

**PERSPECTIVES FOR SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE
SOUTH CAUCASUS: THE ROLE OF NORMALISATION
BETWEEN TURKEY AND ARMENIA**

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Introduction:

The disintegration of the former USSR in 1991 has created a major transformation in international relations and in the international system. The last twenty-five years have been affected by the developments in the aftermath of this tremor in the international system. One of the immediate effects of this change has been the emergence of new conflicts, particularly in the former Soviet territory. Today, those post-Cold War conflicts remain unresolved and prevent the widening and deepening of stability and security in neighboring geographical regions.

Political geography in the South Caucasus has also been affected with the post-Soviet and post-Cold War developments. The newly independent states in the South Caucasus, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia immediately embarked upon the task of establishing their sovereign and independent nation states. During the Cold War, the USSR was bordering Turkey and Iran in the region. In the post-Soviet setting of the South Caucasus, Russia, as a successor state of the former USSR found three new neighbors.

The new configuration in the South Caucasus has affected Turkey's look at the region, too. During the Cold War, Turkey's relation with the USSR was under the influence of bloc-to-bloc relationship between NATO and the Warsaw Pact and was mainly defined through the parameters of security. After the collapse of the USSR, however, Turkey ceased to have a direct land border with Russia and found three new neighbors in the region.

The three South Caucasus countries on the eastern border of Turkey gave a new opportunity for creating lines of direct transport and communication between the north and the south, as well as the west and the east. South Caucasus became Turkey's gateway to Central Asia.

Furthermore, South Caucasus has become an important region for Turkey in terms of energy, too. As Turkey is heavily dependent on energy imports, the rich hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Basin make the region an important source of supply through Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan crude oil pipeline and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline. The Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), on the other hand, gives an opportunity to Turkey to become a major hub in the east-west energy corridor by means of offering diversification of routes and supplies to Europe. This, in return, is expected to enhance EU's energy security.

Turkey's policy vis-a-vis the South Caucasus region is based on the following principles:

- Development of regional stability and security,
- Facilitation of peaceful, lasting and just solutions to the conflicts of the region,
- Support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region,
- Ensuring the sustainability of democratization as well as economic and political reform processes in the region,
- Deepening of regional and inter-regional cooperation as well as bilateral and regional economic integration,
- Strengthening of the concept of regional ownership,
- Support for the development of relations between the countries of the region and Euro-Atlantic institutions¹.

Upon these principles, Turkey's foreign policy in the region was shaped through development of both bilateral relations and multilateral cooperation schemes in South Caucasus. Turkey, after the dissolution of the USSR, recognized all the three South Caucasus post-Soviet states as sovereign and independent subjects of international law, without exception.

¹ For general reference to Turkey's relations with the Caucasus countries the following link would help: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye_nin-guney-kafkasya-ulkeleriyle-iliskileri.tr.mfa

In time, after the establishment of diplomatic relations, Turkey has developed extensive bilateral relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia. It would be a fair statement, however, to mention that Turkey's Caucasus policy fails to be comprehensive due to lack of diplomatic relations with Armenia. Turkey closed its border with Armenia on the 3rd of April, 1993, as a reaction to Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan's territory in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. Since then, efforts to launch a reasonable normalization of bilateral relations between the two countries remained in vain. Turkey's Caucasus policy, therefore, cannot be defined to be objective and impartial, as it is not equidistant to both sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, thus prevents Turkey from fulfilling the role of an honest broker in the South Caucasus.

Transformation of Turkey's foreign policy in the South Caucasus:

The dissolution of USSR can be considered as a significant motivational factor in transforming Turkey's foreign policy from a reactionary conduct to a more proactive one. Turkey has taken immediate action by means of launching several initiatives, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and Summit of the Turkic Languages speaking countries as well as establishing the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) to reach out to the post-Soviet states for assisting them in their economic development on project basis. BSEC has transformed into a regional organization and the Turkic Summit is now restructured under the Turkic Council. TİKA continues to expand its projects in Eurasia.

