as well. It is very difficult to manage all these groups since bilateral talks are even problematic, so how can we manage all these people together, but we need to. Somehow, I don't know, maybe we can discuss it but we have to because without that, particularly with regard to the closed border issue, we can achieve nothing.

Prof. Dr. Kemal ÇİÇEK:

I agree with Dr. Palabıyık because we shouldn't negate the role and importance of the third parties in this issue. In my opinion, the protocols failed because it didn't include the Armenian diaspora properly and also didn't pay any attention to the role of Azerbaijan in Turkish-Azeri relations. Here, we shouldn't forget that not only Karabakh and the seven regions around is occupied by Armenia, but also Azerbaijan is divided by Armenia, and this is very important for the Azeris. We shouldn't also forget the history that there wasn't a state called Azerbaijan 100 years ago, the state wasn't the same perhaps but the people were the same, all the world referred to them as Tatars and Tatars meant Turk to everyone at that time. Also, the diaspora, they didn't come from another planet, they were the people who were removed from Turkey and they are a part Armenian nation and the protocols neglected and negated their presence and role in this issue. Also, Ruben Mehrabyan said very important things in his talk. Yes, reconciliation and inter-



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state relations should be separated from each other, we should decouple them, and it works in some other regions.

For example, Greece announced that May 19, 1999 was the genocide of the Pontus people, and we still go and eat fish in Greek islands. That doesn't prevent us from going there and having lunch or dinner. But in the case of Armenia, yes it is easier for the Armenians to come to Turkey and enjoy, to some extent. I don't know what happens if you lose your passport, but that is another issue. It is more difficult for Turks to go to Armenia. When I was in Armenia I was always with a security escort, and I do not know if you have escort here, I don't know if anything changed. It has been 10 years since I have been there, but I hope something has changed. But we shouldn't forget these important elements in this issue.

Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan are the same state. I am not blaming anyone, as a person you are not responsible for anything. I am not responsible for anything, but if we are talking about interstate relations, we have to consider this as an important point in our discussion. Turkey and Azerbaijan are not the same nation to many Armenians perhaps, but it is for us. The third players in this issue should not be neglected as well; Russia, America, the diaspora or other actors like Iran should be on the table I think, for the solutions of the problems. They should be on the table as well, if we are going to normalise the relations between the countries in the Caucasian region, you have to invite all the parties to the table. If we are talking about establishing or setting a train line between Armenia and Turkey or between Turkey and Turkmenistan, Turkmenistan should be on the table as well. These countries were affected by the events of 1915 and 1916. WWI of course ended 100 years ago, but its impact still goes on in the Middle East and that is what we are suffering from, the current problems. If we just tie the problem to the shooting down the Russian plane we are not in the right track.

Dr. Turgut Kerem TUNCEL:

Thank you very much Mr. Safaryan. That is a very good question and I think I failed to make a crucial point clear. Your question was whether Turkey-Armenia relations are dependent on everybody except Armenia and Turkey and how these relations will be sustained, how these relations will continue. That is a very good and fair question.

My point is that, and this is actually also true for other cases, a new geopolitical context is emerging. Turkey and Armenia will be maneuvering within this newly emerging context which provides Turkey and Armenia with both some advantages and disadvantages, both opportunities and challenges.



When the normalization and reconciliation efforts started between Turkey and Armenia, who funded these initiatives? It has always been Western states or Western civil society organizations. We have to ask why these Westerners allocated so much money and resources to Turkey-Armenia rapprochement. Not even a single cent would have been allocated if the donors were not expecting some benefits. We have to realize and come to terms with that fact. But, we have to be self-critical, as well. Because we, Turks and Armenians, could not manage to do anything together on our own, the space was left to other actors. So this is our fault actually. The actors that support Turkey-Armenia normalization and reconciliation will continue to do so as long as this is to their benefit. When they think that Turkey-Armenia normalization and reconciliation is not crucial for their interests anymore, they will stop promoting the Turkish-Armenian interactions.

In my presentation, I said that the West has failed to understand the dynamics in the South Caucasus, Turkey, and Armenia. Because of that, the West provided support to some projects that would result in no good at all. I can give you several concrete examples. I mentioned the ‘Repair Future’ project in my presentation. I am sure many of the people in this conference hall know that website. Take a look at the articles that are published in this website and tell me if you really think that this website really promotes dialogue. Unfortunately many Turkish-Armenian civil society projects are more or less the same kind.

Thank you.



Aslan Yavuz ŞİR:

Thank you Mr. Chairman and thanks for these three questions Mr. Safaryan. For the first question, about the establishment of a historical commission, I think knowing about the legal definition and implications of a crime as defined by international law is the limit, and establishment of a historical commission is totally in line with this offer. Historical commission is, as the title suggests, to gather historians from both sides to discuss and share the historical events that Turkish governments define as tragic. Thus a commission of historians cannot and should not discuss a crime that has a peculiar legal definition in international law. I don't see myself as a representative of Turkish government, but I think it is better talking history together than criminalize any academic, historical discussion on 1915. That is what the Armenian diasporas all around the world try to achieve today. Turkish side thinks that what happened back in 1915 was a tragic historical event, but they cannot be defined as genocide. I think the offer to establish a historical commission to understand and learn about contrasting views about 1915 confirms that these events cannot be defined as genocide, since it is a legal term.

