

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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The George H. W. Bush Administration as Moderator in the Process of Normalization of the Armenia-Turkey Relations

SUREN SARGSYAN

Brusov State University, Armenia

The purpose of this paper is to study the foreign policy of the administration of the 41st President of the United States, George H. W. Bush as well as the efforts and motives for normalization of the relations between newly independent Armenia and Republic of Turkey. The collapse of the USSR was an opportunity for the United States to establish relations and use public diplomacy as well as soft power toward newly independent states, including Armenia. Efforts to normalize Armenian-Turkish relations were made using both public policy and behind-the-scenes diplomacy. In order to study the policy and diplomacy for the normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations, a number of scientific articles and the information flows of the time were studied. Also, many interviews were conducted with former officials involved in the process. In order to understand the efforts made for the normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations in the early 1990s, behind-the-scenes diplomacy of the US administration was also studied, taking into account the confidentiality and complexity of that process. The declassified documents of the White House, the State Department, the National Security Council, as well as other state institutions were the subject of a separate study.

Keywords

USA, President George H. W. Bush, Armenian-Turkish relations, diplomacy, mediation

Introduction

Despite the fact that Turkey was one of the first states to recognize the independence of Armenia on December 24, 1991, the Armenian-Turkish border remained closed and the diplomatic relations was never established. In 1993 Turkey unilaterally closed its air and land border with Armenia. The

reopening of the land border and the establishment of diplomatic relations are hindered by the preconditions brought by Turkey¹.

The collapse of the USSR had dual meaning for overcoming the challenges Turkey faced. On the one hand, it brought a new challenge significantly decreasing Turkey's role as the main partner of the USA near the southern borders of the USSR. On the other hand, the power vacuum created in the region as a result of the absolutely new geopolitical situation, the collapse of bipolar world order and the disappearance of the second pole theoretically created large opportunities for Turkey².

At the beginning of 1990s, when Russia faced many challenges connected with the post-Soviet internal transformation processes, the official Ankara considered that a favorable situation was created in the South Caucasus and Central Asia to turn those regions into areas of its dominant influence³. At the same time, Turkey continued to have an important role for the USA for restraining Iran and, specifically in the context of U.S. military actions in the Middle East- Iraq, as the only member state of NATO that has land border with Iraq.

It is undeniable that after overcoming the internal problems Russia would intensify its policy first of all towards the former states of USSR as the vital zone of its influence, consequently Turkey had to try to take steps as soon as possible to position itself in its adjacent region. To this end, Turkey took some steps at the beginning of 1990s to improve relations with Armenia especially in the sphere of trade and economics. However, the victories of Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh rose anti-Armenian sentiments within the social-political circles of Turkey and starting from February 1992 the Nagorno-Karabakh issue became an important political factor for Turkey's relations with Armenia, as a result of which Turkey started to link

¹ Relations between Turkey and Armenia, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-armenia.en.mfa>

² **Թորոսյան Տ., Արշակյան Գ.**, Թուրքիայի արտաքին քաղաքականության ձևավորման նախադրյալները, մարտահրավերներն ու հեռանկարները, *Հայկական քաղաքագիտական հանդես*, 2014, 2, 141-162:

³ **Torosyan T.**, The Return of Turkey, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2009, 3, July September, 120-129.

the improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations mainly with the progress of NK issue⁴.

In the context of regional global policy Russian-American relations were also important. American policy could have been effective, had it been quick. As ambassador Kauzlarich mentions “During this period, the United States became deeply involved in this area for the first time and helped to keep these states afloat and preserve their independence from Moscow because we attributed geostrategic importance to the area. We have maintained interest in the area’s energy resources and sought to keep them out of the hands of Russia and Iran—and equally to get the energy to market in ways not dependent on Russia or Iran.”⁵

Former United States Ambassador to Russia Jim Collins stated⁶: “The idea of limiting Russian influence in the region by opening the Turkish-Armenian border also played a role. I would say, generally speaking, a major strategic preoccupation of the U.S. government, particularly in these first years after the breakup, was that Moscow not reasserts its control over the new states or in the regions. And so, there were a lot of different ways in which the U.S. approached that question. One was, essentially, to bring all of these new states into things like the OSCE, into the Council of Europe, into an international base of the UN... That is giving them the international standing and then supporting their effective participation in those kinds of organizations. That was one thing. The other was to try to ensure that their relations with their neighbors were developed in reasonable ways. So it was not only Armenia and Turkey. We were doing this, between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, we were doing this between, you know, Ukraine and Europe, between Moldova and Romania... So, within that context, among other things, Armenian-Turkish relations were seen as an important factor. It was also true that the relations with Turkey were seen as an adjunct factor, an important adjunct factor, for the Karabakh conflict.

