
Turkish-Armenian Normalisation and the Karabakh Conflict

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Abstract

Over three years after the signing of protocols on opening diplomatic relations and land borders, the prospects for Turkish-Armenian normalisation in the absence of progress on the Karabakh conflict are slim. But there is also little sign of a breakthrough in the Karabakh conflict-resolution process. Given these impasses, this article proposes an alternative way forward: an unconditional opening of Turkish-Armenian diplomatic relations followed by a retooling of the Basic Principles. This retooling would accept a linkage between the border opening and the withdrawal of Armenian forces from territory outside Nagorno-Karabakh. It would also reduce ambiguities in the Basic Principles that have stalled the peace process to date. The article first analyses the failure of the Turkish-Armenian protocols, then justifies a change in policy, and finally, proposes a retooled set of interim principles and focuses on intermediate steps that would help normalise Armenian-Azerbaijani relations while deferring the final settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh's political status for a later time.

Key Words

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Nagorno-Karabakh, Minsk Group, Turkey-Armenia normalisation, conflict resolution.

Turkish- Armenian Normalisation and the Karabakh Conflict¹

Over three years after Turkey and Armenia signed two landmark protocols on opening diplomatic relations and their land border, the prospects for a full normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations in the absence of progress on the Karabakh conflict are slim.² The efforts of many Turks, Armenians, and outside stakeholders to comprehensively decouple Turkish-Armenian relations from the Karabakh conflict have not borne fruit. But there is also little sign of a breakthrough in the Karabakh conflict-resolution process, spearheaded by the OSCE Minsk Group, which has the United States, Russia, and France as co-chairs.

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To assert the absence of a linkage between Turkish-Armenian normalisation and the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is to depart from a longstanding reality of Turkish foreign policy.

Given these impasses, this article proposes one alternative way forward: an unconditional opening of Turkish-Armenian diplomatic relations followed by the retooling of the Basic Principles underpinning the Minsk Group-led Karabakh peace process into a set of “interim principles” that can guide the work of international peacemakers. These interim principles would accept a linkage between the Karabakh conflict and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border while reducing certain ambiguities that have stalled the peace process to date. At the same time, they are more modest than the Basic Principles in their pursuit of the intermediate goal of conflict transformation rather than a final settlement of the conflict.

The article first analyses the failure of the Turkish-Armenian protocols. It argues that the Turkish government erred by gambling on the success of the Karabakh peace process, allowing Armenia and international mediators to persuade themselves that Turkey was prepared

to forgo its policy of conditionality. It next justifies a change in the current international approach, explaining why arguments for dropping the linkage are not fully compelling, and why the Basic Principles have run aground. It concludes by proposing a retooled set of interim principles, which includes the opening of the Turkish-Armenian land border and focuses on intermediate steps that would help normalise Armenian-Azerbaijani relations while deferring the final settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh’s political status for a later time and context.

The failed Diplomacy of the Turkish-Armenian Protocols

“We will not sign a final deal with Armenia unless there is agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Nagorno Karabakh.” Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (10 April 2009).³

“The United States welcomes the statement made by Armenia and Turkey on normalization of their bilateral relations. It has long been and remains the position of the United States that normalization should take place without preconditions and within a reasonable timeframe.” US Department of State Press Statement (22 April).⁴

“Our borders were closed after the occupation of Nagorno Karabakh. We will not open borders as long as the occupation continues. Who says this? The prime minister of the Turkish Republic says this. Can there be any

guarantee here apart from this?” Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (13 May).⁵

“I want to reiterate our very strong support for the normalization process that is going on between Armenia and Turkey, which we have long said should take place without preconditions and within a reasonable timeframe.” US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton (28 September).⁶

To assert the absence of a linkage between Turkish-Armenian normalisation and the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is to depart from a longstanding reality of Turkish foreign policy. In 1993, Turkey sealed its land border with Armenia, previously open to humanitarian shipments of wheat, after Armenian forces seized the large mountainous Azerbaijani region of Kelbajar, sandwiched between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.⁷ The Turkish government said the border would remain closed- and diplomatic relations unopened- until Armenian forces withdrew from Azerbaijani territory.⁸ This policy has remained in place for 20 years.