For the second question, what you have called International Court of Transnational Justice is in fact an International "Center" for Transnational Justice, an NGO of some sort with no legal authority. They announced a legal opinion back in 2004, with no legal implications that said statutory limitations are applicable to 1915 events, thus confirming that there was no law that defined a crime of genocide

back in 1915, thus it is impossible to convict anyone of that crime about the 1915 events. And then again, being an NGO with other motives than law, ICTJ went ahead and also speculated, as if they knew everything that is to know about this historical dispute, that if there was not statutory limitations it could have been defined as genocide. That is no legal decision, no judgment by a court of law, not even an opinion by a legitimate legal authority, but only an opinion by a self-proclaimed NGO on the matter.

Lastly, I think what I already have said in response to your question clearly shows that this particular decision by European Court of Human Rights is the most important and probably the only legal decision by a legitimate court until today. It shows how Armenian side has long been trying to suppress the emergence of meaningful dialogue and mutually acceptable historical understanding of the tragic 1915 events. It also shows the attempts in the European arena has failed and policies to politicize history and oppress Turkey and Turkish people is doomed to fail. Therefore, the Perinçek Case points out the necessity to reform one of the basic pillars of Armenian policy towards Turkey, namely recognition of genocide allegations and criminalization of the rejection of those allegations, which surely will open new ways of understanding and dialogue for the future of both countries.

**Archbishop Prof. Dr. Boğos Levon ZEKİYAN, *Apostolic Administrator*
“Sede Plena” of the Archieparchy of Istanbul of the Armenians:**

I thank especially Ambassador Ömer Engin Lütem and Ambassador Alev Kılıç for this kind invitation. I would like to make a consideration. I personally met Ambassador Lütem for the first time after the first day of the conference at Istanbul University titled “New Approaches to Turkish-Armenian Relations”. In that morning, one of the speakers had said the Ottoman Empire was very tolerant etc, and genocide was not possible. That evening, I went to this gentleman and I said “I agree with you, that the Ottoman Empire was a tolerant Empire”. But the men, the government of the time, and not only the government but also Armenian intellectuals, were on both sides drunk with the influence of the West. In my opinion, genocide as such, in its modern rigorous meaning, independently from the debate, even among the best specialists, in cases in which it effectively occurred, has its roots in a Western ideology. I am deeply convinced of this. These roots plunge mainly in the concept of ‘nation-state’ as developed, especially, in the French ideology of “la philosophie des Lumières” and the subsequent French Revolution. Nation-state is not simply a national state, even if many people, not excluding the learned ones and people responsible of Governments and States, confound the two concepts. The gentleman I addressed replied to me “oh no you are mistaken; the Ittihat Party was not French people, but Turks or Ottomans”. Of course, there was a misunderstanding! At that moment, Ambassador Lütem came



and we started talking. I think this is a very important point to make. Today also I observed some tendencies in our mental frame, on both sides, which are probably still very occidental, very Western. I think that to be able to resolve similar questions, or to come nearer to a solution, some more Eastern sensitiveness, without neglecting the Western cool in reasoning, could be useful. Sensitiveness which I am referring to is the empathy that comes from a shared history, comes from a common culture.

I'll give an example; I had about 100 students in Venice, mostly Italians but also Spanish people, French, German, and Dutch in the frame of Socrates or Erasmus. I had two Turkish students there, and at our summer course some 20 Turks. Many Armenians also came from Turkey to our Summer Course, Turkish citizens; but I am speaking now of ethnic Turks or Kurds who came and continue to come to that Course. Generally speaking, these people perceived more easily what I was saying about Armenian history and culture than my European students. Because, our history – even the respective concept of ‘nation’ between the West and our Middle Eastern tradition – is different.

So I think that this is a very basic point to make just to be able to find a common path for discussion. So for instance, in my opinion, it is in this frame that must be considered also the penalization or criminalization of genocide denialism. This

concept also needs to be defined more accurately. For instance, William Schabas, who is one of the greatest specialists in genocide studies and is one of the strongest defenders that 1915 was real genocide, admits only four genocides in the 20th century, while others, who are also eminent scholars, recognize 19 or 20 genocides in the course of the 20th century. Now, can we qualify William Schabas as a denialist, because he only recognizes four genocides in the 20th century, among which are the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust? Sincerely, at this moment I am not sure which are the two other he recognizes in the 20th Century.