During the initial years of post-Soviet political setting in the South Caucasus, Turkey expected to become a significant regional actor by means of expanding its political, social, cultural and economic ties with the countries of the region. This policy was particularly important to widen Turkey's influence in Central Asia because South Caucasus provided the physical link to reach out to this vast geography where Turkey hoped to find a "Turkic world". Turkey's policies, inevitably, were carefully monitored by Russia to prevent the emergence of a new competitor in the region. Turkey, on its behalf, believed that the newly independent states in

South Caucasus and Central Asia would be inspired by Turkey's democratic, secular and western-oriented state system and would incline to look at Turkey as a role model instead of Iran or Russia.

Turkey's policies to reach out to Central Asia and to expand its influence in the region coincided with the efforts of Russia to regain its self-confidence and to overcome the psychological effects it has undergone due to the disintegration of the USSR. By mid 90's, Russia began to fill in the gap that emerged in Central Asia after the collapse of the USSR. This caused Turkey to reluctantly accept the fact that social, political, economic and cultural dominance of Russia in the region could not be easily undermined and that Russia's influence there was bound to persist. This recognition has affected Turkey's foreign policy vis-a-vis the former Soviet geography and resulted with a more prudent conduct in Central Asia, carefully avoiding confrontation with Russia.²

If the USSR's dissolution in 1991 had been a major determining factor in the transformation of Turkey's foreign policy conduct, the other significant effect had been the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power in November 2002. The former has resulted with a more proactive and forward looking foreign policy whereas the latter has caused a more autonomous and assertive conduct. There is a general consensus in the academia that Turkey's foreign policy pursued by AKP has been primarily inspired from Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu's vision, as it is described in his book called "Strategic Depth". The main philosophy behind this theoretical framework is based on the perception that change in the international environment can be a source of both risks and opportunities and that the end of Cold War offered Turkey a historic opportunity to become a global power with the promotion of Islamist ideology.³

Davutoğlu argues that such a foreign policy vision would allow Turkey to be more influential in the Middle East, the Balkans and the

² For an extensive account on Turkey's changing priorities and foreign policy in Eurasia, please see: Oran, Baskın, ed., *Türk Dış Politikası*, vol. II, İletişim Yayınları, 2005, pp. 371-372, and Oran, Baskın, ed., *Türk Dış Politikası*, vol. III, İletişim Yayınları, 2013, p.466.

³ Özkan, Behlül, "Turkey, Davutoğlu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy August-September 2014*, vol. 56, ed. No: 4, pp. 119-140.

Caucasus, those regions which he defines as Turkey's hinterland and believes that Turkey could create new spheres of influence there. In this context, Davutoğlu also envisions continuity between the Caucasus and the east of the Caspian Sea, which together comprise the gateway to the rest of the Asian continent. As for the South Caucasus, his vision is defined in the context of relations between three regional powers, namely Russia, Turkey and Iran⁴ (Here, the changing international position of the Caucasus is defined in its relation to changes in three spheres: 1. The changing global balance and its effect on the region itself, 2. The change in the regional sphere itself, and, 3. The changes in intra-regional balance and contradictions which include ethnic and religious diversification. It is further argued that competition between Russia, Turkey and Iran in the regional sphere contains the ramifications of the global competition in the first sphere and the geopolitical and diplomatic maneuverings of the regional actors in the second one. The regional sphere is important because the policies of Russia, Turkey and Iran have implications for the Black Sea and the Balkans as well as for the Middle East and Central Asia.)

It is necessary to underline, however, that although Turkey's look at the South Caucasus has been under the influence of this new foreign policy vision, it is also affected by the disappointment that Turkey has faced in the policies that it has pursued in Central Asia in the 1990's. AKP's foreign policy, therefore, has been based on more tailor-made policies, favoring bilateralism rather than regionalism. This has also resulted with more focus on energy issues which increased emphasis more on the Caucasus and the Caspian region rather than Central Asia⁵.

Attempts for normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia:

Turkey's relations with Armenia have not been developing in compliance with the pace that Turkey had with other two South Caucasus countries. Turkey has recognized the independence of Armenia in 1991 but the two countries have not been able to establish diplomatic relations since then.

⁴ Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, p. 125.

⁵ Oran, Baskın, ed., *Türk Dış Politikası*, vol. III, İletişim Yayınları, 2013, p.466.

