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## Introduction

Recent political changes in the international arena and South Caucasus region have revitalized global interest in the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict area. In the past year international mediators have stepped up their efforts, and a growing number of voices are saying that conditions are emerging which can lead to a speedy resolution of the conflict. At the same time serious new differences of opinion over the terms of such a resolution have also become evident. It is becoming apparent to all the main actors that the issue of the conflict has become deeply interwoven into the canvas of broader regional issues and affects the interests of many countries.

The fact that the NK issue has become the source of emerging new differences between major powers and Armenia on the one hand, and Turkey and Azerbaijan on the other, is of particular interest. April 2009 marked the beginning of a process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Turkey, which has caused serious controversy over interlinking Armenia-Turkey relations and resolution of the NK conflict.

Armenia and the major powers believe that Armenia-Turkey relations should continue to normalize without any preconditions and that resolving the NK conflict is a separate, albeit overlapping and concurrent, process. Turkey and Azerbaijan insist that the border between Armenia and Turkey cannot be opened until all Armenian troops have withdrawn from the territories surrounding NK. This new problem has resulted in tensions between Azerbaijan and Turkey, mainly because of Azerbaijan's approach which has put Turkey in a very difficult position.

So far there have been no signs that this controversy will be quickly resolved. This circumstance alone has already created serious problems both for Armenia-Turkey relations and for diplomatic efforts to resolve the NK conflict. The French co-chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, Bernard Fassier, said on 16 May 2009 in Baku that "the process of negotiations will be very long and will conclude only when the presidents agree to sign a peace deal ... The timing of the meeting and its prospects depend on the presidents. I hope that we do not take as much time to arrive at the resolution of this conflict as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East ..."

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev also underlined the slow resolution of the situation on 14 May 2009 when he said that "17 years have passed since the creation of the Minsk Group and despite all the breakthroughs there have been no results ... There are different approaches and different evaluations resulting from this situation. Some might think that we are close to achieving an agreement, others claim that there is still a lot to be done on this front."

If we also bear in mind the fact that since 2008 there have been numerous indications of change in the international community's attitude to the conflicts originating in the 1990s, one could say that the emergence of such pessimism is undoubtedly connected with the deepening realization of the unprecedented nature of the new situation. We are talking mainly of the radical change in attitude to the principle of territorial integrity of states which have ongoing conflicts. Some territories previously categorized as 'unrecognized entities' have become 'semi-recognized states'. This has led to changes in the state of international security and stability. And the 'culprits' are the major powers themselves.

There can be no doubt that the new situation will have a serious impact on conditions for the resolution of the NK conflict.

<sup>1</sup> Please note: the terminology in the biographies of authors was chosen by the participants themselves.

This long-standing conflict has had a complex structure from the very beginning. It has been intertwined with such an intricate network of international interests that any attempt at its transformation creates a response in the most unexpected areas of relations between different countries.

One should remember that the 'conflict potential' in the relations between NK, Azerbaijan and Armenia was firmly established when these states first emerged. What underpins the ongoing conflict is the international recognition of NK as part of Azerbaijan in 1991.

At the time no attention was paid to the fact that the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a conflict already mapped out onto the territory of the former Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan with two separate sectors of military and political control. As a result of ignoring those circumstances and recognizing Azerbaijan's independence within its former Soviet borders, the international community *de facto* legitimized Azerbaijan's right to start an armed conflict against NK. It was then that the first complication arose – Azerbaijan could not avail itself of that opportunity and this simply exacerbated the conflict situation even further. In fact the war which Armenia found itself dragged into set the parameters of this deadlock: NK found itself controlled by one state, while the legal power resided elsewhere. It was then that the present status quo first emerged.

That circumstance determined the specific nature of the diplomatic efforts aimed at conflict resolution – to restore the pre-war status quo in the conflict area. In practice this meant demanding that Armenia and NK should return part of the territories they controlled to Azerbaijan. At the same time, Azerbaijan demanded that the international community force Armenia to hand NK back to Azerbaijan, together with all the territories it controlled.