That is I think the first point to pay attention, the genocide issue is a very important issue. But it must be clarified, clarified because I have the impression that on both sides, and not only on both sides but even among specialists, there is no clear definition of what ‘genocide’ is. For this reason, as I mentioned that even one of the major specialists like William Schabas holds four genocides in the 20th century, including in this the Armenian case, while other eminent specialists for instance Israel Charney holds 19 genocides. If such huge specialists do not agree, this also due perhaps, so I think, to the fact that the definition of genocide is a very complicated one. In my opinion, there are two basic definitions: the one of Raphael Lemkin and the other of the United Nations Convention, which are different from each other. In my opinion, a mistake was made even in translating the term to both Armenian and Turkish. In Armenian ‘ts’yeghaspanut‘yun’, as ‘soykırım’ in Turkish, means the same thing, that is the ‘killing of a race’, but both are not what ‘geno-cide’ meant in the definition of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Because ‘race’ is not the object of the definition given by the UN; it indicates one of the possible motivations so that a crime may be a genocide, while the object of the crime, in that definition, is a group, not necessarily a race; the race is only one of the four possible motivations. Moreover the concept of ‘group’ is not clearly defined, so that often mass media referred to recent facts of mass atrocities as genocides. In the Armenian case, it has been very often debated how many people died, how many people were executed. In my opinion, in the Armenian case its most important and most tragic dimension was the uprooting of the people from the land where their identity and culture were formed, which was not the case of Jews from Germany or Poland. The Armenian people have been uprooted from their own homeland. I mean ‘homeland’ not in a political sense, but in a cultural, identity sense.

I think both sides have to come together to develop a consensus, and I think if this problem is ever resolved, it will be resolved between Armenians and Turks. I don’t believe others can do some definitive meditation. They can help, but the problem will be resolved between Turks and Armenians. The West lacks the necessary culture or meditation. That is a problem for the West. In an article I wrote, Turks and Armenians share a common point: Those who love Armenians love Armenians

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as the most fanatic Armenian, and those who love Turks love the Turks as the most fanatic Turk and vice versa.

I am not a politician; I think however that Armenia and Turkey, both can contribute to improve international law in which there are some great gaps, for instance the status of non-territorial minorities whose recognition is insufficient at all on international level. The Ottoman tradition and the Armenian experience can help supplying this lack. In Turkey, Armenians are a non-territorial minority. This is an Ottoman heritage. And with due adaptations this can serve as a model even for the West today. Allow me, please, to give a personal example of some practical consequences that such a status may have. I use to pass at the airport by VIP, being the head of a very small community of 2000 people, even if historically relevant. Effectively, I am recognized a status as an ambassador or a minister, because the Armenian Catholic community is recognized in Turkey, in force of the Ottoman tradition, as a non-territorial minority. When I arrive at Venice, I am there as a simple traveler. Because there is no concept, in the West, of non-territorial minorities. There minorities are only territorial. The Basque in Spain, the Macars in Transylvania and so on. I think these are very important points.

Another great lack, in international law, is symbolized by the puzzle of the Karabakh issue – but also of other issues: the antinomy existing, in my opinion, between the ‘dogma’ of territorial integrity, which is like a religious dogma in Western, international law, and state law, and on the other side, the principle of auto-determination in which the first for-runners of the Karabakh Movement very strongly believed, especially Levon Ter Petrossian. I am honoured to be a friend of him as a colleague while he was a scholar at Matenadaran, I knew him. When he started the movement with his friends, I had some perplexities, if this movement would be recognized by the international community, if the problem would be resolved. And we discussed enough about this question. And he always gave me the Cyprus example, the Turkish side of Cyprus. And he even said “you have some friends, tell them, the Armenians of course, not to demonstrate against Turkish presence in Cyprus. Because it is similar to our situation in Karabakh”. I say this as an example, I do not give any evaluation if he was wrong or right. I think that Turkey also still has a problem of Cyprus. I think it has not recognized by the international community, yet. He also said, “You see, Levon, we are not a great country, we cannot contribute to change international law or reform it, we have to look for some small place for us.” We used to speak friendly about such questions relevant for international law. Turkey is of course a much greater country, in the frame of the European Council. The problem I am touching upon, for which both Turkey and Armenia can bring a good contribution to resolve a very important problem, I think. We have seen how it was resolved, at least for the time being, in Kosovo and Abkhazia, by the dictate of one or the other great power/superpower, but there was no legal solution to the problem, which I think is necessary in any

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case. Otherwise, we will have this problem every time. And I think the Karabakh issue can be a model for such problems to fill the gap in international law. And I think that even Turkey and Armenia can do much together, also because they have a common platform, coming from common geography: Anatolia and the Caucasian area, from the land itself. I am hopeful, very happy, and grateful today, because when I went to Armenia for the first time in 1978, I could not even imagine that one day in Ankara, Turkish and Armenian intellectuals would be able to get together to speak and I would be there among them. Perhaps this could be then a dream, only a dream, but a dream which I see realized today.

I thank you for your invitation and take this opportunity to greet my Armenian friends, Mr. Iskandaryan, and the other friends, especially Richard, we met in Lourdes in 1997.

Thank you again, and I hope these talks continue and maybe also someday propose some concrete steps to the respective governments.

