

Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Armenia in 2008-2009: Impact On Azerbaijani-Turkish Relations¹

Türkiye'nin 2008-2009 Yıllarında Ermenistan Politikası: Türkiye-Azerbaycan İlişkilerine Etkisi

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Abstract

Relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan cannot be classified simply as the ratio of two nation-states in the international arena. The peoples of these two countries are united by common ethnic roots and understandably sympathetic to each other's positions. Consequently, controversies between Turkey and Azerbaijan should be viewed in the framework of these specific relationships. This study will analyze the causes of the controversies between the two countries during Turkey's rapprochement with Armenia between 2008 and 2009. It will also discuss the manner in which Turkey and Azerbaijan have resolved their problems and formed a new platform for the development of relations.

Keywords: *Turkey, Azerbaijan, Turkish-Armenian rapprochement process, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict*

Öz

Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki ilişkiler uluslararası arenadaki sıradan iki ulus-devlet arasındaki ilişkiler gibi sınıflandırılmaz. Bu iki ülkenin halkı ortak etnik köken ile birbirine bağlıdır ve birbirinin pozisyonuna anlaşılabilir şekilde sempattir. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki ihtilaflar bu özel ilişki çerçevesinde değerlendirilmelidir. Bu çalışma, 2008-2009 yıllarında Türkiye ve Ermenistan arasındaki yakınlaşma sürecinde Türkiye ve Azerbaycan arasındaki ihtilafları analiz etmektedir. Aynı zamanda bu çalışma Türkiye ve Azerbaycan'ın aralarındaki sorunları nasıl çözdüğünü ve ilişkilerini geliştirmek için kurdukları yeni platformları tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Türkiye, Azerbaycan, Türkiye-Ermenistan yakınlaşma süreci, Dağlık Karabağ sorunu*

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1. AZERBAIJAN-TURKISH RELATIONS: MORE THAN “ONE NATION, TWO STATES”

Relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey began to develop after Azerbaijan gained independence in 1991. Turkey was the first country to recognize its independence and establish diplomatic relations with it, actively promoting state building in it. Since independence relations between the two countries have only improved, facilitated by the fact that the peoples of the two countries share common ethnic roots. Over time, the basis of the relationship has been strengthened and fostered on a pragmatic basis. A number of regional transport and logistics projects have been realized, initially through the implementation of transport corridors such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) gas pipeline. The construction of another project, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railroad, is due for completion by the end of 2015, prompting further economic relations between the states in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions.

The two countries have launched another energy transport corridor, the Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline (TANAP), which will transport Azerbaijani gas from Shah Deniz 1 offshore field to Turkish markets until the Turkish-Greek border and then to the European states via another transport corridor: the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). With the implementation of all of these and other projects in Turkey, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) is expected to invest approximately US \$20 billion into the Turkish economy.

The development of relations between the two countries is not limited to the economic sphere. A stable political dialogue at the highest level has also been established with the signing of a treaty on 16 September 2010, establishing a High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, with the purpose of enhancing and strengthening relations in different fields. Similarly, an agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support (SPMS) was signed. Under the terms of this treaty, both countries undertake to support each other “using all possibilities” in the event of a military attack or aggression.

Despite strong ties between the two countries, controversies have occurred, but they have not been structural, but the consequence of rapid political and economic developments. With expanding potential, national interests of the two countries have also diversified, leading at times to an incorrect assessment of the current situation. This has caused a difference in approach towards certain situations. This has had an influence in Turkey’s foreign policy approach towards Armenia, perceived ambiguously by Azerbaijan. These developments have led to the need for a two-way adjustment, tailored to the interests of both states. This article will examine the reasons for the controversies between the two states from 2008-2009 and prospects for resolution.