In April 2009, after months of quiet preparation, Turkey appeared to reverse course, issuing a joint statement with Armenia that the two countries had “agreed on a comprehensive framework for the normalization of their bilateral relations.”⁹ Six months later, under the

eager gaze of top diplomats from the United States, Russia, the European Union, and Switzerland, the Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers signed two protocols for establishing diplomatic relations and opening the land border that contained no preconditions regarding the Karabakh conflict.¹⁰ Many assumed that Turkey had dropped its longstanding insistence that normalisation was contingent on Armenian troop withdrawal.

The sea change in Turkey’s Armenia policy in 2009, therefore, was not to delink Turkish-Armenian normalisation from the Karabakh conflict but to open negotiations.

Within a few weeks, however, it was clear that conditionality had not been dropped. Instead of ratifying the protocols, Turkish parliamentarians from the ruling party and the opposition insisted that normalisation would proceed only after progress was made on the Karabakh conflict, a position Turkish officials subsequently affirmed.

What went wrong? Did the Turkish government intentionally mislead its Armenian counterpart and international mediators, who had been regularly

insisting upon normalisation “without preconditions and within a reasonable timeframe”?¹¹ Not if you judge by the public statements of Turkish officials. Throughout the process, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan repeatedly linked a successful conclusion of the normalisation process to progress on Karabakh (see, for example, his quotations at the top of this article). While Turkish Foreign Ministers Ali Babacan and, after him, Ahmet Davutoğlu were more circumspect in their public statements, observers interpreted their statements emphasising the importance of achieving parallel solutions as an echo of the Prime Minister’s assertions.¹²

The sea change in Turkey’s Armenia policy in 2009, therefore, was not to delink Turkish-Armenian normalisation from the Karabakh conflict but to *open* negotiations- carry them, really, to their very end- without waiting for signs of progress on Karabakh. While some in the Turkish government may have supported the dropping of conditionality, in the end official policy only sought to make conditionality more respectable. The Turkish leadership appears to have believed that participating in negotiations would allow it to signal a sincere desire to normalise relations, chart a clear vision for the future of Turkish-Armenian relations, and, possibly, ease the way for Armenia to adopt a more pliable position on the Karabakh conflict.

This, however, was not the way many supporters of normalisation understood the disconnect between Turkish officials’ public statements and their seemingly sincere pursuit of normalisation. One reading was that Turkish officials may have been insisting on progress in Karabakh for domestic purposes or to reassure Azerbaijan, but they had genuinely embarked on a new course and were committed to seeing it through to its end. Another was that the Turkish political elite was divided, but that the “doves”, including President Abdullah Gül, supported normalisation and would ultimately be victorious.¹³ Yet another was that the government had belatedly come under heavy pressure from Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, who came to the realisation that Turkey might actually move forward with normalisation if he did not derail the process, but that Baku’s efforts to influence Turkish decision making, including threats to divert natural gas exports passing through Turkey, were destined to fail. The Turkish government’s decision to let Davutoğlu sign the protocols in a high-profile international venue inescapably strengthened the view that the government was serious about normalisation without preconditions.

But in the end, the government did not try very hard, if at all, to secure parliamentary approval of the protocols.

One day after signing the protocols, Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasised the linkage that had been conspicuously absent from the documents themselves, noting that “as long as Armenia does not withdraw from occupied territories in Azerbaijan, Turkey cannot take up a positive position.”¹⁴ This statement led many to conclude that the Turkish government had been misleading Armenia and international supporters of normalisation all along.¹⁵

Insincerity, however, is not the only possible explanation for the protocols’ failure. One might say that the Turkish government was instead guilty of sloppy diplomacy. It expected Armenia and international mediators to treat its representatives’ informal public statements with the same significance as their formal negotiating stance. It also failed to directly counter Armenian and US government assertions that normalisation was to be achieved without preconditions. Most astonishingly, Turkish officials do not appear to have warned the Armenian government or international mediators that the protocols, if signed, would almost certainly not be ratified.