Styopa SAFARYAN:

Thank you very much. Coming to Turgut Tuncel's questions, I should say about absence of precondition from the Republic of Armenia, in the case of the establishment of normal relationship with Turkey. I mean that, if you want to establish relationship, you establish a relationship. When you don't want to, you speak about genocide, about Karabakh, about Russia, about America, about white bears in Antarctica, and black bears in Russian forests, and so on. I mean without precondition, point one, Armenia and Turkey establish diplomatic relations. Point two, Armenia and Turkey open embassies in Ankara and Yerevan, that's all. And two signatures, nothing more. A few sentences more please. It's not a secret that Mr. Putin is not immortal. Post-Soviet age will be over with Putin's regime, and post-Russian age has already started. Are we ready for this window of change? I'm sure no. We don't even want to imagine it, because of inertia of thinking. As I see, the future of the region of Southern Caucuses is part of Euro-Atlantic mega region. I see that four countries; Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey have to be in the same system of security. It is my future vision, and I think that stone by stone, step by step to realise this vision. This is my personal opinion that I wanted to introduce to everybody. That's all. Thank you.

One sentence more, I should want that Turkey be better provider of Euro-Atlantic community's strategy, interest, and vision in the region. But, I do not see that this is not present yet, unfortunately. Well, the potential is there and the infrastructure is there, but we have to work on it.

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Alev KILIÇ:

Thank you very much. I will come back to that wish of yours, which I share totally that indeed these four South Caucasian countries should have their future in a common interest and security basket.

Prof. Dr. Ali Engin OBA, (Ret.) Ambassador, Çağ University:

Thank you Mr. Chairman, well I am a latecomer. I'm sorry to miss this wonderful opportunity. But, being able to follow the discussions and also as a student in the Istanbul University, Department of Philosophy, writing a philosophical thesis on Kant about 'peace' and the problem of peace, as a political scientist coming from all over the society, is there any philosophical look on this issue? Would there be a philosophical look?

For example, when you study Kant's 'permanent peace', which is a leading issue for integration in Europe. Mr. Mehrabyan just talked about an integration proposal among four countries of the Caucasus. When we look at the point of Kant, how he thinks about perpetual peace after the collapse of Europe, when the Napoleonic



War completely destabilised Europe. He found that democracy would provide peace, and even he went a little bit further to think about cosmopolitan ideas and global citizenship, collective attitude to the problem. In short, is there any philosophical approach to this political issue? Would it possible to think philosophically a little bit, if we will be able to raise upon this many confrontational problems and we will think about how we can bring peace, and if we look at the case from a philosophical perspective, I think we will be able to find some issues. In my opinion, as Mehrabyan has pointed out, intervention movements are the core of the peaceful settlement. If it will be possible to raise all these difficult questions that we have, if we try to unite our forces and try to get rid of the preconditions and nationalistic feeling, and try to think about peace, would it possible to reach a solution?

Dr. Colin DÜRKOP:

Any progress in these difficult relationships will just depend on the political will on both sides. If there is not such a political will prevailing, then we will have many, many more rounds like this. It is not bad, it's always good to speak and listen to the visionary ideas of monsignor [Prof. Dr. Zekiyan], I think it is very encouraging to have these views. I think that this is the bottom line, there is no need for diving into Kant in this particular difficult relationship. It is pure politics and a question of interest and value added and these kinds of things.

Dr. Alexander ISKANDARYAN:

I doubt that Putin is the reason and not the result of the situation. Putin is extremely popular in Russia. Russia has very understandable post-imperial attitudes and sentiments in the spirit of the 19th century. The Turks can understand it. Turkey built a nation-state in Atatürk times and after Atatürk, whereas Russians are still in the process. Therefore, I am not sure that it will end with the death of one person. We live in the environment in which we live. I am not sure that the Euro-Atlantic framework organisation, the NATO will still exist after 50 years or 100 years. I do know one thing: we need to act. We cannot change politics because we are not politicians. But we can change the environment in our societies, change the societies, and this will work because politicians do what society gives them permission to do. We are doing this in Turkey and in Armenia.

The first time I was in Turkey, in 1995 or 1996, I met Hrant Dink. We were eating *pilav* in his newspaper office, and he told me that he did not have a Turkish passport and couldn't go abroad. I asked him, 'Have you never been abroad?' He said, 'Never'. So I asked, 'Haven't you been in Armenia?' He said, 'Of course I



have. Armenia is my country. I've been to Malatya, I've been to Erzurum'. Back at that time, it was impossible even to say the word 'genocide' in public. Now it's different. I recently gave a lecture at Istanbul University about the genocide as a political factor in Armenian-Turkish relations. The audience asked questions, I answered them, people agreed or didn't agree, but the discussion happened. It would have been impossible just seven years ago. Turkey is changing.

