RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF ARMENIAN-TURKISH RAPPROCHEMENT

ABSTRACT: The Armenian Diaspora (Spyurq) is one of the oldest and skilled diasporas in the world. Armenian communities are present in practically all the corners of the globe and are distinguished both by uncommon abilities of adaptation and the preservation of their cultural specificity. Due to these features, Armenian diasporic communities possess solid development potential, ensuring their high status through an active penetration of Armenians into the elite of the accepting society and a stable character of their communal institutes.

Recent Armenian-Turkish rapprochement to some extent brings into question the traditional unity of the Armenian Diaspora and its close relationship with the Republic of Armenia.

Representatives of the Spyurq with a negative attitude towards rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey on existing terms can be conditionally divided into three categories:

**Romanticists** (represented mainly by the Union of Armenians of Russia) believe in a certain “mission” of the Armenian nation and the “superiority” of Armenians over the Turkic nations. The Armenian people are, thus, viewed as an integral whole which is not divided into citizens of Armenia and representatives of the Diaspora. Therefore, the government in Yerevan has only a symbolic meaning and has no right to make any crucial decision on all-Armenian issues, in particular in the domain of relations between the Armenian and the Turkish people.

**Nationalists** (mainly supporters of the Dashnaktsutyun party, from the USA and Lebanon, as well as natives of Nagorno-Karabakh and descendants of natives of Western Armenia, which is now Turkish territory) consider the rapprochement of the RA with Turkey as an actual rejection of the struggle for Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide, as well as a “betrayal” of Nagorno-Karabakh’s independence.

**Pragmatists** understand international law, political science and history but, in their opinion, the signed Zurich protocols contain weakly reasoned for-
mulations which are not in accordance with the interests of the RA and are, therefore, inefficient. These formulations 1. do not contain any guarantees of the protocols’ observance on the part of Turkey, 2. recognize the existing configuration of the Armenian-Turkish borders, i.e. symbolize the refusal to return Western Armenia to the Armenian state, and 3. recognize the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the existing states, which translates into a withholding of support for Nagorno-Karabakh, which was a part of AzSSR during the period of the USSR. Besides, Armenian-Turkish rapprochement is interpreted by members of this category as a result of external pressure on Armenia on the part of Russia and the USA.

In signing the Zurich protocols, the leadership of the RA was guided, first of all, by the state interests of the RA. The Diaspora factor was in this case secondary, although it was taken into consideration. The split in the Armenian Diaspora, in the authors’ opinion, will be short-lived, because, in the end, pragmatism will prevail.

KEY WORDS: Republic of Armenia, Armenian Diaspora, Turkey, Armenian-Turkish rapprochement

The Armenian Diaspora (Spyurq) is one of the oldest and skilled diasporas in the world. Armenian communities are present in practically all the corners of the globe and, at the same time, are distinguished both by uncommon abilities of adaptation and preservation of their cultural specificity. Due to these features, Armenian diasporic communities possess solid development potential, ensuring their high status through an active penetration of Armenians into the elite of the accepting society and a stable character of their communal institutes.

Unity of the Armenian Diaspora is ensured, in many respects, at the expense of close and often mutually advantageous cooperation with the Armenian state: on the one hand, adherence to the interests of the historical native land creates a basis for reproducing traditional Armenian culture and legitimizes the authority of diasporic leaders and, on the other hand, allows the Republic of Armenia (RA) to use the economic and political potential of the Diaspora to strengthen its international-political positions. It would seem that the relations between the RA and the Armenian Diaspora are an example of such relations. However, in the last half-year these relations have undergone a serious revaluation by both parties.

The visibility of the unity of the Spyurq and the RA has been traditionally supported by declarations regarding the indissolubility of Armenians’ interests irrespective of where they live. However these interests a priori cannot be common, as the fragmentation of the Armenian ethnus has made its many representatives carriers of an ambivalent identity and, moreover, carriers of different cultures, regardless of their preservation of the Armenian cultural-linguistic and confessional bases. Is it necessary to be surprised that a number of actual political steps undertaken by the RA leadership (led by Serj Sargsyan), with the goal of normalizing relations with Turkey, have caused negative reactions on the part of the Armenian diasporic public? As it will be shown below, this fact has been present historically: the Armenian
Diaspora has traditionally confused interests of “all Armenians” and the state interests of the sovereign state, formed on only a part of the ethnic space of the Armenians.