The international community's response was to introduce the principle of a compromise agreement with a predetermined model of compromise into diplomatic practice. The mediators represented by the Minsk Group, set up in 1992, have been trying to persuade Armenia to hand over part of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR)-controlled territories to Azerbaijan, in exchange for promises to determine NK's new status.

Fifteen years of effort have not yielded any tangible results. Experience has shown that this approach to the problem has simply become a mechanism for supporting the status quo which formed after the war. Throughout this period Azerbaijan has continued to press for the right to have another go at a military solution to the problem. Global powers in their turn demand that Azerbaijan negotiate a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Armenia.

Any attempts to predict future developments in the NK conflict area should be based on the picture I have outlined so far, as well as taking into account the current radical changes in the international situation and their possible effects on the conflict. It seems that only this

kind of comprehensive approach can create the necessary background for proposing and arguing convincingly any hypothetical scenarios which may develop in the next five years. This is the underlying logic of the rest of this article.

## Evaluation of the basic state of the conflict

### **Evaluation of the compromise model developed by the Minsk Group**

To begin with, it is advisable to assess the effectiveness of the Minsk Group's approach to the resolution of the Karabakh conflict. It appears that this approach is the main reason for the failure of international diplomacy so far. This is because the conflict resolution process excludes the actual subject matter of the compromise under negotiation from the scope of the discussions. It is suggested that everything could be reviewed apart from the resolution model itself which has been the staple of the negotiating process since 1992. Yet the absence of any progress in negotiations impels us to re-evaluate all aspects of the conflict resolution diplomacy.

We should re-evaluate the principle of a *compromise solution* itself, in particular the proposed *compromise* model. This is important because we think that the suggested formula is the least likely to contribute to a solution.

The Minsk Group's approach initially consisted of the following:

- a. The object of the compromise was to *return the formula of military control and the demographic situation to their 1991 status*. This would be followed by an agreement on the status of NK in one form or another.
- b. It was assumed that the parties would agree to the pre-arranged compromise formula having first abandoned some of their claims. In other words, it was suggested that a compromise is achieved by following the principle of the *mutual waiver by the sides of the conflict of their unacceptable claims*.

Thus the initial subject matter of the compromise which was modelled on the basis of the outcome of the 1994 war and the organizational principles of the negotiations' format had a clearly defined shape. None of the parties to the conflict or international mediators have attempted to encroach on any aspect of this compromise model. All that has changed are the ways of proposing the formula and the format of its discussion. At the moment the subject of the compromise is presented in the form of the Madrid principles drawn up in 2007.

### **Parameters and evolution of the military and political situation post-12 May 1994, and resolution diplomacy**

Since 1994 there has existed a territorial and a military-political status quo in the conflict area. At the same time

there are two important circumstances which determine the nature and formula of the military-political balance in the South Caucasus region, and the major powers' attitude to the conflict situation. The first is the absence of peacekeeping forces in the NK conflict area. The second is the blockade of the Turkish-Armenian border by Turkey which has been in place since 1993.

Of all the parameters of the status quo only the military and economic potential of the conflicting parties have changed. In the absence of peacekeeping forces in the 15 years since the ceasefire, conflicting sides have equipped their national armies with modern long-range weapons. In addition, a single security system for NK relying on the joint potential of the Armenian and NK armies has been put in place. Consequently the strategic significance of the conflict's geographic range has considerably diminished.

Since Turkey was drawn into the conflict, Armenia has acted as a deterrent to any eastward-looking plans by Turkey. Armenia's accession to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) raised this role to an international level. The closed Armenian-Turkish border has become one of the most important aspects of international regulation of the military balance between NATO and Russia. Russian troops located along this border symbolize this fact. Thus the NK issue together with the closed Armenian-Turkish border has fitted well into the broader spectrum of international security issues.

This means the conditions for achieving a compromise have greatly diminished. The condition of waiving one's claims has become unattainable because the parties to the conflict have received *additional resources* for avoiding a compromise solution. These resources were clearly discernable in the interests of the powers bordering the region. This circumstance has slowed down the resolution process for many years.<sup>2</sup> In addition, since 2008 the effectiveness of the conflicting parties' waiver of claims principle has diminished even further.