The main difficulty blocking the development of bilateral relations and the establishment of diplomatic relations has been the basic differences of opinion on a certain episode of the common history of two nations. Armenia wants the events of 1915 to be labeled as an act of genocide whereas Turkey acknowledges mutual massacres between Turks and Armenians during the First World War but refuses to call this incident as genocide on the basis of the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide.

Turkey, having established extensive relations with Azerbaijan, also considers the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh as another hindrance in front of the development of Turkey's bilateral relations with Armenia. On 3 April 1993, Turkey has closed its land border with Armenia due to the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the subsequent invasion of Kelbecer, an Azeri region bordering Nagorno-Karabakh. Since then, Turkey has continued to pursue the policy of supporting the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem based on the UN principles, with respect to the inviolability of borders and territorial integrity of sovereign and independent states. Turkey still considers the unresolved problem in Karabakh as a major obstacle preventing the development of stability and security in the South Caucasus region.

AKP foreign policy continued to build on the forward looking and proactive foreign policy conduct of Turkey developed from 1991 to 2001. During the first governing term of AKP from 2002 to 2007 Turkey has emerged as a prominent regional actor in the Black Sea, Caucasus, Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa regions. Turkey, at that time, tried to address all the pending bilateral issues with its neighbors in order to create a favorable environment for enhancing its foreign policy objectives in its immediate neighborhood. This approach, later, has been called by Davutoğlu himself as the “policy of zero-problems with neighbors”.

Obviously, Turkey's non-existent relations with Armenia represented the weakest link in Turkey's South Caucasus policy and also needed to be addressed in compliance with this constructive and visionary approach. This is the time when the famous “football diplomacy” has been developed into a substantial process of attempts for normalization of bilateral relations, facilitated by Switzerland.

Between 2008 and 2009, Turkey and Armenia embarked upon an intensive effort of normalization of their bilateral relations. For Turkey, this was a genuine effort to address the essence of bilateral relations with Armenia, without being affected by the pursuance of Armenia's policy to widen the recognition of the events of 1915 as genocide in the parliaments of third countries. From Armenia's point of view, it was also the first time that the Armenian government believed that Turkey's engagement was not directed to counter Armenia's policy but rather to embark upon a constructive and promising commitment to normalize the bilateral relations. Switzerland's skillful efforts of facilitation eased the process and helped its fruition.

As a result of these efforts, the two governments have been able to undersign jointly two protocols on the 10th of October, 2009, in Zürich. The "Protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey" and the "Protocol on development of relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey" are the only two documents which have been signed between the two countries since the Kars Treaty of 1921. Although those two documents form the only available context for the process of bilateral normalization, they have never been ratified by the legislative organs of the two countries. On the Turkish side, the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan linked the ratification process and the normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia to the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh problem. Many hold the view that Erdoğan's position was particularly influenced by the strong reaction against the normalization process coming from Azerbaijan. As for Armenia, the ratification process in the parliament was hampered mainly due to the pressure exerted on the Armenian government by the Armenian diaspora. Armenia also reacted to Turkey's position and considered it as preconditioning and insisted that it would only consider ratification of the protocols once Turkey had affected that process in its own parliament. In February 2015, President Serzh Sargsyan finally withdrew the two protocols from the Armenian Parliament.

Normalization of bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia would have opened a new chapter in South Caucasus. It would have

allowed the two countries to establish diplomatic relations, address the disputed issue of history, develop bilateral trade and commerce and end what Armenia considered as “Turkey’s support to Azerbaijan’s policy of blockading Armenia”.

Today, although there are no diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey and the land border is closed, there is a limited amount of trade between the two countries. In 2014, the total trade volume was reported by the Armenian sources as 234 million US dollars. Same sources indicate that the figure has been reduced by half in 2015. About 99% of this trade volume is Turkey’s exports to Armenia, mainly consumer goods and food. This figure, in spite of its low amount, accounts for more than 5,5% of Armenia’s overall imports.⁶

Why is normalization between Turkey and Armenia important?

Eight years after the signing of the two protocols in Zürich, Turkey and Armenia still fail to establish diplomatic relations. This situation presents an anomaly for the stability of the South Caucasus and needs to be addressed constructively and with open mindedness. It is obvious that there is lack of mutual trust and confidence between the leaders of the two neighboring countries. However, lack of dialogue does not help to overcome the difficulty and will not contribute to regaining trust and confidence.