⁴ **Արշակյան Գ.**, Թուրք-հայկական հարաբերությունները Թուրքիայի տարածաշրջանային քաղաքականության համատեքստում 1995-2001թթ., *Լրաբեր Հասարակական Գիտությունների*, 2017, 2, 12-26:

⁵ **Kauzlarich R.**, Time for Change? U.S. Policy in the Transcaucasus, <https://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-Kauzlarich.pdf>, The Century Foundation, NY, 2001.

⁶ Author's interview with the American Chargé d'Affaires in the USSR (1990-1995), Adviser to the Secretary of State on CIS Affairs, James Collins, the US Ambassador to Russia (1997-2001), Washington, DC, 2018.

We were never able to, let's say, divorce things. Whatever people wanted to do, the reality was you couldn't. And so, you have to extend, we could get the normalization between Armenia and Turkey, and we felt it would have a positive impact on dealing with Karabakh. And, basically, we thought, it was an important vital interest for everybody to have a normalization in that relationship.”

That was the reason that Washington was trying to diversify political contacts and relations with USSR republics though their independence was not formally recognized.

The beginning of U.S.-Armenian official relations

On November 11, 1991 during the inauguration ceremony the first president of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan referring to foreign policy mentioned “ Considering that the most serious failure of the Republic’s current authorities has been the sphere of foreign relations, it is necessary to quickly intensify the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to establish active ties with all states that are of interest to us striving to reach full political independence, become subject of International law, member of United Nations, at the same time our interests demand to participate in all the constructive processes in the former Soviet Union and in the activities of the interstate economic and political bodies, if not with the conviction in the success of those processes, then with the concern to keep the republic away from undesirable shocks. ... Establish stable trade and economic ties with our immediate neighbors- Turkey and Iran, to turn Armenia from a communication deadlock into a busy international crossroad.”⁷ This statement was, of course, taken into account both in Ankara and in Washington DC. Considering Russia’s historic presence and influence in the region, as well as the possible tension of U.S.-Russia relations not in the distant future, Ter-Petrosyan declares that newly independent Armenia must deepen its relations with all Soviet republics, first of all with Russia.

It is noteworthy that a day after Levon Ter-Petrosyan’s inauguration as the president of Armenia, he made his first official visit to the United States. On November 13, 1991 in Washington he met with the acting

⁷ The speech following the inauguration ceremony of Levon Ter-Petrosyan November 11, 1991, <https://www.aniarc.am/2019/11/11/ltp-11-november1991/>

Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger in the State Department⁸. The cornerstone topic of the meeting was the normalization process of Armenian-Turkish relations. Taking into account the recognition of Azerbaijan by Turkey and the violation of the geopolitical balance in the region, Ter-Petrosyan offers the United States to initiate security "rearrangements" in the region. He notes that a rather difficult winter is expected in Armenia, and asks the US mediation on the opening of the border by Turkey, so that it is possible to carry out cargo transportation to Armenia. During the meeting, the president states that the United States has special "obligations" in the region, which was formed as a result of friendly relations with Turkey and hostile relations with Iran. Ter-Petrosyan singles out three main challenges that Armenia faces: the elimination of the consequences of the 1988 earthquake, the problem of supporting 300.000 refugees because of the Azerbaijani aggression and the blockade carried out by Azerbaijan and the violence in Artsakh. Eagleburger asks Ter-Petrosyan to clarify what the new geopolitical reality in the South Caucasus means and reports that the United States will continue to support security in the region, but states that the U.S. government cannot assume new treaty obligations in the field of regional security. Ter-Petrosyan presents several additional requests. He informed the acting Secretary of State that the establishment of greater air connections with Armenia and the possibility of transporting food through Turkey are of "crucial" importance, as last spring bread supplies were carried out through the Turkish border. The permission to enter through Turkey was an important mechanism to reduce the pressure on Armenia. Ter-Petrosyan hopes the U.S. government will urge Turkey to fully open borders with Armenia. According to the declassified cable, Eagleburger informed Ter-Petrosyan that the US government was urging the Turkish government to open its borders and the Trabzon Seaport for trade with Armenia. "The US government thinks that Ankara may open the port soon. We also understand that Turkey wants to have good relations with Armenia and will soon recognize Armenia's independence," Eagleburger said. "Ankara informed the US government that it will push this process forward if Armenia issues a statement renouncing its territorial claims to Turkey and recognizing the existing de facto borders," Eagleburger noted. He asks Ter-Petrosyan to advise what else the United States can do to support in this area."

⁸ U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2008-02192.

Former advisor to the president, later Foreign Minister Vahan Papazyan remembers. “The package of our suggestions was large, it consisted of a few points, which involved the whole aspect of the relations. In terms of some points we started to progress, but the strategic aim of the package was not implemented. Some tactical issues started to normalize: deeper relations, resolution to economic problems, more involvement by the USA, possible bigger investments... But the war issue was the most essential one. “End the war, after that we will open all the doors for you” This was the approach.”⁹ However, the unclassified documents neither make clear that “strategic aim”, nor confirm the American condition.