### **Radical changes globally and regionally: key changes in international relations in 2008-09**

The conflict situation and international diplomacy described have been transformed by recent qualitative changes in

international relations. Three important events changed the parameters of the situation around the NK conflict:

a. Russian troops' entry into Georgia on 8 August 2008 and Russia's subsequent recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These events have served as a catalyst for new political processes and highlight the fact that the principle of a military resolution of conflicts has undergone a major revision.

b. The emergence of the 'reset' strategy in Russian-US relations. For the purpose of this article an important element of this strategy was the fact that on 5 March 2009 the meeting of foreign ministers from 26 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries decided to resume the Alliance's full official relations with Russia.

On 2 April representatives of NATO member states declared that they were inclined to think that NATO's steady expansion to the east since the end of the Cold War would be halted for a period of time, while the bloc turns its attention to improving relations with Russia.

This attempt by the West to involve Russia in its plans changed the very essence of the system of political confrontation, in place until 2009, including the situation in the Caucasus. Subsequent events have shown the importance of this circumstance.

c. Turkey and Armenia's 22 April agreement to a 'road map' for the normalization of their relations without any preconditions. The fact that NK is not even mentioned in the agreement has become the most important element of the situation under discussion.

As early as 23 April the US State Department welcomed Armenia's and Turkey's declarations about the start of the process of normalization of their bilateral relations, noting that "the US position for many years has been a firm belief that any normalization of their relations should take place without any preconditions and within a reasonable time frame". A similar statement was made later by the Minsk Group's co-chairs.

The very fact that the Karabakh conflict resolution has been placed outside the framework<sup>3</sup> of Armenian-Turkish

2. Conflicting parties' positions began to show symptoms of lacking confidence in the possibility of reaching an agreement on the formula proposed by the mediators back in 2006. Following an unsuccessful round of talks in Rambouillet, Armenian President Robert Kocharyan said in February 2006 that Armenia might review its position and recognize NK with the subsequent conclusion of an agreement on military cooperation and adopting a programme of the territories' incorporation. Just as symptomatic was the statement made by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev in October 2006 that the only way to solve the Karabakh issue was a policy of total isolation of Armenia at the regional and international levels, as well as shifting the military and economic balances in Azerbaijan's favour. The president saw this policy as an opportunity to force Armenia into a voluntary withdrawal from NK. The parties to the conflict were emphasizing their rejection of the compromise solution principle. This approach, however, did not lead to the refusal to hold negotiations in the traditional format.
3. The US representative Matthew Bryza's treatment of the logic of separating these processes bears witness to the non-accidental nature of this step. According to Bryza "we have two processes: the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh or Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and a separate process of Turkish-Armenian relations ... these are two different processes, proceeding in parallel at a different speed. One might therefore suppose that the 'road map' is focused on the Turkish-Armenian relations. In my view, the improvement in these relations would improve the diplomatic and psychological situation in the region. This would mean a better environment for the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process." The proposition about the different speeds of the two processes is quite interesting. One is left with an impression that both clusters of issues are seen as phenomena in inverse proportion to each other. The sphere of Armenian-Turkish relations is marked here as the leading one. It is unlikely that such an interpretation by the aforementioned official is a figment of his imagination. (MS)

negotiations came as a total surprise for Azerbaijan. Following the Minsk Group and US statements the head of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs told the US that the "opening of the Turkish-Armenian border before Armenia withdraws its troops from the occupied Azerbaijani territories runs counter to the national interests of Azerbaijan".

From the very outset of this process Turkey also clearly understood the complexity of the emerging situation. As early as 8 April, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that it was difficult to overcome the problems of Armenian-Turkish relations until the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was resolved. Erdogan also mentioned that he was hoping that "the UN Security Council would recognize Armenia's occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and would adopt a resolution urging Armenia to leave the region".

Nevertheless, the agreement between Armenia and Turkey was signed. Since then, in recognition of repeated statements by Turkey's leaders that the border with Armenia would not be opened until Armenian troops are withdrawn from territories adjacent to NK, conflict resolution diplomacy has become somewhat vague in nature. This has impacted on the political situation around NK and Azerbaijan.

