

# A CENTURY LATER: TOWARDS TURKISH-ARMENIAN RAPPROCHEMENT?

(YÜZYIL SONRA: TÜRK-ERMENİ UZLAŞMASINA DOĞRU?)

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**Abstract:** *This article examines various attempts that have been made to begin the process of reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia including the TARC, Joint Committees of Experts proposals, Sarafian-Halaçoğlu initiative, and WATS. However, the main emphasis is on the Soccer diplomacy that began in 2008 and led to the two Zurich Protocols that were signed on October 10, 2009. These two protocols would have established an intergovernmental commission to examine problems between the two states and diplomatic relations between them. However, the optimism over this achievement quickly faded when nationalist elements in both states blocked the ratification of these two protocols. However the very fact that Turkey and Armenia signed the Protocols to establish diplomatic relations, open their borders, and create a Historical Commission to examine their history illustrates that progress is being made even if ratification is not presently possible. What is more, track-two diplomacy between the two ancient enemies continues and is clearly beyond the point of no return. Turks and Armenians will continue to work through civil society contacts and exchanges that will lessen negative stereotypes and construct new confidences. The article ends with recommendations for the future.*

**Keywords:** *Turkey, Armenia, Armenian massacres, TARC, David Phillips, Joint Committees of Experts, Ara Sarafian-Yusuf Halaçoğlu Initiative, WATS, Ragnar Naess Initiative, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Switzerland, Abdullah Gul, Serzh Sarkisyan, Soccer Diplomacy, Zurich Protocols, Jennifer Lind, Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, genocide, büyük felaket/mets yeghern*

**Öz:** *Bu makale aralarında TARC, Ortak Uzmanlar Komiteleri önerileri, Sarafyan-Halaçoğlu İnisiyatif, ve WATS'ın da bulunduğu ve Türkiye ile Ermenistan arasında uzlaşma süreci başlatmayı öngören çeşitli girişimleri incelemektedir. Ancak, öncelikle 2008 yılında başlatılan ve 10 Ekim 2009'da iki Zürih Protokolünün imzalanması ile sonuçlanan Futbol*

*Diplomasisi sürecine odaklanmaktadır. Bu iki protocol iki devlet arasındaki sorunların incelenmesi için iki hükümetlerarası komisyonun kurulmasını ve diplomatic ilişkilerin başlatulmasını sağlayabilecekti. Ancak, her iki ülkedeki aşırı milliyetçi kesimlerin protokollerin onaylanmasını engellenmesi sonucu bu başarıyla yakalanan iyimserlik gözden kayboldu. Yine de günümüzde bu protokollerin onaylanması mümkün olmasa da Türkiye ve Ermenistan'ın bu protokollere diplomatic ilişkileri kurmak, sınırları açmak ve ortak bir Tarih Komisyonu kurarak tarihsel inceleme yapmak amacıyla imza atmış olması dahi kaydedilen ilerlemeyi göstermektedir. Ayrıca, iki kadim hasım arasındaki ikincil diplomasi süreci devam etmektedir ve artık dönüşü olmayan bir seviyeye gelmiştir. Türk ve Ermeniler sivil toplumlar arasındaki iletişim yoluyla birlikte çalışmaya ve olumsuz önyargıları kırarak yeni güven ilişkileri kurmaya devam edeceklerdir. Makalenin sonunda geleceğe dönük öneriler sunulmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Türkiye, Ermenistan, Ermeni katliamları, TARC, David Phillips, Ortak Uzmanlar Komiteleri, Ara Sarafyan-Yusuf Halaçoğlu İnisiyatifi, WATS, Ragnar Naess İnisiyatifi, recep Tayyip Erdoğan, İsviçre, Abdullah Gül, Serj Sarkisyan, Futbol Diplomasisi, Zürih Protokolleri, Jennifer Lind, Dağlık Karabağ, Azerbaycan, soykırım, büyük felaket/metz yeghern*

As the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragic Armenian massacres in World War I nears, many have wondered if finally a Turkish-Armenian rapprochement might be reached on the definition and continuing meaning of this event which still poison their relations, might be possible. For example, Turkey and Armenia have no diplomatic relations, and the border between them has been closed since 1993 due to the fighting that had occurred in Nagorno Karabakh. However, in 1992 Turkey did not oppose Armenia joining the then newly-established Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) based in Istanbul. Since 2001, Armenia also has maintained a senior ambassador accredited to the BSCE in that city. This connection has facilitated a steady flow of visiting foreign, transport, and energy ministers, among others, between the two states despite their formal lack of diplomatic relations.

Nevertheless, the hopes that have risen for the normalization of relations have proven premature. Both sides must take blame for this situation. For example, in September 2005, a Turkish court ruled that a controversial conference on the Armenian question should be suspended.<sup>1</sup> The academic conference had been scheduled to examine critically the official Turkish approach to what had happened during World War I. It was the second time the conference had been called off. The first attempt to hold it had been postponed in May 2005 when Turkey's minister of justice had called it an attempt to stab Turkey in the back. However, while the opposition to the conference had been spearheaded by a group of nationalistic lawyers, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan called the court decision undemocratic.

A little more than a year later, however, the Turkish government invited Armenian officials and representatives of the Armenian diaspora to participate in Hrant Dink's funeral ceremony in January 2007,<sup>2</sup> but no visible reconciliatory developments ensued. The attitude of Harut Sassounian, the publisher of the *California Courier*, is instructive. In a recent interview, Sassounian took umbrage over the *Los Angeles Times* publishing the transcript of a meeting with the Assembly of Turkish American Associations in which that Turkish group questioned the validity of Armenian claims about genocide: "Any group, no matter who they are, that denies any genocide or holocaust, I can not with a clear conscience call them a respectable group. They lose

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1 Sarah Rainsford, "Turkey Bans 'Genocide' Conference," BBC News, September 22, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4273602.stm>, accessed September 15, 2008. This article is an updated and somewhat altered version of the final chapter in my recently published book, *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide* (New York: PalgraveMacmillan, 2011).

2 Hrant Dink was a Turkish-Armenian newspaper editor murdered by a Turkish ultra-nationalist outside his office in Istanbul under still disputed circumstances.

respectability when they deny genocide.”<sup>3</sup> In reply to a query about establishing a fact-finding mission to determine what actually happened, Sassounian replied: “I’m not the one who needs fact-finding. . . . I don’t need to find out what happened. I know what happened.”<sup>4</sup> With such a self-righteous attitude, no wonder rapprochement efforts have proved so difficult.