On November 14, 1991 “Hayastani Hanrapetutyun” daily newspaper publishes an article of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, which represents Armenia’s official stance on the relations with Turkey, “In our relations with Turkey we have been guided by our adopted principle of normalization of relations with neighbors, and have implemented a very consistent policy in this context starting from the first day, when the “Movement” was formed as social-political movement and adopted its principles. From that day till now our authorities have implemented consistent policy, without any deviations, if not considering the speech of our Foreign Minister cited not long ago. And it should be mentioned that we encounter almost the same if not equivalent position from Turkey. Though it should be taken into account, that this issue is as complicated for us as it is for Turkey.”¹⁰

It was obvious that publishing the article on the eve of the US trip, had many addressees. First, Levon Ter-Petrosyan reconfirms his approach to Armenian-Turkish relations expressing readiness to conduct Armenian-Turkish negotiations on those principles with U.S. mediation. Referring to the speech of the Foreign Minister he tried to alleviate its possible negative effects in Ankara and Washington, expressing his disagreement with that and continuing to have the same position he had. The addressee of the article was also Armenian community ahead of the communal meetings.

Summing up the results of the American visit, the important priorities of the Armenian side can be singled out. In the foreign relations it was Nagorno-Karabakh and the concerns about the latter were shared in the

⁹ The author's interview with former RA Foreign Minister V. Papazyan, Yerevan 2017.

¹⁰ Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն 14 նոյեմբերի, 1991թ. Լևոն ՏերՊետրոսյան: Ընտրանի, Երևան 2006, էջ 305–328:

Bush administration. The normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations was also a priority for the two states and it seemed that the positions here coincided. As for the bilateral relations, it is important not to forget that the USSR still existed and the relations could not develop in its full capacity. Therefore, the main issue of the agenda continued to be the allocation of assistance to Armenia.

In the evening of December 25, 1991, U.S. president George Bush in his Christmas speech stated: “the United States also recognizes the independence of Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan - all states that have made specific commitments to us. We will move quickly to establish diplomatic relations with these States, and build new ties with them. We will sponsor membership in the United Nations for those not already members.”¹¹ Prominently Azerbaijan was not in the list of recognized states.

Armenian-Turkish relations in the center of American attention. Unclassified developments

The examination of State Department’s unclassified archival documents reveals that first Foreign Minister Raffi Hovhannisyanyan, who was in the USA during the New Year holiday, asked for a meeting with Secretary of State James Baker. According to the relevant report¹², Hovhannisyanyan wanted to make the next step for the establishment of diplomatic relations and exchange the notes on the establishment of diplomatic relations and discuss bilateral economic ties. The meeting took place on January 7. Following the protocol part of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the American side posed a number of questions. Specifically, James Baker suggested to normalize Armenian-Turkish relations, informing that not having territorial claims against Ankara and a relevant statement on recognition of the borders will be a serious step towards normalization of the relations with Turkey¹³.

¹¹ End of the Soviet Union; Text of Bush's Address to Nation on Gorbachev's Resignation, available from; www.nytimes.com/1991/12/26/world/end-soviet-union-text-bush-s-address-nation-gorbachev-s-resignation.html

¹² The talking points at the State Department declassified cable- U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604215

¹³ Ibid.

On January 9, the U.S. Secretary of State sent a more detailed message¹⁴ to US Embassies in Yerevan, Ankara and Moscow presenting the results of the meeting. It confirms that the Secretary of State said that Armenia should clarify its position on Armenian-Turkish border. Hovhannisyan informed the Secretary of State that in the future he planned to visit Ankara (The State Department informs its Embassies that actually Hovhannisyan is going to travel to Istanbul instead of Ankara), where the position on borders would be clarified. According to the document, Baker also expressed readiness to support Armenian-Turkish negotiations. In response to that Hovhannisyan reaffirmed that Armenian leadership never made a territorial claim to Turkey¹⁵.

On January 22, the U.S. Embassy in Ankara sent a report personally to the Secretary of State. In particular, the report provided him with information that, according to Turkish sources, Armenian Foreign Minister Hovhannisyan intended to discuss with Turkey the issue of border recognition during a conference of Foreign Ministers of the Black Sea countries to be held in Istanbul on February 3¹⁶.

On February 12, the US Embassy in Ankara sends another report to Baker, in an attempt to present Turkey's official position on Armenian-Turkish relations, according to the approaches formulated during the meetings between the Armenian delegation led by V. Papazian- Advisor to Armenian President, and Turkish officials¹⁷. The delegation arrived in Ankara on February 3, ahead of the forthcoming session of the Foreign Ministers of the Black Sea Cooperation to be held in Istanbul on February 3. It became clear only at the airport that Minister Hovhannisyan had not arrived and the delegation was headed by V. Papazyan. Other information about the meeting was announced by the Deputy Director General for the Caucasus Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Candan Azer during a meeting with members of the city council on February 7. According to him, the Turkish side stressed that the issues related to the recognition of the territories and the Armenian Genocide must be resolved in order to make

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State Cable, Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604531