#### **Scenarios of developments for the next five years**

Analysis of all these aspects helps us to consider different scenarios of potential developments in the situation around the NK conflict area. It is possible to make a clearer case for them in the context of the trends outlined above. For, irrespective of the international mediators' efforts, the extent to which recent changes in international relations could affect the positions of the mediator countries themselves and the positions of the parties to the conflict has become particularly important. There is no doubt that the way bilateral relations between key interested parties pan out will affect the conflict situation.

Consequently the following three scenarios are worth considering:

#### **a. Likelihood of reaching consensus between interested parties on the speedy resolution of the conflict concurrent with the process of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations (changing the status quo).**

It is clear that at present Turkey's and Azerbaijan's hopes are pinned on the idea of holding six-party (Azerbaijan-Armenia-US-Russia-France-Turkey) negotiations. This proposal has been made by Turkey's Minister of Foreign

Affairs Ali Babajan. Despite universal declarations about the priority status of the work carried out by the Minsk Group, there have been parallel attempts to change the format of diplomacy.

Once all six countries have reached an agreement, there could be a withdrawal of Armenian troops from the five territories around NK in the near future. In addition, an international peacekeeping force could be introduced into the conflict area. In other words, the traditional compromise approach based on the Madrid principles would have been successfully implemented.

We should point out, however, that the likelihood of such a development depends on the positions of the major powers. It is not in Armenia's interests, and it would be impossible to achieve the proposed format of negotiations solely through Turkey's and Azerbaijan's efforts. It would only be possible if the US and Russia changed their stance and welcomed Turkey's increased role<sup>4</sup> in the South Caucasus. The political potential of Turkey alone would not be sufficient to unilaterally procure a desired restructuring of relations in the region. But the fact that the international community has separated the Armenian-Turkish normalization process from the Karabakh conflict resolution process testifies to the absence of any desire in Russia or the US to see this happen.

Turkey has no doubt been strongly resisting this separation but it is important to remember that Turkey's room for manoeuvre is greatly limited by its own internal problems and by the demands of the global powers. Only Armenia's consent could help Turkey's position.

But Armenia cannot afford to compromise on this issue. The decision to pursue talks with Turkey was approved by the Armenian Security Council on 25 April, but it triggered a domestic crisis. The Dashnaksutyun (ARFD) party decided on 26 April to leave the coalition government over the issue. Dashnaksutyun has a history of major grievances against Turkey, and it saw the 'road map' as a threat not only to the country but to its own future as well.

Armenia's strong opposition, led by former President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, welcomes the normalization process, but considers Turkey's involvement in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict unacceptable. This opposition force pressured the government to abandon its initial intentions to agree to Turkey's involvement in conflict resolution.

NK's regime also considers the ongoing processes a threat to the interests of its people. During the hearings in the NKR National Assembly on 29 April 2009 there was strong criticism of the Armenian leadership. The

4 It is clear from the statement of the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey that it is expecting to play a significant role in the region. On 4 May Akhmed Davutoglu stated that his country "should become a country which brings order to the Middle East, Balkans and the Caucasus". In his view, "from now on Turkey is no longer a country which simply reacts to crises. It should try to effectively prevent them and create order in the region". At the same time Davutoglu emphasized that "the country's foreign policy will continue to focus on its relations with the West ... EU and NATO are the most important links in the policy of creating a balance between security and stability".

participants expressed their concern that Azerbaijan and Armenia may come to an agreement which goes against Karabakh's interests.

One should note that no-one in NK accepts the idea of handing over territories to Azerbaijan or agreeing to anything other than independence. On this second issue they are supported by the Armenian public and political parties. Considering the significant influence the NK issue has on Armenia's internal politics, the NKR's position will always present a potential threat to the Armenian leadership. The opposition is always ready to appeal to the NKR's point of view if there is any sign of a rift between them and the government. The events of 1998 were a case in point when such a rift led to Ter-Petrosyan's resignation.