At the same time, the Turkish government appears to have been playing a risky game—betting that the latest stage of the Karabakh conflict resolution process, specifically agreement

on a set of so-called Basic Principles for settling the Karabakh conflict, could be brought to a successful close before the Turkish parliament was to ratify the protocols.¹⁶ In this way, Turkey would be able to square the circle of its Armenia policy: conditionality would be satisfied informally without it having been made an explicit part of the process.

While there were some grounds to believe progress on the Basic Principles might be possible, the prospect of an agreement was still highly uncertain. The chances for success were certainly not so great as to make a prominent endeavour like the normalisation process dependent upon it. But it was either this or ending the “feel-good” diplomacy of the protocols, an outcome that no stakeholder wanted.

Subsequently, Turkish officials blamed the Armenian government for the protocols’ fate. In January 2010, Armenia’s constitutional court ruled that the protocols “cannot be interpreted or applied... in a way that would contradict” an article in Armenia’s declaration of independence underlining Armenia’s support for the “international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia.”¹⁷ Following this decision, Turks accused Armenia of belatedly introducing its own precondition for implementing the protocols, namely

Turkish recognition of genocide claims. However, the ruling did not in fact change the *status quo*: clearly the Armenian government had not repudiated the country's declaration of independence when it signed the protocols. Nonetheless, Turkish dissatisfaction with the constitutional court's ruling ensured that the government would make no further effort to have parliament ratify the protocols.

Supporters of normalisation rightly seek to implement more modest steps to incrementally regain confidence and trust.

In the end, the diplomatic consensus to ignore Turkey's consistent, if informal, linkage between normalisation and conflict resolution alienated Turkey from Azerbaijan; lent Armenia an unwarranted optimism that change was in the air; made Turkish policymakers look inconsistent, duplicitous, or uncertain; reinforced the fragmentation of US policy across the region; and, in the end, had terminal consequences for the Turkish-Armenian protocols.¹⁸

What Now?

More than three years later, the prospects for full Turkish-Armenian

normalisation in the absence of progress on the Karabakh conflict remain slim. At a press conference in Baku in September 2012, Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasised that the withdrawal of Armenian forces from at least “one or two districts” is a precondition for the opening of the Turkish border.¹⁹

This may be disappointing but it is not that surprising. Indeed, arguments for opening the Turkish-Armenian border unconditionally may be attractive, but they have never been fully compelling. One argument is that Turkey has long had new economic and foreign policy priorities that would benefit from the border opening. But economic interests and Turkey's aspirations to become a regional “center of gravity” are equally well served by keeping the interests of Azerbaijan, their co-religious and co-ethnic neighbour and energy partner, close to heart. A second argument is that the border closure has failed as a mechanism of conflict resolution. But while this is demonstrably true, Turkey might still wish to implement it as a punitive sanction, until Armenia decides for other reasons to withdraw from Azerbaijani territory.

A third argument is that opening the border could facilitate conflict resolution. Armenia's sense of security might increase, which could lead it

to impute a lesser sense of risk in its dealings with Azerbaijan and enable Turkey to become productively involved in the Karabakh conflict-resolution process. Normalisation's role as an element of conflict resolution has had great rhetorical appeal for the US government, a principal backer of normalisation without preconditions. In two speeches in 2010 and 2011, Assistant Secretary of State Phillip H. Gordon noted that normalisation is "a step towards genuine reconciliation in the region", a "contribut[or] to further trust and peace and stability, not just for Turkey and Armenia but elsewhere as well", "the true path to peace and stability and reconciliation in the region", and something that "holds out the prospect of positive transformative change in the region".²⁰ However, these laudable sentiments remain untested: increased security on Armenia's western front could just as well provide Yerevan with the "strategic depth" it needs to avoid making compromises on its eastern front.

A final argument is simply that *something* must be done, as the status quo is increasingly tenuous and risks renewed war.²¹ An Azerbaijani-Armenian arms race, Azerbaijan's loss of faith in negotiations, the ambiguity of Russian treaty obligations to Armenia in the event of an internal conflict, and the

allure of trying to retake at least some territory outside Nagorno-Karabakh all increase the odds of an eventual renewal of conflict. In this context, supporters of Turkish-Armenian normalisation need not guarantee it will have a positive impact on the Karabakh peace process; they simply have to suggest that it *might*. On the other hand, the border opening could also have the unintended effect of increasing Azerbaijani desperation to the point that Baku concludes that war is its best option.