¹⁵ The Post-Gamsakhurdia Georgia: The Crisis of Legitimacy, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005403091.pdf.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State Cable, Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604531 F2009-03553

¹⁷ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-09722 Doc No. C05128065

progress in relations. The Armenians noted that they believe in the possibility of solving the territorial problem. The Turks raised a question about the reference to Western Armenia in Armenia's Declaration of independence, noting that they would demand an unequivocal statement on territorial issues, probably based on the Moscow-Kars agreements of 1921. The Armenian delegation noted that the issue related to the genocide will be more difficult to resolve, as it is a psychological problem for Armenians. Azer insisted that it was the propaganda of the Armenians to keep this issue alive, so Armenia should put an end to the issue of genocide. It is stated in the document that after the session held in Istanbul on February 3, during a private conversation with V. Papazyan, Azer had the opportunity to study in more depth the approaches of the Armenian side on those issues. Azer asked about the Armenian flag and symbols. Papazyan explained that the colors of the flag are blue, red, orange, which symbolize the sky, the blood shed for independence, the Armenian kingdom, respectively. The symbols include the royal eagle and the lion (Azer thinks probably to bother Iran) and the image of Mount Ararat. Azer asked why the coat of arms of Armenia had the image of a Turkish mountain, whether it did not indicate the continuous intentions of Armenians regarding Turkish territories. Papazyan answered that Ararat is only a symbol, it did not show the demands of the Armenians towards the Turkish territory. Azer said that it will be difficult for the Turkish people to accept this, so the Armenians must find a sufficient solution to dispel the suspicions of the Turkish society. On the issue of the Genocide V. Papazyan again referred to the psychological side of the issue. Azer stressed that Armenians must understand the subtlety of this issue for Turks. He considered the discussion open and sincere from both sides. He hoped to have tangible results from such kind of communications and meetings in the near future and urged Alacan-Malkara border gate be opened soon as there is already a "leak" in the border (Armenian delegation had crossed the border from the part which was not yet officially opened) and the opening of the border gates will show the Turkey's desire for progress¹⁸. The reason for passing the details of the meetings to the Secretary of State was not only the interest of the United States regarding the normalization of Armenian-

¹⁸ Ibid.

Turkish relations but also the fact that on February 12 James Baker was going to have a regional visit to former USSR states, including Armenia¹⁹.

Among the unclassified documents of the U.S. State Department's archive is part of the transcript of President Levon Ter-Petrosyan's working lunch with James Baker, during which one of the important issues discussed was the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations²⁰. During the working lunch held on February 12, in the President's residence in Yerevan, president Ter-Petrosyan and U.S. Secretary of State discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Armenia's relations with Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran, and Armenia's plan for economic reform. Baker declared that the tensions and riots in the region need to stop and welcomed Armenian president's efforts towards the normalization of relations with Turkey. Referring to Nagorno-Karabakh he mentioned that the possibility of escalation or expansion of tension is visible, which can lead to the inclusion of the whole region. The Foreign Minister Raffi Hovhannisyian emphasized the role of history for the present policy, which should not be ignored. Secretary of State mentioned some concerns of the USA connected with the Iranian influence, as there are overall deeply rooted concerns for Iran and argued that Turks will cooperate with the West and USA will support them in that issue, However, from the cultural standpoint, Turks are connected with Central Asia and it is impossible for Turks not to be interested in that region. Secretary of State also mentioned that USA will be happy to see the establishment of relations between Turkey and Armenia without preconditions, and Assistant of Secretary of State Niles who also participated in the meeting asked about the lifting of the blockade-whether that would serve as confidence-building measure for lifting Nakhichevan's restrictions.

The next unclassified note with the title "Background to Armenian Border Crossing Issue" was sent by the U.S. Embassy in Ankara to Washington dated February 27²¹. A border incident caused Turkish authorities again to refer to the issue of opening the border with Armenia, further tightening their position. On February 26 Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Sanberk told the U.S. Ambassador that the border is closed for all tourist and business trips and will open only for humanitarian aid. He also

¹⁹ Baker opens tour of the Caucasus,

<http://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/12/world/baker-opens-tour-of-the-caucasus.html>.