2. A CHRONOLOGY OF TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS: 1991-2009

Turkey was the first country to recognize Armenian independence on 16 December 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.² Turkey intended to develop relations with the new independent states, including Armenia. Turkey did not concentrate its attention on the historical dispute with Armenians, especially with diaspora on the “the events of the 1915” under the Ottoman Empire. Despite good will from the Turkish side and a readiness to form relations with Armenia, including a statement on the 1915 events, which the Armenians incorporated as an act of genocide into their declaration of independence. According to paragraph 11 of this declaration: The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia.³ Besides this, the declaration also contained territorial definitions, such as that of “Western Armenia” by which the eastern part of the Turkish Republic has been defined. Thus, the newly created state officially registered its territorial claims against modern Turkey and the primary reasons as to why diplomatic relations between these two countries have not been established.⁴

Despite this, with the opening of the border in 1991, as a sign of goodwill and in order to improve relations with the EU,⁵ Turkey dispatched food aid and contributed to the delivery of Western humanitarian assistance to Armenia through its territory.⁶ Turkey allowed passage through the Kars-Gyumri railway- a transport connection from the Soviet period. The Turkish-Armenian border was officially closed in April 1993, when Armenia occupied Kelbajar, a territory adjacent to the Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh region. This occurred after the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 822 on April 30 1993, which demanded the immediate withdrawal of Armenian occupying forces from territory of Kelbajar district and other recently occupied areas of Azerbaijan.⁷ As a result of the continuing Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and occupation of Azerbaijani territories, Turkey expressed its solidarity with Azerbaijan. Turkey joined Azerbaijan in imposing an economic embargo on Armenia and the border between the two states was closed. However, even after land border closing, the airspace

² “According to the official Armenian sources, on 24 December 1991”, Official site of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.mfa.am/en/country-by-country/tr/>.

³ “Armenian Declaration of Independence”, <http://www.gov.am/en/independence/>.

⁴ Svante E. Cornell, “Turkish-Armenian Relations: Wrong Priority, Wrong Approach”, *Caspian Report*, HASEN, (Summer, 2013): 109, https://www.academia.edu/4876695/Turkish-Armenian_Relations_Wrong_Priority_Wrong_Approach

⁵ “Relations between Turkey and Armenia”, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/reasons-between-turkey-and-armenia.en.mfa>.

⁶ Kemal Kirisci, “New Patterns of Turkish Foreign Policy Behavior”, in *Turkey: Political, Social and Economic Changes in the 1990s*, ed. Cigdem Balim et al, (Leiden: 1995), 18.

⁷ “Resolution 822 (1993) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3205th meeting”, 30.04.1993, <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=3b00f15764>.

between the two states was reopened in 1995 with the operation of charter flights from Yerevan to Istanbul and Antalya.⁸

The status quo continued until 2008, after which relations started to change. Turkey tried to use the opportunity of same group qualification for the 2010 FIFA World Cup for reconciliation. Rapprochement through “football diplomacy” resulted with the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, inviting his Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gul to attend the first match between the two national teams, on September 6 2008 in Yerevan. Abdullah Gul accepted this invitation, culminating in the first visit by a Turkish president since 1991.⁹ After Gul’s visit to Yerevan the process of hosting secretive talks began in Switzerland. The main purpose of these talks was to identify differences that existed between the two sides. Parallel to this the foreign ministers of both countries held two meetings in order to find opportunities for furthering relations.¹⁰

A year later, on 14 October 2009, Sargsyan made a return visit in Turkey, to Bursa where the second qualifying match was held... After the match, the official delegations of Turkey and Armenia met to consider furthering of relations between the two countries.¹¹ During the talks, Turkey agreed to open its border with Armenia without setting any preconditions. Turkey believed that with the border opening, economic and trade relations would develop. Turkey’s hope was that the Armenian economy due its small size, in the short term would integrate with Turkey’s, due to Turkish investors, governmental loans and an increasing in trade. As a result of the closer economic relations, perception towards Turkey would, leading to the formation of political dialogue and an atmosphere for a discussion on the “events of 1915”, with the starting point the “Just Memory” conception. According to this concept, the parties must respect the memory of each other and avoid evaluation of the historical events based on “one-sided memory” and instead form a perception of “shared pain”.¹²

Turkey expected that in 2015, due to the 100th year anniversary of these events, Armenians throughout the world would be holding large-scale events, affecting negatively, the image of Turkey. In this regard, Turkey intends to at least partially neutralize the effects of the expected large-scale propaganda related to this date

⁸ David Shahnazaryan, “Nervous Neighbors: Five Years After The Armenia-Turkey Protocols”, *Journal of Turkish Policy Quarterly* 13, no 3, (Fall, 2014): 46.

