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**Reflecting on the Two Decades of  
Bridging the Divide:**

**Taking Stock of Turkish-Armenian Civil  
Society Activities**

The accumulation of practical experience and knowledge in civil society efforts to normalize and reconcile Turkish - Armenian relations during the last decade and a half makes a general assessment useful. This study aims to encourage the practitioners to reflect on their past and present activities by generating space for sharing lessons learned, best practices and defining the challenges ahead. This assessment pays particular attention to the transference of insights and ideas to the policymaking level and their impact on the inter-governmental normalization and reconciliation process. It offers guidance on how to design and implement future projects more effectively. This report is a result of a collective effort owing so much to the generous collaboration of NGO practitioners and civil society activists from Armenia and Turkey.

This study has been conducted with the support of the GMF-Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation by Burcu Gültekin Punsmann (Senior Foreign Policy Analyst at TEPAV) and Esra Çuhadar Gürkaynak (Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science in Bilkent University) and assisted by Seda Kırdar, Research Associate, TEPAV.



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Esra Çuhadar  
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Medieval city of Ani:  
Silk Road Bridge on the Arpaçay/Akhourian river,  
border between Turkey and Armenia



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*Kitap ieriğinden yazarları sorumludur.*

*Kaynak gstermek suretiyle kısmen veya tamamen alıntı yapılabilir.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	10
1. TRACK TWO DIPLOMACY AND GENERAL TRENDS IN THE ARMENIAN-TURKISH TRACK TWO ACTIVITIES.....	12
1.1. General Trends in the Armenian-Turkish Track Two Activities from a Chronological Perspective.....	14
1.2. Brief Chronology of Armenia-Turkey Relations (2001-2010) at the Track One Level.....	19
2. MAPPING OF THE EXISTING INITIATIVES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRACTITIONERS.....	22
2.1. Perceptions of Track Two Practitioners.....	22
2.2. Perceptions of the Conflict.....	22
2.3. What Needs to Be Done to Address the Conflict? Types of Activities and Approaches to Conflict Transformation.....	23
2.3.1. Types of Activities, Expected Outcomes, and Pathways to Change.....	25
3. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN TURKISH-ARMENIAN JOINT INITIATIVES.....	30
3.1. How to Go Beyond the Limited Circles and Reach Out to the Mainstream?.....	30
3.2. The Center-Periphery Dichotomy.....	33
3.3. The Asymmetry in Armenian-Turkish Relations.....	35
3.4. The Funding Structure of Turkish-Armenian Initiatives.....	38
3.4.1. American and European Sources.....	39
3.4.2. The Shortcomings of the Funding System.....	41
4. MAINTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP-OUTCOME BALANCE IN INITIATIVES.....	42
4.1. Caucasian Cheese.....	48
5. INCREASING THE IMPACT: SPILL OVER AND ADVOCACY.....	50
5.1. The Spill Over Effects and Multiplier Mechanisms.....	50
5.2. Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement and Related Concerns.....	52
5.2.1. Regional Town Hall Meetings in the Republic of Armenia.....	52
5.3. The Presidents' 'Track Two' Efforts.....	55

5.4. Social Media .....	59
5.5. The Van Earthquake .....	60
<b>6. DISCUSSING THE FORMAT AND PARTICIPANTS: THE EVENTUAL INVOLVEMENT OF SECONDARY ACTORS .....</b>	<b>61</b>
6.1. The Role of Turkey's Armenians in Joint Projects .....	61
6.1.1. The Promising Years-Projects That Were Launched .....	62
6.2. The Involvement of the Diaspora in Armenian-Turkish Projects .....	66
6.2.1. The Diaspora Armenians Are Closely Linked to Turkey .....	68
6.2.2. The Armenian Diaspora and the Politicization of the Genocide Issue .....	68
6.2.3. A Direct Channel of Communication between Turks and Armenians Living in Diaspora .....	70
6.3. A Trilateral Format? Discussing the Participation of Azerbaijan .....	71
<b>7. A CROSS-BORDER AGENDA FOR TURKISH ARMENIAN RECONCILIATION .....</b>	<b>75</b>
7.1. "Özür Diliyorum" .....	78
7.2. Rediscovering a Common History and Constructing a Shared Identity .....	81
7.3. Shared Cultural Heritage and Tourism .....	83
7.4. Armenians in Turkey 100 Years Ago Through the Postcard Collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno .....	84
<b>8. LINKING TRACK 1 AND TRACK 2: TOWARDS A MORE EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP .....</b>	<b>87</b>
8.1. Did the Track Two Activities Have A Positive Impact on the Process of the Normalization of Intergovernmental Relations? .....	87
8.2. Impact of the Failure of the Intergovernmental Talks on Civil Society Activities .....	91
<b>9. CONCLUSIONS &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>93</b>

**Figure 1:** Distribution of Track Two Projects by Year (according to start date)

**Box 1:** Brief Chronology of Armenia-Turkey Relations (2001-2010) at the Track One Level

**Figure 2:** Types of Projects

**Figure 3:** Initiatives by the Level of Participants

**Figure 4:** Funding Structure of Turkish-Armenian Track Two Initiatives

**Table 1:** Goal Orientation and Level of Participants

**Figure 5:** Initiatives by Their Goal Orientation

**Box 2:** Caucasian Cheese

**Box 3:** Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement and Related Concerns, Regional Town Hall Meeting in the Republic of Armenia

**Box 4:** The Presidents' "Track Two" Efforts

**Box 5:** Social Media

**Box 6:** The Van Earthquake

**Box 7:** Özür Diliyorum...

**Box 8:** Rediscovering a Common History and Constructing a Shared Identity

**Box 9:** Shared Cultural Heritage and Tourism

**Box 10:** Armenians in Turkey 100 Years ago through the Postcard Collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno

*‘For centuries, a stone bridge spanning the emerald green waters of the Akhurian River connected the southern Caucasus to the Anatolian plains: a strategic pivot on the Silk Road, running through the ancient Armenian kingdom of Ani. Today the bridge would have linked tiny, landlocked Armenia to Turkey. But war and natural disasters have reduced it to a pair of stubs—a sad commentary on the relations between the two states’.*

**Amberin Zaman, ‘The cost of reconstruction, It takes many hands to reconcile two peoples so divided by history’, *The Economist*, 11 March 2010**

## Introduction

Armenian-Turkish conflict is different from other intractable conflicts. There is no violence at the moment, although the past is a violent one. Dealing with the past and its legacy weighs heavily. Unlike in other peacebuilding contexts, preventing or ending violence is not an issue. It is more about healing a broken relationship, rebuilding trust, and coming to terms with the past while also building positive and constructive relations between the two neighbouring states. It also has a present dimension with the closed border. What can citizens and civil societies do to positively contribute to this process? How can they do better? Can we empower them in a way that they become a positive driving force for their governments to make peace?

This study and the resulting report set out with such questions in mind. Civil society efforts to normalize and reconcile Turkish-Armenian relations have been underway during the last decade and a half. Indeed, we identified sixty-four of such initiatives between 1995 and 2010 involving Armenians in Armenia and diaspora, and Turks. We have reached a critical juncture at the moment where there is enough accumulation of practical experience and knowledge that makes a general assessment useful. Reflective practice is the only way to improve our contribution to this difficult conflict. Yet, most civil society actors hardly have the time to engage in reflective thinking and analytical exercises as this one, given the extreme time pressure to secure grants, organize events, and disseminating their results. Thus, with this study, as academics that care highly about conflict resolution and reconciliation practice, we aimed to encourage the practitioners to “reflect” on their past and present activities, and wanted to generate space for them where they could share their lessons learned with us and with each other and funders. This report is a result of a collective effort owing so much to the generosity of these practitioners and their willingness to share with us their experiences.

The purpose of this study is not to be critical of what has been done so far at all. Indeed, other than providing brief information on some “good examples,” we don’t focus on the assessment of a specific initiative. We take a more general approach and look at

all initiatives in entirety by identifying general trends in the Turkish-Armenian peacebuilding and areas that require more attention by donors in future activities.

First of all, we wanted to create a detailed inventory of all civil society efforts carried out so far. We highly benefited from some of the existing databases out there such as the one formed by the European Stability Initiative, however we not only updated these databases, but also built on them by coding all of the initiatives according to several criteria to allow for general analysis. Second, we selected a handful of these projects, especially the current and ongoing ones, in order to undertake an in-depth study of them and to explore dynamics on the ground. At this stage, we conducted two field trips: one to Yerevan in 2010 and another to Istanbul in 2011 in which we interviewed about 25 practitioners. Then, based on the coding of 64 initiatives and the interview data, we identified some important themes that would benefit from an interactive discussion. To this end, during the third stage of the project we gathered a smaller group of Armenian and Turkish practitioners from Armenia, Turkey, and diaspora together in Ankara in July 2011 in order to have them further discuss and elaborate some of the themes identified.

The report is a summary of this three staged study. While we tried to cover a large ground, the amount of information we generated throughout this process was so immense that we could write only selectively. It is our intention that this report, in addition to presenting an overview of the current situation of Turkish-Armenian peacebuilding, brings to the surface the perceptions, concerns, and suggestions of the civil society practitioners. For this reason, we especially emphasize the points where the views converge and diverge upon. Finally, our utmost intention is to improve the practice in this area and contribute to the capacity building of civil society actors.

# Chapter 1

## Track Two Diplomacy and General Trends in the Armenian-Turkish Track Two Activities

Track Two diplomacy<sup>1</sup> or multi-track diplomacy (we use these terms interchangeably in this report) efforts to normalize or reconcile Turkish-Armenian relations go back to the mid-1990s, although the real upturn arrived in the 2000s with the availability of the first flow of funding. Since then, numerous projects have been undertaken. Indeed, at this time these projects have reached a critical number, which allows a general assessment and mapping.