## TARC

Nevertheless, in recent years there have been several very tentative attempts to bring representatives of the two sides together. On July 9, 2001, for example, the US Department of State helped establish the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) to employ track-two or civil society, non-governmental, person-to-person diplomacy in an attempt to initiate a dialogue between Turks and Armenians. TARC’s terms of reference were:

Terms of Reference are agreed to on this 9<sup>th</sup> day of July 2001 between Armenians and Turks from civil society who, working in an individual capacity, agree to establish the *Reconciliation Commission*.

The *Reconciliation Commission* grew out of meetings held at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna.

The *Reconciliation Commission* seeks to promote mutual understanding and good will between Turks and Armenians and to encourage improved relations between Armenia and Turkey.

The *Reconciliation Commission* hopes, through its efforts, to build on the increasing readiness for reconciliation among Turkish and Armenian civil societies including members of Diaspora communities.

The *Reconciliation Commission* supports contact, dialogue and cooperation between Armenian and Turkish civil societies in order to create public awareness about the need for reconciliation and to derive practical benefits.

The *Reconciliation Commission* will directly undertake activities and catalyze projects by other organizations.

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3 Cited in “The Armenian Question, 2008: Harut Sassounian on Realpolitik and Genocide,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 2008.

4 *Ibid.*

## A Century Later: Towards Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement?

The *Reconciliation Commission* will develop recommendations to be submitted to concerned governments.

The *Reconciliation Commission* will support collaborative Track Two activities in the fields of business, tourism, culture, education and research, environment, media, confidence building, and other areas which are to be determined.

The *Reconciliation Commission* will secure expertise based on project requirements, and may include specialists on historical, psychological and legal matters, as well as other topics.

The *Reconciliation Commission* will review progress after one year.<sup>5</sup>

David L. Phillips, a senior conflict-solving facilitator, served as TARC's neutral chairman. Founding members from the Turkish side included Ilter Turkmen, a former Turkish foreign minister; Gunduz Aktan, a former Turkish ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva; and Ozdem Sanberk, a former Turkish ambassador to the United Kingdom, among others. Founding members for the Armenian side included Van Z. Krikorian, a New York attorney and representative of the Armenian Assembly of America since 1977; David Hovhanissian, a former Armenian ambassador to Syria and minister-at-large for regional issues; and Alexander Arzoumanian, a former Armenian foreign minister and ambassador to the United Nations.

According to David L. Phillips, TARC's chairman:

TARC's detractors accused it of negotiating whether the Armenian genocide actually occurred. They also maintained that TARC's existence was used to deter international criticism of Turkey. In addition, TARC was attacked as a pawn of the U.S. government, and TARC members were labeled traitors. [Armenian] President [Robert] Kocharian's political opponents used TARC to impugn his leadership. Instead of standing by its commitments [to support TARC] the Kocharian government ran for cover.<sup>6</sup>

The Dashnaks (an ultra-nationalist Armenian party founded in 1890) opposed

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5 Cited in David L. Phillips, *Unsilencing the Past: Track Two Diplomacy and Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 57-58. See also Douglas Frantz, "Unofficial Commission Acts to Ease Turkish-Armenian Enmity," *New York Times*, July 10, 2001; and "A Historical Step for Turks and Armenians," *Turkish Daily News*, July 12, 2001.

6 Phillips, *Unsilencing the Past*, p. 61.

TARC because “first and foremost Dashnaks use genocide recognition to solicit money from the Armenian Diaspora... To Dashnaks, TARC was an insidious device undermining their reason for being... If reconciliation occurs, they have no reason to exist.”<sup>7</sup> Phillips also noted the “Diaspora members are typically more hard-line. Having reaped the benefits from peace and prosperity, they have the luxury to assert uncompromising positions.”<sup>8</sup>

TARC tried to focus initially on culture in an attempt to “personalize Turkish-Armenian relations.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, according to Phillips “cultural events had the desired effect by generating positive media coverage and helping to reduce negative stereotypes.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, “prior to TARC, Armenian issues were virtually taboo in Turkey. TARC helped break the ice and a plethora of civil society initiatives ensued.”<sup>11</sup>

*Although the Turks thought that normalizing the visa regime between Turkey and Armenia was a major achievement, TARC’s Armenian members did not agree. TARC also failed to establish a policy working group.*

However, problems soon aroused. Although the Turks thought that normalizing the visa regime between Turkey and Armenia was a major achievement, TARC’s Armenian members did not agree. TARC also failed to establish a policy working group. While Armenians wanted to see more results, the Turks wished to go slower. Thus, an

expectation gap existed between the two sides that hindered positive momentum. The lack of a secretariat slowed any progress. Merely documenting discussions provided problems as did negotiating the text of joint or chairman’s statements. Some TARC members made premature statements to the press, which were seen as breaches in confidentiality that dissipated goodwill. Other TARC members tended to put aside their unofficial capacities and began to act like state officials. “As criticism intensified, TARC’s inability to address the genocide issue raised doubts about the usefulness of continuing the process.”<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, TARC’s chairman felt that “significant . . . advances have been more visible in the field of civil society, where the most difficult barriers to direct contact are no longer present and the reconciliation process is not only underway but has assumed courses independent of TARC and official relations

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

... exactly what TARC was designed to achieve.”<sup>13</sup> Upon its conclusion in 2004, TARC’s chairman listed the following recommendations: 1.) Official contacts should be further improved. 2.) Opening of the Turkish Armenian border should be announced and implemented. 3.) The two governments should publicly support civil society programs focused on education, science, culture, and tourism. 4.) Standing mechanisms for cooperation on humanitarian disaster assistance and health care should be established. 5.) Security and confidence building measures between Turkey and Armenia should be enhanced. 6.) Religious understanding should be encouraged. 7.) The Turkish and Armenian people need to develop more confidence. Despite these tentative beginnings, one must conclude that TARC’s success was modest.

### Joint Committees of Experts.

In 2005, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent a letter to Armenian president Robert Kocharian in which Erdogan proposed a joint committee of Turkish and Armenian experts to study the Armenian allegations of genocide.<sup>14</sup> The Armenians, however, hesitated, replying the committee should instead be composed of governmental officials. In a speech in Baku, Erdogan reiterated his position that conducting historical research was not an issue for politicians: “Let historians, political scientists, archeologists, lawyers and historians of art study this issue.”<sup>15</sup> He then speculated that the Armenians were not replying because then they would have to answer for the Khojali massacre in which 683 Azeri civilians were killed by Armenians on February 25-26, 1992 during the fighting over Nagorno Karabakh: “There is still no answer because then they will have to face the Hocali [Khojali] massacre.” However, the Turkish Prime Minister then declared that “if it is eventually understood that there is a grievance, then we will do what we’re supposed to do.” In other words, Erdogan seemed to be saying that Turkey would admit wrongdoing if the evidenced so proved. This then was truly an amazing declaration that should encourage the Armenians to put aside their pretense of complete innocence and refusal even to discuss anything but a Turkish admittance of unilateral guilt.