⁹ Rovshan Ibrahimov, “Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement: Defining the Process and its Impact on Relations Between Azerbaijan and Turkey”, *Caspian Report*, HASEN, (Winter, 2014): 89.

¹⁰ Richard Giragosian, “Changing Armenia-Turkish Relations, February”, (2009): 2, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/06380.pdf>.

¹¹ Каринэ Симонян and Георг Стамболчян, “В Бурсе Состоялись Армяно-Турецкие Переговоры”, <http://www.armenialiberty.org/content/article/1851953.html>.

¹² Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkish-Armenian Relations in the Process of De-Ottomanization or “Dehistoricization”: is a “Just Memory” Possible?”, *Journal of Turkish Policy Quarterly* 13, no 1, (Spring, 2014): 28.

by improving relations with Armenia.¹³ Over time, closer relations with Armenia will force this country to reconsider its demands towards Turkey.

Another expectation of Turkey is that Armenia will recognize the border between these states as drawn out in the Kars and Gyumri Treaties of 1921, as a precondition to improving bilateral relations. In other words, Turkey expects that Armenia will officially declare recognition of Turkey's territorial integrity. The expectation of Turkey is understandable, given that these territorial claims are being focused on at the highest level in Armenia. Thus, President Serzh Sargsyan on the 5th Pan-Armenian Olympiad on Armenian language and literature, held in July 2011, in Tsakhkadzor, whilst answering a question about a return of the Western Armenia territory (including Mount Agridag (Ararat)) said: "All that depends on you and your generation. I think my generation has accomplished his duties, when in the beginning of 90s defended Karabakh from the enemies. I don't want to accuse anybody. I just mean that each generation has its own duties to accomplish."¹⁴ As can be seen from the speech, which was given after the convergence process, Armenia still has territorial expectations from Turkey.

As a continuation of the new foreign policy approach, on October 10 2009, in Zurich, Switzerland, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davudoglu and Armenia's Eduard Nalbandyan signed the "Protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia" and the "Protocol on Development of Relations Between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia". Signing the protocols received a positive international response. During the signing procedure, the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (EUHRCFSP), Javier Solana as well as the Russia Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton and France's Bernard Kouchner were participants.¹⁵ It is worth noting, that all of these three officials at the same time represent states which are co-chairing of the OSCE Minsk Group on the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Despite the importance of this event, both protocols did not enter into force as the parliaments of the both states did not ratify the protocols. Turkey argued that the ratification may be possible if Armenia would release occupied districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh. In turn, Armenia reacted negatively to Turkish demands, explaining that these conditions shouldn't be referred to as "requirements".¹⁶ Armenia insisted that the borders were closed unilaterally and therefore must be opened without additional requirements. As a result, on 22 April 2010, Armenian

¹³ Rovshan Ibrahimov, *Turkish-Armenian*, 90.

¹⁴ "In Tsakhkadzor President Sargsyan Met With The Participants of the 5th Pan-Armenian Olympiad and With the Students Sponsored by The Luys Foundation", Official site of President of the Republic of Armenia, (23.07.2011), <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2011/07/23/news-1713/>.

¹⁵ "Armenia and Turkey normalize ties", (10.10.2009), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8299712.stm>

¹⁶ Rovshan Ibrahimov, *Turkish-Armenian*, 95.

