

# Armenian Foreign Politics and the Rapprochement with Turkey

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## *Regional Consequences*

An opening of the Armenian-Turkish border and the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries will fundamentally change the structures of the relationships between all countries in the Black Sea and Caspian regions, as well as between the great powers for which the region is an area of vital importance.

It would be fallacious to expect these changes to occur smoothly. At the same time, it seems obvious that a new configuration of fields of force will take shape in the region, which will significantly modify our notion of the existing balance of power and influences. For this very reason some powers with special interests will strive to prevent an opening of the border, and their resistance will increase the more likely an opening becomes. The way the Government of Azerbaijan has reacted to so far has proved how significant these developments are for Azeri interests (even if we take into consideration the preventive nature of such reaction). Despite the tendency towards strengthening the Russian-Turkish cooperation, it is likely that Russia's reaction might be even more severe.

The first and most apparent consequences of opening the Armenian-Turkish border will include the following:

1. Armenia will have a direct land connection to a NATO member state for which the membership in the mentioned military and political alliance remains of great importance and highest priority in terms of national security and foreign policy issues.
2. The USA and NATO will acquire more favorable conditions to realize their interests in Georgia, Iran and Azerbaijan thus increasing their impact on the entire region.

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3. The European Union will gain a chance to adopt a regional approach and move to region-wide planning, which requires less resources than country specific planning.
4. Russia's control over and influence upon the political processes that take place both in the entire region and each regional country will gradually decrease.
5. Armenia will get access to regional projects (naturally in case it succeeds in overcoming the resistance of Azerbaijan) and this will make it possible for the EU to develop alternative approaches or in other words, to enjoy freedom of maneuvers. For instance, communications (both those anticipated and those under construction), which are expected to go from Kazakhstan through Turkmenistan and Iran to the Mediterranean Sea, could cross Armenia, and this would restrain Azerbaijan from using its transit position for political purposes.
6. Opening of Armenian-Turkish border, establishment of diplomatic relations, signing of the package of documents concerning mutual security purposes will make it possible for the region to get rid of the presence of foreign military forces, slowly over time.
7. Increasing influence of NATO, the United States and EU in Armenia will speed up, promote and improve the processes of Euro-Atlantic and European integration. At the same time, since the mentioned processes work against the foreign policy of Russia and are likely to weaken its influence in the region, their development will be decisively repulsed from Moscow.
8. The latter circumstance may lead to the escalation of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and even provoke a new war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.
9. At the same time, it is obvious that the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations will have a positive impact on the entire region in terms of regional stability and security and consequently, on negotiations over Nagorno Karabakh. The confidence building process must take into account that trust is easier to achieve on the political level. Today, the confidence level of the Armenian society towards the Turkish policy is extremely low.
10. It is most probable that Russia will try not to lose its military deployments in the region, that could be questioned along the path of a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The continued presence of Russian military forces (or the ODKB peace forces) in those 5, 6 or 7 regions, which the NKR will have to give to Azerbaijan based on the predictable agreement on conflict resolution, will be a goal of Russia's foreign policy.

### ***Adopting Armenia's Foreign Policy to New Circumstances***

The above list may be continued, however, it is noteworthy to consider the opportunities and internal resources of the Armenian foreign policy in new conditions. It is most likely that the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations will create conditions for a more balanced foreign policy. Armenia should adopt a proactive foreign policy and develop relations with the European Union within the Eastern Partnership framework. At the same time, new regional conditions will make it possible for Armenia to intensify its efforts within the NATO Individual Partnership Plan.

Along with the abovementioned strategic directions Armenia should develop relations with Central Asian countries and make every possible effort to create an atmosphere of constructive cooperation in political, economic, transportation and communication fields.

Armenia should strive to deepen its neighborly relations with Iran, which may become highly productive if cooperation between Iran and the EU is achieved, especially taking into account that Iran could provide the European countries with hydrocarbon and that military and political significance of Iran in the region could hardly be overestimated. In particular, Armenia could assume a significant intermediary role between the United States and Iran.

Establishment of regular relations with Turkey will enable Armenia and Georgia to achieve an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence and to lay the basis for regional cooperation and collaboration.

Opening of the Armenian-Turkish border and establishment of diplomatic relations will generate a need to create relevant conditions for further development of relations with Turkey. In Armenia the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey is considered to be the first and foremost way to guarantee trust building between the two countries. At the same time, there is a set of important procedures to be prepared in advance (an agreement concerning the border, deployment of forces along the borders, movement control, information exchange, equipment of admission points etc. ).

It is obvious that to achieve its goals the Armenian diplomacy should operate carefully and unhurriedly analyzing and assessing all consequences of its possible steps, since the situation in the Black Sea/Caspian region is still extremely unstable and highly explosive.