It appears that any significant change in the NKR's position will only occur if there is a change in attitude to the machinery of the negotiations. For example, if there is international recognition of the NKR's independence and the establishment of direct dialogue between the NKR and Azerbaijan, the NKR could consider a discussion on territorial issues. It is assumed that this would be preceded by Armenia divesting itself of the responsibility to discuss this (territorial) component of the conflict.<sup>5</sup>

It is clear there are great difficulties in creating concurrent/parallel processes of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations and resolution of the Karabakh issue. In addition, there are growing complications for Turkey. So there might come a time when Turkey reluctantly refuses to support Azerbaijan's demands.

In such a case the scenario of reaching a broad consensus would become highly improbable.

Turkey's refusal would also have a decisive effect on the matter of excluding a military solution of the conflict from the political arsenal of Azerbaijan (until recently Azerbaijan's military rhetoric has relied on the country's close links with Turkey). The idea of a compromise solution would lose its meaning because the main argument about the need to divide territories in the conflict area would no longer be an issue.

#### **b. The likelihood of separating the NK issue from Armenian-Turkish relations (preservation of the status quo or bringing the conflict issue into Russian-Azerbaijani relations).**

The impact of the new Armenian-Turkish relations on NK's conflict and the relationship between Azerbaijan and

Turkey has not yet been discussed in depth by anyone. The change in Turkey's position – which has played an important role in Azerbaijan's position on NK and in deterring Armenia and Russia – could radically change the balance of power in the region.

The prospect of the US and Russia establishing a strategic cooperation directly affects Turkey's position. It will see this development as a threat to its own strategic role. For over 50 years it has been at the forefront of NATO and the main containing factor against the USSR (and later Russia) in the southerly direction. The idea of normalizing relations between Turkey and Armenia – a country which has been seen to be one of the main factors containing Turkey – becoming political currency changes the whole military-political balance in the region. US President Barack Obama's meetings with Turkish leaders on 6 and 7 April included discussions on military cooperation, prospects of Turkey-Armenia rapprochement, resolution of the Cyprus issue, the joint fight against the separatist Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK) and Turkey's integration in the EU.

It is quite difficult for Turkey to refuse such prospects. Yet they clash with Turkey's traditional approaches to its role. What was missing from the talks was discussion on Turkey's interest and role in the east, including the NK issue.

Turkey faces a serious choice. The situation is further complicated by the sharp change in Russia's position. Russia does not hide the fact that it is helping the US to normalize relations between Armenia and Turkey, stressing at the same time that "talks between Armenia and Turkey are a bilateral matter for the two countries and Russia welcomes all steps which lead to the normalization of their relations". Such an approach by Russia has been thoroughly thought through, which is apparent in the very fact that Russia quickly abandoned its provisions declared in the Russian-Turkish declaration of 2009 about the 'separate' responsibilities of the two countries.

Russia's logic here is quite clear – it sees an opportunity to deepen its relations with Azerbaijan arising from the present processes. It is also clear why the NK issue has moved to centre stage and has become a key issue in the unfolding structure of relationships in the region and the world, instead of being relegated to the margins. A particular stance on the NK issue can establish a certain pattern of relations between South Caucasus countries and their neighbours. In the words of Turkish President Abdulla Gul: "although it is a relatively small territory, it can become either a wall or a gateway between the East

5 On 3 June 2009 the parliamentary Heritage party demanded that the Armenian leadership should refuse to discuss the problem of the territories at the negotiations. In the statement by the party's council it notes that "the problem of territorial division between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan is the exclusive right of the duly elected leadership of the NKR whereas Armenia can only contribute to the resolution of this problem between the NKR and Azerbaijan". It is suggested that the Armenian leadership should "bring the format and contents of the negotiations in line with the real rights and responsibilities, springing from its undertaking to serve as a guarantor of the NKR's security. First and foremost it is suggested that it recognize the exclusive rights and responsibilities of the NKR leadership regarding the issue of discussing the territorial component of the negotiations and to stick solely to the problems of status and security of the NKR during its own negotiations with Azerbaijan." The full text of this statement is available at: <http://heritage.am/pr/030609arm.htm>

and the West". Everyone understands that taking the Karabakh issue outside the framework of Armenian-Turkish relations is not just a whim of the major powers. Such a decision could only be the result of serious geopolitical considerations.