President Serzh Sargsyan signed a decree suspending ratifications of the Protocols.¹⁷ Five years later, on 16 February 2015, President Sargsyan sent a letter to the National Assembly speaker Galust Sahakyan, informing him about his decision to recall the Armenian-Turkish protocols from parliament.¹⁸

Despite all of these developments, Turkey is still looking for ways to normalize relations with Armenia within the conception of «Just Memory». In short it is worth noting the speech of the then Prime Minister R. T. Erdogan on 23 April 2014, when he again pointed out the common historical «pain». In his speech, he noted that: “Having experienced events which had inhumane consequences-such as relocations-during the World War I, should not prevent the Turks and Armenians from establishing compassion and mutually humane attitudes towards one another.”¹⁹ It was an unprecedented move by a Turkish leader on the events of 1915.

3. RELATIONS BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND TURKEY DURING THE TURKISH-ARMENIAN RAPPROCHEMENT PROCESS

The reaction of Azerbaijan on Turkey’s policy towards Armenia was negative. This is primarily due to the fact that the process of rapprochement began without analysis by Turkey of possible consequences for Azerbaijan. Due to interference of external actors opposed to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan has very limited scope and capacity to put pressure on Armenia in order to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. One leverage in Azerbaijan’s hands is economical sanctions against Armenia, currently implemented by both Azerbaijan and Turkey.

The beginning of a negotiation process between Turkey and Armenia on border opening, would lead to the lifting of sanctions, but qualitatively affect Azerbaijan’s policy on resolution of this conflict. It should be noted that Azerbaijan does not oppose the process, considering it as Turkey’s internal affair. The reaction of Azerbaijan was connected to the effect of the resolution on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Hence, the border closing was directly related to the occupation of Azerbaijani territories. Although Turkey was ready to reopen its border, Armenia does not intend to liberate the Azerbaijani territories.

As this process directly relates to its national interests, Azerbaijan has closely followed the development of relations between Turkey and Armenia. However, as demonstrated above, Azerbaijan is not a passive observer. Azerbaijan reacted to the visit of President Gul in Yerevan, whereby football diplomacy transformed into the negotiation process defining concrete steps towards opening the border.

¹⁷ “Armenian-Turkish Bilateral Relations”, Official Site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.mfa.am/en/country-by-country/tr/>.

¹⁸ “Recalls Armenian-Turkish Protocols From National Assembly”, Official site of President of the Republic of Armenia: Armenian President, (16.02.2015), <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2015/02/16/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-National-Assembly/>.

¹⁹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Turkish-Armenian Relations*, 29.

In anticipation, by 24 April 2009, considered a day of remembrance for the victims in 1915, it was assumed that Turkey may open its border with Armenia. This development did not satisfy Azerbaijan and she immediately reacted. In April 2009 during the official visit of the U.S. President Barack Obama to Turkey, it was stated that Turkey and Armenia within one month would announce an agreement to reopen the border and exchange diplomatic personnel.²⁰ Before all of these developments, Obama promised to endorse Armenian claims of genocide during his election campaign and his visit to Turkey was seen as political support to the process of rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia. In this regard, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev boycotted the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Conference which took place in Istanbul on April 6-7, despite repeated invitations by the U.S. State Secretary Hillary Clinton offering instead for him to send his daughter to represent the country.²¹

The rejection of President I. Aliyev to participate in the forum put Turkey in a dilemma, according to which the improvement of relations with Armenia would cost her a sharp deterioration in relations with Azerbaijan, a neighbor with which Turkey has never had any serious disagreements. Rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia has also been negatively perceived by the public in Turkey. The leaders of the two opposition parties Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and Republican People's Party (CHP), which have representation in Turkish parliament, have also criticized the government's policy towards Armenia. Given the negative reaction within the country and from Azerbaijan, Turkish then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan attempted to ease controversies and announced on April 10 2009, that, "Unless Azerbaijan and Armenia sign a protocol on Nagorno-Karabakh, we will not sign any final agreement with Armenia on ties. We are doing preliminary work but this definitely depends on resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem".²² Following a statement by the then-Prime Minister R.T. Erdogan seemed that the differences between Turkey and Azerbaijan have been papered over.