As the normalization between Turkey and Armenia fails to take hold, the security situation in the South Caucasus remains fragile. There is no possibility of substantial multilateral cooperation schemes and almost all such attempts exclude Armenia. The two major energy pipelines, namely Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline bypass Armenia. The railroad connection which will make the South Caucasus an important passage from west to east is connecting Baku-Tbilisi-Kars and is envisaged to establish an uninterrupted link from London to Beijing. This project also bypasses Armenia.

The most significant multilateral scheme between Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan which also excludes Armenia envisages a cooperation

⁶ These figures are taken from the web site of Armenian Foreign Ministry.

process which focuses on defense cooperation, harmonization of foreign-security policy, energy and transport cooperation, as well as business, trade and commerce between those three countries. In their first meeting which took place in Trabzon, Turkey, on 8 June 2012, the trilateral declaration stated “determination to build a better future for the region characterized by peace, stability, cooperation and increasing wealth and welfare”⁷.

It is hard to conceive the development of a favorable environment for security and stability in the South Caucasus by alienating Armenia. One of the essential prerequisites for correcting this anomaly is certainly the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh problem. The other is normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia.

A number of reasons require a more positive approach to the resolution of this impasse and both Turkey and Armenia need to look at their common future with pragmatism.

First, Turkey and Armenia, after having failed to ratify the two protocols they have signed in 2009 lost their mutual trust and confidence. Although Turkey’s commitment to the normalization process was seen as a genuine effort by Armenia, the linkage of the development of Turkey’s relations with Armenia to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is considered to be a preconditioning and is flatly rejected by the Armenian leadership. Turkey, in that respect, is thought to have shifted back to its pre-2008 policy, namely to pursue a foreign policy based on preventing Armenia’s efforts to make the recognition of the events of 1915 as genocide. In time, this perception has the tendency to be entrenched in the Armenian leadership and will be difficult to eradicate. Consequently, any future attempt by Turkey to revisit the normalization process will risk to be taken genuinely by the Armenian side because of this skepticism. The longer the current situation persists, the more structural that skepticism is likely to become.

Second, the current situation will never give Turkey the opportunity to develop a comprehensive, lasting and stable foreign policy vis-a-vis the South Caucasus region. In 2008, immediately after the Russia-Georgia war,

⁷ “Trabzon Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Turkey”, 08 June 2012, Trabzon.

Turkey had come forward with an initiative for enhancing peace and stability in the South Caucasus region, namely the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP). With this initiative, Turkey had been able to bring Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia around the same table for three consecutive meetings at Deputy Foreign Ministers level. This had been possible simply because Turkey at the time had increased its image as an impartial regional actor because of the continuation of its normalization process with Armenia. Today, Turkey has lost this moral high ground.

Third, it is also important to underline that Turkey can contribute to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem constructively only if it maintains an image of impartiality in the region. Although Armenia insists on the differentiation of the two processes, namely the normalization with Turkey and the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh problem, it is also a fact that this stance mainly emanates from the perception of Turkey in Armenia. Turkey's lack of diplomatic relations with Armenia does not give Turkey the perception of a reliable honest-broker in the facilitation of this protracted conflict.

It is important to recall that during the continuation of normalization talks between Turkey and Armenia, talks between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to discuss the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh problem also gained momentum. This, in a way, shows that any positive development in the Turkish-Armenian relations is also likely to have positive impact on the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; no matter how unrelated these two issues seem to be.

A fourth reason is related to obligations of both countries to protect the rights of their citizens in their respective territories. Lack of diplomatic relations and having a closed border cannot and does not prevent people to people contacts between Turkey and Armenia. On the one hand, indirect trade relations continue. This requires frequent travels of Turkish businessmen to Armenia and vice versa. On the other hand, there are many Armenian citizens who travel to Turkey for tourism or for seasonal labor opportunities. Such social contacts increase the likelihood of need for consular services in the respective countries. Unless the two countries come to terms with an understanding to address these issues, unexpected

incidents may result with undesired consequences and cause each country to fail to protect the rights of their citizens in the other's territory.

Today, Armenia has a diplomat as its permanent representative to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization at its headquarters in Istanbul, but this Armenian diplomat's tasks are limited to the jurisdiction he has only under the parameters of the regional organization he is assigned to. He cannot perform consular services and cannot act as if he represents a bilateral diplomatic, or for that matter consular, service in Turkey.