Neither Turkey nor Azerbaijan wish to put up with this state of affairs. This is not simply because the conditions of Azerbaijani-Russian rapprochement are not in the interests of these countries. What worries Azerbaijan is the specific political formula unfolding in the region. Azerbaijan has been quick to realize that if Turkey accepts the geopolitical interests of the US and Russia and their new plans, the conflict area between Azerbaijan and NK could become not just a geopolitical 'wall' but a military and political fiefdom of Russia.

The widespread idea that there exists a permanent state of antagonism between the US and NATO on the one hand, and Russia on the other, on the subject of deploying troops in the region no longer holds water. On 22 April the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov spoke in London about "Russia no longer perceiving NATO as an *a priori* threat to itself. For us NATO is one of the objective key factors which determine the state of security in the Euro-Atlantic region, including close to our borders". Lavrov simply noted that all NATO's movements close to Russia's borders would be taken into account in Russia's foreign policy and military planning in order to guarantee national security. And not much else.

There is no doubt that progress in Armenian-Turkish relations benefits Russia because it presents an opportunity to tie Azerbaijan closer to itself and thus radically change plans for future energy projects in the region. Russia would also obtain direct access to Iran – a geopolitical advantage which cannot be overestimated.

With such a development it is conceivable that Russia may get the West's 'green light' to deploy troops in the conflict area of NK.

Therefore a conflict transformation scenario whereby Russian troops might be deployed in the territories bordering the NKR (mainly along the border with Iran) also becomes a reality. Such a scenario would be possible if the blockade of the Armenian-Turkish border were to be lifted, irrespective of the outcome of the NK resolution process. The status quo transformation would then follow from a Russian-Azerbaijani agreement. It is quite possible that units in Russia's military base in Armenia could be then redeployed in the conflict area.

This scenario should be seen as an example of the status quo transformation, not an example of conflict resolution. Azerbaijan would have to choose, too. It is no accident that as soon as the word got out about the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations bypassing the NK issue, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev visited Moscow on 16-17 April. According to information sources one of the

topics discussed was Russia's arms supplies to Azerbaijan. Apparently, the threat of not being able to rely on Turkey's military might is already forcing Azerbaijan to think about alternative means of increasing its own military potential.

Russia showed its desire to deepen its links with Azerbaijan back in July 2008 when the two presidents signed a declaration on strategic cooperation. Whether Azerbaijan wants to deepen its relationship with Russia or not, it feels that it might have to say goodbye to the customary and desirable ideas of cooperation.

Moreover, if Azerbaijan thinks that it may lose a lot, Russia can only gain. If events begin to unfold according to the aforementioned scenario, Armenian-Turkish relations could become a new basis for future strategic alignments. The re-activated railway link between Turkey and Armenia is more likely to reach Russia via Georgia and Abkhazia, than via Azerbaijan. The Caucasus could then become a double corridor connecting North and South (Turkey-Armenia-Georgia-Russia and Iran-Azerbaijan-Russia). The two corridors could only meet in Russia or Iran. If we also take into account the fact that Russia might get a chance to deploy its forces in the conflict area it could not have envisaged a better system of strategic control for itself.

### **c. Likelihood of introducing the conflict issue into Armenian-Turkish relations (the strategy of unilateral recognition of the NKR)**

Russian-Azerbaijani cooperation, in conditions where Turkey could refuse to include the NK issue in the process of normalizing its relations with Armenia, is not necessarily going to bring about transformation of the status quo. Nuances in the emerging Armenian-Turkish relations could affect the situation around NK in a much greater way.

Despite the prevailing pessimism regarding the possibility of strategic relations forming between Armenia and Turkey, the process of rapprochement between the two could go quite far. The prerequisites for this are the objective spheres of strategic interests between these two countries and Turkey's special place in the contemporary global arena.

Turkey is pondering the situation much more seriously than any other country in the region. In the end it is the international dimension of this country which is at the heart of major powers' interests. Having been 'abandoned' after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, this regional vanguard of NATO has been attracting increasing attention from the West.