However, another surge of controversy erupted again during the return match between Turkish and Armenian football teams in Bursa which was held on 14 October 2009. Not wanting extra disagreement with the Armenian side regarding Turkish support to Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Azerbaijani flag was barred from the stadium. On Azerbaijani TV channels, images where Azerbaijani flags were thrown in a box, which had an unmarked restroom image on it were shown. The reaction in Azerbaijan was acute. As a response to this act,

²⁰ Paul Richter, "Turkey, Armenia are likely to ease conflict, President Obama is to visit Turkey in a few days, and the expected deal would allow him to point to progress toward reconciliation", (04.04.2009), <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/apr/04/world/fg-turkey-armenia4>.

²¹ "The Alliance of Civilizations Forum: A Major Test for Turkish Diplomacy", <http://eurodialogue.eu/us/1513>.

²² "Turkey-Armenia deal to refer to Karabakh solution" *Today's Zaman*, April 13, 2009, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_turkey-armenia-deal-to-refer-to-karabakh-solution_172294.html

in Baku, at the Martyrs' Alley, where the Turkish soldiers who gave their lives for the liberation of Baku in 1918 rest, Turkish flags were lowered.²³

The scandal was settled after a visit to Baku on 22 October 2009 by Ahmet Davutoglu and alternate visits from the parliamentary delegations of both countries. In Turkey, the culprits who negligently treated Azerbaijani flags were punished. The scandal around the national flags of the two countries has been resolved and the general opinion on the policy for further development of relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan have been formed.

With a delegation of ministers, Erdogan made a visit to Baku on 12 May 2010. During the visit Erdogan reaffirmed the strained ties between the two countries. In a press conference with Azerbaijani President I. Aliyev, Erdogan announced that, "There is a relation of cause and effect here. The occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh is the cause, and the closure of the border is the effect. Without the occupation ending, the gates will not be opened".²⁴ On Erdogan's this statement, the Azerbaijan President I. Aliyev expressed his satisfaction and added that "There could be no clearer answer than this. There is no doubt anymore".²⁵

Azerbaijan's reception from senior Turkish officials ensures that the policies of the country towards Armenia will not change as long as the latter does not withdraw from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. This promise by Erdogan was enough for Azerbaijan. As proof, during the signing of the protocols in Zurich, Azerbaijan remained low-key.²⁶

4. THE REASONS FOR THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND TURKEY: 2008-2009

The basis for the differences between the two countries was due to the rapid political and economic changes in Turkey and Azerbaijan. Both countries over the first ten years of the new millennium have made significant achievements: the economies of these countries have developed rapidly, GDP is growing and diversifications of sectors have been observed. Turkey has acted more actively in the international arena and both have become major actors in their regions. The rapid change also impacted the foreign policies of these countries. For instance, Turkey started to change its traditional foreign policy with the intention to play an active role at the regional level. Whilst, Azerbaijan desired to act more actively by using

²³ Rovshan Ibrahimov, *Turkish-Armenian*, 91.

²⁴ Prime Minister Erdoğan puts Baku's Armenia concerns to rest, *Todays Zaman*, May 14, 2009, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_prime-minister-erdogan-puts-bakus-armenia-concerns-to-rest_175222.html.

²⁵ Prime Minister Erdoğan, *ibid*.

²⁶ Kamer Kasım, "Aliyev's visit: Strengthening the strategic partnership", *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, 23.03.2015, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3939/aliyev-s-visit-strengthening-the-strategic-partnership.html>.

its energy resources towards achieving its national interests, although the priority in Azerbaijan's foreign policy remains settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the return of occupied territories. With an increase in political capacity, Azerbaijan started to diversify its leverages including: increasing diplomatic efforts, active participation and action in the framework of international organizations, intensively encourage bilateral and multilateral cooperation. As a consequence of change and diversification in the areas of interests, it has led to an increase in the number of contact points between these two states, which have always been in coordination.