So, while there are good arguments for opening the border without making progress on the Karabakh conflict, none are so compelling to push Turkey toward full normalisation. This does not mean that the process of Turkish-Armenian rapprochement must be halted however. In the absence of forward movement on Karabakh, supporters of normalisation rightly seek to implement more modest steps to incrementally regain confidence and trust. Thomas de Waal, for example, has proposed an appealing list of measures that include increased Turkish connections to the Armenian diaspora (primarily via tourism), direct Turkish Airline flights to Yerevan, limited border crossings, and electricity sales.²² It is also vital to continue efforts to promote cross-border business, civil society, academic, media, film, and cultural connections, along

the lines of the multifaceted “Support for Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement (SATR)” project that the US Agency for International Development funded, with implementation by the Eurasia Partnership Foundation and Armenian and Turkish partners from 2010-2012.²³

At the same time, irrespective of the fate of the protocols, it would be prudent to continue pushing for at least one of the two goals of the protocols: the unconditional establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia. In retrospect, the absence of diplomatic relations appears to have been more a casualty of the early decision to close Turkey’s borders than the reasoned intervention of an external actor seeking leverage. The Armenian state has lost little from the absence of diplomatic relations and has relatively little to gain from their establishment. At the same time, establishing diplomatic relations would offer a promising foundation for Turkish-Armenian rapprochement. It would provide consular and representative services to assist travellers, workers, and businesses of both countries; establish a mechanism for formal communication between Turkey and Armenia that could maintain momentum for full normalisation; and conceivably help facilitate Turkey’s productive engagement in the Karabakh peace process.

From Basic Principles to Interim Principles

A further- if more controversial- way forward would be for international peacemakers to accept a linkage between the border opening and the Karabakh conflict. This does not mean positioning the border opening as some kind of looming demand or precondition. Instead, it could be included as one element of several in a retooled set of “interim principles” peacemakers could use to guide their work rather than continue to push for Armenian and Azerbaijani acceptance of the more ambitious Basic Principles that have underpinned the Karabakh conflict resolution process for years.

While laudable in intent, the Basic Principles have proven too difficult to swallow. The main problem lies with what originally must have seemed their greatest strength: a “constructive ambiguity” that creates the appearance of agreement by papering over critical differences between Azerbaijan and Armenia.²⁴ For instance, the Basic Principles call for “return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control” and the establishment of “a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh,” but Azerbaijan and Armenia have been unable to agree on the timing of the return of territories (whether

or not to allow Armenia to hold some territories as “insurance” pending a final settlement) and the size of the corridor (a road? a region? two regions?). While the Basic Principles call for “the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence”, they fail to address the timing and sequence of that return. Most importantly, while the Basic Principles call for a “future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will”, this principle has run aground on the details of its referendum-sounding measure (who will vote? when?). In essence, Armenia seeks guarantees that the population of Nagorno-Karabakh will be able to vote for independence at a specified time in the future, while Azerbaijan seeks to promote an intentionally ambiguous proposal on Nagorno-Karabakh’s final status that, in President Aliyev’s words, is to be “put forward at an unspecified time in the future and in an indefinite form”.²⁵ Other principles- an “interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance” and “international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation”- are less disputed on the surface, although these terms also hide differences that will emerge in efforts to make these elements more concrete.²⁶

Rather than continuing to search for the magic formula that will secure agreement on the Basic Principles as they stand, it may be time to contemplate a set of more explicitly interim principles. The aim of such interim principles would not be to establish a framework for finalising Nagorno-Karabakh’s political status. It is much too early for that.

Instead, the aim is to achieve a feasible *interim* stage that would increase security for all parties, redress at least some of the consequences of conflict, catalyse trans-boundary activity, and ultimately transform the conflict environment in a way that could facilitate the parties’ eventual entry into the final, more difficult, stages of a political settlement. Such interim principles would accept the existing linkage to the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border while reducing the number of unbridgeable ambiguities enshrined in the Basic Principles. At the same time, they would not be complete: they would not resolve the Karabakh conflict in its entirety, and they would not strive to give Azerbaijan or Armenia all that they have sought in the negotiations to date. They also would not represent a package to be delivered to the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments for their formal consent. Instead, they would serve as mutually agreed-upon guidelines for the work of the OSCE Minsk Group and other

international peacemakers, who would then convey to Armenia and Azerbaijan their intention to direct resolution efforts towards achieving these interim elements of a peace process.

