

Workshop

Armenia-Turkey: lessons and realities

The workshop, held on March 7, 2022, at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the NAS RA, was devoted to the ongoing Armenian-Turkish negotiations to discuss the factors underlying the fourth attempt to normalize Armenian-Turkish relations. Invited scholars, experts and former diplomats shared with their observations. The researchers tried to answer the questions - What lessons can Armenia draw from its 30-year experience of normalization of relations with Turkey? What scenarios can Armenia explore in the current phase of normalization?

Summarizing and combining the key realities of the current Armenian-Turkish process, the speakers have identified the following points:

1. If, after 13 years, Turkey has once again decided to try to normalize relations with Armenia, it has clearly defined goals and a deep strategy to achieve them, especially given the marked increase in Turkey's involvement in our region and its policy of expansion.
2. Turkey, especially in the context of the changes in the situation in the region as a result of the 2020 Artsakh war and the obvious weakening of Armenia's position, will not "grant" to Armenia anything. Any move from Turkey will have a clear price. Turkey will not make a decision unless it gets what it needs. This creates much more unfavorable starting conditions for Armenia.
3. Therefore, in Turkey's view, this is the most appropriate time to normalize relations with Armenia in accordance with its own interests. Deriving from this logic, it is possible that Turkey will make every effort to solve all the problems of interest to it, which mainly relate to the historical past, the risks arising from the worldwide recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the de jure restoration of the Armenian-Turkish border with Armenia, etc.
4. Despite the fact that as a result of the war most of the territory of Artsakh came under the control of Azerbaijan, Turkey publicly declares its support for all the positions of Azerbaijan on the Artsakh conflict, stressing that Ankara is discussing any issue, related to the normalization of Armenia – Azerbaijani relations with Baku. To all this is added the question of the "Zangezur corridor", and the Turkish side has repeatedly stressed the need

to open it through Armenia. These are issues that Turkey can also raise during the negotiations.

5. It should be emphasized that Armenia does not intend to link the settlement of the Artsakh conflict with Armenian-Turkish relations. Although Turkey will continue to press Armenia in this regard.
6. The Turkish side, in view of the previous 3 attempts at normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, this time is more prepared and determined to achieve results. Turkey has demanded and obtained the consent of Armenia that, this time, unlike previous attempts, the talks be conducted without mediators. For the first time, Turkey publicly declared that it was ready for negotiations without preconditions. Why? Because it is in Turkey's interest that the negotiation process begin and take place.
7. Turkey's president Erdogan is also directly involved in this process, which further underlines the importance of achieving the desired outcome in the negotiations and the seriousness of Turkey. Turkey's upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2023 could play an additional role in this regard from a domestic policy perspective.
8. Therefore, if Turkey logically seeks to seize the opportunity and get the maximum benefit from Armenia, Armenia's main objective should be to use all possible leverage and diplomatic flexibility, to separate the issues of establishing relations and opening the border from the historical and related issues of Azerbaijan. To invite the Turkish side to discuss all other issues in the context of the established relations. It is difficult to say how realistic this is and whether Turkey will be willing to follow such logic.
9. In Turkey, especially in the regions bordering Armenia, there is a strong negative attitude towards Armenia and Armenians, which was formed under the influence of many years of propaganda, overcoming which is a long-term task. Therefore, this in turn may cause risks in the case of the possible opening of the Armenian-Turkish border and interaction between the two nations.
10. Armenian side values the process more than the result. It is wrong to present the process as the result. Armenian authorities should clearly define what is

in our interest if it wants to continue in the process. Now Armenia's task is to gain time and strengthen its position in the negotiation process.

11. It is necessary to try to normalize relations on the following principle: settlement now, reconciliation after. It is necessary to exchange diplomatic notes, to have diplomatic representation. It is possible that the Turkish side will try to actively use soft power tools to deepen the talks and soften the red lines of Armenia, which again follows the logic of maximizing.
12. The proposed opening of the border, in turn, may cause economic risks for the Armenian market, which need to be agreed upon in order to take systemic measures. The importance of the economic component in Armenian-Turkish relations should also be taken into account. The Armenian market is small. Turkey has a rich experience when it comes to dominating various markets. If the Armenian-Turkish border is opened, the negative trade turnover will be apparent. The textile industry in Armenia has developed significantly over the past eight years, but it cannot compete with the Turkish market. Therefore, opening the Armenian-Turkish border in this case will lead to the reduction of jobs in the textile industry of Armenia.