As regards to Turkey, the first step of this new regional policy was to develop a strategy aimed at improving relations with neighboring countries. A new formula termed 'zero problem' has been derived for relations with the neighbors. It is about finding a formula for the resolution of controversies and to establish provisions for a further development of relations. According to this policy, Turkey expects to eliminate or completely solve the problems from her relations with neighbor states. The main scope of this new concept in Turkish foreign policy is the rejection of stalling problems and the intensification of efforts to solve problems through a win-win approach by peaceful means.²⁷ It is from this perspective that Turkey is also considering changing its policy towards Armenia. In general, the overall concept of the new Turkish foreign policy in relation to Armenia can be summarized as "from zero relations to zero problems". Turkey was determined to resolve the existing problems with Armenia. With the adoption of a new foreign policy, Turkey started to unilaterally look for ways to resolve problems with Armenia and form confidence-building measures.²⁸

As for Azerbaijan, it believed that despite Turkey having started the process of rapprochement with Armenia and a wish to get more actively involved in the South Caucasus policy, it does not have full cognition as regards the intertwining interests of the various forces in the region. Azerbaijan was very skeptical about the fact that Turkey through these steps could achieve its objectives with respect to Armenia. It would be difficult to believe that liberal initiatives of the Turkish government can change the perception of Armenians both in Armenia and beyond its borders. Nationalist politicians in Armenia as well as many amongst the Armenian diaspora staunchly opposed the deal because Ankara has not recognized the events of 1915 as genocide.²⁹ In any case, the worry of Azerbaijan was not due to this reason: it was not clear how the process would affect the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

²⁷ For more information see: "Policy of Zero Problems with our Neighbors", *Official site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Turkey*, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa>.

²⁸ "Relations between Turkey and Armenia", *Official site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Turkey*, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-armenia.en.mfa>

²⁹ "Turkish-Armenian Football Diplomacy Gets A Rematch in Bursa", *Radio Free Europe*, 14.10.2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/TurkishArmenian_Football_Diplomacy_Heads_For_Rematch_In_Bursa/1851889.html.

As it was mentioned before, the interests of the third countries in the region are one of the main reasons that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is still not solved. In this case, Azerbaijan has to maneuver within a narrow space, while trying to retain the ability to independently carry out its domestic and foreign policy in accordance with its national interests. The most effective policy is the use of economic measures as pressure. They include measures such as closing borders, deliberate exclusion of Armenia from participation in regional economic projects, increasing of military spending by Azerbaijan, forcing Armenia to also spend more on the military needs with an already meager budget. Some calculations show that closure of borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan has cost Armenia annually approximately in between 10-30 % of its GDP.³⁰ Armenia could increase its total exports if the Turkish and Azerbaijani borders were opened. This would erase almost a half of Armenia's high trade deficit. Also, considerable savings would result from straightening transport routes and switching to closer supply sources.³¹ Almost 90% of Armenian foreign trade flows are transported through Georgia and the Georgian ports of Poti and Batumi by truck or railroad and this route is comparatively expensive.³²

In this case, the factor of two closed borders is very painful for Armenian economy. It is true that some Turkish goods entering the markets of Armenia through Georgian territory. However, in this case their cost is increased. Among the supporters of the border opening, there is also opinion that despite the fact that the border has been closed for about twenty years, it does not affect the resolution of the conflict. However, economic sanctions are aimed primarily at resolving the conflicts peacefully, as it is one of the most effective methods of alternative dispute resolution. Additionally, unlike a military solution, sanctions often have no short and medium-term effect, and therefore they are designed for a longer period.

Also, if the sanctions would not be an effective mechanism, the international community currently would not use them as a method of pressurization against Iran and Russia in order to force them to change their political priorities. As demonstrated by the development of events, these sanctions are very effective and have a negative impact on the economies of these countries, forcing them to negotiate. In the case of Armenia, it does not happen just because the sanctions against the occupier are imposed only by two states. If Turkey refuses to accept this step, the

³⁰ Ümit Kurt and Bezen Balamir Coşkun, "History vs. Geopolitics: an Overview of Turkish-Armenian Relations in the 2000s", *Turkish Review*, 01.06.2013, http://www.turkishreview.org/tr/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=223310.