²⁰ Department of State Case No. F-2unnaN-na:AlTh Date:07/22/2016
C17604519.pdf

²¹ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-09722

stressed that Turkey will agree to bulk food shipment to Armenia, if bulk shipments were also designated for Nakhichevan. The cause was the visit of two prominent Armenian-Americans- the President of the Armenian Assembly of America Hrayr Hovnanyan, the Secretary General of the same organization Van Krikorian to Turkey at the invitation of Turkish businessman Ishak Alaton. Alaton's aim was the development of Armenian-Turkish relations through improved commercial ties, using the free port at Trabzon to link American- Armenian business leaders with businesses in Turkey and Armenia. Alaton managed to organize a meeting for two Armenians and Turkish Foreign Minister Cetin, apparently without the knowledge of other MFA officials concerned with Armenia. During the meeting, Alaton and his colleagues believed to have obtained permission for Hovnanian and Krikorian to cross the border at the closed Alacan-Malkara gate (near Igdir in Kars province). However, they were denied permission to cross the border and on February 20 and 21 U.S. Embassy officers were bombarded with phone calls by Krikorian from Igdir. Following numerous contacts with senior MFA officials, the Embassy finally succeeded in gaining a one-time approval by both civilian and military authorities for the passage of Krikorian and Hovnanian through the gate. MFA officials agreed to that with significant hard feelings and strongly denied that such permission had been granted at the Cetin meeting. Note also emphasizes that Turkish media's negative reaction to that event and states that the initiative did not help to improve Armenian-Turkish relations, despite the best intentions of all involved parties²². However, the intensity of the communications did not decrease. Right, there are no unclassified documents on the March 21 phone call between U.S. president George Bush and Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosyan except for a note in President Bush's schedule for the day²³. However there is an indirect proof for that. The same day during the meeting with Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl in Camp David, U.S. president Bush again referred to the process of USSR dissolution. He informed Kohl that he had talked to Levon Ter-Petrosyan in the morning on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. According to Bush, Ter-Petrosyan wanted a three-way group: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. "We will be supportive at the CSCE meeting. Ter-Petrosian says

²² Ibid.

²³ Schedule of the meetings, page 36 [https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/foia/2005-1031-F%20\[NSC%20Confidential%20Files\].pdf](https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/foia/2005-1031-F%20[NSC%20Confidential%20Files].pdf)

Turkey is not being fair. We think the Turks are in fact being fair. The Armenian and Turkish Foreign Ministers have had good talks” Bush informs²⁴.

On April 2, the U.S. State Department sent a letter concerning the process of the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border to the U.S. embassies in Ankara and Yerevan to hand it to the authorities of the two countries²⁵. It was an exhortation to both sides due to the "cautious optimism over the growing progress made in the Nagorno-Karabakh mediation process over the past few weeks." The second factor, which contributed to the U.S. initiative was the letter of R. Hovhannisyanyan to the U.S. Secretary of State presenting the Armenian position on the recognition of the border with Turkey. The latter considers it as a good basis for the start of the dialogue. Urges Armenia to address this position to Ankara, and to point to the latter the progress in the normalization of relations with Armenia in order to maintain its policy of impartiality. In the section addressed to the Armenian authorities, the State Department outlines its approaches to the visible developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, separating them from the issue of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations: “The Turkish government understands that the U.S. government cannot allow foreign forces to intervene in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey is committed to a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and will play a decisive role in persuading Azerbaijan to accept the mediation. Ankara also desires and needs to have good relations with Armenia...”We look forward to continuing to work with Turkey, our NATO and OSCE partners, and the United Nations to find a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict based on good faith negotiations.”²⁶

In the face of such activity it is not difficult to assume that on the eve of April 24, when Armenian Genocide anniversary was to be marked in Armenia, the newly opened U.S. Embassy in Armenia was to receive instruction from the Secretary of State Baker concerning how American diplomats should behave in those days²⁷. The instruction particularly states:

²⁴The White House, Memorandum of Conversation, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1992-03-21--Kohl.pdf>.

²⁵ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604506

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-09722 Doc No. C05128062, available from foia.state.gov

“April 24 is the date on which Armenians worldwide remember the alleged Turkish massacres of Armenians by the Turks... The U.S. Government acknowledges the meaning and historical importance of the April 24 anniversary and will join with other nations in commemorative ceremonies. Embassy Yerevan staff are authorized to attend any official Armenian Government event related to the April 24 anniversary to which the Yerevan diplomatic corps is invited. The Embassy should make every effort to have an embassy officer attend such an official event. The U.S. Government does not want to see its presence at a commemorative ceremony singled out, however, and used in a propaganda war with Turkey or to imply U.S. Government’s recognition of the Armenian description of the 1915 massacres as genocide. To prevent this from happening the Embassy is requested to decline any invitation to an April 24 related event to which other members of the Yerevan diplomatic corps are not invited or at which U.S. Embassy participation will be highlighted above that of other Embassy representatives. Embassy Yerevan staff should not make any public comment or statement about that event.” At the same time, the Secretary of State's instruction states what formulations American diplomats can use: “1. The deaths of millions of peoples during World War I was an unfathomable tragedy for which peoples all over the world still grieve. 2. The U.S. government is honored to be present at this ceremony which honors the memory of Armenian deaths during that tragic time. 3. We do not believe that this commemoration should be used in any way to hinder the improvement of relations between Turkey and Armenia which are important for stability in the region.”²⁸ It is easy to notice that in the next almost 3 decades, formulations with the same content are used.