Indeed on the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian massacres in 1915, the Turkish prime minister expressed his condolences to the grandchildren of those killed at that time and called what had occurred then “inhumane” and our “shared

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13 *Ibid.*, p. 151.

14 The following discussion is largely based on “PM Erdogan Attends Turkish Diaspora Meeting in Baku,” *Briefing* (Ankara), March 12, 2007, pp. 4-5.

15 This and the following citations were taken from *ibid.*, p. 4.

pain.”<sup>16</sup> Orhan Dink, the brother of the murdered Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink referred to above, welcomed Erdogan’s statement as “a very important step. . . . Some may say that it came late, but the important thing is that this first step was made.” However, Aram Hamparian, the executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America simply dismissed Erdogan’s words as “cold-hearted and cynical. . . . Ankara is repackaging its genocide denials.”

### Sarafian-Halaçoğlu Initiative

A few years earlier, another possibility of joint Turkish-Armenian research on the issue fell through. In February 2005, Ara Sarafian, the founding director of the Gomidas Institute<sup>17</sup> in London, originally had accepted the proposal of Yusuf Halaçoğlu,<sup>18</sup> the chairman of the Turkish Historical Society, to discuss what had happened on the Harput Plain (where many Armenians had lived in eastern Anatolia) and how many people had died there during the Armenian deportations. Soon afterwards, however, Sarafian indicated that he was not willing to proceed with such a study since certain Ottoman records would not be available. The Armenian scholar was apparently referring to Halaçoğlu’s remarks during a television interview in which he said that Sarafian might not be able to discover what he was seeking in the Ottoman archives. Halaçoğlu asked Sarafian to reveal exactly what he was looking for and then added that he thought the Armenian scholar had come under heavy criticism from the Armenian diaspora because of his initial willingness to work with Turkish scholars. The Turkish scholar also indicated that Sarafian was disturbed by the Turkish request to study the Dashnak archives.

In reply, Sarafian stated:

Primary sources outside of Turkey indicate that the 1915 deportation of Armenians and the liquidation of their properties were regulated by Ottoman state authorities. Armenians were deported under the auspices of Ottoman officials. And most deportees were killed through privations

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16 These and the following citations were taken from Constanze Letsch, “Turkish PM Offers Condolences over 1915 Armenian Massacre,” *The Guardian*, April 23, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/23/turkey>. . . , accessed August 8, 2014.

17 The Gomidas Institute republishes English translations of Armenian texts related to the events of World War I which would not otherwise be readily available. Turkish institutes have carried out similar roles in recent years. During the 1990s, Sarafian, along with Hilmar Kaiser, had conducted demographic research in the Turkish Prime Minister’s Ottoman Archives.

18 Yusuf Halaçoğlu is the author of *The Story of 1915: What Happened to the Ottoman Armenians?* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2008).



and outright massacres on their way or in their places of exile (most notably Der Zor). Our sources indicate that there never was a resettlement program as historians defending the official Turkish thesis suggest. . . . [Sarafian then asked Hacacoglu to] explain why he thinks that the Ottoman deportation and resettlement registers the Gomidas Institute requested do not exist—especially those on Harput and its environs.<sup>19</sup>

On a related matter, Halaçoğlu also announced that he had agreed with David Gaunt, a historian from Soderntorn University in Sweden, to conduct joint research on opening recently discovered mass graves in Nusaybin in the southeastern Anatolian province of Mardin. Armenian historians have said that these graves might contain the remains of victims from the massacres in 1915. Halaçoğlu declared that he was confident that these graves were from ancient times and not related to the Armenian accusations.

### WATS

In addition, there have been five Workshops for Armenian/Turkish Scholarship (WATS) held at the University of Chicago in 2000, the University of Michigan in 2002, the University of Minnesota in 2004, Salzburg in 2005, and New York University in 2006. These Workshops have been directed by Professors Muge Gocek of the University of Michigan, Gerard J. Libaridian of the University of Michigan, and Ronald Grigor Suny of the University of Chicago. They have sought to investigate through scholarship the history and politics of the deportations and massacres of Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire and related questions, but consisted mainly of Armenian and pro-Armenian scholars joined by a few Turkish ones. Thus, these Workshops were not neutral venues in which both sides were given equal opportunities to make their case.

### Ragnar Naess Initiative

In May 2008, Ragnar Naess, a concerned Norwegian academic, invited nine or ten Turkish and Armenian scholars to Oslo, Norway to unofficially discuss the situation.<sup>20</sup> The workshop was financed by The Norwegian Association for Freedom of Expressin. Hilmar Kaiser read an interesting paper for the Armenians, while Garabed Moumjian, who knows Ottoman Turkish, and

<sup>19</sup> Cited in *Briefing* (Ankara), March 12, 2007, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> The following discussion is largely based on information I obtained from an Armenian participant in the Oslo meeting who preferred to be anonymous.

Khatchig Mouradian, the current editor of the Dashnak newspaper in the United States *The Armenian Weekly*, also made substantive contributions. Dennis Papazian, a retired professor and reasonable interlocutor, announced on arrival that he was not interested in discussing whether or not there had been an Armenian genocide but would be pleased to discuss any other aspects of Armenian-Turkish relations. On the Turkish side, Justin McCarthy, an American professor of Turkish studies known for his pro-Turkish position, was a prominent participant. Baskin Oran, a noted Turkish professor who has studied ethnic identities in Turkey, read a good paper, which did not please the more conservative Turks. Kemal Cicek, a member of the Turkish Historical Society, presented the Turkish point of view, doing so with a pleasant demeanor. Yavuz Baydar also made a favorable impression. The conference participants agreed not to discuss specifics in public, but did issue a joint statement that said little besides announcing their meeting, discussion of important things, and agreement to meet again.

One Armenian participant said that he did not hold out much hope for the Oslo meeting at present because the issue of genocide was now a political issue between Armenia and Turkey. Once a governmental agreement would be reached, however, academics would be called upon to vouch for its accuracy. At the present time, no Turkish scholar wanted to stick his neck out, but unless there would be good representation from Turkey, further talks would be difficult. Although the participants expressed a desire for a follow-up meeting, the sponsoring Norwegian Association declined to do so. In an email to this author, Ragnar Naess, speculated that “probably the Norwegian genocide scholars had a hand in this.”<sup>21</sup>

### Further Developments

Nevertheless, some 200 Turkish intellectuals used the phrase *Buyuk Felaket* [Great Catastrophe] in an apology issued in December 2008, and also signed online by about 29,500 others: “My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the denial of the Great Catastrophe that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my share, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them.”<sup>22</sup> Although this apology was criticized to varying degrees by the Turkish

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21 Ragnar Naess, email to Michael Gunter, December 3, 2013. Naess added that since 2008, he had been lecturing annually on the Turkish-Armenian question at The Institute for Political Science at the University of Oslo and was concluding a 250-page book manuscript entitled “A Genocidal Age and Its Aftermath: Notes on the Question of the Armenian Genocide?”

22 See Ozur Diliyorum, [www.ozurdiliyorum.com](http://www.ozurdiliyorum.com), accessed August 18, 2009. This Turkish term for Great Catastrophe is a virtual translation of the frequently used Armenian phrase employed to describe the events of 1915, *Mets Yeghern*.

prime minister, president, armed forces general staff, conservative retired diplomats, and nationalist newspapers, the reaction was much less than would have occurred only a few years earlier. Indeed, the Ankara Chief Prosecutor's Office decided not to prosecute the signers, which in the past would have been unthinkable. Thus, the "Great Apology" demonstrated how some modern Turkish opinion was willing to move beyond the earlier sterile denials of any wrongdoing.

Similarly, in January 2009, Murat Bardakci, a Turkish scholar, published Armenian population figures in Turkey from a long-lost record left by Talaat Pasha, indicating that nearly a million Armenians who had been living in the Ottoman Empire before 1915 had disappeared by 1917.<sup>23</sup> Although few in the Turkish media commented about this finding, it was still a token of Turkey's growing democratic maturity that these figures could even be revealed. Bardakci himself stated that "I could never have published this book 10 year ago. I would have been called a traitor. The mentality has changed."<sup>24</sup>

In addition, following the ground breaking work of the TARC in 2001-2002 more than a dozen other track-two projects have tried to ameliorate relations including joint concerts in Istanbul and Yerevan, art exhibitions, student exchanges, a youth summit, a Turkish-Armenian women's magazine, reciprocal visits between think-tank officials, and photography exhibits. On March 17, 2009 approximately 40 Turkish and Armenian NGO activists met in a large conference in Yerevan and agreed on the necessity for an unconditional normalization of links.<sup>25</sup> Although these track-two initiatives have had only mixed results, they still manifest a momentum that would have been impossible to even conceive of earlier.

Thus, over the past decade, a new, more liberal Turkey has been emerging. Under the stewardship of the *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* (AKP) government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey has sought greater democratization, while its European Union (EU) accession bid has led to the harmonization of many of its laws with those of the EU.<sup>26</sup> This process of democratization has led to more emphasis on Turkey's soft power<sup>27</sup> and the

23 Murat Bardakci, ed., *Talat Pashanın Evrak-i Metrukesi* [The Papers Talat Pasha Left Behind] (Istanbul: Everest yayinlari, 2009). See my discussion at the end of Chapter 2 for the pro-Turkish response to these figures.

24 Cited in Sabrina Tavernise, "Nearly a Million Genocide Victims, Covered in a Cloak of Amnesia," *New York Times*, March 8, 2009.

25 See Civil Society Institute, [www.csi.am](http://www.csi.am), accessed August 18, 2009.

26 For a cogent analysis of the AKP and its ground-breaking attempts at reform, see M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

27 Meliha Benli Altunisik, "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* 10 (April 2008), pp. 41-54.

desire to pursue a new foreign policy of zero problems with its neighbors.<sup>28</sup> The AKP's massive electoral victories over determined military and Kemalist opposition in July 2007 and again in June 2011, on-going Ergenekon investigation of reputed military coup attempts, large sympathy demonstration in Istanbul for Hrant Dink, and removal of hard-line Yusuf Halaçoğlu as the chairman of the Turkish Historical Society, among numerous other developments, further indicates this new current of thought.

### The Swiss Role

After two years of closed talks in Switzerland; Turkey, Armenia, and Switzerland announced on April 22, 2009 that they had reached a road map to normalize Turkish-Armenian relations:

*This process of democratization has led to more emphasis on Turkey's soft power and the desire to pursue a new foreign policy of zero problems with its neighbors.*

Turkey and Armenia, together with Switzerland as mediator, have been working intensively with a view to normalizing their bilateral relations and developing them in a spirit of good-neighborliness, and mutual respect, and thus to promoting peace, security and stability in the whole region.

The two parties have achieved tangible progress and mutual understanding in this process and they have agreed on a comprehensive framework for the normalization of their bilateral relations in a mutually satisfactory manner. In this context, a road map has been identified. This agreed basis provides a positive prospect for the on-going process.<sup>29</sup>

This road map then led quickly to further negotiations and the signing of two Protocols before the year was out.

### Soccer Diplomacy

The Five-Day War between Russia and Georgia that began on August 8, 2008,

28 Bulent Aras, "The Davutoglu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Insight Turkey* 11 (Summer 2009), pp. 127-42.

29 "Joint Statement of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, the Republic of Armenia and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs," Press Release No. 56, April 22, 2009, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-56-22april-2009-press-release-regarding-the-turkish-armenian-relations.en.mfa>, accessed October 5, 2009.

also contributed to the momentum by showing Turkey how vulnerable its communication and energy routes through Georgia were. New incentives had been created for opening the border with Armenia as a way to construct necessary alternative routes. In addition, Russia now looked more favorably upon a Turkish-Armenian rapprochement given its reasserted prominence in the region. The United States and the European Union were already on board as approving, and Turkey was willing to satisfy them in return for being seen as willing to mend fences with Armenia.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, on September 6, 2008, Turkish president Abdullah Gul accepted an invitation from his Armenian counterpart Serzh (Serge) Sarkisyan (Sarkisian) and journeyed to Yerevan, Armenia to watch Turkey and Armenia play against each other in a World Cup qualifying soccer match. Gul's visit was the first ever by a Turkish president and sparked speculation that "soccer diplomacy" might initiate reconciliation between the two historical enemies as "ping-pong diplomacy" had 35 years earlier between the United States and China. In addition to the Turkish president, some 5,000 Turkish fans also traveled to the soccer match on special visas issued by the Armenian government. For its part, Turkey already had permitted free travel for Armenians to Turkey since 1995. Indeed, as many as 40,000 Armenian passport holders are now believed to be working in Istanbul without official permits, but with the tacit approval of Turkish authorities.<sup>31</sup> In the case of Gul's visit to Armenia, Sarkisyan had invited him the previous July and at that time had expressed a desire for "a new phase of dialogue with the government and people of Turkey, with the goal of normalizing relations and opening our common border."<sup>32</sup>

For their part senior Turkish foreign ministry officials revealed that they had been meeting secretly with their Armenian counterparts in Switzerland for some time to arrange further initiatives<sup>33</sup> Despite the Armenian parliament referring to Turkey's eastern provinces as "western Armenia" in its declaration of independence on August 23, 1990, Turkey had recognized Armenian independence earlier than most other states and had also invited Armenia to join the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization as a founding member

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30 For further analysis, see Alexander Iskandaryan and Sergey Minasyan, "Pragmatic Policies vs. Historical Constraints: Analyzing Armenia-Turkey Relations," Caucasus Institute Research Papers #1, Yerevan, Armenia, January 2010.

31 *Today's Zaman*, January 29, 2009.

32 Cited in "We Are Ready To Talk To Turkey," *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 2008.

33 Jeremy Bransten and Charles Rechnagel, "The Outbreak of 'Football Diplomacy,'" Radio Free Europe, September 5, 2008, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Outbreak\\_Football\\_Diplomacy/1196718.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Outbreak_Football_Diplomacy/1196718.html), accessed October 9, 2008.

in 1992 even though it did not have any border on that body of water.<sup>34</sup> Turkey also had been providing energy to Armenia when it faced serious energy shortages during the 1990s, as well as donating 100,000 tons of wheat to it then. In addition, flights between Yerevan and Istanbul continue to run despite the closed border. Turkey even allows in thousands of illegal Armenian workers. In the wake of the brief war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, Turkey offered Armenia membership in its new project, The Caucasian Stability and Cooperation Platform. Apropos to the initiation of soccer diplomacy, Turkey also had been permitting Armenian soccer (football) teams to organize preparation camps in Antalya, a large Turkish city on the Mediterranean Sea.

Gul's office stated that his visit "will be an opportunity to overcome obstacles and prepare a new ground to bring the two people together."<sup>35</sup> Sarkisyan declared that "without forgetting the past, we must look to the future. If there is a dialogue, we can discuss any, even the most difficult questions. We must shape a mutually beneficial agenda and begin contacts without preconditions."<sup>36</sup> Mark Parris, the former US ambassador to Turkey and currently a scholar at the Brookings Institution, said: "Both capitals have wanted to find a solution for some time, but third parties—including Azerbaijan, in the case of Turkey, and the Armenian diaspora, in the case of Yerevan—have militated against one."<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, in Yerevan, Gul's motorcade passed hundreds of protesters calling for Turkey to admit its role in the Armenian massacres. His visit, however, enabled him to confer with Sarkisyan, talks which Gul characterized as heralding a breakthrough in relations: "Everything will move forward and normalize if this climate continues. I believe my visit has destroyed a psychological barrier in the Caucasus."<sup>38</sup> Suren Sureniants, a senior Republic Party member in Armenia, seemingly concurred by stating: "The visit of the Turkish president is the most important political event for Armenia. The visit will have an indirect influence not only on our foreign, but also on domestic

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34 The following discussion is based on Bulent Aras and Fatih Ozbay, "Turkish-Armenian Relations: Will Football Diplomacy Work?" No. 24, *SETA Policy Brief* (Ankara), September 2008, pp. 2, 4.

35 Cited in Andrew Purvis, "Can Soccer Heal Turkey-Armenian Rift?" *Time* (in partnership with CNN), September 5, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1839199,00.html>, accessed September 10, 2008.

36 Cited in *ibid.*

37 Cited in *ibid.*

38 Cited in Mark Bentley, "Turkey Says Armenia May Re-establish Relations, Trade," *Bloomberg.com*, September 10, 2008, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601085&sid=aFUwZ222syYc&refer=>, accessed September 10, 2008.

policy and will lead to the start of new relations.”<sup>39</sup> Levon Ter-Petrosian, the former Armenian president and current opposition leader, agreed: “We should establish normal, good-neighborly relations with Turkey without preconditions.”<sup>40</sup> Ter-Petrosian elaborated that “when I said this [earlier], they [Armenian government officials] would say what treachery it is. And now, they keep repeating it [positively what Ter-Petrosian had said] night and day.”<sup>41</sup> Alexander Iskandarian, a political analyst at the Caucasus Media Center in Yerevan, said that there was strong political support in Armenia for détente with Turkey for economic reasons. He explained that Armenia’s hope was that better relations would lead to a permanent reopening of the Turkish-Armenian border. Currently, Armenia had no rail links to the West despite the fact that some 70 percent of its trade balance was with Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Elmar Mammadyarov, the foreign minister of Azerbaijan, added that Azeris “welcome this initiative positively.”<sup>43</sup> Most centrist Turkish media outlets were also supportive of Gul’s trip, while EU officials declared that it had enhanced political stability in the region. Important too was the support of Professor Ahmet Davutoglu, the chief advisor on foreign policy to the Turkish prime minister and subsequently the Turkish foreign minister. Mustafa Akyol, the deputy editor of the *Turkish Daily News*, felt it significant that the politically-influential Turkish military was not objecting to Gul’s initiative: “Right now, the nationalist parties in the parliament are more nationalist than the military on some issues. And probably on this one, I think the military is not disturbed because the military understands that Turkey needs to secure its Caucasus borders and needs to have good relations. So probably the military is not a big obstacle on this issue.”<sup>44</sup>

Following Gul’s visit, the foreign ministers of the two states held additional talks. Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Armenian president Sarkisian then met briefly at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in January 2009. Sizing up the results of Gul’s visit and its aftermath, The International Crisis Group concluded: “Since then, barely a week goes by

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39 Cited in Marianna Grigoryan, “Armenia, Turkey Put Differences Aside for Soccer,” *Eurasia Insight*, October 9, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav090508.shtml>, accessed October 9, 2008.

40 Cited in *ibid.*

41 Cited in *ibid.*

42 Bransten and Rechnagel, “Outbreak of ‘Football Diplomacy.’”

43 Cited in Grigoryan, “Armenia, Turkey Put Differences Aside for Soccer.” On the other hand, I have been told by many Azeris that they were very wary of any understanding between Turkey and Armenia that would sacrifice Azeri interests.

44 Cited in Bransten and Rechnagel, “Outbreak of ‘Football Diplomacy.’”

without senior officials meeting. Armenia and Turkey ‘have never been closer’ to normalising relations.”<sup>45</sup>

Not all parties, however, were as pleased with these sudden developments. The Dashnaks vowed to carry out protests against Gul’s visit. Ruben Safrastian, the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, felt that Turkey would not deviate in any meaningful way from its current policy towards Armenia. Gul had come to Armenia due to regional tensions connected to Russia’s war against Georgia and because of a possible upcoming debate in the US Congress over yet another pro-Armenian resolution: “There may be some small change that will result in some thaw between the two countries, however, Gul will try to use the visit to strengthen his positions in the region. The Turks will use this visit to prove their goodwill. However, in reality, they will do everything to use it in their interest.”<sup>46</sup>

Nationalistic Turkish leaders felt that the trip bordered on the betrayal of their country; the opposition leader of the Republican Peoples’ Party in Turkey Deniz Baykal sarcastically opined that Gul should lay a wreath at the Yerevan genocide monument.<sup>47</sup> Devlet Bahcheli’s Nationalist Action Party also criticized Gul’s initiative.<sup>48</sup> The genocide issue had not even been directly broached. A careful Turkish think-tank study concluded: “There is not much change in the Armenian attitude overall.” Despite Sarkisyan’s “mild tone . . . , it is doubtful . . . whether such an approach alone will solve the direct problems between Turkey and Armenia.”<sup>49</sup>

## The Breakthrough

Following the soccer diplomacy initiative, the confidential talks alluded to above between Turkey and Armenia in Switzerland gained new impetus. On April 22, 2009, the parties arrived at a “roadmap” document towards establishing diplomatic relations. At first, however, the roadmap seemed to founder as both sides renewed hard-line positions. Turkey’s desire to promote

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45 International Crisis Group, “Turkey and Armenia: Opening Minds, Opening Borders,” Europe Report No. 199 (Istanbul/Yerevan/Baku/Brussels, April 14, 2009), p. 1. For further background, see Aybars Gorgulu, “Towards a Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement?” *Insight Turkey* 11 (Spring 2009), pp. 19-29.

46 Cited in Grigoryan, “Armenia, Turkey Put Differences Aside.”

47 “Turkish-Armenian Soccer Diplomacy,” Reuters, September 5, 2008, <http://blogs.reuters.com/global/2008/09/05/turkish-armenian-soccer-diplomacy/>, accessed October 9, 2008.

48 Aras and Ozbay, “Will Football Diplomacy Work?”

49 *Ibid.*



its “zero-problems” policy in the Middle East and further its EU candidacy, especially while its supporter Sweden held the rotating presidency however, encouraged it towards an accommodation. For its part, Armenia, badly in need of economic stimuli and a breakout from its geographic isolation, finally agreed to two major concessions: the establishment of an historical commission to analyze the events of 1915 and acceptance of the present borders. The perception that Armenian president Sarkisyan would not be able to reciprocate Turkish president Gul’s attendance at the World Cup qualifying soccer match between the two on October 14, 2009 unless progress had been made served as an immediate catalyst.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, on August 31, 2009, the two sides issued a joint statement that they had agreed “to start political negotiations” aimed at establishing diplomatic relations.”<sup>51</sup> After six more weeks of internal political negotiations and with the Swiss government’s assistance, Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu and Armenian foreign minister Edward Nalbandian finally signed two separate protocols at Zurich University in Zurich, Switzerland: 1.) Protocol on Development of Relations; and 2.) Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations. However, what UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon termed an “historic decision”<sup>52</sup> only occurred after a last-minute dispute over the final statements each would make was solved by agreeing that there would be no oral statements that might be construed as deal-breaking reservations. US secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton, US diplomat for Europe Philip Gordon, and Swiss foreign minister Micheline Calmy-Rey aided in clearing this last-minute hurdle.

When the problem regarding statements first aroused, Clinton abruptly left the ceremony venue where the signing was to occur. She spoke from a sedan in her hotel parking lot three times with the Armenians and four times with the Turks. Escorted by a Swiss police car with lights and siren blazing, a Turkish diplomat finally arrived with a new draft of his state’s statement. Clinton and Nalbandian then met in person at the hotel and drove back to Zurich University where the signing finally took place three hours later than originally scheduled. Along with the individuals already mentioned, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner, the EU high representative for common foreign and security policy Javier Solana, and Slovenian foreign

50 For background, see Gallia Lindenstrauss, “The Historic Accord between Turkey and Armenia: What Lies Ahead? *INSS Insight* No. 136, October 12, 2009.

51 Sebnem Arsu, “Armenians and Turks Agree on Ties,” *New York Times*, September 1, 2009.

52 Cited in Matthew Lee, “Turkey and Armenia Sign Historic Accord Establishing Diplomatic Relations,” October 10, 2009, accessed at [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com), October 17, 2009. The following discussion is largely based on this source.

minister Samuel Zbogor also attended the signing. Significantly perhaps for Turkey's EU hopes, Solana thanked Turkey and declared: "This is an important cooperation, no doubt, of Turkey, to solve one issue that pertains to a region which is in our neighborhood."<sup>53</sup> In Turkey, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that Turkey was demonstrating its "goodwill" and added that it also was keen on seeing Armenian troops withdrawn from Nagorno Karabakh. He added that "we are trying to boost our relations with Armenia in a way that will cause no hard feelings for Azerbaijan." Armenian president Serge Sarkisyan said that his state was taking a "responsible decision" in normalizing relations with Turkey, despite what he maintained were "the unhealable wounds of genocide." He added that "there is no alternative to the establishment of relations with Turkey without any precondition. It is the dictate of time."

Four days later, the Armenian president journeyed to Turkey where the Turkish president hosted him in the ancient Ottoman capital of Bursa for a final round of soccer diplomacy. There Sarkisyan specifically explained that his recent meeting with representatives of the powerful but skeptical Armenian diaspora was merely a briefing process, and that he was not "seeking permission"<sup>54</sup> from them to reconcile with Turkey. Turkish president Gul declared: "We're not writing history, we're making history."

In the first protocol on the "Development of Relations," the two sides agreed to open their "common border within 2 months after the entry into force of this Protocol."<sup>55</sup> They also agreed to establish an "intergovernmental commission and various sub-commissions at ministerial level" on political consultations; transport, communications and energy infrastructure and networks; legal matters; science and education; trade, tourism and economic cooperation; environmental issues; and historical dimension "in which Turkish, Armenian as well as Swiss and other international experts shall take place." A working group headed by the foreign minister of the two parties was tasked "to prepare the working modalities" of these different bodies. Specific time tables of one, two, and three months were established for their implementation. Both protocols had to be ratified by the respective parliaments of the two new partners/parties.

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53 This and the following citations were taken from *ibid.*

54 This and the following citation were taken from Suzan Fraser, "Armenia, Turkey Pursue 'Soccer Diplomacy,'" October 15, 2009, accessed at <http://www.ArmeniaDiaspora.com>, October 16, 2009.

55 The following data and citations were gleaned from "Protocol on Development of Relations Between The Republic of Turkey and The Republic of Armenia," Turkish Embassy, Washington, DC, October 11, 2009, accessed at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/protocol-on-development> . . . . October 16, 2009.

### Aftermath

Given the ancient history of bad will between Turks and Armenians, the Zurich Protocols they signed on October 10, 2009 initially seemed to hold the distinct possibility of being of major historic significance. However, this soon proved not to be the case as the historical antagonisms again reared up. Indeed, Jennifer Lind has shown how attempts at apologies sometimes can be a risky tool for well-meaning peacemakers, causing more harm than good.<sup>56</sup> For example, post-World War II attempts at Japanese contrition have triggered domestic backlash resulting in conservative politicians, intellectuals, and patriots either justifying or denying past Japanese atrocities. Apologies can impugn wartime leaders, veterans, and those who died fighting for their country. Even in Britain, proposed apologies for former actions in Ireland as well as complicity in the slave trade sparked backlash. In the United States, a proposed Smithsonian exhibit to discuss the horrors of Hiroshima and question the necessity of using the atomic bomb triggered widespread backlash from Congress, veterans' groups, and the media.

On the other hand, both Britain and the United States established close relations with West Germany without apologizing for firebombing German cities. Japan and the United States built a positive postwar relationship despite neither side apologizing for their wartime actions. West Germany and France reconciled soon after World War II despite very little initial apologies from the former. Bonn's fulsome expressions of contrition only came later. German apologies did not provoke much backlash largely because of the unique strategic circumstances in which Germany found herself regarding her need to reassure NATO and the West and thus earn their protection from the Soviet Union.

The West German-French approach offers a non-accusatory strategy of shared catastrophes. Instead of singling out German brutality, the Franco-German memorial at Rheims cathedral and cemetery at Verdun highlight the suffering that militarism and ultra-nationalism brought both sides and thus emphasized their need for unity. Such multilateral approaches focus beyond blaming only one side by considering atrocities committed by many states in numerous wars. Since such multilateral themes do not accuse just one side, they are less likely to elicit backlash. Of course, if one side continues to see itself as uniquely innocent and requiring retributive justice, such multilateral approaches remain premature.

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56 The following discussion is largely based on Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics* (Cornell University Press, 2008).

In the matter of the attempted Turkish-Armenian rapprochement, several problems remained. First, as already mentioned, their agreements in Zurich needed to be ratified by their respective parliaments before they could take effect. By the summer of 2010 it had become clear that strong nationalist opposition in both states had scuttled the Zurich Protocols. On January 12, 2010, for example, the Armenian Constitutional Court struck a blow at the rapprochement by ruling that the Protocols signed in October 2009 could not override the 1990 Armenian declaration of independence, which had declared that Armenia would seek international recognition of the genocide. Some would interpret this court ruling as preventing any further discussion with

*Once both sides would have to listen to the other's position instead simply of preaching to the choir, it was possible that some type of agreement gradually would emerge.*

Turkey over this issue, one of the main reasons Turkey signed the Protocols in the first place and whose discussion Turkey argued it was guaranteed by the Protocols.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the Armenian court implied that the protocols could not have any bearing on the Armenian-Azeri conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. The Turkish foreign ministry immediately released a statement that Armenia was creating unacceptable preconditions that undermined

the very reason for negotiating the protocols.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, Turkey seriously miscalculated the Azeri reaction to the Protocols as the seemingly intractable Nagorno Karabakh issue led Azerbaijan to pressure Turkey against ratification.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Azerbaijan even hinted that it might reconsider its earlier commitment to deliver gas to Turkey. Rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia might drive Azerbaijan into the Russian hands.<sup>60</sup> By not dealing with the Nagorno Karabakh issue, Turkish nationalists also saw the Protocols as betraying their Azeri kin.<sup>61</sup> Finally, even if an historical commission were to be established to study what happened in 1915, it was difficult to see how it would be able to convince both sides whether genocide

57 See Semih Idiz, "The Turkish-Armenian Debacle," *Insight Turkey* 12 (Spring 2010), p. 14; and Sergey Minasyan, "Prospects for Normalization between Armenia and Turkey: A View from Yerevan," *Insight Turkey* 12 (Spring 2010), p. 28.

58 Emil Danielyan, "Turkish-Armenian Deal Threatens to Unravel," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7 (January 27, 2010); and Barcin Yinanc, "Turkey Asks for Guarantee from Bern, Washington on Behalf of Armenia," *Hurriyet* (Turkey), January 27, 2010.

59 Elhan Mehtiyev, "Turkish-Armenian Protocols: An Azerbaijani Perspective," *Insight Turkey* 12 (Spring 2010), pp. 41-47.

60 Piotr Zalewski, "Abnormalisation: The Bumpy Road to Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement," Centre for European Policy Studies, (Brussels, December 17, 2009).

61 Elhan Mehtiyev, "Turkish-Armenian Protocols: An Azerbaijani Perspective," *Insight Turkey* 12 (Spring 2010), pp. 41-47.

had occurred or not. The on-going dispute simply would move to this commission.

However, once both sides would have to listen to the other's position instead simply of preaching to the choir, it was possible that some type of agreement gradually would emerge.<sup>62</sup> As mentioned above, the two sides might be able to forego employing the word genocide, in favor of the term *Buyuk Felaket/Mets Yeghern* or Great Catastrophe. Finally, some have suggested that Armenia could turn to Iran for the economic support it needs and which drives it to accept the rapprochement with Turkey.<sup>63</sup> However, given Iran's own economic malaise and continuing problems with the West, it is questionable how much the Islamic Republic can help Armenia.

Given this seeming impasse, there are some who now argue that the supposed rapprochement has actually made matters worse between Turkey and Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan, and even Turkey and the United States. In addition, Turkey's attempt to assume the role of a regional problem solver has been botched, while Armenia remained economically isolated. Washington's hopes to revive its deteriorating relationship with Ankara have been frayed, while U.S. calculations that the protocols could reduce Armenia's dependence on Russia dashed. Only Russia would seem to have benefited by continuing its delicate balancing strategy in the region: Armenia remained tied to Russia, Russian ties with Azerbaijan have been fostered while Turkish and Azeri relations soured, relations with Turkey over regional and energy issues continued, and the United States prevented from becoming too successful in its initiatives.<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, the very fact that Turkey and Armenia signed the Protocols to established diplomatic relations, open their borders, and create a Historical Commission illustrates that progress is being made even if ratification is not presently possible. Important governmental precedents have been set and institutions created. As soon as the diplomatic winds shift, as they usually do, the basis to pick up and continue to the finishing line already will have been established. What is more, track-two diplomacy between the two ancient enemies continues and is clearly beyond the point of no return. Turks and Armenians will continue to work through civil society contacts and exchanges

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62 See, for example, the recent discussion in Ronald Grigor Suny, "Truth in Telling: Reconciling Realities in the Genocide of the Ottoman Armenians," *American Historical Review* 114 (October 2009), pp. 935 ff.

63 Emil Danielyan, "Armenia Showcases Iran Ties, as Talks with Azerbaijan and Turkey Falter," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7 (February 11, 2010).

64 For background, see Igor Torbakov, "Russia and Turkish-Armenian Normalization: Competing Interests in the South Caucasus," *Insight Turkey* 12 (Spring 2010), pp. 31-39.

that will lessen negative stereotypes and construct new confidences. Of course, only time will tell whether these continuing attempts at a rapprochement would lead to a cordial peace or only to a cold peace as has existed between Israel and Egypt since their peace treaty was signed in 1979.

## Recommendations

Given the initial breakthrough and rapprochement in Turkish-Armenian relations that occurred in October 2009 but the impasse currently reached, what roads should Turkey now take? This, of course, is a most difficult question and surely there are behind-the-scenes contacts occurring of which this author is unaware. Nevertheless, based on what has been discussed above, the following might be considered besides simply waiting for the diplomatic winds to shift in favor of ratification of the Protocols. If denial fuels continuing fear and revenge, while unilateral contrition risks backlash and subsequent demands for reparations, how can peacemakers confront the past?

In such a situation, Turkey should differentiate between the independent state of Armenia and the Armenian diaspora.<sup>65</sup> There are more opportunities for progress with Armenia because it needs to deal immediately with its severe economic problems, and Turkey is in a strong position to help. The more affluent Armenian diaspora, on the other hand, does not need any economic aid. Rather, it remains concerned primarily with its allegations of genocide, which has the effect of disengaging it from the immediate economic reality of Armenia.

Indeed, one study found that diaspora communities in general tend to be more radical concerning the foreign policy of their homeland and associated conflicts than their kin who actually live in the homeland.<sup>66</sup> By helping Armenia with its economic problems, Turkey may begin to split the two Armenian actors.<sup>67</sup> According to an estimate from Kaan Soyak, the director of the Turkish Armenian Business Development Council (TABC), opening the border could more than double Turkish-Armenian trade.<sup>68</sup> Such action could also boost foreign direct investment in Armenia by reducing the perception of its risk and

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65 The following recommendations are largely based on the discussion in Aras and Ozbay, "Will Football Diplomacy Work?" pp. 5-7.

66 C. Christine Fair, "Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights from the Khalistan and Tamil Eelam Movements," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11 (April 2005), pp. 125-56.

67 In a mirror image of this splitting strategy, however, Armenia undoubtedly would like to separate Turkey and Azerbaijan by convincing Turkey to open its borders to Armenia, an increasingly possible demarche given the perceived sterility of keeping the borders closed. Armenia would also like to split Turkey and Azerbaijan on the Nagorno Karabakh issue.

68 *Today's Zaman*, February 16, 2009.

isolation. In addition, open borders would appreciatively reduce Armenian transport costs now dependent on expensive, low capacity, and vulnerable rail and road links through Georgia and its Black Sea ports. Although the much larger Turkish economy does not stand to gain nearly as much, open borders still would help develop such isolated Turkish towns as Kars, Igdir, Trabzon, and Erzurum, among others.

As for the genocide allegations, Turkey should continue to advocate a joint commission of historians to undertake an objective analysis. Since much of the Armenian diaspora opposes this approach as questioning the authenticity of its version of history, once again Turkey is presented with an opportunity to portray the Armenian diaspora as obstructionist, take a constructive diplomatic stance that will please the West, while dividing the diaspora from the state of Armenia. Such a proactive instead of defensive approach would also strengthen Turkey's regional profile in the Caucasus, opening new possibilities for it to pursue roles as a mediator and facilitator in keeping with its recent position as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

At the same time, however, Turkey should remain sensitive to Azeri concerns regarding Nagorno Karabakh. This remains a very emotional issue, for which the OSCE Minsk initiative and UN-authored attempts have not produced any solution. Once again, Turkey's Caucasian initiatives involving Armenia might offer new possibilities. Russia and to some extent even Iran, of course, will be key actors in all this, and must be convinced that the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement will not threaten their interests. Although Russia may subtly benefit if the rapprochement falters, it is not likely that Russia will actively attempt to hamstring its revival as Moscow too could benefit by increased political and economic stability in the Caucasus. Iran's position is not as clear, but certainly not hostile. Finally, Turkey should remain susceptible to continuing track-two, civil society dialogues. As documented above, even in the Armenian diaspora there are those who should be willing to discuss discreetly all contentious matters. This will not be an easy process, and there is no guarantee of success. However, the long, arduous journey has already begun, and many Turks and Armenians have committed themselves to an eventual rapprochement.<sup>69</sup>

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69 For a series of further even-handed and cogently reasoned recommendations on how the parties might proceed, see International Crisis Group, "Turkey and Armenia," pp. ii-iii. These proposals were released in April 2009. For additional policy proposals and recommendations, see Aybars Gorgulu, Alexander Iskandaryan, and Sergey Minasyan, "Turkey-Armenian Dialogue Series: Assessing the Rapprochement Process," TESEV (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation), Istanbul, May 2010, pp. 22-23. Finally, see on the website maintained by the European Stability Initiative (ESI) in Berlin [www.esiweb.org](http://www.esiweb.org) "Turkey-Armenia: The Great Debate," August 2009; and "Turkey-Armenia Manual: Information and Contacts to Persons and Institutions Working on Turkey-Armenia Relations," August 2010.

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