As for Armenia, if seven-eight years ago you met somebody in the street in Yerevan and asked them, 'What is Turkey?', he or she would talk to you about the Ottoman Empire, Talaat Pasha and the genocide. Turkey was history. Turkey as a country did not exist on the Armenians' mental map at all. Now if you ask, people in Armenia will probably say that Turkey is bad. They might say that Turkey doesn't open its borders that it does this or that, that it supports Azerbaijan, and so on. But their image of Turkey is that of modern Turkey, not the Ottoman Empire. It is a great difference, and it is the Armenian and Turkish intellectuals that made this happen. If we keep doing our work, politicians will react, and the day will come when borders open, because you cannot have borders closed forever. Someday they will open. Whether Russia will be democratic or non-democratic, whether Iran will be open to the world, I don't know. Borders will open. We should be prepared for that day, and we should prepare that day. This is my philosophical answer to the question.

Mehmet Oğuzhan TULUN:

Speaking in terms of philosophy, when I started working on this topic, I started learning more about the Armenian and also the Turkish perspectives on this issue, and I came to the realisation that we have, in general, vastly different mental worlds in understanding history and understanding the present. When I talk to young Turkish people in conferences, or for example when I was in Erzurum, young people came up to me and they started complaining; “why are Armenians doing this, why are they pushing this genocide issue?” My response was; “because this is what they think to be true”, and this is why they act this way. It doesn’t mean that they are bad people, it is just what they believe to be true. To them, this is about pursuing justice, you have to understand this. A lot of people in Turkey do not understand this point; when Armenians talk about the genocide issue, they are sincere about it. A lot of people think “Armenians are liars”, no. A lie is when you purposely manipulate truth. When they put forward this argument, they believe it to be true and they are not liars. This may seem like a trivial distinction, but a lot of people in Turkey do not realise this. So, you said changing the environment, right? Changing the environment involves informing people about the mindset of the other person. So, I think there should be institutionalised projects about informing especially young people about how Armenians and about how Turks think about both history and the present.

Styopa SAFARYAN:

From the beginning, we know why we are here, and thankfully at least, foreign stakeholders are interested in developing these bilateral ties. I’ve been in Istanbul this year just to meet UK university alumni with Armenian alumni’s comprised of 10 people, and meeting different people in Istanbul and Ankara. The ambassador of the United Kingdom told me that we don’t want to lose Armenian-Turkish relations, at least at the level of civil society, as we lost it with the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. So, this is something we see the results of work, this is opening societies, this is opening minds and the voices that we hear, and couldn’t hear a few years ago. Now about your point, which is mine as well; political will. Yes, you are right. Process will be sustainable and will last and take place if there is a political will on both sides. Political will exists if there is a strategic goal to normalise the relations. At least to have the minimum, if not the maximum, but at least the minimum. And to reach the minimum goal, we need just very simple steps. As my friend said, establishing diplomatic relations, opening the border and as Richard Giragosian said, implementing what we wrote in those protocols, if this is really our strategic goal to bridge both societies, these divided societies, and to bridge Turkey and the region and Armenia as well.

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Armenia had three presidents with different concepts vis-à-vis Turkey. This is somehow the answer to your question as well, about preconditions. From the very beginning, Levon Ter-Petrossian announced that Armenia has no territorial claim from Turkey. Armenia does not expect that Turkey will recognize the genocide. Genocide is not on the foreign policy agenda. The only statement that displeased Ankara was, I know the reaction of that and perhaps ambassadors will prove that, when Ter-Petrossian met some representatives from the Armenian Diaspora and he was asked about international recognition, he said it's the responsibility of the Armenian Diaspora and we cannot impact on that. They have their own agenda we have our own agenda. Then, we had Kocharyan's presidency. He said that he put preconditions that we will pursue the genocide recognition as a foreign policy goal, and another statement that was made by his foreign minister, that if Turkey does not open the border Armenia will survive for hundreds of years. We criticized this statement. That was another politics. Then we have Serzh Sargsyan's presidency, which is a mix of the first and second presidents. I mean, very flexible without having international recognition on the foreign policy agenda, but not refusing that the recognition of the Armenian genocide is important for Armenia. Having this variety of foreign policy concept, Turkish policy concept, we had the same result on the Turkish side, unfortunately. I regret that the representative of the ministry of foreign affairs is not here, I understand that she might be very busy, but she said that "we would like to see what to expect from Armenia especially after constitutional change". Nothing, we did everything but we had the same result, we have the same wall and especially when the opening of the border depends on the Turkish side, exclusively, and establishing of diplomatic relations depending on both sides. This is what Yerevan is ready for. I don't know even in what way to criticize Armenian leadership to further this process. Because even in my view, everything is done. But, today we tried to analyse what was the failure of the protocols. Of course I agree with the different assessments and different opinions, but I think the major failure was that there was no public backing to the process. It's not a problem of Baku's role, or others interest and so on. There was no public interest, and we see that and we confess that.