The next important event, the record of which contains interesting information, is the meeting of U.S. President Bush with Turkish President Ozal on April 28 at the White House²⁹. It is clear from the unclassified minutes of the meeting that the U.S. leadership was not well aware of the problems in Armenia or the essence of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. That is why the President of Turkey successfully pushed some suggestions in favor of the Turkish and Azerbaijani interests using U.S. complex relations with Iran as well as the Russian interests in the region. The following part of

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The White House, Memorandum of Conversation, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1992-04-28--Ozal.pdf>.

the transcript is especially remarkable: “President Ozal: “Now on Nagorno-Karabakh. Nagorno-Karabakh is 80% Armenian and 20% Azeri. They could swap territory, with Nagorno-Karabakh going to Armenia and Azerbaijan getting the piece of Armenia that separates the two parts of Azerbaijan. Stalin created the borders down here. He divided Azerbaijan to give it to the Armenians to buy them off.

Secretary Baker: “What would happen to the Armenians in the southern part that you would give to Azerbaijan?”

President Ozal: “All together, not more than 50,000 people would have to be moved. Otherwise this war will continue forever. Turkey has good relations with Armenia, and Armenia needs good relations with Turkey. There is another reason to do this. The Central Asian republics need a connection to Europe. The new Russians want to be like the Tzarist Russians. They want all roads to go to Moscow. Under the communists, everything produced was then processed in Russia. There is still a desire to pull these states back toward Russia. These states could be threatened by Russia. I hope you don't put all your eggs in the Russian basket. All the pipelines go to Russia or through Russia. Even now Turkmenistan gas all goes to Russia. So they are looking for alternative routes such as Tehran and Turkey. With my plan, there could be a connection through Azerbaijan to Turkey and on to Europe. These states need lines of communications to Europe that don't go through Russia. The other route would be through Afghanistan to Pakistan and the Indian Ocean. It is important to make these states independent from Russia by infrastructural development.”

Secretary Baker: “We are already doing the same thing. All of the states but Tajikistan want this. Do you think that the Tajiks are vulnerable to the Iranians?”

President Ozal: “No, I don't. I think that the Tajiks will be okay because they are Sunnis. But Azerbaijan is key. They need a corridor, and Azerbaijan could provide it. This would also benefit Armenia.”

Secretary Baker: “Would the Azeris be interested? Let us know. We might be willing to follow up. We would have to check into the demographics.”³⁰

This dialogue testifies to the fact that the assertions that Turkey had quite real aims and has to establish terrestrial connection with Central Asia through Azerbaijan and to expand its zone of influence are quite well-

³⁰ Ibid.

founded. Moreover, it proves that Turkey had no less important role in formation of the so-called "Goble Plan" presented by the Advisor to the Secretary of State of U.S. administration Paul Goble.

Obviously, the liberation of Shushi, a pivotal event for Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, could not have been left out from the circle of these contacts. Two days later, on May 11 U.S. President Bush has a phone conversation with the Turkish prime-minister Demirel.

"Bush. "On Nagorno-Karabakh, you got our message I know. But we all must work to restrain forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. I know you're under domestic pressure. I strongly urge you against using any military intervention. It's a very difficult situation.

Demirel: "I am telling our people to be patient, and that we can't use arms. I tell them that military intervention is impossible. I don't think you can settle any problem with arms today. We will also work with our Azeri brothers."

Bush: "President Ter-Petrosyan called me this weekend. I told him that we were looking for restraint and a peaceful solution"³¹

The next day, on May 12 President Bush during his meeting with UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, informs the latter that Demirel is concerned about Azerbaijan.³² The dialogue testifies to the fact that the situation was fraught with unexpected developments. "Boutros-Ghali: I am afraid we will become involved in Nagorno-Karabakh"

Bush: "What are they asking you to do?"

Boutros-Ghali: "Their Permanent Representative is asking to send peacekeepers like Yugoslavia, saying "we are a full-fledged UN member now, so why not appoint a special representative? Why not send a fact-finding mission?" We are overloaded. Even sending 200 observers costs. Rwanda and Uganda have asked for my help but I cannot intervene now."

Another evidence of a serious tension is the information conveyed to the US Embassy from the Turkish Embassy in Moscow on May 21 that the Turkish troops are in an appropriate position and are ready to counterattack Armenian troops, which would try to attack Nakhijevan-the bridge linking Azerbaijan with Turkey. According to the same source it is Armenian

³¹ The transcript of the telephone conversation with Demirel, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1992-05-11--Demirel.pdf>.

³² The transcript of a telephone conversation with Boutros-Ghali, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1992-05-12--BoutrosGhali.pdf>.

aggression which has the aim to involve Turkey in Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict³³. It is not a coincidence that on May 23 in Lisbon during Baker-Hovhannisyan meeting³⁴ Baker says that the time for negotiations has come and that the international community conceives Armenia as an aggressor. He suggests organizing the OSCE Minsk Group meeting in the coming days. Hovhannisyan asks to organize the meeting after May 28 because he accompanies Armenian president during his visit to Egypt.