Track Two diplomacy has emerged in the last several decades as a complementary method to official state-based diplomacy, particularly where intractable identity-based conflicts have proven resistant to official negotiation efforts. Often defined as interventions in which representatives from communities in conflict are brought together by an unofficial third party to consider the underlying roots of the conflict and means for its positive transformation,<sup>2</sup> Track Two provides a pathway for off-the-record and sustained contact

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<sup>1</sup> Various terms are used to refer to “**track two diplomacy**” a term coined by Montville, J. *Track Two Diplomacy: The Work of Healing History*, 15-25. *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*. Summer/Fall 2006. Other terms used are “**interactive conflict resolution**” by Fisher, R. *Interactive Conflict Resolution*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997 and Rouhana, N. “*Interactive Conflict Resolution: Issues in Theory, Methodology, and Evaluation.*” *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War*. Edited by P. Stern and D. Druckman. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. 2000; “**interactive problem-solving**” by Kelman, H. “*The Problem-Solving Workshop in Conflict Resolution*”. In *Unofficial Diplomats*, Edited by M. Berman and J. E. Johnson. New York: Columbia University Press; 1977 “**sustained dialogue**” by Saunders, H. *A Public Peace Process*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999; “**unofficial diplomacy**” by Volkan, Vamik, D.A. Julius and J. Montville. *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships: Unofficial Diplomacy at Work*. vol.2. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1991; “**multi-track diplomacy**” by Diamond, Louise, and John McDonald. *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach*. 3rd ed. Kumarian Press, 1996; “**track one and a half**” by Nan, Susan Allen. “*Track One-and-a-Half Diplomacy: Contributions to Georgian-South Ossetian Peacemaking.*” In Ronald J. Fisher, ed., *Paving the Way: Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005. Although there are differences in their methodological and philosophical approach to dialogue and the end goal they formulate for their practice, in this report we cover all of these approaches that refer to a similar type of peacebuilding activity. Therefore, we use the term “**track two diplomacy**” throughout the report as a generic shortcut to refer to all of such interactive activities.

<sup>2</sup> Davies, J. and E. Kaufman. Eds. *Second Track Citizen’s Diplomacy*. Lanham, Boulder, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002

between representatives of adversary groups even when official diplomacy proves impossible. Track Two diplomacy begins with an assumption that social conflicts cannot be resolved without paying attention to the inter-societal dimensions and social identity needs of the conflicting parties, or in Harold Saunders' terms, could be resolved only with a "multi-level peace process" involving different stakeholders in the society.<sup>3</sup>

Track Two diplomacy may adopt various methodologies and participants. Interactions are structured to share historical conflict narratives, build understanding and trust, or even develop unofficial solutions to the conflict. Thus, among the varied goals of Track Two are to provide a safe, off-the-record venue for dialogue, to create the conditions necessary for formal agreements to "take hold," increase communication, understanding and trust among polarized groups, break-down stereotypes and dehumanizing cognitions, and to develop consensus-based proposals that can be transferred to Track One processes.<sup>4</sup>

There are many ways of categorizing Track Two efforts. In this report, we use several criteria suggested by Esra Çuhadar in her earlier work.<sup>5</sup> We first categorized them according to the level of representatives brought together for interaction, and the "stage" at which the conflict is being waged. Within the first dimension, Track Two efforts are differentiated by the background of the representatives. The representatives range from political leaders and decision-makers who interact unofficially (or *quasi-officials*), to influential *elites* (e.g., journalists, academics, former high level bureaucrats, leaders of civil society groups, political advisors), to people that represent *grassroots* organizations within specific communities (e.g., youth, religious leaders, women). Within the second dimension, Track Two activities are designed at various stages of a conflict, from the preventive, pre negotiation, and negotiation stages to the post conflict stage. In terms of the conflict stage, the Armenian-Turkish conflict has been

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<sup>3</sup> Cuhadar, E. "Problem-Solving Workshops." In *Oxford Encyclopedia for Peace*, N. Young (ed.), Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 574

<sup>4</sup> Fisher 1997; Davies and Kaufman 2002; Saunders 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Cuhadar, E. "Assessing Transfer from Track Two Diplomacy: The Cases of Water and Jerusalem." In *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 46, no. 5, 2009; Cuhadar, E. and B. Dayton, "Oslo and Its Aftermath: Lessons Learned from Track Two Diplomacy." In *Negotiation Journal*, forthcoming.

oscillating between the pre-negotiation and negotiation stages for the last decade. This stage has been designated as an especially fertile and receptive stage for Track Two activities to flourish and to make an input.<sup>6</sup> Thus, we take special interest in this report to deal with the notion of Track One-Track Two interaction as well and what can be done to improve this aspect of the Armenian-Turkish initiatives (See Chapter 7).

The second categorization we use in this report is between *outcome-focused initiatives* and *process-(relationship) focused initiatives*.<sup>7</sup> While the former is designed to generate concrete outcomes such as proposals that can be used or adopted in official policy making and negotiation processes, the latter has a priority to build relationships like increasing trust, empathy, and mutual understanding among adversaries in order to prepare the groundwork for a widely supported peace to take hold. An initiative can incorporate both goals or adopt only one of them, but both approaches have been widely used. We report on these findings in Chapter 4 of this report.

### **General Trends in the Turkish-Armenian Track Two Activities from a Chronological Perspective**

We classified a wide range of Turkish-Armenian initiatives that we identified between 1995 and 2010 (n=64) according to their starting dates. The projects have lasted for different lengths of time therefore we did not include their duration. The starting date is a good indicator to understand the overall course of evolution of the civil society activities (See Figure 1).

The general trend is that Turkish-Armenian civil society initiatives have been on a steady rise since 1995 despite several sharp downturns. Certain years have witnessed a sharp increase in the number of projects initiated. The first upsurge was observed in 2001, the second one in 2005, and the final one in 2008. Interestingly,

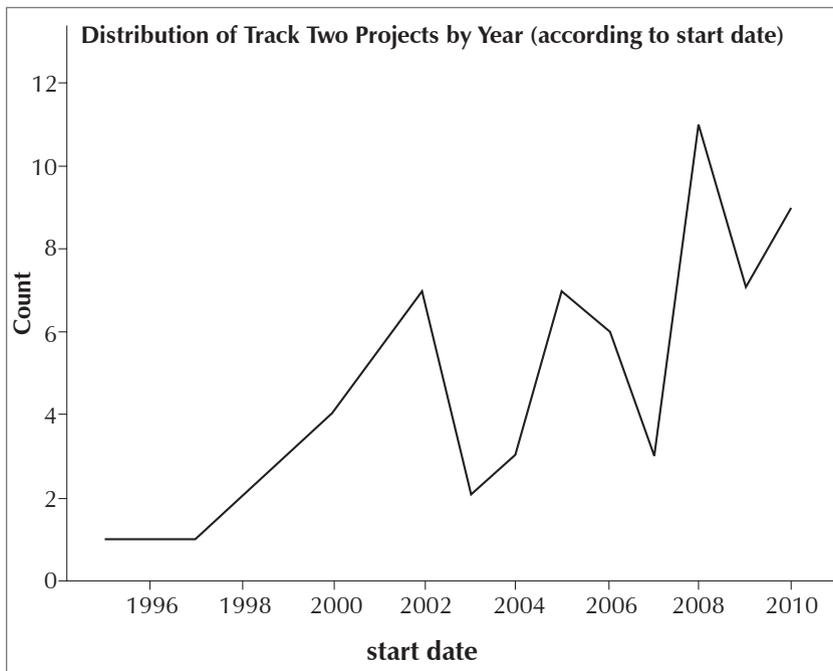
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<sup>6</sup> Fisher, R. *Paving the Way: Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005; Nan, Susan Allen. "Complementarity and Coordination of Conflict Resolution Efforts in the Conflicts over Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transdniestria". Ph.D. Dissertation, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Cuhadar, E. and B. Dayton. "The Social Psychology of Identity and Intergroup Conflict: From Theory to Practice", In *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 12, 2011, pp.273-293.

between these upsurge periods, there have been times of steep decline. We explain the upsurge and decline patterns mainly with two external factors: the availability of funding especially from US sources and the evolution of Track One relations and negotiations (See the Box titled *Brief Chronology*). The years of upsurge correspond almost directly to the availability of major funding sources from the US. In 2001 and 2009, a significant amount of US funding was funneled into Turkish-Armenian Track Two activities through the US State Department and USAID. On the other hand, while the periods of upsurge can be explained by the inflow of funding, the downhill trends in 2003 and 2007 can be related to the obstacles at the Track One level.

**Figure 1: Distribution of Track Two Projects by Year (according to start date)**



In the early 1990s, generally speaking civil society was still very weak in Turkey and almost nonexistent in the newly independent post-Soviet Armenia. The EU accession process gave a significant boost to civil society in Turkey. The Turkish-Greek rapprochement process, triggered by the Marmara earthquake of 1999, also opened a space for civilian initiatives and introduced the notions of public

and Track Two diplomacy. On the other side of the border, in Armenia, the restructuring of public space, the process of political stabilization, and the opening up to the outside world contributed progressively to the emergence of civil society organizations.

Above all, Turkish-Armenian inter-state relations do not appear to have been a problematic issue in the first half of the 1990s. Turkish diplomacy did not single out Armenia and inter-governmental contacts intensified. There is a shared willingness to set the ground for good neighborly relations. In March 1991, President Turgut Özal visited Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan as well as Moscow, and regular flights started between Istanbul and Baku. The following month saw the first visit ever by a senior Turkish official to Armenia, when the Turkish ambassador in Moscow, Volkan Vural, travelled to Yerevan to discuss the improvement of bilateral relations. The following Mesut Yilmaz government decided to take the risk of recognizing the independence of all former Soviet states before the US and other Western powers made the same decision: one of its last acts, before leaving office was to recognize Azerbaijan on 9 November, 1991. Following ambassador Vural's visit to Yerevan, a high level delegation from Armenia was received by Ekrem Pakdemirli, the then deputy premier. The incoming Süleyman Demirel government followed this lead, by recognizing all the other states of the former USSR on 19 December. Turkey established diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia in 1992.

Civil society and private actors started getting involved in the bilateral relations only after 1997. After 1997, there was some awakening at the Track Two level. Figure 1 shows this slight pick-up after 1997, which can be called *'the TABDC years'*. The Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council (TABDC), a private sector-driven initiative, was the first to open a Track Two channel of communication with Armenia in a worsening political context after Robert Kocharian's rise to power. The TABDC was co-founded in 1997 in both Turkey and Armenia in order to foster the creation of new trade links. The idea came up during a BSEC meeting held in 1997, in Istanbul, and was supported by the businessman Telman Ter Petrossian, brother of the Armenian President. In the absence of diplomatic relations, the establishment in Turkey of an official Turkish-Armenian business council was impossible. The TABDC, thus remained an unofficial structure as it could not be integrated

in to the *Foreign Economic Relations Board*, the Turkish umbrella organization gathering business councils. The TABDC has grown from its early business focus to become an influential line of political communication between the two governments. Advocating for the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border and the establishment of diplomatic relations, people active in TABDC have established and maintained close ties with political leaders in both countries by generating common interests in the creation of strong regional and global economic policies. One of the highlights of this cooperation was the leading role TABDC played in arranging for the supply of earthquake aid from Armenia to Turkey in both August and October of 1999.