Finally, the anomaly of non-normalized relations between Turkey and Armenia remain as one of the last vestiges of the long forgotten Cold War era. As the bipolar system of the Cold War collapsed, the iron curtain disappeared and countries in Europe all agreed that they would never allow the reappearance of new dividing lines between the peoples of the common European home. At a time when the United States and Cuba have also embarked upon a process of establishing diplomatic relations-although Donald Trump is now trying to reverse this process-it is incomprehensible to have a closed border between Turkey and Armenia in the heart of Caucasus at the center of Eurasia.

Normalization between Turkey and Armenia will be beneficial not only for the two countries but will also become an inspiration for the facilitation of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. Consequently, the region will enjoy a new dynamism for the enhancement of east-west and north-south relations.

Is Turkey-Armenia normalization likely to happen soon?

Although South Caucasus and its problems appeared to gain importance in Turkey's foreign policy between 2008 and 2009, it is also true that the region's importance has been relatively reduced in the last couple of years due to developments in the Middle East and North Africa. However, when one considers the effect of Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision on Turkey's recent foreign policy conduct, one can even question whether the previous importance attributed to the South Caucasus was circumstantial at best.

Middle East has always figured prominently in Turkey's foreign affairs and AKP's foreign policy has not been an exception. However, theirs had a fundamental difference from the previous governments' prioritization of the Middle Eastern matters in Turkey's foreign policy. During the first half of 1990's Turgut Özal also tried to reach out to the post-Soviet space and other neighboring geographical regions around Turkey but he was prudent to sustain the basic principles of Turkey's commitments to its western allies. Özal's policies sought to work together with the United States, for example, during and after the Gulf War. AKP's foreign policy, however, was developed with pursuit of a broader anti-status quo approach, dissociating itself from the U.S. policies. This interpretation is justified with the example of the Turkish Parliament's 1st of March 2003 vote against the use of Turkish territory by the U.S. troops for intervention in Iraq. This approach characterized as "non-first world axis" and "anti-Özal" vision has become one of the main elements of Turkey's foreign policy conduct under AKP, particularly in the Middle East.⁸ (Barkey, in defining AKP's foreign policy argues that AKP government "has little attachment to NATO and the other institutions and remnants of the Cold War and, therefore, feels no particular closeness to the US.")

AKP's direction toward the Middle East, particularly under the influence of Davutoğlu, therefore became a matter of identity and assertiveness. Davutoğlu has been frequently quoted to have mentioned Turkey as "regional protector to bring order to the Middle East". This, in time, has developed into a more ambitious commitment to and engagement with the region.

In the aftermath of the Arab upheaval in the Middle East and North Africa, Turkey's engagement in the region did not only become more intense but also lost its impartiality. With the emergence of civil war in Syria, Middle East has become the most important focus in Turkey's

⁸ See: Barkey, Henry J., "Turkey and the Great Powers", in Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem and Philip Robins, ed., *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, p.254.

foreign policy. Today, Turkey is perceived as a regional actor which is trying to define, pursue and implement its own hidden agenda in the region.

Another feature of AKP's foreign policy is its instrumentalization for domestic political purposes. Foreign policy matters related to the Middle East have direct relationship with Islam and this becomes an efficient instrument to manipulate the religious sentiments, emotions and nationalism based on all these primordial feelings. Under the circumstances, Middle East's priority in Turkey's foreign policy is unlikely to be reduced. The situation in Syria, Turkey's preparation to become a contributor to the de-escalation zone in Idlib, the referendum organized by the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and the complications it may produce are all important factors to affect Turkey's focus toward the region.

Currently, Armenia can become a matter of attention only if there is an escalation of conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. It is unlikely to see a new momentum in the attempts for normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia in the near future. Instrumentalization of foreign policy, nationalist and populist policies pursued for domestic purposes would create a reaction if Turkey tried to revisit the process of normalization unilaterally and this would very easily be exploited by the nationalist political parties in the opposition as well as by the similar ranks of AKP parliamentary group itself.