The first Armenian Republic, created as a result of the Russian empire’s breakup, existed from May, 1918 till November, 1920. According to a variety of sources, the creation of the Republic was unexpected for the political organizations and figures of the Spyurq. That period of time stood out among political organizations of the Spyurq “National Delegation”, considering that the formation of Armenian statehood on a certain part of Eastern Armenia could not be viewed as a realization of the political goals of the Armenian people, as in such a situation no attention was paid to the question of the historical native land of the Armenians\(^1\). However, in May, 1919, the government of the RA proclaimed Armenia a unified and independent republic, thereby undertaking responsibilities for the solution of the Western Armenia liberation issue and association with the RA [Kirakosyan 2006: 22-23]. The National Delegation considered itself competent for resolving this issue, as from the very beginning it had been representing the interests of the Western Armenians in conditions when the young Armenian Republic was experiencing the serious complexities of the interstate and international-political order. Within the next two months, the sides carried on negotiations that ultimately proved ineffective.

In November 1920 Soviet power was established in Armenia. As one of the republics of the USSR, Armenia existed for almost seventy years. It is difficult to overestimate the positive influence of the Soviet period on the national-cultural development of the Armenian people. Nevertheless, there was also a negative side of the Soviet influence, reflected in the policy of the forced isolation of the Armenians living in Soviet Armenia from the Armenians of the Spyurq. And no matter how surprising it sounded, the negative consequences of isolation became more obvious in the beginning of the 1990s, when Armenia regained independence. The main objective of Soviet diplomacy in the course of attempting to establish contacts with the Spyurq was to run the Spyurq and use its potential in the state interests of the USSR. This policy alienated the Armenians in the Spyurq from Soviet Armenia. As a result, throughout almost seventy years, two segments of the Armenian people existed practically isolated from each other, which, in its turn, promoted the formation of mutually negative stereotypes. These stereotypes were related to different spheres, including way of life, level of national consciousness development, etc.

With the independence of Armenia, a qualitatively new stage began in the mutual relations of the Armenian state and the Armenian Diaspora. At the same time, it is to be pointed out that the attitude of various forces of the Diaspora regarding the ongoing processes in Armenia in 1988-1991 was ambiguous. Even the tragedy of the catastrophic earthquake in Armenia

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\(^1\) The Republic of Armenia was considered to be the native land by the Armenians; however, the unequivocal historical native land of the Armenians was considered to be Western Armenia, which remained a part of the modern Turkey after the First World War.
could not rally the numerous Armenian Diaspora to unity. Diasporas were also beset by disagreements related to questions such as methods of conducting the struggle for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh and the democratic transformation in Armenia [Armenia 2020: 2003: 212].

According to Armenian experts, the modern Armenian Diaspora can be divided into two basic parts in terms of their relation to the leadership of the RA. The first large part unconditionally accepts and supports Yerevan's internal and foreign policy. The other part criticizes from time to time the political steps of the leadership of Armenia. For instance, the barring of the activities of the Dashnaktsuyun party on the territory of the RA [Dallakyan 1996: 179], considered unsubstantiated, was subjected to sharp criticism.

The Spyurq expressed a similar attitude regarding the aspiration of official Yerevan to open the borders with Turkey, expressed in the Armenian-Turkish negotiations and the initiation of corresponding protocols.

The consequences of the Zurich Protocols for the Armenian Diaspora can be viewed as ambiguous. On the one hand, they brought a split in the Armenian Diaspora, while, on the other hand, the leadership of the RA received invaluable experience in terms of interaction with its foreign-based countrymen, to be more precise – the experience of upholding state interests under conditions when a variety of communities openly does not support the diplomatic efforts of the RA. At the same time, it is necessary to take into consideration that the rejection of Yerevan’s positions is typical for representatives of practically all the major segments of the Diaspora (USA, Europe, Middle East, Russia).