Turkey is very busy, as the representative of the foreign ministry said, now we have a lot of troubles, it's not a priority. It was not a priority even during the protocols, as we heard different statements. I do not want to underestimate the role of Azerbaijan in Turkish foreign policy, but sorry, I don't believe that Azerbaijan dictates Turkish foreign policy. I don't think that Mr. Davutoğlu decides nothing, as not only as an architect of modern Turkish foreign policy but as a government. Sorry for saying that, but I do not believe that the minister of foreign affairs of Turkey is Mr. Mammadyarov. So, I think we exaggerate the role of Azerbaijan in normalisation of bilateral relations. With this respect, I am not saying that we will not take into account all these factors. Of course we will take them into consideration, but first of all, we should have this political will, we

should have this political interest, vision and understand that it is beneficial for both sides, and it is not measurable by money or financially in other dimensions. Of course, I am happy that although we are calling ourselves as realistic, I think that the society and ordinary people are realist who are facing each other and knowing each other better, and we know that the knowledge of Armenia in Turkey, and the knowledge on Turkey in Armenia are raising and this is at least the main optimistic note I would end my concluding remarks, saying that we should at least stop doing things that we did that affected and created this stalemate in our relations or at least the stalemate for normalisation. Very simply, we referred that it is unprecedented that the Turkish President, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered some letters for condolences called this shared pain, but on the other hand we read that in Baku recently he states that they will fight against Armenian allegations on genocide issue, that was the statement made by Mr. Çavuşoğlu.

We read that in Ankara, during the approval of the government programme, on one hand that Mr. Davutoğlu says that his government will do his best for normalisation of Armenian relations, but on the other hand we heard that Turkish stance on Nagorno Karabakh is just the liberation of all territories and so on. I think that having these messages we will not have the future for the normalisation. We will have it in future in general, but the thing is, when the future will come and what we will do for that day, for that future.

Aslan Yavuz ŞİR:

I just took a note and one of those was very critical, about the funds we need, we all need this support to implement this change around our environment, I agree. But the thing is, without the political will that you already mentioned, efforts only by civil society will only delay/undermine the real issues that we have to talk about, like the fact that you still perceive Armenia did everything they can. This is not true. Armenia did not do anything. Not before, or after the protocols. Armenia still pursues international recognition of genocide, and continues its illegal occupation in Nagorno Karabakh.

Executive Summary

The Armenian narrative of historical events during the First World War or reflections of Turkish memory of those events, as well as current prospects of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation have often been voiced in panel talks and discussions in uniform, unchallenged formations to uncontesting audiences. These have helped shape strong one-sided opinions, eventually turning into self-repetitive discourses.

As a centenary year, 2015 acquired a quality of a turning point where Armenian expectations reached their crescendo but yielded to more disappointments than achievements. With a view to contributing to constructive dialogue, AVIM invited Armenian counterparts from Armenia to hold frank exchange of countering and challenging views, breaking the established mode of convincing the already-convinced and instead searching for new ideas to find a mutually understandable common denominator.

The response from Armenian counterparts was encouraging, as they agreed to air their views in Ankara to a receptive but not like-minded interlocutors. It proved to be successful in the sense that both parties benefited from learning from each other and recognizing that what binds them is equally strong as what divides them.

Here below is an executive summary of the views expressed in this symposium.

Armenian Views

On Bilateral Relations

Turks and Armenians regularly need to talk to each other even though they have different perceptions and approaches. Due to security threats, fears, and challenges, we have created two separate geographies and histories. Turkish-Armenian relations are currently in a path of a lose-lose situation. Turks and Armenians must somehow normalize relations or both will continue to bear the negative consequences.

On the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations & Opening of the Border

Normalization is not a reward for Armenia, it is an attempt to correct a failed policy that has not worked. Closed borders have not led to concessions, but on the contrary, has promoted a siege mentality in Armenia, and deepened resentment towards Turkey. Current situation is a “no war, no peace” condition for both countries. Status quo is less likely to hold and Armenia is aware of this.

Turkey suffers more than Armenia from the lack of diplomatic relations. This is mainly because Turkey's ambitions to become a regional player can only be realized if relations with Armenia are normalized and the borders are opened. Although the border is closed, we do have significant bilateral trade and direct air link between two countries, but the economic gains of this trade and link are not significant.

On Turkey's Motivations for Rapprochement

Turkey's motivation in rapprochement is not economic, but almost only political and concerns Turkey's regional and European politics. Armenia-Turkey normalization is unlikely to disappear from the negotiation table between Turkey and the EU. Turkey's current foreign policy towards its south can benefit from such an opening in the Caucasus. Thus, if Turkey wants to become a regional player, Turkey has to communicate with all the countries in the region. Opening of borders might be a political risk for Turkey, but the potential gains are elsewhere, i.e. it will contribute to Turkey's international image and success as a regional power.

On Armenia's Motivations for Rapprochement

Armenia has several major motivations for rapprochement with Turkey, the most important of which is communication with the West. For Armenia, border with Turkey is the border with Europe. In that context, the new Armenian government is a new factor that fosters optimism. Turkey-Armenia normalization is hostage to both to the economy and domestic politics in both countries. Armenia is changing in a way that dependency on Russia is slowly beginning to be perceived as a threat. Russia's hostility towards Turkey were thus criticized in Armenia.