The West is split on the issue of letting this country into the European theatre of action. The French and German positions are a case in point. And Turkey's ambition to play an important role in the east is not particularly welcomed either. The new strategy of bringing Iran into Russia-US plans for addressing global problems would totally isolate Turkey from this eastern dimension.

One could also suppose that by keeping it within a specific political and spatial framework Turkey is given a chance to bring itself in line with European standards, not so much domestically but in terms of its foreign policy. In other words, Turkey is offered a chance to become an ordinary European country with a moderate foreign policy. This would involve Turkey recognizing the Armenian genocide, and changing its attitudes towards Armenia, the idea of the 'Turkic brotherhood' and the Kurds. However, such suggestions are deemed too tough and too demanding by Turkey.

Turkey understands the West's wishes but appears to have decided to review both the suggestions made and the processes under way. This is determining the nature of the emerging regional situation, and Turkey's resistance threatens to delay many new initiatives on the world stage. The nature of further processes therefore depends on where mutual understanding is reached between global powers. If Turkey finally understands that it needs to change the basis of its policies, Armenia too would have something to offer Turkey.

Objectively, it is in Turkey's interests to enter into a strategic union with Armenia if the latter decides to support its policy<sup>6</sup> on the Kurdish issue and its position on Northern Cyprus. This is extremely important for the understanding of the seriousness of potential cooperation between Armenia and Turkey. The issue is not so much Armenia itself but the new strategic security vector. If one remembers that Turkey's abandoning Azerbaijan to the mercy of Russia may be seen by the latter as a friendly act, the Armenian-Turkish union could very quickly embrace Russia as well.

These objective opportunities could be turned into a concrete allied policy. Compared with such a prospect the NK problem for Turkey is not a mere trifle, but a valuable resource for strengthening the new strategy for cooperation.

If events unfold in the way outlined here, a completely new configuration could emerge around NK. It is quite possible that the principle of unilateral recognition could be acted upon. One should bear in mind that the Northern Cyprus issue<sup>7</sup> is strategically important for Turkey. Combined with all the listed problems Turkey could consider the issue of recognizing NK and Northern Cyprus together with Armenia. If both countries agree this with the US and if they make it an aspect of the new Armenian-Turkish

relationship, the US might consider joining them on that. Such a move could act as a deterrent for Russia-Azerbaijan plans to resolve the NK issue unilaterally. Moreover, such a scenario would put an end to the possibility of a military solution to the conflict. Russia, itself having abandoned the idea of recognizing the NKR's independence, is unlikely to oppose such a move by other countries. It would allow it to deepen its relations with Azerbaijan. The NKR as a semi-recognized entity serves Russia's interests if one bears in mind the situation around the former Georgian provinces, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

## Conclusion

To conclude, we can see three plausible scenarios of future regional developments which can affect the situation in NK in different ways. The present situation is such that the meaning of the new US strategy has not yet been fully appreciated by many countries which are undergoing a process of adjustment to the new political realities. New factors could soon emerge in the Middle East. In particular, it is already clear that there are new problems arising in Israeli-Iranian relations. Any transformation in Iran's position could send new shock waves which would affect NK's conflict. With the current speed and quality of political developments the period until 2014 appears too long to contemplate such a forecast. In five years' time the political appearance of this region could be beyond recognition.

6 The fact that the problem of the Kurds remains particularly relevant and causes Turkey a lot of concern is clear from recent debates between the leadership of the military wing of the PKK and the Turkish leadership. On 29 May Turkey's ambassador in Azerbaijan Khulusi Kylydzh stated that "no country would enter into political bargaining with terrorists. Turkey is a great state. Not only Turkey but any country would refuse to negotiate with terrorists". This statement was made in connection with the fact that earlier the leader of the military wing of the PKK Murat Karajylan said that he was ready for talks with Ankara. He urged Turkey not to miss this opportunity: "If it is missed it would not present itself again."

7 The fact that Turkey itself seems to link the NK problem and the Cyprus problem was clear from the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's statement on 16 May 2009 in Sochi that "Russia and Turkey carry responsibility for what happens in our region ... We are condemned to take decisions in the interests of preserving security in the region. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, the problem of the Middle East and the Cyprus problem are among these priority issues".