³¹ Evgeny Polyakov, "Changing Trade Patterns after Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Washington" the World Bank, Unit Europe and Central Asia Region, Washington DC (2000): 6, [http://lnweb90.worldbank.org/eca/eca.nsf/0/23ac8865ee0dc520852568fc005ba956/\\$FILE/ATT00ZE9/Trade+flows3.pdf](http://lnweb90.worldbank.org/eca/eca.nsf/0/23ac8865ee0dc520852568fc005ba956/$FILE/ATT00ZE9/Trade+flows3.pdf)

³² Mher Bagramyan, "The Economic Impact of Opening the Armenian-Turkish Border", *Armenian International Policy Research Group*, Armenia, (2012): 9, file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/The%20Economic%20Impact%20of%20Opening%20the%20Armenian-Turkish%20Border,%20Bagramyan%20M..pdf.

efforts of Azerbaijan can be reduced to a minimum and if not collapse, but will lose its effectiveness. Such a situation may give impetus to Armenian wishes to further prolong the resolution of the conflict, since a change in the situation on the border with Turkey will enable it to generate more space for maneuvering. For this reason, the reaction in Azerbaijan has been very sharp.

CONCLUSION

It is no secret that the Azerbaijani reaction to Turkey's rapprochement with Armenia was not expected. One of the reasons of misunderstanding between the two states was held on the thesis that Azerbaijan has no clear policy in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and that is why Turkey is taking steps to change the status quo in the region. Since the closure of the border in 1993 and the signing of the ceasefire agreement in 1994, in spite of numerous negotiations, the conflict has not yet been resolved. That is why, even though Turkey sets conditions for the opening of the border as the liberation of Azerbaijani territories, in 2008 she started to reconsider her priorities. In turn, the Azerbaijani side expressed the view that the proposal is based on the fact that Turkey itself is not clearly represented on the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh and the region as a whole. Azerbaijan was skeptical about the possibility of improving relations between Turkey and Armenia, in the case of opening borders and its impact on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. Armenia is heavily dependent on Russia, as well as on its diaspora, and they determine the strategy of this state's foreign policy.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly tried to change the situation militarily until 1994, and then after through negotiations. In 1999, some agreement could have been reached. The U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott visited both capitals, Yerevan and then to Baku, on 26 October 1999, for a discussion about the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations. An intensive round of Karabakh peace talks took place and expectations were that some agreement would be signed in November 1999, at the OSCE Istanbul Summit.³³ However, the terrorist act in the Armenian parliament stopped the process; attackers killed Prime-Minister Vasgen Sargsyan, parliament speaker Karen Demirchian, government members and 6 deputies and a number of others were wounded.³⁴ It became clear that some interest groups and powers in Armenia and outside the country are not interested in the solution of the Karabakh problem. The interest groups within the country, which came to power through the use of the Karabakh card needed to beware that in the case of conflict resolution they may lose their leading position in Armenia. At the same time, third countries which are interested in maintaining the status quo in the Karabakh problem from a geopolitical perspective, also do not want a resolution in favor of one or another party.

³³ "The Negotiations During 1999", http://garabagh.net/content_314_en.html.

³⁴ "Armenia's Prime Minister Killed in Parliament Shooting, Other Government Officials Shot; Many Hostages Held", CNN, October 27, 1999, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9910/27/armenia.04/>.

Therefore, Azerbaijan has chosen a tactic of economically weakening Armenia, namely the maintenance of the embargo against the country and the implementation of regional projects within which Armenia would not be permitted to participate. Prolonged economic pressure on Armenia could force the country's leadership to reconsider its priorities in the face of discontent from public opinion and mass migration. In this case, the opening of borders with Turkey would lead to the economic pressure on Armenia being weakened by Azerbaijan.

Turkey has rightly assumed and adequately perceived the Azerbaijani position and all concerns have not gone unanswered. High-ranking Turkish officials promised that the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and liberating Azerbaijani territories would be a first step towards a rapprochement in Turkish-Armenian relations.

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