Moreover, the current in Turkey in the first decade of the twenty-first century was very much in line with the enhancement of fundamental rights for freedom and deepening and widening of democratization of the society in Turkey. As there was an attempt for rapprochement with Armenia, Turkey was also trying to reach out to its citizens of Kurdish origin with a view to launching a dialogue process in order to achieve historic reconciliation for the resolution of the so-called "Kurdish issue". These two processes, in essence, were the two complementary elements of a more comprehensive policy of democratization in Turkey.

Today, the dialogue process with Kurds in Turkey is practically terminated. There is also a risk of rising tension in Turkey against the Kurds due to the potential developments in Syria and Iraq. Therefore, it

would be unlikely for the government to return to the so-called “Armenian issue” which would immediately provoke nationalistic reactions. Azerbaijan’s influence on the Turkish street in that respect should not be underestimated as well.

What could be the way forward?

Taking into consideration the peculiarities of the process of normalization between Turkey and Armenia, the following scenarios could be envisaged:

1. Turkey changes its policy and suddenly makes an opening towards Armenia, such as opening the border or establishing diplomatic relations:

Such a development can only take place when the decision comes from a self-confident and authoritative executive leader. Under the circumstances, President Erdoğan will not be in favor of taking such a bold step forward. If he does, it will be open to exploitation by the opposition and he will easily be depreciated of his overwhelming authority. He would not risk losing authority and being exposed to criticism before the presidential elections. President Erdoğan can only take such a step forward if he wins the presidential elections, currently scheduled for 2019, and ensures an uninterrupted period of five years term of Presidency. Even in such a confident political setting, however, he will have to assure that Azerbaijan’s reaction will be moderate. Given the continuation of TANAP project and many other infrastructural projects currently underway, and financed by SOCAR in Turkey, it would be hard to figure out how Azerbaijan would respond. Similarly, Armenia may also show reluctance and may not find such an opening sufficient enough to restart the normalization process with Turkey because of domestic concerns. The Armenian leadership may be forced to ask for more from Turkey if and when such an opening takes place.

2. Armenia takes a bold step forward and declares willingness for establishment of diplomatic relations, ratifies the protocols:

This is less unlikely to happen as compared to the first scenario but if it happens, it can also happen only when a strong, authoritative, self-confident Armenian leader, with a relatively safe term of leadership in front

of him goes forward and takes the decision. Such a decision would certainly require effective advance coordination, not directly with Turkey, but either through a third party or a second track mechanism, to ensure that Turkey will not exploit the situation and ask for concessions in Nagorno-Karabakh. In return, Turkey may find this kind of an initiative easier to accept in spite of Azerbaijan, because the offer comes from Armenia. Turkey may also convince Azerbaijan that such a first step could give Turkey the opportunity to negotiate, not directly at the outset but perhaps at a later stage in the process, on small and incremental openings in Nagorno-Karabakh, too. Nevertheless, current political setting in Armenia, as well as the in the diaspora will hardly allow this scenario to happen.

3. Nothing happens, both sides wait for an opening from the opponent and the status-quo continues:

This is not to the benefit of either side. The only winner in that kind of a scenario will be Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan will successfully sustain the blockade on Armenia by exploiting the inability of Turkey to take an initiative and will continue to enlarge its military potential. Azerbaijan's long-term policy calculation will continue to be based on the military option. Therefore, this scenario should not be allowed to take a chance.

4. A third party takes the initiative to bring the two sides together with a view to breaking the ice:

World politics suffers from lack of pragmatic, effective and respectable leadership. Under the circumstances, neither the U.S. nor the Russian leaders would be considered as potential honest-brokers in the international community and they would be unwilling to take the risk of being unsuccessful, too. The only likely candidate seems to be President Emmanuel Macron of France, but he will have to see the real benefit of taking such an initiative, both internationally and domestically. Armenian diaspora in France is as sensitive as the one in the United States and they will also be demanding. Macron, if he sees a real benefit in making this issue as a major asset for enhancing his international image, may consider presuming such a role.