After raising hopes, the Turkish-Armenian normalisation process of 2009 failed to come to fruition or spur a breakthrough in the Karabakh peace process.

One set of interim principles that fits this bill is the following:

- the opening of the Turkish-Armenian land border;
- the return of all territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control, except the Lachin and Kelbajar districts, which will remain under interim Armenian control;
- the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to voluntarily return to their former places of residence or seek property restitution, with the modalities of return to Lachin, Kelbajar, and Nagorno-Karabakh to be determined at a later time;
- a commitment by all parties to the non-use of force, including the

removal of snipers and mines along the line of control;

- an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh that provides guarantees for security and self-governance;
- international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation.

Such retooled interim principles would be of benefit to both Azerbaijan and Armenia. Azerbaijan will have retained Turkey's commitment to make the opening of the border contingent on the withdrawal of Armenian forces. It will have the prospect of receiving much of its territory outside Nagorno-Karabakh, enabling the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia will be allowed to assert their right of return or restitution.²⁷ Finally, the agreement would not bring about any change in international interpretations of Azerbaijan's *de jure* territorial integrity.

Armenia would also gain from such an agreement. It would receive the expected benefits of a border opening with Turkey and it would continue to retain control (on an interim basis) of the two territories it deems most strategic for the defence of Nagorno-Karabakh. The latter would receive an internationally-mandated codification of its rights

of self-government (“interim status”) for the foreseeable future. Armenian refugees and IDPs from Azerbaijan would be able to assert their right of return or restitution, while the return of Azerbaijani IDPs would be managed in phases. Nagorno-Karabakh would be provided with international security guarantees to prevent Azerbaijan from deploying military forces against it.

This does not mean it will be easy to reach an agreement on or implement a retooled set of interim principles. The Armenian government has long insisted that any linkage between the border opening and the Karabakh conflict is a non-starter, and the US government has repeatedly and vocally agreed with that. Armenia has also long been unwilling to give up territory outside Nagorno-Karabakh without a clear guarantee that the breakaway autonomous region will eventually have the opportunity to opt for formal independence. For its part, the Azerbaijani government will not want to risk signalling any kind of consent to the continued occupation of Lachin and Kelbajar, the drawing of distinctions among groups of IDPs, or the right of IDPs to seek restitution instead of return.

These interim principles also do not resolve all ambiguities. They do not insist upon a specific formula for the timing of Armenian withdrawals from the rest of the occupied territories outside Nagorno-Karabakh, for example. They also do not clarify the content of “interim status” and “international security guarantees”. Hammering out the details of such points in mutually acceptable fashion and with a unified approach by the international actors who will have roles in these structures will remain challenging.²⁸

Conclusion

After raising hopes, the Turkish-Armenian normalisation process of 2009 failed to come to fruition or spur a breakthrough in the Karabakh peace process. With neither the protocols nor the Basic Principles offering a promising way forward along separate tracks, it is worthwhile to consider how the two processes might be constructively linked. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that neither track is ripe for a “grand” solution.

The above analysis offers one way to weave the two processes together with an eye toward gradual- and, in the case of Karabakh, open-ended- resolution. Other models, for instance alternating incremental steps on each track, might also be worth considering: for starters,

Armenian withdrawal from one or two territories in exchange for the Turkish border opening, for example.

Any such approaches will encounter many challenges, as have the approaches before them, and success is not guaranteed. At the same time, all formal conflict-resolution processes require

substantial and courageous on-the-ground efforts to prepare populations for peace that, to varying degrees, the Turkish, Armenian, and Azerbaijani governments have not been willing (or able) to make. But the protocols and the Basic Principles have run their course. It's time to find something to take their place.