Already from June it is evident that the American side is reacting to the ongoing events more restrained. Particularly, though on June 15 R. Hovhannisyan with a phone call informs Baker that Azerbaijan has seized the Shahumyan region and some settlements of Nagorno-Karabakh and Baker's response is nothing but a protocol formulation. The interest of American authorities is exacerbating once again after a short phone conversation of President Bush on June 26 during which the Turkish Prime Minister Demirel informs that he has had a meeting with the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Istanbul who presented their problems³⁵. On July 18 the US Department of State once again attempts to persuade Armenia and Turkey that it is not real to expect very rapid progress now but this is the time to work on the normalization of the relations. The State Department encourages to reach an agreement as "In the Armenian political context, the Ter-Petrosyan government is the best partner the Turks can reasonably expect to face across a negotiating table."³⁶ It is interesting in the points for the Turkish authorities how the American side presents the situation in Armenia: "The Ter-Petrosyan government in Armenia faces strong internal opposition from political forces resistant to improving Turkish-Armenian relations or solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through peaceful negotiation." But this attempt was also in vain.

American side also unclassified the letter of August 11, from Armenian Foreign Minister to the U.S. Secretary of state³⁷. It is sentimental-connected with Azerbaijan's annexation of Artsvashen through aerial

³³ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2013-01627 Doc No. C05436105 available from foia.state.gov

³⁴ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604482 available from foia.state.gov

³⁵ <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1992-06-26--Demirel.pdf>

³⁶ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604463

³⁷ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-03553

bombardment and the destruction in Stepanakert and the village of Kornidzor (RA) by Azerbaijani forces, however the American reactions in terms of the results were once again the same. There can be a few reasons. With just 2-3 months left until the next U.S. presidential election, the administration could not take drastic steps that could have influenced public opinion. There could have been some problems with Turkey and Azerbaijan, which can be revealed only through research of the unclassified documents on Turkey and Azerbaijan. It is easy to notice that changes in positions are also noticeable within the official circles of Armenia during that period. Speaking at a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Istanbul on September 10, Raffi Hovannisian accused Turkey of pursuing a pro-Azerbaijani policy in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and of violating human rights, and he mentioned the fact of the Armenian Genocide in his speech. The following part of that speech was included in the report addressed to the Secretary of State by the U.S. Embassy in Ankara on September 13³⁸. "Despite the tragedy of the genocide, President Ter-Petrosyan has actively sought good relations with Turkey. To date, however, Turkey has rejected Armenian initiatives, has from time to time, impeded the shipment of humanitarian aid to Armenia, and has failed to maintain neutrality (thus becoming involved) in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey has advocated a reserved approach to Armenia's special guest status and ultimate membership in the Council of Europe. Turkey likewise sought to impede Armenia's induction into the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Turkey, despite its being a senior member of the Council, has yet to meaningfully demonstrate its commitment to European values. Grave human rights violations in Turkey.... Clearly in no position to oppose the admission to the Council of (Armenia)...Armenia's status within the Council cannot be artificially tied to a conflict beyond its frontiers or to the status of Azerbaijan, which lags substantially behind Armenia in demonstrating commitment to European values. Although the newly coined term 'ethnic cleansing' has long been familiar to the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, and its capital Stepanakert is an eerie splitting image of Sarajevo, Europe has not extended to Nagorno-Karabakh the same swift and effective measures it has taken for Bosnia-Herzegovina."

³⁸ UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604300 Date:

It is also mentioned in the report that “Armenia's president reacted slowly but strongly to this speech” through his spokesman R. Shougarian, who announced during a press briefing that the audience was not taken into consideration, that the speech could have been delivered to some Armenian diaspora group, but was not at all appropriate in the Turkish capital and some specific points in the speech simply did not correspond to state policy.

The President has not concealed his discontent with the speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Deputy Assistant of the Secretary of State Richard Kauzlarich. There are some formulations describing the situation in his report sent to Washington³⁹. Stressing that the meeting is confidential, he presents some thoughts on the conflict “Karabakh has forced Armenia out of its natural course of development. Our relations with the rest of the world have been blocked off because of the conflict. Although Armenia has actively pursued deeper and more mutually beneficial relations with Turkey and Iran, those relations can go no further in the absence of a ceasefire.” Ter-Petrosyan also states that the only real economic partner Armenia has is Russia and it is logical taking into account the historical development of the region. Ter-Petrosyan informs that the situation 4 days ago was catastrophic, there was no grain in Armenia and he contacted Yeltsin and he helped with the supply of grain. With the latter’s help 1000 tons of grain was shipped to Armenia from Batumi. “Had these supplies reached us a couple days later, I am confident that our government would not exist any longer,” said Ter-Petrosyan. He also noted that the physical safety of Nagorno-Karabakh is the most important task. The only guarantee of this is self-defense. “This must be replaced by international guarantees. Once this is done, I believe the extremism (of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians) will be mitigated. Ter-Petrosyan said he spoke to UN Secretary General Boutros-Gali about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Boutros-Gali stated that the UN supports Minsk Group and there is no reason for UN involvement. The president said he suggested to Boutros-Gali that if CSCE did not work they might create a unique format of CSCE-UN.”