5. Slowly and gradually, confidence building measures continue with a view to creating the fertile environment for political leaderships to take decisions more easily:

The main problem between Turkey and Armenia is the lack of trust and confidence. This becomes the main handicap for both leaderships because they are not certain about the reaction of their counterparts. They hesitate to take bold steps forward because they cannot be sure that it will not be exploited by the other side. It is therefore necessary to prepare the necessary infrastructure by means of slow steps and gradual confidence building measures and create an environment of mutual trust and confidence. This can become a functional approach to problem solving, addressing less important issues which will not be politically contested and which will be more easily understood by the political elite. Increased people to people contacts, focusing on joint cultural and social projects, as well as small economic or other sectorial platforms to enhance bilateral cooperation should be considered. Such small steps would not necessarily draw the attention of public and should not necessarily be publicized but create an undercurrent which will come to fruition with strong and solid background. Projects along the common border such as restoration at Ani, or rehabilitation of cultural monuments, such as development of Akhtamar, could also be considered. Joint sport activities could also help. A joint Turkish-Armenian expedition to the summit of Mount Ararat, for example, could be a good start.

Conclusion:

Normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia is one of the essentials for the future stability and security in the South Caucasus. Currently, both countries hesitate to take the leading action mainly because of domestic concerns. Gradual and incremental steps of confidence building will help the political elite in both countries to overcome their hesitations through increased contacts between the two peoples. Failure to overcome the impasse between the two countries carries the risk of new tensions and escalation in the South Caucasus.

Furthermore, Turkish-Armenian normalization will also create a new positive spirit in the region which in turn will have a positive impact on the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, too. Resolution of this conflict will enhance the environment of security and stability in the region.

Finally, overcoming these two pending issues in the South Caucasus will create a more favorable environment in the region for expanding the opportunities of multilateral cooperation.

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Քանալի քառեր՝ Հարավային Կովկաս, Թուրքիայի արտաքին քաղաքականություն, նորմալացում, ՀՀ-Թուրքիա հարաբերություններ, տարածաշրջանային անվտանգություն

Հոդվածում քննարկվում է Խորհրդային Միության փլուզումից հետո ստեղծված տարածաշրջանային նոր խորապատկերը և դրա առանձնահատկությունները՝ հայ-թուրքական հարաբերությունների համատեքստում: Մասնավորապես, վերլուծվում են այն գործոնները, որոնք պայմանավորում են Թուրքիայի՝ Հարավային Կովկասի հանդեպ վարած քաղաքականությունը: Թեև Հարավային Կովկասում Թուրքիայի վարած քաղաքականությունը մեծամասամբ առաջնորդվում է այդ երկրի որդեգրած նոր արտաքին քաղաքական ուղենիշներով, բայց և այդ քաղաքականության վրա իր ազդեցությունն ունի Թուրքիայի հիասթափությունը՝ կապված նրա՝ Միջին Արևելքում ունեցած փորձառության հետ: Թուրքիայի՝ «գրո խնդիր հարևանների հետ» քաղաքականության ամենաթույլ օղակը, անկասկած, ՀՀ-ի հետ հարաբերություններն են:

Հարաբերությունների նորմալացման ջանքերը, որ ստացել են «Ֆուտբոլային դիվանագիտություն» անվանումը, կարող էին նոր էջ բացել Հարավային Կովկասի համար: Այդ ջանքերը, սակայն, հաջողության չհասան: Ութ տարի առաջ կնքված Յուրիխյան արձանագրությունները այդպես էլ չեն վավերացվել երկու երկրներում, իսկ հայ-թուրքական հարաբերությունների ներկա վիճակը լուրջ խոչընդոտ է տարածաշրջանի անվտանգության ու կայունության տեսանկյունից:

Ի տարբերություն 2008-2009 թթ.-ի՝ այսօր Թուրքիայի արտաքին քաղաքականության առաջնահերթություններից չէ Հարավային Կովկասն ու նրա խնդիրները:

Հաշվի առնելով Հայ-Թուրքական հարաբերությունների առանձնահատկությունները՝ հողվածում քննարկվում են նաև հնարավոր փոփոխությունների սցենարներ: Ներկայացված սցենարների՝ իրականություն դառնալու հավանականությունը, սակայն, նվազում է, երբ հաշվի ենք առնում անվտանգության այն մակարդակը, որ կա երկու երկրների միջև: Երկու երկրների հասարակությունների միջև վստահության մակարդակի բարձրացումը աներկբա առաջնահերթություն պիտի լինի այդ երկրների հարաբերությունների նորմալացման ճանապարհին: