

and Anapa. Islamic rebels could target the critical infrastructure, the destruction of which could lead to delay, suspension or cancellation of the event. As the Olympic Games will be organized in separate mountain (Krasnaya Polyana) and coastal (Sochi) clusters, railway links will be important for transporting athletes, officials, and tourists. A number of explosions on the gas pipelines and railways which connect Dagestan with Azerbaijan show the rebels' interest to inflict damages to the transportation infrastructure. If not prevented, terrorist attacks could incite violence throughout the entire Caucasus. Encouraged by its ability to carry out attacks in a highly securitized environment, the insurgents could try to extend the "front," for instance from Dagestan to northern Azerbaijan (in 2008 Azerbaijan's Special Forces clashed in the Gusar district with Dagestani militants). The Russian authorities might also try to camouflage their failure by accusing Georgia of providing shelter and support for Islamic fighters, fueling another spiral of tensions between Moscow and Tbilisi.

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Conclusions

There is no doubt that the Sochi Olympics will have a multidimensional impact on developments in the Caucasus. The interpretation of regional trends and patterns coupled with a bit of imagination presented above revealed how the Sochi factor could influence politics, economics and security in different parts of the Caucasus. Although the prestige calculations of hosting the Olympics in Sochi will push Russia to seek stability in the region, some instruments and means employed to this end could generate contradictory effects. Other state or non-state actors' competitive agendas could breed tensions or, in a pessimistic scenario, create an explosive mix affecting parts of the region or the whole area, ultimately jeopardizing the 2014 Olympics themselves. Nevertheless, there are fair chances that the Sochi factor will play a positive role too by restraining states from openly aggressive actions and diluting to some extent the patterns of enmity in a region with an acute deficit of trust.

Armenia–Turkey Relations: Options for 2025

By Alexander Iskandaryan, Yerevan

Abstract

Armenia–Turkey relations are of extreme importance for the entire Caucasus region. How they look in 2025 will affect the entire region. An assessment is not very difficult as there are few options. Armenia–Turkey rapprochement began in 2008 and stalled by early 2010; however, following the political logic, normalization will happen sooner or later. The timing will depend on political developments in Armenia and Turkey but also on the regional context. Moreover, the situation in the South Caucasus will only have a limited instrumental effect on the rapprochement; it's the geopolitical context in the wider region, from the Balkans to the Larger Near East, which will define the place and role of Turkey by 2025.

Most Probably, By 2025 the Borders Will Be Open

Where Turkey is concerned, the true question is "when" not "if." It is extremely unlikely that Turkey will give up its engagement with the West in the coming years. Even a dramatic development such as coup d'état or change of rule in Turkey will not make it abandon its Europeanization plans. Turkey's choice is about civilization, not current politics. Something like the Iranian revolution is not nearly feasible in Turkey. Irrespective

of whether or not the country will have joined the EU, Turkey will remain part of European geopolitics also in 2025. Turkey's relations with Armenia are part of Turkey's European agenda and of the EU and US agenda with regard to Turkey. With all the domestic problems this involves, 15 years is a long time for Turkey to withstand European and US pressure with regard to normalizing ties with Armenia.

Turkey's efforts to boost its role in Middle Eastern politics (manifest as an estrangement from and even a

confrontation with Israel) do not imply Turkey might give up its European integration ambitions. Ankara's rise to prominence in the Middle East is not intended to happen at the expense of its relations with the West but in many ways, for their sake. In this context, unsettled Armenia–Turkey relations will pose an impediment to Turkey's new activism in regional politics, and will keep negatively affecting its international image. The only way Turkey can deal with this impediment is by normalizing relations with Armenia and opening its borders, by 2025 or sooner.

From Armenia's perspective, there are no alternatives to normalization of ties with Turkey; all Armenian governments have acknowledged this fact and expressed readiness to unconditional normalization. Mistrust and hostility to Turkey do exist in Armenia and especially in the Diaspora, but they are insufficient to stop the ruling elites from going ahead with normalization.

Moreover, there is a domestic process ongoing in both countries, and it is moving rather fast. Despite widespread protests and apprehensions, the psychological borders between Armenia and Turkey are already down. Less than two years since the start of rapprochement, mutual relations have become part of domestic politics. Issues are being debated at various levels and new ties established in various spheres.

Fifteen years should be long enough for the borders to be unsealed. The question is when this happens: at the start of the 15 years, in the middle or towards the end. Exactly what Armenia–Turkey relations look like by 2025 will depend on when normalization will have happened. Therefore, three scenarios are possible.

Scenario 1: Quick & Optimistic

Turkey–Armenia borders open between 2011 and 2015 and relations are fully normalized. The geopolitical context remains favorable, external actors continue supporting reconciliation, and domestic developments in Turkey and Armenia (such as the 2011 election to Turkey's Parliament) are also conducive to mutual rapprochement. Normalization is full-scale, and although political challenges remain, the two nations have the political will needed to deal with them. Societal rapprochement will also unfold, albeit cautiously, and historical reconciliation will gradually take shape. This scenario will lead to an overall change of the regional context, fostering integration between the societies and states of the South Caucasus and Turkey.

The role of external players will also change. After the opening of the Turkish–Armenian borders, Russia's influence in the region will decline, if slowly. Some regional

communication and transit projects will move to Armenia or involve it; Armenia will become another crossroads in the region. The new projects and the diminished need for Russia's military and strategic umbrella will enable Armenia to implement a more balanced foreign policy.

The opening of the railroad bridge over the Bosphorus and the opening of borders will make an Iran–Armenia railroad economically feasible as soon as the Armenia–Turkey stretch is already in place. As to an automobile road from Armenia to Iran—it is already under construction.

As the two neighboring nations interact and do business, the impact will be mutual. On the one hand, Turkish businesses will be active in the Armenian market and compete against Armenian companies. On the other hand, Armenian business will become involved in Eastern Turkey, which is poor and counts on ties with Armenia for its economic development. Many Armenian businesspeople are very keen to get engaged; several owners of Yerevan supermarket chains have already announced they would open shops in Eastern Turkey as soon as the opportunity arises. Of course, so far those are no more than plans, but some of them may work. Eight to 10 million people live in the regions of Turkey directly bordering on Armenia, promising Armenians access to a market three times larger than the domestic one.

Scenario 2: Complex & Scattered

In this scenario, normalization is partial and inconsistent. The regional context creates obstacles to bilateral dialogue between Turkey and Armenia. Some external players lose their onetime interest in the rapprochement; others try to interfere with it. The societies of Armenia and Turkey suffer from growing mutual mistrust and hostility, resulting, on the one hand, from more profound Islamic and radical trends in Turkey, and, on the other, Armenians' growing feeling of isolation and vulnerability combined with the disappointment of Armenian society and Diaspora with the failed Football Diplomacy effort in 2008–2010.

In such a setting, Armenia will toughen its stand on Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia's negativism and pessimism where the settlement of this conflict are concerned, and its rejection of the potential involvement of Turkey, will also be projected onto Turkey, causing Armenian society to perceive it as a hostile nation openly supporting Azerbaijan in its conflict with Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Both Armenia and Turkey will have to face the 2015 hundredth anniversary of the Genocide, which will also affect the results and options of rapprochement. As this

date approaches, by 2013–2014, nervousness and tensions will increase. Turkey will be concerned by the prospect of leading Western powers recognizing the Genocide; it may consider rapprochement with Armenia as a possible deterrent.

Aware that final settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is not realistic, Turkey will slacken its efforts to tie rapprochement with Armenia to this conflict; however, nationalistic trends in Turkish society will affect its policy with regard to Armenia. As a result, the mutual borders may be opened partially, or opened and then quickly closed again. Pragmatic motives will induce the two countries to sustain some degree of normalization, but mistrust and hostility will keep the bilateral relations very tense by 2025. New problems will arise alongside successes in normalization.

The opening of borders will cause some problems to escalate. Many Armenians will be eager to visit adjacent regions of Turkey which are part of Armenian history and the homeland of their ancestors. Visitors from Armenia will be appalled by the sad state of Armenian historical heritage in those regions whereas some local residents will resent the Armenian pilgrimages and the memories they evoke. A surge of intolerance and nationalism on both sides will be inevitable. With the border crossable, nationalist ideologies will no longer rely solely on historical memories but also on everyday problems that did not happen as long the two nations did not interact. The already existing and rather neurotic discourse about Turkish “crypto-Armenian” citizens will intensify in both countries. Descended from Armenians who survived the Genocide as a result of adopting or being forced to adopt Turkish identity and faith, the “crypto-Armenians” preserve some form of Armenian identity. They are seen as a threat to national identity by Turkish nationalists, and to ethnic and religious identity, by Armenian nationalists. Moreover, according to some data, up to a third of the population of the Turkish regions that border

on Armenia are Azeri, i.e. people having some aspects of Azerbaijani identity.

Scenario 3: Long & Pessimistic

The border opens by 2025 as a result of slow, bit-by-bit normalization. Following the 2010 suspension of Football Diplomacy, bilateral relations relapse into the pre-2008 stagnation phase, both in terms of interstate relations and the perceptions of elites and expert communities. The two countries continue their quest for normalization, without, however, making any efforts to compromise, but rather trying to induce one another to make concessions.

The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh may become a deterrent to Armenia–Turkey rapprochement. Mounting militaristic rhetoric, renewed warfare in the conflict zone (regardless of its results) or any other force majeure developments in the South Caucasus may slow down Armenia–Turkey normalization.

However, given the regional trends towards integration with Europe, and Turkey’s ambitions to boost its role in regional and world politics, to which unsettled relations with Armenia will continue creating obstacles, normalization will still unfold, albeit slowly, unevenly and painstakingly. The international community will play a relatively low-profile but still positive role in rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey. Domestic perceptions of mutual relations will remain overall negative.

Conclusion

At which stage this process will be in 2025—the very beginning of mutual ties, the most acute stage of trying to come to grips with each other, or already the stage of mutual adaptation—will depend on exactly when the border opens. Any risks to this process are external; they do not stem from Armenia–Turkey relations but from Armenia–Azerbaijan relations. A profound crisis in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh can have repercussions for the Armenia–Turkey relationship.

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