On October 20, the President of the Republic of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan signed a decree dismissing Raffi Hovannisian according to his application, and on November 3 the regular presidential elections took place in the USA. Bush lost the election and Democratic presidential candidate

³⁹ U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2009-03553 Doc No. C17604294 available from foia.state.gov

Bill Clinton became president. The change of the American administration, the strong internal pressure on the governments of Armenia and Turkey, the developments in Nagorno-Karabakh and the strengthening of Turkey's pro-Azerbaijani position as a result of the latter, significantly reduced the prospects for normalization of relations, and consequently the American efforts.

Conclusion

In December, 1991, right after the formal recognition of Armenia's independence, the USA officially undertook the mediation mission for the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations and opening of the Armenian-Turkish border. While the approaches of the Armenian side were fully in line with the aspirations of the American side, the various preconditions brought by Turkey were adverse to the normalization of relations. First, Ankara informed the U.S. government that the reconciliation process would move forward if Armenia issued a statement renouncing its territorial claims to Turkey and recognizing the *de facto* existing borders. It is noteworthy that no Armenian leader has ever made a direct or indirect territorial claim to Turkey. However, the Turkish side probably calculated that in the future, following the opening of the borders and the establishment of diplomatic relations, it would have been more difficult to resist the pressure if the Armenian side nevertheless put forward some territorial claims. There was probably a fear that if not this, then the next Armenian authorities might make such demands, especially if one takes into account that some Armenian opposition forces as well as the organizations of the Diaspora, were constantly pushing the issue of making territorial claims to Turkey. The position of the State Department on this issue was that in the Armenian political realities Ter-Petrosyan's government is the best partner that the Turks can reasonably expect at the negotiating table. Therefore, the Turks must agree now or face the risk of losing that opportunity.

The second precondition was to stop the process of the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. It was thought in the Turkey that non-inclusion of the genocide issue in Armenia's foreign policy agenda is a temporary issue and Armenia will one day include it in its agenda to achieve international recognition of the genocide. Moreover, they probably also understood that despite the Armenia's removal of this issue from its agenda, it still cannot influence the Diaspora especially American-Armenian

Diaspora, the lobbying organizations of which have their number 1 priority- the recognition of the genocide. In this regard, Ankara could not in any way blame Yerevan for the attempts of the international recognition of genocide, initiated by the Diaspora. Consequently, the making of this demand testifies to the fact that it was only intended to disguise the real intentions of avoiding the relations normalization. It is not excluded that Turkey made preconditions with the sole aim that the Armenian side refused to negotiate referring to the impossibility of the implementation of one of these preconditions.

Starting from 1991, attempts of reconciliation of Armenian-Turkish relations have been initiated by all U.S. administrations without any exception. The normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations has been and continues to be in the U.S. interests for several reasons. With the normalization of relations USA gets the opportunity to be engaged in the South Caucasus region and Black Sea basin more actively with Turkish help or assistance. This was also in the strategic interests of the U.S., which is connected with the longtime adversaries- Iran and Iraq. Besides, it was probably assumed that with the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations Armenia's dependence on Russia and Georgia would have significantly reduced as Armenia would have an alternative route to the world. In this case it would have been easier to additionally press Armenian authorities to decrease the economic and political relations as Turkey could become an alternative route to Black Sea region, Europe and Middle East. The opening of Armenian-Turkish border and the normalization of the relations in its turn would diminish Russia's influence on the whole South Caucasus, especially taking into consideration Georgia's aspiration to Europe and Azerbaijan's aspiration to Turkey. However, this could become a factor only in case Armenia got guarantees that Turkey would not drastically change its approach one day. Nevertheless, no one, even the USA cannot guarantee that in case of Turkey.

Most probably taking into account these factors at the same time the exhausted condition of Russia after the collapse of the USSR, from the establishment of diplomatic relations (January 7, 1992) till the defeat of George Bush in the elections (November 3, 1992) the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations with the apparent U.S. mediation are becoming one of the most important priorities of the U.S. policy in the region. This is the evidence that though the USA did not have an established policy toward

the region, in comparison with the other cases,⁴⁰ the South Caucasus and Black Sea region have been of much significant geopolitical importance.

At the same time, Bush administration was making efforts to that end not to allow Turkey's involvement in the conflict, which not only contradicted USA's interests in the region, but could also provoke Russia to take tougher steps, which in its turn would create additional hardships for the USA efforts to improve its position in the region. Turkey's possible involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would make Ankara a party to the conflict further complicating the prospect of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. Consequently, the USA views the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations not only in the context of bilateral relations, it was of significant regional importance in terms of advancing American national security interests.

⁴⁰ **Gevorgyan N.**, *Armenian-American relations in the context of the US foreign policy priorities in the South Caucasus region 1991-2001*, Yerevan, 2012.