The representatives of the Spyurq with a negative attitude towards the rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey on existing terms can be conditionally divided into three categories²:

1. **Romanticists.** This category includes people who believe in a certain “mission” of the Armenian nation and, in one form or another (often – latent), support the idea of a certain “superiority” of Armenians over the Turkic nations, such as Turks and Azerbaijanis. The Armenian people are, thus, viewed as an integral whole which is not divided into citizens of Armenia and representatives of the Diaspora. In addition, differences in the national interests of the RA and host countries, such as France, USA etc. are ignored. Representatives of the given category consider that official Yerevan is only a symbol of the Armenian people’s unity and the government of the RA has no right to make any crucial decision related to adjustments in relations between the Armenian and the Turkish people. As it can be assumed, socially-active representatives of Armenian diasporic youth, as well as individuals interested in problems of Armenian history on an amateurish level relate to the given category. The argumentation of the point of view expressed by the given category is rather more emotional than rational. This point of view is expressed mainly via the Internet, exemplified, for instance, by the forum of the official site of

² A corresponding classification is worked out based on an analysis of Internet resources of Armenian newspapers and public organizations, both in Armenia and in such countries as the USA, France, etc.
the Union of Armenians of Russia (UAR). The lack of logical argumentation is partially compensated by the use of particularly graphic means and slogans expressing a negative attitude toward the Zurich Protocols.

**Nationalists.** Mainly supporters of the Dashnaktsutyun party belong to this category (USA, Lebanon), as well as natives of Nagorno-Karabakh and descendants of natives of Western Armenia (now the territory of Turkey). The representatives of this category view the rapprochement of the RA with Turkey as an actual rejection (or, at least, the first step toward the rejection) of the struggle for Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide, as well as a “betrayal” of Nagorno-Karabakh’s independence, which will inevitably be sacrificed in Armenian-Turkish negotiations under conditions when Turkey is the traditional partner of Azerbaijan. The argumentation of this part of the Spyurq representatives is well justified, although it does not take into account the changing international situation and, accordingly, changes in the interests of modern states, particularly of Armenia and Turkey.

**Pragmatists.** As a rule, representatives of the Armenian diasporic intelligentsia with an understanding of international law, political science and history fall into this category. In their opinion, the signed protocols contain weakly reasoned formulations which are not in accordance with the interests of the RA and are, therefore, inefficient. These formulations 1. do not contain any guarantees of the protocols’ observance on the part of Turkey, 2. recognize the existing configuration of the Armenian-Turkish borders, i.e. symbolize the refusal to return Western Armenia to the Armenian state, and 3. recognize the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the existing states, which translates into a withholding of support for Nagorno-Karabakh, which was a part of AzSSR during the period of the USSR. Besides, Armenian-Turkish rapprochement is interpreted by members of this category as a result of external pressure on Armenia on the part of Russia and the USA.

Representatives of these three groups exist, judging by publications on the Internet, in all segments of the Spyurq. Nevertheless, it seems to us that the split in the Armenian Diaspora will be relatively short-lived and superficial due to the following principal reasons:

The competent position of the RA leadership, which skillfully justified the necessity of opening the borders with Turkey, pointing out that a) it will allow an adjustment in economic exchange with the given country, b) will open the way for a settlement in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations (since the fact of the border opening is a friendly step from Turkey in relation to Armenia and, thus, relativizes the special relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan), c) will improve the image of the RA on the international stage, d) will stabilize the Armenian communities which still exist on the territory of Turkey and are an integral part of the Armenian people, e) will ensure (as an immediate prospect) restoration of monuments of Armenian cultural heritage on the territory of Turkey, which, in its turn, can become the first step on the way to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish leadership.

Formation of the Ministry of Diaspora, which (in spite of the mixed views of the Diaspora regarding the Ministry) is capable, to a certain extent,
of optimizing the relations of the RA with the Spyurq. Besides, the formation of this ministry will allow a more accurate differentiation of the state interests of Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, thereby substantiating once again the necessity of signing the said protocols in the context of the interests of the RA.

Organization of scaled public discussions concerning the content and the importance of the protocols by the largest Armenian communities in the countries of Europe, the USA, Lebanon and Russia, which, in any event, are capable of changing the emotional background of inter-Armenian contradictions and which shall, with the passage of time, promote the formation of public opinion favorable to the initiatives of the RA.

A number of Armenian public organizations, including umbrella organizations (the UAR), have issued basically neutral statements on the subject of the aspiration of the RA to build relations with Turkey;

The Armenian Apostolic Church has not shown any clear and consolidated position on this issue.