Endnotes

- 1 This article is a revised and updated version of “To Link or Not To Link? Turkey-Armenia Normalization and the Karabakh Conflict”, *Caucasus International*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 2012), pp. 53-62. The author thanks the editorial board of *Caucasus International* for their reprint permission.
- 2 In this article, “Karabakh” refers to all the territories that are the focus of conflict, including the territory of what was known as the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (Region) in Soviet times and the territories around Nagorno-Karabakh that are presently occupied by Armenian forces. “Nagorno-Karabakh” refers to the territory of the Soviet-era Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast.
- 3 “Turkish PM Sets Conditions to Armenia Reconciliation: Report”, *Agence France Presse*, 10 April 2009.
- 4 US Department of State, “Press Statement: Turkey and Armenia: Normalization of Relations”, at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/04/122065.htm> [last visited 22 January 2013].
- 5 *ANS TV (Baku)*, 13 May 2009.
- 6 U.S. Department of State, “Remarks With Armenian Foreign Minister H.E. Edward Nalbandian After Their Meeting”, at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/09/129687.htm> [last visited 12 January 2012].
- 7 Armenian forces captured a smaller amount of territory, the so-called “Lachin corridor”, outside Nagorno-Karabakh in 1992, and additional territories later in the war. For a history of the Karabakh conflict, see, Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, New York, NYU Press, 2003.
- 8 “Turk Says Russia is Tangled in Caucasus War”, *New York Times*, 15 April 1993.
- 9 Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “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”, at http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-56_-22-april-2009_-press-release-regarding-the-turkish-armenian-relations.en.mfa [last visited 28 January 2013].
- 10 The protocols are available at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sub.en.mfa?93e41cc9-832f-4ec7-a629-a920bfdbb432>.
- 11 See, the two US Department of State statements that opened this article, as well as, “President Serzh Sargsyan met in Prague with the President of Turkey, Abdullah Gül”, *Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia*, at <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2009/05/07/news-511/> [last visited 03 February 2013].
- 12 See, for example, Charles Recknagel and Andrew Tully, “Turkey Signals Opening to Armenia Must Include Nagorno-Karabakh Process”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, at http://www.rferl.org/content/Turkey_Signals_Opening_To_Armenia_Must_Include_NagornoKarabakh_Progress/1613844.html [last visited 21 January 2012]; “Turkey Still Committed to Preconditions in Armenia Talks”, *Asbarez*, at <http://asbarez.com/68790/>

- turkey-%e2%80%98still-committed%e2%80%99-to-armenia-talks-with-preconditions/ [last visited 22 January 2012].
- 13 Turkish President Abdullah Gül avoided making explicit statements linking the two processes and did not attempt to debunk the notion put forward by Armenian president Serzh Sarkisian in May 2009 that the two had agreed to “move forward with normalization without preconditions and within a reasonable time frame”. See the two US Department of State statements that opened this article, as well as “President Serzh Sargsyan met in Prague with the President of Turkey, Abdullah Gül”, *Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia*, at <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2009/05/07/news-511/> [last visited 03 February 2013].
 - 14 See, for example, “Little Fun for Soccer Fans, Giant Leap for Rapprochement”, *Today’s Zaman*, 13 October 2009.
 - 15 In particular, the suspicion was that the Turkish government had agreed to declare the formal start of the normalisation process only to avoid a vote in the US Congress on recognizing Armenian genocide claims. Many believed it was no coincidence that the Turkish-Armenian statement was issued just two days before the annual 24 April commemoration. For an expression of such suspicion prior to the signing of the protocols, see the US Congressional letter reprinted in Armenian National Committee of Armenia, “Over 80 House Members Slam Turkey’s Reversal on Proposed ‘Roadmap’”, at http://www.anca.org/press_releases/press_releases.php?prid=1745 [last visited 12 January 2013].
 - 16 The last publicly available statement of the Basic Principles is the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe, “Statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries”, at <http://www.osce.org/item/51152> [last visited 20 January 2013].
 - 17 The text of the constitutional court’s ruling is available at <http://www.concourt.am/english/decisions/common/pdf/850.pdf> [last visited 08 January 2013]; The text of Armenia’s declaration of independence is available at <http://www.gov.am/en/independence/> [last visited 08 January 2013].
 - 18 For a detailed account of the rise and fall of the Protocols, see, David L. Phillips, *Diplomatic History: The Turkey-Armenia Protocols*, New York, Columbia University, Institute for the Study of Human Rights, March 2012; Also see, Alexander Iskandaryan and Sergei Minasyan, “Pragmatic Policies vs. Historical Constraints: Analyzing Armenia-Turkey Relations”, *Caucasus Institute Research Papers*, No. 1 (January 2010); Aybars Görgülü, Alexander Iskandaryan and Sergei Minasyan, “Assessing the Rapprochement Process”, *TESEV Foreign Policy Programme- Turkey-Armenia Dialogue Series*, May 2010; D. Nigar Göksel, “Turkey and Armenia Post-Protocols: Back to Square One?”, *TESEV Foreign Policy Programme*, Istanbul, Turkey, October 2012.
 - 19 “Joint press conference of Ilham Aliyev and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was held”, at <http://en.president.az/articles/6053> [last visited 27 December 2012].
 - 20 See, U.S. Department of State, “The U.S. Relationship With Central Europe Under the Obama Administration”, at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2011/157707.htm> [last visited 12 January 2013]; “The United States and Turkey: A View from the Obama