On the Nagorno-Karabakh Dispute

Turkey is not interested in normalization with Armenia; rather Turkey keeps Nagorno-Karabakh as a precondition and supports Azerbaijan's strategic interests. Turkey unconditionally supports Azerbaijan's position vis-à-vis Armenia and continues a policy of blockade/isolation against Armenia. Turkey also uses the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a leverage to contain Armenia. Turkey-Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh issues are not to be linked. Nagorno-Karabakh should not be trifled with, as it bears the risk of leading to a total war. OSCE Minsk Group's mandate and responsibility over the dispute must be recognized.

Occupied territories are subject to negotiation. Only Karabakh and Laçın are non-negotiable for the Armenians. Concessions such as a railway link from

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Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan and unilateral withdrawal of snipers by Armenia can be negotiated.

Armenia's decision to become a member of Eurasia Economic Union was essentially a display of loyalty to Russia, it was not a pragmatic choice.

On the Future of Turkey-Armenia Relations

The 2009 Protocols are dead. It is time to implement the terms of the protocols in a more gradual way.

Turkey and Armenia should unburden issues from the intervention of third countries. Nevertheless, the key to Turkey-Armenia normalization is much more in Baku. Turkey underestimated Azerbaijan's reaction to normalization. Azerbaijan is completely qualified in its frustration with the peace process. Azerbaijan should be convinced that normalization is good for Azerbaijan, and not a threat to its interests.

The shortest way to diffuse the tension is Turkey's recognition of the Armenian genocide. But Armenians understand that this is unlikely. Therefore, the frame of bilateral relations should be widened so as to transform the Turkish-Armenian dispute.

Turkey should understand that Armenia-Turkey relations are different from the Armenian-Turkish relations. Armenian Diaspora's influence and Armenia's dependence on the diaspora are both exaggerated.

Turkish Views

On Bilateral Relations

Incremental but courageous steps are necessary for normalization between Turkey and Armenia. No grand scheme of reconciliation seems possible today.

We are passing through the most desperate times in Turkey-Armenia relations. There is little enthusiasm on both sides to continue normalization process. In the post-Protocols period, both sides began to distance themselves.

The historical dispute between Turkey and Armenia is not about normalization between two states, but about reconciliation between two societies. It cannot be counted among the topics of bilateral political nature. Therefore, in the civil society level, changing the mindset of the people requires informing especially young

people about how the two nations think about the past and the present. Despite the fact that Turkey-Armenia civil society relations are at a more advanced stage than state-to-state relations, civil society relations have limited impact on reconciliation between societies. Both civil society and official dialogue should be strengthened to initialize a societal level dialogue.

However, we must be careful in this respect, as current Turkish-Armenian civil society relations are flawed. It is hard to say that there is a real dialogue in current civil society relations. Indeed, monologue prevails in the communication between Turkish and Armenian civil societies. The same popular public figures almost always replicate the same ideas and the rhetoric of empathy, conscience, and other concepts that target sentiments rather than intellects and practical considerations. Therefore, it is essential to leave behind the discursive space that is built upon sentimental and moralistic elements and talk about realities on factual bases.

On the political level, protocols are frozen, but not because Turkey's preconditions, rather because of Constitutional Court of Armenia's decision on the status of the historical sub-commission as defined by the 2009 Protocols and rejection to recognize Turkey's territorial integrity immediately after the signing of the Protocols. The Turkish side expects Armenia to display a political will for normalization of relations.

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) can/should be used to provide Turkey and Armenia a platform for future normalization. Utilizing BSEC would mean a return to basic economics, and might prove useful for Turkey and Armenia.

We cannot speak about Turkey-Armenia relations in the absence of the geopolitical context. Thus, it is necessary to contextualize Turkey-Armenia relations within the wider Eurasian geopolitics and take into consideration the interests of neighboring countries. For example, reconciliation without Russian/Azerbaijani contribution is not possible. The West's interests must also be taken into consideration, which seek to confront and confine the deepening Russian hegemony in the South Caucasus.

Nagorno-Karabakh Dispute

Nagorno-Karabakh is the only reason why the borders remain closed. There is no incentive for Turkey to open the border. Nothing has changed in terms of the occupation of Azerbaijan territory. As ECHR's *Chiragov v. Armenia* decision puts it, Armenia has "effective control" of Azerbaijani occupied territories. Azerbaijan is one of the biggest partners of Turkey, and has the necessary power and social connections to mobilize public opinion. Thus, normalization of relations will not come at the expense of Azerbaijan's relations with Turkey.

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OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs have failed to pursue a common, coherent strategy regarding the end of the conflict.