In conclusion it is possible to assume with a great deal of probability that, in signing the Zurich Protocols, the leadership of the RA was guided, first of all, by the state interests of the RA. The Diaspora factor was in this case secondary, although it was taken into consideration. The split in the Armenian Diaspora, caused by differences in approaches to Armenian-Turkish rapprochement, will be short-term, taking into account that a considerable part of the Armenian diasporic elite, having access to the authorities of the accepting states, is showing a sufficiently pragmatic estimation of events and is capable of assessing the benefits and prospects of a constructive relations adjustment between the RA and Turkey. It is possible to assume also that a considerable part of the Armenian elite living on the territory of the USA and the Russian Federation is directly interested in an adjustment of such relations, as it allows them to act in closer accordance with the foreign policy of the accepting states and, accordingly, strengthens their positions in the accepting society. The given assumption with regard to the UAR is supported also by the fact that the “pro-Yerevan” position of the UAR will allow this organization to strengthen its influence in the Russian regions at the expense of, for example, compromise with regional communal leaders who are opposed to the UAR policy. Expectations of constructive cooperation between Armenia and the Diaspora are also supported by the fact that a significant number of joint cultural projects unite them, whose implementation is important not only for official Yerevan, but also for maintaining the authority of diasporic leaders.

LITERATURE


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ОДНОСИ РЕПУБЛИКЕ ЈЕРМЕНИЈЕ С ЈЕРМЕНСКОМ ДИЈАСПОРОМ У УСЛОВИМА ЈЕРМЕНСКО-ТУРСКОГ ПРИБЛИЖАВАЊА

Ј. А. Балашов и С. Е. Давтјан

Сажетак

Јермени у расејању чине једну од најстаријих и најобразованијих дијаспора у свету. Ту дијаспору која се може наћи у сваком кутку земљине кугле одликују истовремено и ретке способности прилагођавања и очувања културних особености. Захваљујући тим особинама јерменске дијаспоричне заједнице поседују солидан развојни потенцијал, који им омогућује висок статус, што потврђују активан продор Јермена у елиту друштава која их прихватала и постојана природа њихових заједничких установа.

Скорашње приближавања Јерменије и Турске унеколико је проблематизовало традиционално јединство јерменске дијаспоре (Спјурка) и њену блиску с матичном државом.

Представници Спјурка који имају негативан став према приближавању Јерменије и Турске под датим условима (дефинисаним тзв. Циршким протоколом) могу се условно поделити у три категории: Романтичари (окупљени, на пример, у Савезу Јермена Русије) верују у „мисију” јерменске нације која „супериорна” у односу на туранске народе. Јерменска нација се посматра као целина која се не може делити на држављани Јерменије и Јермене у дијаспори, стога влада у Јеревану има само симболички карактер; она не сме сама одлучивати о свејерменским поставкама, најмање о приближавању Турској.

Националисти (углавном присталице Дашнактсутјун партије, из САД и Либана, као и становници Нагорно Карабаха и потомци Јермена из Западне Јерменије, данас територије Турске) сматрају приближавање као одрицање од борбе за турско признање геноцида над Јерменима и као издају независности Нагорно Карабаха.

Прагматичари разумеју и уважавају међународно право, политичке науке и право, али сматрају да Циршки протокол садрже неодређено дефинисане формулације које нису у интересу Републике Јерменије и које су стога неефикасне. Оне 1. не гарантују да ће их се Турска придржавати, 2. признају јерменско-турску границу, што значи одрицање од враћања Западне Јерменије матици и 3. признају суверенитет и територијални интегритет постојећих држава, што значи и власт Азербејџана над Нагорно Карабахом. Осим тога, они тумаче јерменско-турско приближавање као последицу америчког и руског притиска на Јерменију.

Закључујући Циршки протокол вођство Републике Јерменије руководило се првенствено државним интересима те земље. Фактор дијаспоре био је секундаран, иако је узет у разматрање. Раскол у јерменској дијаспори, према мишљењу аутора, биће краткотрајан, јер ће, на крају, превладати прагматизам.

Кључне речи: Република Јерменија, јерменска дијаспора, Турска, јерменско-турско приближавање