- Administration”, at www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2010/138446.htm [last visited 12 January 2013].
- 21 To these justifications might be added two others that could help explain US support for dropping conditionality: responsiveness to domestic lobbying and a possible opportunity to shift the balance of influence in the Caucasus away from Russia and toward the West. These, however, have not been publicly articulated justifications.
 - 22 See, Thomas de Waal, “Armenia and Turkey: Bridging the Gap”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/10/05/armenia-and-turkey-bridging-gap/22p> [last visited 25 January 2013].
 - 23 Information about the project is available at <http://armturkdialogue.net/>. Also see, Sinem Cengiz, “Turkish, Armenian Journalists Want the Border Opened”, *Today’s Zaman*, 3 June 2012; Susanne Güsten, “Using Cheese To Bridge the Turkey-Armenia Gap”, *The New York Times*, 24 October 2012; Göksel, “Turkey and Armenia Post-Protocols: Back to Square One?”. On a separate EU-funded collaborative film endeavour by the UK-based NGO Conciliation Resources, see, Laurence Broers, “Turks, Armenians and Azeris: Mirrors and Memories”, *Journal of Conflict Transformation (Caucasus Edition)*, 1 November 2012, at <http://caucasusedition.net/analysis/turks-armenians-and-azeris-mirrors-and-memories> [last visited 12 January 2013].
 - 24 On the “constructive ambiguity” of the Basic Principles, see, Thomas de Waal, “The Karabakh Trap: Dangers and Dilemmas of the Nagorny Karabakh Conflict”, *Conciliation Resources*, December 2008, p. 10.
 - 25 “Opening speech by Ilham Aliyev at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers”, at <http://en.president.az/articles/4105> [last visited 22 December 2012]. In an earlier interview with Russian state television, President Aliyev also said that the determination of final status “could happen in one year, maybe in ten years, or in 100 years, or this could never happen. Time will tell”, *Azertag*, at <http://www.azertag.com/ru/newsarchive?mod=1&date=2009-7-6&id=252&partition=1> [last visited 11 December 2012]. The quotation is cited in translation in, “Nagorno-Karabagh: Getting to a Breakthrough”, *International Crisis Group*, Europe Briefing No. 55 (October 2009), p. 7.
 - 26 See, for instance, the discussion of “interim status” in, Conciliation Resources, “Beyond Exclusion: Rethinking Approaches to Status in the Nagorno Karabakh Peace Process”, Discussion Paper (February 2012).
 - 27 On problematising the issue of “return” and a discussion of restitution and other alternatives, see Gerard Toal, “Return and its Alternatives: International Law, Norms and Practices, and Dilemmas of Ethnocratic Power, Implementation, Justice and Development” and the other contributions in *Forced Displacement in the Nagorny Karabakh Conflict: Return and its Alternatives*, London, Conciliation Resources, August 2011.
 - 28 See, Conciliation Resources, “Beyond Exclusion”, p. 7.