Armenia's Motivations for Normalization

Armenia is no more seen as a part of the West. Armenia turned her face away from the West to Russia. Russian military presence and economic influence in Armenia is getting stronger. Thus, the EU and the US are no longer pushing for Turkey-Armenia normalization. The EU has significant resentment towards Armenia, because of the recent decision to become a member of Eurasian Economic Union instead of signing an association agreement with the EU. Despite recent attempts to rebuild damaged relations, such attempts are unlikely to repair the damage in the short and medium term. Therefore, Armenia's growing isolation and dependence on Russia will continue and relations with Armenia will not be high on Turkey's agenda unless Armenia shows the political will to take the first step towards normalization.

In this respect, it is Armenia more than Turkey, who needs a breakthrough in Turkey-Armenia relations. The Turkish border is currently Armenia's only border with Europe. In order to improve its economic situation, break its isolation, connect with the West, and gain a space for maneuvering vis-à-vis Russia, Armenia needs normalization with Turkey.

Turkey's Motivations for Normalization

Turkey might benefit from better relations with Armenia, particularly with respect to diversifying its connection routes to the Caucasus and Central-Asia. Normalization could augment Turkish strategic interests, particularly by becoming an energy hub and a transit country between the West and the East in general, and between the hydrocarbon rich countries in Asia and the consumers in Europe.

Also, normalization will probably be useful in ending the abuse of the historical disagreements between Turkey and Armenia by third-countries.

Turkey-Armenia Border

The border should be open, but opening the border today and without any steps taken by Armenia towards the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh dispute would only benefit Armenia.

Economically, Turkey will not make gains from opening the border. Armenia's purchasing power and the potential as a market is insignificant for Turkey. Thus,

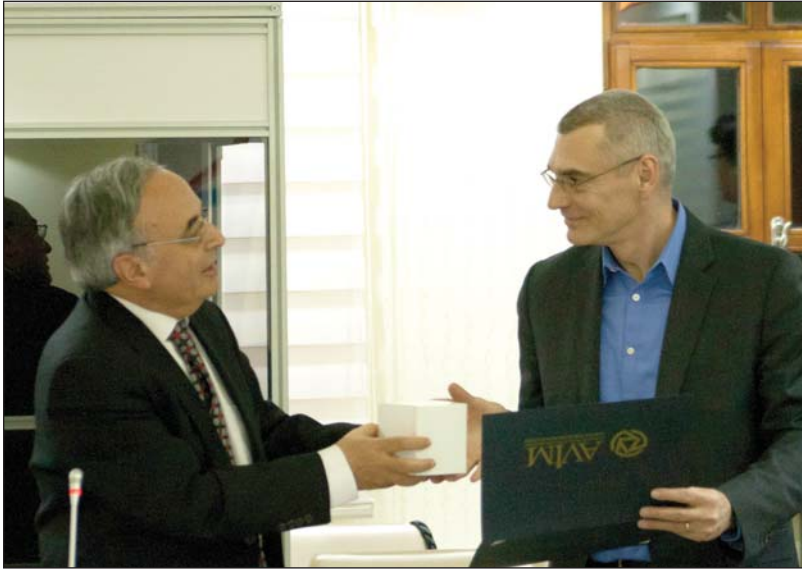
Turkey will not discard its 4.2-billion-dollar trade with Azerbaijan and billions of investment for the insignificant gains to be made from opening the border.

Politically, for Turkey, Armenia simply does not carry the same political, economic, or cultural weight of Azerbaijan. Closing the border was the most powerful response Turkey could give to Armenia. Thus, Turkey did not want to become a part of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Closing of the border with Armenia was to show solidarity with Azerbaijan, and induce Armenia to give up territorial claims. Therefore, as long as Armenia's occupation (as confirmed by the ECHR decision of 2015) continues, so does the closed borders. Therefore, Turkey will not go ahead and open the border without a breakthrough in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is essential to understand that if the border is opened as such, a resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh becomes highly unlikely, since Armenia will receive what it wants the most (opening of the border).

Armenia made no concessions on any political matters with Turkey or Azerbaijan, but announced a Pan-Armenian Declaration, allowed the Armenian state to be hijacked by State Commission on 100th Anniversary, and subjugated the Armenian people to the obsessions of the Diaspora. Therefore, Armenia needs to take steps forward and provide Turkey with political and economic reasons to reconsider the policy on the closed border.

Conclusion

There are significant hurdles to be overcome in the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. It is apparent that the two sides view the same realities in different ways. Both sides expect the other to take a step forward, and refrain from doing so since they think such a step would give the other an early upper hand. Furthermore, the normalization of relations between the two sides seems to have become embroiled in the interests of Azerbaijan, Russia, and also the West. Ignoring the interests of these third parties will most probably introduce a number of complications that will have consequences for normalization efforts. It also transpires that some form of breakthrough in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be achieved for Turkey to be willing to open the border and Armenia to become willing to take bolder steps in the conflict's resolution. Finally, fact-based dialogue (rather than emotional monologues) that takes into consideration the practical considerations of both sides need to be conducted to address the grievances of both sides. In that context, the "Projections for the Future of the Turkish-Armenian Relations" symposium is evaluated by both sides to have been an auspicious beginning and that it should be followed up.







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