Track One level activities accelerated in 1999. Questions about the connection between pipelines and peace in the Caucasus surfaced during the preparations for the OSCE summit held in Istanbul on 18-19 November, 1999; as a massive diplomatic offensive was launched aiming at concluding a peace deal between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as a series of pacts on the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline in Istanbul during the summit. Prospects for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations were on the horizon during 2000-2001. This optimism gave impetus to civil society as well between 2001 and 2003. As illustrated in Figure 1, the number of initiatives began to increase considerably during these years. The momentum was jeopardized by the recognition of the *'Armenian Genocide of 1915 perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire,'* by the French Parliament in January 2001. Nonetheless, civil society activities continued to rise until 2002.

Civil society initiatives between the two countries showed a sharp increase between 2001 and 2003. This period coincided with a large grant scheme funded by the US government for Turkish-Armenian Track Two activities. TARC was the highest profile initiative during these years. The grant scheme was launched after an acceleration at the inter-governmental level, and in the liberal context which developed after the elections of 2002 in Turkey, which was perceived as a harbinger for new prospects for the future of relations between Turkey and Armenia as well. Throughout 2001 and 2003, more than a dozen Track Two diplomacy projects between Armenia and Turkey were implemented, mostly with the support of the US State Department and under the supervision of the Center for

Global Peace of the American University in Washington D.C. This was a period characterized by mutual visits and concerts, a time of engaging in active discussions, publishing numerous articles and even whole magazines, shooting films, making statements, and conducting training sessions and research.

A second sudden upturn occurred in 2005 with the renewal of activism at the official level. The exchange of letters between Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Kocharian created an impression of dialogue. A new momentum was indeed launched by two public proposals - one Turkish and one Armenian. Prime Minister Erdoğan, in his letter to President Kocharian called for the creation of a joint commission to study the historical developments and events of 1915. This was accompanied by President Kocharian's proposal for an inter-governmental commission to meet and discuss all outstanding issues between the two countries with the aim of resolving them. These would have to be sustained by practical steps aiming at the full normalization of bilateral relations.

The final steep surge in civil society initiatives occurred in 2008 during the most publicized period featuring *football diplomacy* marked by the last negotiation initiative that led to the signature of the protocols. Although there was another decline in 2009, most likely due to the stumbling protocols, compared to the 1990s, the initiatives were still at a historic high in 2010. In other words, despite the slowdown on both Track One and Track Two levels, track Two and civil society have not gone back to the low levels seen in the 1990s or earlier .

**Box 1: Brief Chronology of Armenia-Turkey Relations  
(2001-2010) at the Track One Level**

**2001-** France ignores Turkish objections and introduces a law stating that the Ottoman Turks committed genocide against Armenians in 1915.

**2001-2004-** Turkish American Reconciliation Commission (TARC)

**2005-** Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is quoted as saying that Turkey can establish political relations with neighboring Armenia while historians study events during 1915 and 1918 in a bid to clarify whether Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were subjected to a genocide campaign.

**2007 January-** Hrant Dink is assassinated in Istanbul in January 2007, by a 17-year old Turkish nationalist.

**2008 February-** Presidential elections. Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan is declared winner.

**2008 July-** Sargsyan invites the Turkish President to visit Armenia on 6 September to watch the World Cup qualifying match between Armenia and Turkey.

**2008 August-** Georgia-Russia war over South Ossetia

**2008 September-** Turkish president Abdullah Gül visits Armenia - It is the first time a Turkish leader has set foot in Armenia.

**2008 December-** A group of Turkish intellectuals and academics issue a public apology for the killing of Armenians during the First World War. The text has been then signed by approximately 30,000 people.

**2009 April-** After intense diplomatic maneuvering (with the United States playing a leading mediating role) Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers issue a joint statement on a framework to normalize relations, and say they have “achieved tangible progress and mutual understanding”.

**2009 May-** During a visit to Baku, Turkish prime minister says “The border with Armenia will remain closed until Armenian occupation of Azeri territories comes to an end”.

**2009 October, 10-** The governments of Turkey and Armenia agree to normalize relations at a meeting in Switzerland, paving the way for moves to establish diplomatic ties and reopen the mutual border. The protocols are signed by Armenian foreign minister Edward Nalbandian and Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. Opposition of Armenian protesters, they accuse the government of failing to raise the genocide question.

**2009 October, 14-** Serzh Sargsyan makes a reciprocal visit to Turkey to watch the World Cup football qualifying match between Armenia and Turkey in Bursa alongside Abdullah Gül.

**2010 January-** The Armenian Constitutional Court decides on the incompatibility of the protocols with the Armenian Constitution. In the decision’s preamble, the Court states that the protocols cannot be interpreted in a way that would contradict Clause 11 of the Declaration of Independence, which states that Armenia “stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia.”

**2010 April-** Armenian parliament suspends the ratification procedure of the protocols with Turkey after Yerevan accuses Ankara of imposing conditions, in particular by its insistence that Armenia resolve its dispute with Azerbaijan.

**2010 April, 24-** In Istanbul, several hundred intellectuals organize for the first time in Turkey a commemoration for the Armenians victims of 1915.

**2010 September-** A historic religious service –the first in 95 years– took place at the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross on the island of Akhtamar in Van.

**2010 October, 1-** The leader of the Nationalist Movement Party Devlet Bahçeli and hundreds of Turkish nationalists hold Friday prayers beside the ruins of an ancient Armenian cathedral in Ani, in the eastern province of Kars.

**2010 October, 7-** In an interview with the Italian bi-monthly review of geopolitics “Limes”, Turkish president Abdullah Gül says “maybe, it is the moment for a silent diplomacy”

## **Chapter 2**

### **Mapping of the Existing Initiatives and Perceptions of the Practitioners**

#### **Perceptions of Track Two Practitioners**

The findings reported in this section are based mainly on in-depth interviews conducted with Turkish and Armenian Track Two practitioners in November 2010 and January 2011 in Armenia and Turkey. These interviews cover roughly 90% of the currently active Track Two practitioners in these countries. In addition, several interviews were conducted by Anna Ohanyan with Track Two practitioners conducting projects in the US with members of the Armenian and Turkish diasporas there. Finally, an interactive workshop was held in Ankara in July 2011 in order to elaborate on the initial findings gathered from the interviews. A limited number of Armenian and Turkish Track Two practitioners attended this meeting. The meeting itself generated additional information on the perceptions of the Track Two practitioners with regard to how they see the conflict, their role in addressing this conflict, how they go about designing their activities, and the obstacles faced during the implementation of their projects.

#### **Perceptions of the conflict:**

The Armenian-Turkish conflict is a complex one with multiple layers, stakeholders, and dimensions. All of the Track Two practitioners we interviewed were well aware of this complexity. However, they varied in terms of what they prioritize in their assessment of the conflict and what aspect of the conflict primarily needs to be addressed. Here we refer to their perceptions concerning how they see, frame, and prioritize the issues in this conflict. We asked every practitioner what they saw ‘at the heart of the conflict.’ The rationale for asking this question was that their conceptualization of the conflict would influence how they approach the Armenian-Turkish Track Two projects and how they would carry out these projects. As a general remark, perceptions varied according to the national groups, geographic locations, and professional and political backgrounds of the practitioners.

Overall, we identified four different, but not necessarily mutually exclusive frames, about the Armenian-Turkish conflict. While these frames represent different perceptions and priorities of the Track Two practitioners, they also inform us about their motivation for getting involved in this conflict, and guide the types of activities they undertake. These frames of conflict are: 1) the psychological and cognitive factors at the core of the conflict (i.e., images of the other, negative stereotypes, historical trauma, collective memory, lack of healing and closure); 2) structural barriers (i.e., closed borders, lack of communication and contact, lack of knowledge about the other side, lack of diplomatic and economic ties); 3) the need for justice (i.e., correcting historical and present injustices); and 4) Realpolitik (i.e., regional power dynamics such as relations with Russia and other regional actors like Azerbaijan and Georgia, power asymmetry between the two countries, and the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict).

In terms of frequency, the first two frames were the most frequently mentioned by both the Armenian and Turkish practitioners. The third one was overwhelmingly mentioned by the Armenian practitioners and a few of the Turkish practitioners. The last one was mentioned more by Armenian practitioners as a factor that motivated the rapprochement between the two countries. An important observation to share is that most of the Armenian (referring to those interviewed in Armenia) and Turkish Track Two practitioners shared a common understanding about how they frame the conflict. The psychological and cognitive factors were overwhelmingly reported as a very important cause of the conflict together with structural barriers. This tendency also is validated when one looks at especially the initial rounds of Track Two activities. As will be discussed in the next pages, such a diagnosis inevitably led to activities that predominantly focused on “getting to know the other side” and establishing “social contact” and communication channels.

### **What needs to be done to address the conflict? Types of Activities and Approaches to Conflict Transformation**

Related to the conflict frames, one can identify three types of approaches to conflict transformation implied by the Track Two practitioners.

The first group of practitioners saw this conflict as an internal matter of Turkey, arguing that the main responsibility lay within Turkey and with the Turks and thus, opting for activities mainly targeting Turks or the Turkish public opinion. People who thought in this line included some Turkish and American practitioners. Their perception of the conflict was closer to the psychological/cognitive frame in addition to seeing it as a justice and human rights issue, and thus, encouraging a confrontation with history and identity. This approach to conflict resolution has been described in the literature and in the diaspora study conducted by Anna Ohanyan<sup>8</sup> as the “peace with justice” model.

The second group of practitioners perceived the conflict again mainly due to psychological and cognitive factors, but different from the first group they did not see the solution lying exclusively within Turkey or transformation within Turkey. They rather saw a necessity for a joint, interactive dialogue and communication process leading up to a mutual understanding and reconciliation. For this group, addressing the needs of both parties in the conflict is necessary to reach reconciliation. Referring to the study by Ohanyan again, this approach is called the “needs model” in conflict resolution because it seeks to understand mutual needs and tries to find solutions that meet mutual needs.

The third group approached the conflict from a more pragmatic or short-term focus and saw it as an inter-state conflict between Armenia and Turkey. Naturally, this group emphasized the second and, to a less extent, the last frames of the conflict discussed above. The focus was on opening the border and the normalization of diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries rather than a full-fledged reconciliation. This approach coincides with the “conflict management” approach discussed in the literature, which simply prioritizes controlling the destructive aspects of the conflict rather than fully transforming the relationships between the parties towards reconciliation.

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<sup>8</sup> Anna Ohanyan conducted the study on the Armenian-Turkish dialogue initiatives in the US as part of this project. These approaches were mentioned in her report titled *TURKISH-ARMENIAN ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES, 2000-2011*.

The type of activities carried out and the outcomes expected from these activities reflect these general approaches towards the Armenian-Turkish Track Two activities. We identified a variety of Track Two activities in the last decade (including projects within Turkey, between Armenia and Turkey, and in the US among diasporan Armenians and Turks). Figure 2 and the next section discuss how widespread each type of activity is in Turkish-Armenian Track Two practice.

### *Types of Activities, Expected Outcomes, and Pathways to Change*

Among the sixty-four initiatives we identified, the four most common types of activities were interactive workshops and joint working groups, exchange programs and dialogue groups, cultural projects, and academic seminars and conferences (See Figure 2).

Interactive workshops and joint working groups have been carried out with different types of participants over the years. Some of these workshops have been one time events, others have been held multiple times. Participants have come from a wide range of backgrounds, but most have been selected from among opinion makers and influential individuals such as academics, former diplomats and policy makers, and in some cases historians. The format and the goals of these interactive workshops also have varied to a great extent. The goal usually has been articulated as reconciliation and the expected outcomes are often the improvement of relationships and communication, such as building empathy and challenging negative attitudes. Such workshops have been held in Armenia, Turkey, and also with diaspora communities in the US. The pathway to change in these activities is often articulated as “contact” and “interaction” between the adversaries in a safe and friendly environment sometimes accompanied by a joint analysis of the conflict. Those workshops that have a joint analysis component are usually elite level and some of them choose historical conflict narratives for this task. However, joint analysis is not only limited to historical narratives but sometimes also include the assessment of the current political situation and justice aspects. Regardless of what is analyzed jointly by the participants, the expectation is that this exercise will result in a shared understanding about the conflict.

Exchange programs and dialogue groups are the second most common type of activity. These types of activities are similar to those in the first group, but they typically include activities between students at the university level and below. The format was varied here too. Some have intended to be institutionalized programs such as exchange programs between universities; others have been more ad hoc, such as in the form of summer camps. The goal of these activities almost exclusively has been relationship-oriented; most of them have aimed to improve understanding between young people with the help of cultural exchange and grassroots level dialogue. Some recent projects in this vein, such as those carried out by the Toplum Gonulluleri Vakfi (TOG) and the Eurasia Partnership, have ventured into novel formats that have not been tried before. Among these innovative activities has been the building of a youth bank to carry out youth generated small community projects. In this sense, this project is an attempt to go beyond the common youth exchange format. The pathway to change in these activities in general is again primarily through contact and interaction between the adversaries in a friendly and safe environment, with the expectation that such interaction will eventually re-humanize the other, assault stereotypical images, and build empathy.

Cultural projects of various sorts are the third most common type of activity in the Turkish-Armenian multi-track diplomacy efforts. These have included various historical and contemporary exhibitions, joint concerts, and collaboration over literature. One important difference is that most of such projects have been initiated locally and even some have been based on voluntary individual efforts unlike most interactive workshops funded by European or American sources. During the past decade, Anadolu Kultur, a Turkish foundation established by a Turkish philanthropist, has sponsored many such cultural projects. The rationale of these exchanges has been to bring Turks and Armenians together using culture and the common cultural heritage as a bridge and in this way help improve understanding and relations. Another expected outcome from cultural projects has been to educate the public about the culture of the other side in a way that challenges negative stereotypes and ignorance about the present or about the common historical past. A noteworthy project in this spirit was a series of exhibits and books by Osman Köker published by Birzamanlar Yayıncılık. The exhibits and the books documented the lives of Armenians in Turkey

during different historical periods. The main expectation from this voluntary initiative was raising awareness and increasing historical knowledge about the daily lives of Ottoman Armenians. Köker's work was exhibited in both Turkey, Armenia, and other countries. One common theme that we observe in these activities is the desire to revive the memory of the common cultural heritage and years of Turkish-Armenian co-existence before the conflict.

The fourth most common type of activity involves academic seminars and conferences. Activities that are being held in this format are typically undertaken by think tanks on both sides, usually in the form of closed seminars with the limited and invitation-only attendance of academics. Most of the early initiatives, such as those by the Caucasus Institute in Yerevan, have been carried out under this format and there still are many examples of such seminars and meetings. Although these conferences were quite important in the beginning of the Turkish-Armenian multi-track efforts, in time they began to be repetitive in terms of the topics discussed and attendance. A common concern of the practitioners regarding these conferences and seminars has been that they recycle the same academics over and over again.

Other than these four categories, other types of activities are rare in the Turkish-Armenian multi-track diplomacy. There have been a few training and capacity building activities for instance. Yet, one can easily argue that there is a vacuum and a need for more funding and activity in this area. Capacity building is needed at both individual, community, and organizational levels. At the individual and community levels, projects can integrate training programs to increase the problem-solving and project implementation capacity by introducing project management, perspective taking and other conflict resolution skills. At the organizational level, capacity building of especially local NGOs need to be strengthened in writing grants and implementing projects. Otherwise, beneficiaries of grants remain limited to English-speaking urban organizations. This cuts back on the spill over effect and effectiveness of projects.

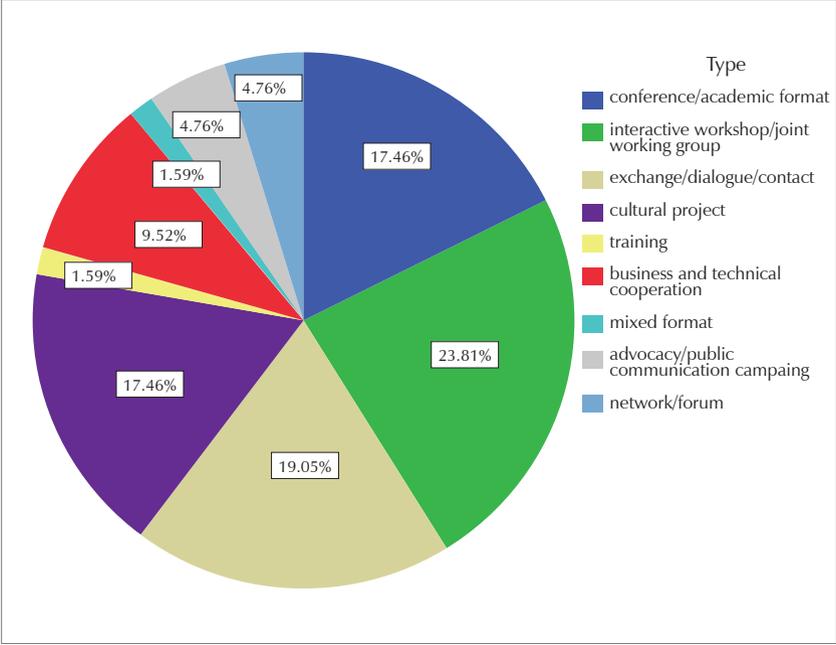
Public communication and advocacy is a rare type of activity as well. One recent novel effort has been to establish a network or forum to bring different civil society actors working in this area together. The TANGO network initiated in 2010 is an example in

this regard. Yet, there is a need to make these networks continuous and sustainable.

Another less frequent activity, although increasing since 2008, has been technical and professional cooperation at the Track Two level. Within this category almost all activities have been geared towards the business community, while other areas of professional and technical cooperation (e.g., transboundary issues and the environment) has been severely lacking. One of the first Track Two efforts between Armenia and Turkey was a business cooperation initiative by the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council (TABDC). TABDC is still active with new partners on the Armenian side including the UMBA. These two organizations are currently cooperating on a USAID-funded Track Two project bringing business communities in different sectors together. The protocol signing process and the possibility of the opening of the border between the two countries has stimulated interest and enthusiasm among other business organizations in both countries. However, with the faltering of the protocols this enthusiasm has not turned into actual cooperation across borders.

Business and technical cooperation projects are somewhat different from others in terms of expected outcomes and rationale. Different from seminars, workshops, and dialogue groups, the incentive to establish business relations --even maybe more than engaging with the other side-- has the potential to bring together people from the mainstream. Thus, sometimes the prior expected outcomes are also concrete outcomes. Relationship building, such as the building of trust and the breaking down of attitudinal barriers, is often seen as a by-product rather than the main goal in these projects. These projects also aim at building interdependence between the two sides, which eventually will serve as a positive driving force towards the settlement of the conflict. Thus, the advantage of these types of projects is that because of the profit and other pay-off incentives, they are more likely to involve mainstream actors and to be durable and sustainable. On the other hand, as a weakness, some of these initiatives can focus on profits and pay-offs narrowly and may ignore important relationship aspects that are required to reach reconciliation. Thus, the effect of business and technical cooperation can be expanded by incorporating a conflict resolution and reconciliation agenda and curriculum to such activities.

Figure 2: Types of Projects



## Chapter 3

### Challenges Encountered in Turkish-Armenian Joint Initiatives

#### **How to go beyond the limited circles and reach out to the mainstream?**

The aim to reach ordinary people should push projects to connect with daily life on both sides of the border. In order to achieve this, the focus of the projects has to be broadened; activities should deal with domestic issues and be relevant with internal discussion. This calls for a redefinition of the priorities in the selection of the issues so that there is a direct connection between the size of the target group and the selection of the issues. Currently, there seems to be a preference for practical projects instead of workshops and conferences focusing on the normalization of bilateral relations. We discuss this preference in detail elsewhere in this report.

There is also a need to open up information channels. Very few people in Turkey have realistic knowledge of Armenia as a neighboring country and vice versa. An open border would create numerous opportunities for interpersonal engagement, communication, bonds and media coverage of issues lying beyond the conflict, thus educating Armenians about life in Turkey and vice versa. The two countries have been separated since the 1920s. Armenia is a very small country, with a population of 3.2 million, while Turkey has a population of almost 74 million. One can reasonably expect that Turkish human and cultural involvement in Armenia following the border opening would have a significant impact on Armenian society.

Although Georgia and Armenia are of comparable size and both border Turkey, ten times more Georgians enter Turkey than Armenians. This is because of the practical difficulties of entering Turkey from Armenia, coupled with the prevailing prejudices and fears in Armenia towards Turkey. Increased human interaction is likely to promote understanding and awareness of each other's societies, including their cultural, social, and ideological diversities. Mutual ignorance is widespread. A 2005 opinion survey revealed that half of the respondents in Turkey did not know whether Armenia was a

large or small country, 16.8% believed that most Armenians practice Judaism while 25.5% did not even venture a guess.<sup>9</sup> The same survey also showed that while Armenian respondents had a better grasp of elementary facts about Turkey, more had strong negative prejudices against Turkey than vice versa. The number of NGOs and individuals involved in cross-border activities increased significantly from 2005 to 2010. However, a quick look at the characteristics of the NGOs and the profile of the individuals involved brings the concern that behind the initiatives are already known individuals or groups. This is a concern repeatedly mentioned by most of the practitioners. Some have already made attempts to address this problem and have tried new formats and ways to open the projects to other locales. For instance, one recent attempt to end this was undertaken by TESEV, which held meetings in Kars and Kayseri with local participation from these cities and Armenians. Before we make recommendations with regard to how to expand the reach-out, it may be useful to take a look at the nature of the participants in Turkish-Armenian Track Two projects.

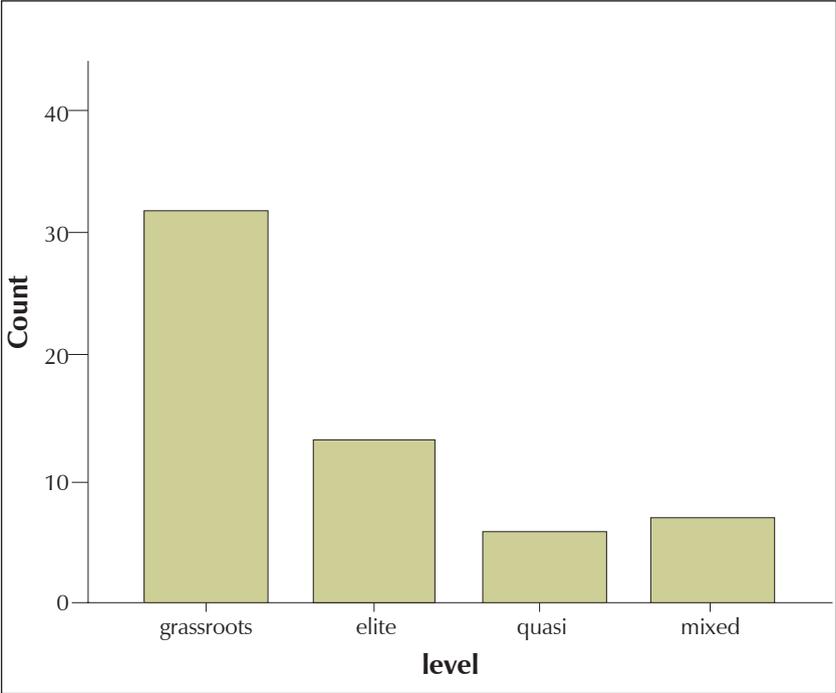
In Turkish-Armenian multi-track diplomacy, most of the projects so far have been carried out with grassroots level participants such as youth, artists, and civil society activists (see Figure 3). In other conflicts too, it is quite common to see grassroots level initiatives in Track Two more frequently than elite level or quasi-official initiatives.<sup>10</sup> This may be for several reasons, but one is that a larger pool to draw from is available at the grassroots level. Secondly, the inter-communal aspect of some conflicts, like the Turkish-Armenian conflict, requires close attention to the grassroots level.

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<sup>9</sup> Ferhat Kentel and Gevorg Poghosyan, *Armenian-Turkish Citizens' Mutual Perceptions and Dialogue Project*, Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV, Istanbul), Sociological and Marketing Research Center (HASA, Yerevan), 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Esra Cuhadar and Katharina Ploss. "What is in their mind? Theories of change and transfer strategies in peacebuilding as understood by practitioners". *International Association for Conflict Management Annual Conference, Istanbul, 3-5 July 2011*. What we mean by "grassroots level participation" is civil society and community level participation, including women, youth, community leaders, etc. "Elite" refers to those participants including opinion makers, those close to the decision-makers, academics, public intellectuals, and journalists. "Quasi-official participants" include people in the decision-making position, but acting in an unofficial capacity or first circle of advisors that are very close to the decision-makers.

**Figure 3: Initiatives by the level of participants**



However, an important remark made about the types of participants in Armenian-Turkish multi-track activities is that despite the widespread nature of the grassroots level activities, some stakeholders at that level have not been involved adequately in projects so far. Among these groups are especially women and environmentalist groups. Surprisingly, very few projects have sought to include women or aimed at targeting issues from a gender perspective. On the other hand, the most common grassroots groups that have been included in the projects are youth (especially students) and artists. Yet, this group again hardly includes any participants from the nationalist youth organizations in either country.

The need to expand the reach-out and go to the mainstream goes hand in hand with engaging new actors in the process. The issue of how to broaden the “peace” constituency and go to the mainstream appears to be one of the major challenges facing the Armenian-Turkish initiatives at the moment. Most of the projects target a self-selected group of people, those who are already convinced of the

need to develop Turkish-Armenian relations and have a keen interest in discussing the issue. Instead of spending time on specific groups, there is the need to inform larger groups.

In targeting the grassroots level, new projects should go beyond this self-selection bias and include those groups that have not been included before, such as women, nationalist and conservative youth, and young entrepreneurs. In targeting the elite and quasi-official level on the other hand, organizers should strive to reach out to those that are of high policy-relevance at the time of the project rather than sticking to the same elites or limiting themselves to the most easily available people. In addition to including new actors, expanding the reach of the initiatives also requires overcoming the center-periphery dichotomy.

### **The center-periphery dichotomy**

Most of the projects have been implemented by NGOs based in Istanbul and Yerevan. The centers are over-represented in the projects. We will handle the case of Ankara separately. Yet, this is problematic and insufficient for the normalization/reconciliation process for two reasons. First of all, once the border is opened, the area that will be affected most directly will be the border regions. Second, the normalization and reconciliation process has to spread out to the mainstream grassroots in both countries, otherwise, the process will remain limited to an elite circle in big cities and it will not be owned by civil society actors in the critical border regions.

We first define peripheries as the borderland regions. Communities living in the borderlands are underrepresented. People living in these areas are directly affected by the current state of Turkish-Armenian relations, and especially by the closed border. However, the propensity for cross-border engagement remains low on the borderland. The need to concentrate more efforts on the borderland and empower the border communities has been acknowledged by most NGO practitioners and donor organizations.

In this respect, lack of capacity and specifically language are the main barriers. English is required first to gain access to funds and second to establish cross-border partnerships. Interestingly, natural interactions – those among traders, drivers, and other travelers-

avoid the use of English, preferring a mix of Turkish/Azeri, Russian, and Armenian. The help of small polyglot borderland communities also can be brought to contribution. The degree of fluency in English is very low if not nonexistent on both sides of the border. Access to funds, without English grant writing skills, is highly unlikely on the other hand. Donors have to assume risks and democratize access to funds.

Building capacity on the borderlands should be a priority. Capacity building projects need not only be increased in number, but also should focus on borderland areas rather than NGOs in the center. The best way of building capacities may be the promotion of a mentoring approach from the centers towards the borderland. The donor community can promote the establishment of unequal partnerships. NGOs based in the centers should be encouraged to establish strong linkages with the peripheries. This could even be a requirement for some of the funds given to them. Some have already started moving their projects to the peripheries. This linkage with the center is all the more important since it will empower the peripheries by ensuring them a sense of security. The local political context can be quite constraining; as a matter of fact, it is much easier to organize a Turkish-Armenian event in Istanbul than in Kars or Iğdır. The risks associated with a critical stance/advocacy attitude are perceived as being higher as the geographical and psychological distance to the center increases. The partnership with a mainstream institution established in the center will provide a sort of immunity for the local actor by legitimizing the initiative.

Ankara-based NGOs also are underrepresented. Turkish-Armenian civil society initiatives bridge the distance between Yerevan to Istanbul, but not to Ankara. The Armenian NGO activists who took part in the research workshop of this project had never travelled to Ankara before despite having been involved in the Turkish-Armenian field for many years. The psychological distance to Ankara is much greater than to Istanbul for Armenians. Cosmopolitan Istanbul is much more welcoming than the capital of the Turkish state. The closed physical border is not the only obstacle to effective peacemaking, practitioners sometimes have a 'mental barrier' which they need to reflect upon and overcome. The under-representation of Ankara-based NGOs in Turkish-Armenian projects is an indicator of the low degree of interactions between the Track 1 and Track 2 levels as well.

## **The asymmetry in Armenian-Turkish relations**

The Turkish-Armenian bilateral relations are inherently asymmetrical in nature. A clear understanding of the effects of the asymmetry is of the utmost importance for any attempt to improve Turkish-Armenian relations, be they at the official level or civil society level. The power of balance is in favor of Turkey when it comes to history (victimization on the other side), economy, soft power, legal structures, and social development. Armenia is a small country, with a population around 3 million, while Turkey's population is almost 74 million.

Turkey recognized the State of Armenia in 1992 and has been conducting a policy that can be best characterized as one of indifference since then. Turkey can afford to ignore Armenia. Turkey is too big to not have an impact on its neighborhood. In fact, it is affecting its neighbors even by its domestic policies. The policy of indifference has a negative influence on the policy orientations of Armenia. The capacity of the two countries to take part in the process of normalization of relations shows a fundamental asymmetry.

Turkey has serious issues at dispute with a few of its neighbors. However, it maintains diplomatic relations with all of its neighbours except Armenia. Turkey continues to ignore a neighbor that it has recognized. In Armenia, Turkey is mostly seen as a powerful country that arouses fear and seeks to oppress the newly independent Armenian state. Uncertainties in its relations with Turkey increase the widespread feeling of insecurity in Armenia. In the absence of diplomatic links, relations with the major neighbor become highly unpredictable.

Most Turks are unaware of this asymmetry. In the absence of diplomatic relations, and therefore of a Turkish mission based in Yerevan, Turkish state officials are deprived of first hand information on Armenia. They can neither monitor internal dynamics, nor represent Turkey on any international and regional forum organized in Yerevan. The formulation and conduct of an information-based policy becomes therefore impossible. Interestingly, Armenian officials are much better informed about the Turkish reality. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia has a diplomat based in Turkey with the title of the Armenian representative at the Black Sea Economic

Cooperation. Furthermore, there are many Turkophile Armenian diplomats.

Turkey and the issue of the normalization of relations always rank among the three top priority issues on the Armenian agenda. However, for a country of the size and dynamism of Turkey, Armenia becomes an issue only on specific occasions, and is forgotten the rest of the time. Armenians, however, cannot ignore Turkey. Armenians closely and constantly monitor what is happening in Turkey. The statements of officials and politicians are always scrutinized. For instance, very recently, the news of the reintroduction of the protocols on the agenda of the Turkish parliament had an immediate effect in Armenia, though very few paid attention to it in Turkey. The fact that Prime Minister Erdoğan left the arena of the UN General Assembly during the speech of President Sargsyan did not become an issue for polemic in Turkey. However, it had immediate repercussions on the other side of the border. Armenians thought that they are not important to Turks. Thinking incessantly that they are not important to Turkey is discouraging. In Turkey, Armenia is just one issue at the national level. While it would be difficult to say that the signing of the protocols triggered an animated debate in Turkey, even a Turkish policy of indifference impacts the Armenian side. This is a counter-productive dynamic. The “ignored” Armenia becomes prone to a policy of ambiguity and uses international platforms to criticize its neighbor, which in return fuels mistrust and exasperation in Turkey. Armenia cannot afford to ignore a neighbor the size of Turkey. The effects of the Turkish policy of indifference are felt beyond the border. The Armenian policy towards Turkey is motivated by the desire to become a “factor” for the big neighbor.

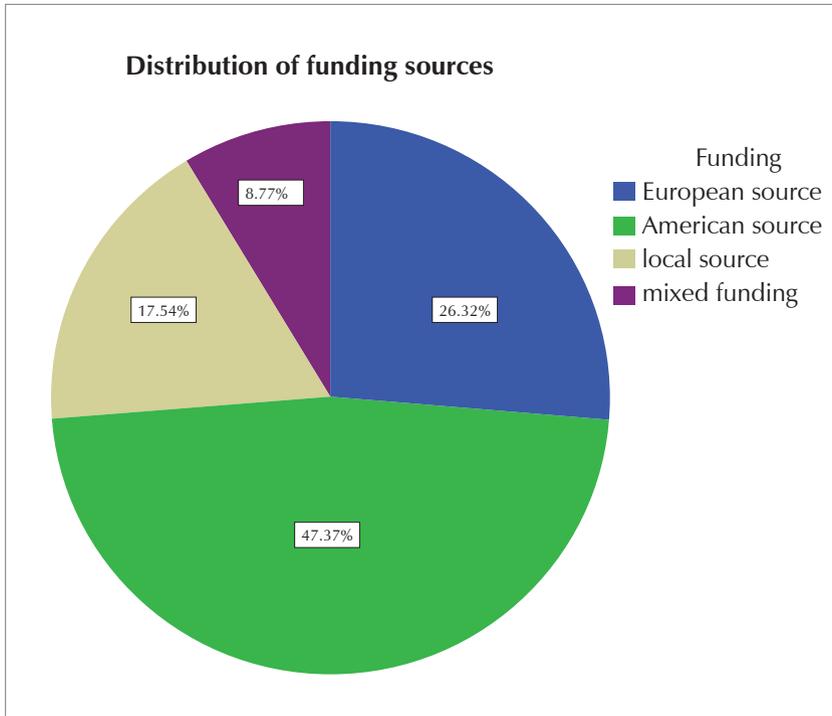
The diaspora acts as a third party in an attempt at balancing this asymmetry. This goes in parallel to the international campaign about the genocide issue. Since 1998, the Armenian government has perceived the genocide issue as an important asset for its international communication strategy. Events which occurred in the pre-Soviet era began to play a more significant role in shaping Armenian public opinion and the formulation of its foreign policy. It seems that the Armenian government decided to align itself with the position of its diaspora and use its power to influence international community. This policy has enabled Armenia to assert itself in world politics, to raise sympathy for the Armenian position in the context

of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and to disqualify Turkey as a potential mediator in the settlement of the latter conflict. According to the Armenian side, another objective behind this policy is the motivation to ensure that Turkey takes Armenia into account as a non-negligible regional actor.

The yearly calendar of Turkish-Armenian activities shows that 24 April, the date which commemorates the tragic history of the Armenians, has become an accelerator for Turkish actors. Turkish interest in Armenia and Armenians increases in the spring. Activities aim at preventing the president of the USA from qualifying the massacres of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire as genocide in his annual White House statement. Armenian activists mobilize for the opposite purpose. Armenian and Turkish diaspora organizations based in the US engage in a frontal opposition. The period between mid-March to the end of April is therefore the least favorable time for any Turkish-Armenian initiative aiming at normalization or reconciliation.

The asymmetrical nature of the two countries and their perceptions (ignorance about Armenia on the Turkish side and negative attitudes toward Turkey on the Armenian side) introduces another level of challenge to Track Two projects. This asymmetry not only influences the selection of participants and projects, but also has important implications in terms of the impact of these projects. It is very likely that the effects of civil society projects have a greater impact in small Armenia where Turkey is a priority issue than in big Turkey where this issue is one of many on the agenda. Such an asymmetrical impact may do more harm to normalization and reconciliation as it generates frustration in time, especially on the Armenian side. At the moment, the scope of the activities of Turkish-Armenian projects fails to address this fundamental asymmetry. The bulk of the work is conducted in Armenia though much more has to be accomplished in Turkey.

**Figure 4: Funding Structure of Turkish-Armenian Track Two Initiatives**



The funding for civil society initiatives offers a vast opportunity to improve Turkish-Armenian relations. Funding issues, however, also become a challenge and perhaps even a liability for civil society actors. Figure 4 illustrates that almost half of the funding (47.3%) for the Turkish-Armenian Track Two projects is provided by American sources. This number is greater when we consider that almost all of the mixed funded projects include an American partner as well. The smallest share in funding is provided by local sources. Most of these local funders are located within Turkey.

There is also a clear correlation between the distribution per year of the Turkish-Armenian cross-border initiatives (see Figure 1 in Section 1) and the availability of funding throughout the years. The years of increase in activity (2001, 2005, and 2009) coincide with the periods of activation of a major American grant scheme. The acceleration of inter-governmental talks is another factor that increases the budgets allocated to Turkish-Armenian initiatives.

## **American and European sources**

Almost half of the initiatives are financed by American funding, mainly through US governmental channels. The grants allocated by European countries, at 26.32%, are much smaller in size than the American ones and represent mainly grassroots initiatives supported by German foundations and the Scandinavian embassies in Ankara and Yerevan. The representation of the EU delegation has allocated some small scale grants as well.

American financial support is allocated most of the time through USAID channels. Turkey is not officially among the beneficiary countries of US aid: There is no grant-making mechanism for Turkish NGOs with the exception of a few grants from the US Embassy in Ankara. Armenian NGOs are the only beneficiaries of the US program for Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement. Although the program aims at supporting cross-border initiatives, NGOs located on the Turkish side of the border are not eligible as applicants. They can only be associated with action designed in Armenia and subcontracted with Armenian NGOs. This affects the sustainability and effectiveness of cross-border partnership initiatives. It also becomes problematic for designing effective projects. Most project designs have to be done by an Armenian organization and only after that is a Turkish partner found to fit that design. Joint designs from the beginning would increase the effectiveness of partnerships as well as the implementation and success of the projects. The asymmetry in Turkish-Armenian relations implies that the scale and the scope of the task that has to be carried out on the Turkish side have to be larger.

The European Commission is not an important grant-making structure in the field of Turkish-Armenian normalization and reconciliation. This seems paradoxical when it is remembered that the EC generally speaking is the major aid contributor both in Armenia and Turkey, and the improvement of the bilateral relations between the two countries and nations is among the political priorities of European institutions. The main obstacle is the fact that there has never been any specific EU budget line for Turkish-Armenian relations similar to the Turkish-Greek Civic Dialogue Project launched in 2004 by the European Commission. The existence of different contractual frameworks for EU relations with Turkey and Armenia is a serious limitation to the funding of any Turkish-Armenian initiatives.

Turkey as a candidate country is a beneficiary of the Instrument of Pre-accession, whereas Armenia is a beneficiary of the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument. There are very few linkages between EU financial instruments. The Black Sea Synergy can be a linkage: the Turkish government has to approve that money be allocated from its pre-accession budget to a regional project involving Armenia as well. EU-funded cross-border programs and projects aimed at resuming dialogue, building confidence between the parties, and tackling regional problems are not launched when governments of the beneficiary countries are reluctant. The European Parliament in its resolution on South Caucasus tried to overcome this obstacle by emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation and urging *“the three countries not to hinder or veto EU-funded cross-border programs and projects aimed at resuming dialogue, building confidence between the parties and tackling regional problems.”*<sup>11</sup>

The resolution also addresses the issue of the closed Turkish-Armenian border. It calls for *“the Turkish and Armenian Governments to start the process of reconciliation for the present and the past, and calls on the Commission to facilitate this process while taking advantage of the regional cooperation realized within the ENP and the Black Sea Synergy policy and calls on the Commission and the Council to address the opening of the Turkish border with Armenia with the authorities of those two countries.”*

The EU instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide, called the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), has financed a few Turkish-Armenian initiatives. This instrument has been particularly there to provide assistance to NGOs without the need for government consent. This is a critical feature of cooperation with civil society organizations at a national level especially in the sensitive areas of democracy and human rights.

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<sup>11</sup> European Parliament: Resolution of 17 January 2008 on a more effective “EU policy for the South Caucasus: from promises to actions” (2007/2076(INI)). See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0016+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

### *The shortcomings of the funding system*

The international funding system has been criticized by local civil society actors for raising costs, increasing uncertainty, and reducing the effectiveness of actions. The extensive and complicated reporting requirements impose extra burdens on recipients. The procedures take a long time, and local conditions and needs may change radically during the period. Small NGOs without previous experience in managing larger grants are discriminated against regularly. Many NGOs have been established as a result of international projects. People affiliated with those NGOs are often in a better position to receive money, but not in a better position to implement the project. “Grant hackers” often overshadow the small NGOs or even voluntary initiatives that work effectively. The system encourages the proliferation of NGOs which have no societal constituencies and do not represent any collective interest.

Civil societies organized on both sides of the border indicate the risk of having donor-driven projects and criticize the use of pre-tailored methodological frameworks and the necessity to adapt to a fixed template. These templates are often used in other conflicts as well and do not necessarily fit the Turkish-Armenian context. NGOs that are initially requested to come up with a vision have the feeling of being put back into the box. The ability of the donors to share the vision of local NGOs is considered the key for success.

The creation of local sources for funding is essential in terms of the development of ownership and the sustainability of the actions. The Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı (Community Volunteers Foundation), founded in December 2002 to encourage young people to volunteer for social responsibility projects, has been particularly successful in raising funds from corporate sources in Turkey. Each year some 800 projects with the participation of 25,000 young people are implemented. A national source of funding can too, however, be problematical for cross-border initiatives that are better off if based on an equal partnership. Therefore, more sources need to be created to which organizations and people from Armenia and Turkey can both apply.

## Chapter 4

### Maintaining the Relationship-Outcome Balance in Initiatives

There is hardly any agreement in the literature on conflict resolution as to what constitutes success in multi-track diplomacy activities. However, a consensus seems to be emerging among scholars and practitioners in the recent years on some principles of success. For that matter, based on lessons drawn from previous successful projects, a project can be considered successful if it fulfills one or more of the following criteria: 1) successfully builds relations (change in empathy, trust, attitudes); 2) reduces or prevents violence; 3) builds capacity of the civil society and organizations dealing with the conflict by introducing them relevant skills to do so; 4) disentangles one of the interlocking aspects of the larger conflict; and 5) creates institutions or processes to address the conflict.<sup>12</sup>

In the Turkish-Armenian context, most of the members of NGOs, especially those involved in joint projects, say explicitly that they do not aim at solving the conflict/problems. Rightly so, they prefer incremental and subtle steps. In fact, often times, and given the difficult conditions, simply being able to carry on a project is a success in itself. It is important to bear in mind that some of the initiatives, though a minority, have taken place in a dire political context.

Still, practitioners have ideas about what their contributions have been. Many think that they have contributed to the breaking of the taboos in their respective societies. The taboos are different in each society. On the Turkish side, many argue that these activities work towards breaking the taboos around the historical atrocities and have normalized the discussion of 1915 in society. On the Armenian side, these activities have broken the belief that it is impossible to engage or negotiate with the Turks. They indeed have shown that a dialogue is possible with the other side and that “there is someone over there with whom we can talk.” Thus, all in all, the increase of human

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<sup>12</sup> Zelizer, Craig and Robert Rubinstein. *Building Peace: Practical Reflections from the Field*, Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2009, pp. 4-5.

interactions and establishment of cross-border social networks have been a major achievement of the Turkish-Armenian projects.

Out of the five success criteria listed above, successfully building relations, building capacity of the civil society and organizations to better address the conflict, and creating institutions or processes to address the conflict are especially relevant to the current Armenian-Turkish context. We argued in the previous section that capacity building is severely lacking as an activity in the Turkish-Armenian activities and needs further development. As for the last criteria, Track Two projects created processes to address the conflict, yet these were mostly ad hoc activities and were hardly institutionalized. Future projects should focus more on the question of institutionalization. The first criterion, which is the goal of many Turkish-Armenian activities, requires closer attention in this chapter.

The human component and the relationship aspects are very important. Increased social interactions – sometimes leading to friendships – are often at the basis of sustainable networks. Given the emphasis of the practitioners on the importance of psychological factors and relationship building in their activities, we wanted to see to what extent projects prioritize relationships as opposed to concrete outcomes. Thus, we examined sixty-four Track Two projects implemented so far according to their goal orientations. A variety of specific goals are articulated by Track Two practitioners in their particular project proposals, but in general these goals can be categorized as “outcome-oriented” and “relationship-oriented” or both.<sup>13</sup> This classification derives from the following questions: do they primarily address and target relationships between people (such as building empathy, establishing friendly relations, overcoming prejudice about the other side), or do they primarily target a concrete or tangible outcome (such as a history archive, a development project, joint publication, a draft negotiation proposal)? Some projects target both, so they were coded accordingly.

According to Figure 5, most of the Turkish-Armenian projects since 1995 overwhelmingly have targeted relationships and have designed activities towards this end. This general trend was confirmed in our interviews as well. As we discussed in the sections above on

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<sup>13</sup> *Cuhadar and Dayton, 2011.*

the perceptions of the conflict and the types of activities section, most of the practitioners interviewed mentioned psychological and relationship issues such as prejudice, enemy images, lack of contact, and historical trauma as the main sources of conflict that needed to be addressed. Given that perception of the conflict, it is clear why the projects are more relationship-oriented. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the most common type of activities, interactive workshops, dialogue groups, and cultural projects are interventions designed mainly to address relationship issues. The dominance of this type of activity also is supportive of the fact that relationship orientation is the primary goal in most Track Two projects. In addition to looking at the goal orientation alone, we also wanted to see the intersection between goal orientation and level of participants. For example, do projects with grassroots participants tend to be more relationship focused? Table 1 and Figure 5 show that this is also the case for Armenian-Turkish Track Two projects.

When we look at the juxtaposition of the type of participants by goal orientation, we observe the following:

**Table 1: Goal Orientation and Level of Participants\***

Count

	level					Total
		grassroots	elite	quasi	mixed	
goal orientation	2	3	0	2	0	7
relationship	1	23	8	2	2	36
outcome	1	2	4	0	4	11
both	1	5	1	2	1	10
Total	5	33	13	6	7	64

\*The chi-square test conducted suggests a significant ( $p < .05$ ) and a strong relationship between categories ( $\phi = .635$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

According to Table 1, out of the sixty-four projects, most of the grassroots level activities were at the same time relationship focused. This is not surprising, though what is surprising in this case is that there were more relationship-focused activities among the elites and quasi-official participants as well. This tendency in the Turkish-Armenian Track Two is somewhat different from other conflicts, like the Israeli-Palestinian or N. Ireland Track Two, because in the Turkish-Armenian conflict relationship-oriented initiatives are still more common among elites.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, not surprisingly, the number of outcome-oriented projects was slightly higher among the elite level and mixed group participants. So, Turkish-Armenian initiatives predominantly focus on improving relationships regardless of the level of participants.

Looking at the rest of the Figure 5, most of the Armenian-Turkish projects do not target a concrete outcome, but rather prefer simply to “bring people together”, at all levels, from each side in a dialogue process. In these projects, the interaction and contact with the other side are seen as the main mechanisms leading to cognitive and emotional change in the participants. Usually a concrete outcome is not expected. While these activities have their own value, especially at the grassroots level, an argument can still be made to further increase their effectiveness.<sup>15</sup> Systematic documentation and assessment of the relationship changes in these projects would contribute to their effectiveness and improvement. Such assessment needs to be incorporated into the project proposals.

Among the few outcome-oriented projects are business and technical development cooperation projects. Different from seminars, workshops, and dialogue groups, the incentive to establish business relations --even maybe more than engaging with the

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<sup>14</sup> Cuhadar and Dayton, *forthcoming*.

<sup>15</sup> Maoz, *lfat*. “Coexistence is in the Eye of the Beholder: Evaluating Inter-group Encounter Interventions between Jews and Arabs in Israel.” *Journal of Social Issues*, (2004) 60(2): 437-452. ; Anna Ohanyan and John Lewis. *Politics of Peace-Building: Critical Evaluation of Interethnic Contact and Peace Education in Georgian–Abkhaz Peace Camp, 1998–2002*, ; Deepak Malhotra and Stamadi Liyanage. “Long-Term Effects of Peace Workshops in Protracted Conflicts,” 908; Esra Cuhadar and Genco Orkun Genc, “Evaluating Peacebuilding Initiatives Using Multiple Methodologies: Lessons Learned from a Greek-Turkish Peace Education Initiative” *ISA Annual Convention, Chicago, March 2007*.

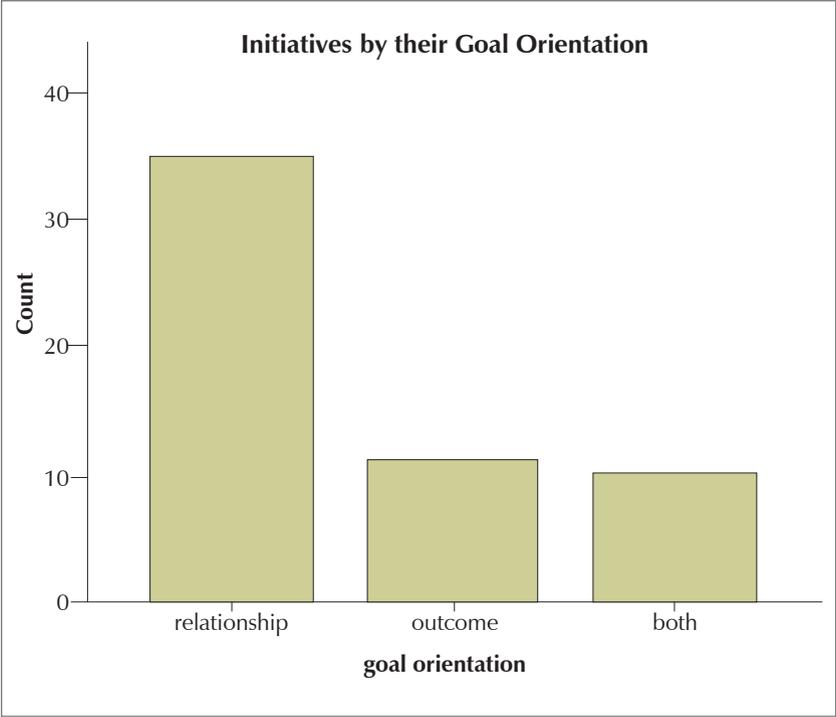
other side-- has the potential to bring together people from the mainstream. Relationship building, such as the building of trust and breaking down of attitudinal barriers, is often a by-product rather than the main goal. Thus, the advantage of these types of projects is that because of the profit and other pay-off incentives, they are more likely to involve mainstream stakeholders and to be durable and sustainable. On the other hand, as a weakness, some of these initiatives narrowly focus on profits and pay-offs and may ignore the important relationship aspects that are required to reach reconciliation. Thus, the effects of business and technical cooperation can be expanded by incorporating a conflict resolution agenda and curriculum in such activities. A good example of a project that successfully brought together the outcome and relationship goals together was the Caucasus Cheese Project (see discussion below titled "Caucasian Cheese" for more information).

In addition to technical and professional outcomes such as in business projects, other types of outcomes that are typical of classical Track Two are also rare in Turkish-Armenian projects. This is especially the case for such things as ideas, drafts, and principles that could be useful for the official negotiation process. It is even more surprising in light of the knowledge that the conflict is currently at a pre-negotiation or a negotiation stage. This may be due mainly to the fact that official track has moved quickly and there has been no time or preparation on the side of Track Two to contribute to this process. However, now that the official track is frozen, there is more room for classical Track Two activities of a political nature with influential people that will focus on creating tangible outcomes that could be useful in moving the negotiations forward.

Thus, in this report, we advocate an approach in which a project design combines both outcome and relationship aspects successfully. Such projects are likely to be more effective. Concrete outcomes can motivate the participants to continue to engage in the process, and cooperation on a common task increases the likelihood of the development of good relations. Outcome-oriented projects also make the spill-over effect or "transfer" from a specific project to a higher level more likely since the resulting products can be distributed. On the other hand, purely technical projects that include no relationship component may suffer from simply remaining technical or professional projects without contributing

to the transformation of conflictual relations, which is necessary for overall reconciliation. Therefore, while outcome-oriented projects have certain advantages their effectiveness can be increased with the incorporation of relationship-building activities into them. This goal would require raising awareness on behalf of the practitioners and a special expertise in designing projects, perhaps bringing psychological and professional know-how together.

**Figure 5: Turkish-Armenian Track Two Initiatives by goal orientation (n=64)**



## **Box 2: Caucasian Cheese**

Joint cross-border initiatives are believed to create incentives on both sides for dialogue and cooperation in the contexts of eliminating mistrust and isolationist thinking. Regional approaches to the normalization process can be integrative and cooperative. These approaches mainly pursue objectives such as establishing different institutional structures or creating joint initiatives for a possible wider regional cooperation. The “Caucasian Cheese project,” in this regard, mainly focused on trade and joint production.

“Caucasian Cheese” was an initiative that underlined the interest and potential of cross-boundary economic cooperation especially in the border regions of South Caucasus. The idea emerged during the Kars Business Forum organized by the Turkish and Armenian partners of the Caucasus Business and Development Network (CBDN), run by the London-based NGO International Alert in early March 2007. Armenian and Turkish dairy producers began exchanging cheese recipes and came up with the idea of creating a new Caucasian Cheese brand.

The First South Caucasian Cheese Exhibition was organized between 14- 15 May 2008 in Gyumri, Armenia, as a follow-up to the Kars Business Forum. The exhibition marked the launch of Caucasian Cheese, jointly produced by Armenian, Turkish and Georgian cheese producers. Hundreds of people, such as members from international organizations, cheese producers, public officials and representatives from the embassies, visited the exhibition. The event received widespread publicity in the region and beyond the borders of South Caucasus.

Between May and June Caucasian Cheese were presented in supermarkets in Gyumri, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Ninotsminda and Kars. These presentations were also covered by the media (mainly TV and print media).

The Second South Caucasian Cheese Exhibition was organized between 17 and 20 July 2010 in Tbilisi. The agenda of the meeting included visiting cheese factories, sharing recipes, and the

exhibition of cheeses from different regions of the South Caucasus including the Caucasian Cheese. The event was attended by the chairmen of the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijan Cheesemakers Associations, representatives of the Georgian Ministry of Agriculture, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and experts. As a result of the conference, an overwhelming majority of participants supported the initiative to work towards establishing the Caucasus Association of Cheesemakers.

Regional economic initiatives, such as cross-border trade and joint production, may well provide beneficial contributions for regional cooperation as they have the potential to provide mutual incentives and increase interdependence among communities. Such cross-border initiatives build closer ties between countries, create platforms for dialogue, and support for stability in the region. Furthermore, they can foster economic development and improve the livelihoods of the local populations.

As a joint initiative, the Caucasian Cheese project created common business interests, strengthened commonalities across the region and demonstrated potential cooperation areas in the region. The project indicates that the countries of South Caucasus can benefit a great deal from regional cooperation initiatives. This unique initiative is an example in which regional cooperation can provide mutual benefits and strengthen peaceful cooperation in the region.

## Chapter 5

### Increasing the Impact: Spill Over and Advocacy

#### The Spill over effects and multiplier mechanisms

In this project, we were also interested in hearing about how the practitioners planned to “transfer” or spill the micro effects of their projects to the macro conflict level. In other words, what did they do to broaden the impact of their micro interventions? From the interviews, we gathered different views and preferences on this issue.

Some of the grassroots level projects, such as a youth summer camp, did not mention any spill over goals. They saw their effect as limited to the participants only and thought that the repetition of the same type of events with new people each time was the way to expand the effects to the larger conflict level.

Yet, most of the project designers and implementers recognized the need to make an impact beyond the circle of project participants and concurred that Turkish-Armenian initiatives must become more public and visible. The publicity and/or advocacy components of the actions should be strengthened. Most of the interviewees see publicity as an integral part of the projects. However, as Figure 1 has shown, only 4.76% of the activities carried out advocacy and public communication. The reasons are not exactly known, but worth thinking about. It could be because of lack of funding for such activities, the political risks threatening project managers to go public, and/or lack of capacity in advocacy and public communication skills.

Advocacy differs from public communication. Policy-oriented projects usually pursue a closed circle advocacy. Information bulletins and policy notes are circulated by means of institutional mailing lists. Advocacy aimed at raising public awareness is missing. The task appears to be more challenging for many: it implies the NGO takes a public stance on Turkish-Armenian relations. There is also the belief that public pressure, even a coordinated Turkish-Armenian one, will do little if any effect on policy makers. Advocacy carried out on the domestic scene is therefore perceived as irrelevant. However, no

one has ever tried to mobilize the public in favor of normalization. The issue is still perceived as being too sensitive to be addressed in an advocacy campaign. Advocacy work towards the political circles seems to be totally absent. NGOs have not developed direct channels with the political circles. There is reluctance in the NGO community to engage in open debate; the risk factor seems too high. Very few advocate for the Turkish-Armenian normalization at home in a public campaign.

However, the need to change minds has been acknowledged on both sides of the border. How to make Turkish-Armenian relations a popular issue for both the grassroots and the political circles is an important challenge. The Turkish-Armenian field appears to be closed to political activism. Although it implies a higher risk, projects should start developing an outreach towards political parties. It is important that the issue be raised in the public arena. Because of the asymmetry which is a characteristic of bilateral relations, the task ahead is much more needed in Turkey. It would be misleading to take for granted that there is a strong opposition to normalization and reconciliation efforts within Turkish society. It has just not been an issue on the national level.

In the case of academic workshops and conferences, especially those organized by think tanks and policy centers, often times a joint report was issued in order to spill over the effects. These reports were then publicized and distributed to the policy makers on both sides, sometimes accompanied by press briefings. In these activities such instruments were seen as the major transfer mechanism. Some of the practitioners also followed up on these reports to see how well they were received by the policy makers. Some also accompanied reports with personal contacts and consultations with policy makers. These additional steps to publishing and distributing 'joint' reports should be encouraged by the funders as they increase the likelihood of impact.

Business projects, on the other hand, use the profit incentive to spill over the effects. The rationale goes like this: business cooperation in various sectors will attract more people from the societies and as more and more people get together around business activities, it eventually will improve relations between people as a side effect. One common problem with regard to the spill over mechanisms in

these projects is that even though they specify what mechanisms they prefer, the practitioners rarely provide a clear map of how they think this mechanism will lead to that particular effect. For instance, it is not clear how business cooperation will improve relations or what if people engage in business cooperation without necessarily changing their attitudes towards each other? Furthermore, even if such cooperation leads to the changing of attitudes, how does this address the main problematique at the heart of the conflict, which is historical trauma and collective memory?

Finally, among the projects we examined, several had unique and creative mechanisms to create spill over effects. One of these mechanisms was the town hall meetings organized by the ICHD. See the Box below for more information on this.

Practitioners also voiced several barriers to the effective spill over of the effects of their projects. A lack of coordination between those who do this kind of work is one of these barriers. Another common barrier mentioned is the recycling of the same people over and over between different activities. This hampers the ability to expand to a wider circle and is especially a problem in grassroots level initiatives that limit themselves to relationship building. A final barrier to effective spill over is the asymmetrical impact of Track Two projects due to the size of the countries and issue prioritization.

**Box 3: Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement and Related Concerns, Regional Town Hall Meetings in the Republic of Armenia**

Regional town hall meetings in the Republic of Armenia

In September 2009, the International Center for Human Development (ICHD), with the support of the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, initiated a series of town hall meetings in all ten provinces (marzes) of Armenia and in the capital, Yerevan, in order to make heard the voice of the citizens of Armenia on the development of relations between Armenia and Turkey and the process of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries, and to engage the general public in an active discussion on this issue of great public importance.

Previously, the ICHD had used the format of town hall meetings to facilitate discussions on issues of high public interest such as the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process and amendments to Armenia's constitution. This format enables citizens representing different social groups to engage directly and effectively in discussions, express their views and opinions and voice their concerns.

The meetings, attended by 1200 citizens, were held in Artashat (Ararat marz), Yeghegnadzor (VayotsDzor), Sisian (Syunik), Martuni (Gegharkunik), Ijevan (Tavush), Vanadzor (Lori), Gyumri (Shirak), Armavir (Armavir), Ashtarak (Aragatsotn), and Yerevan. Discussions were structured around five potential scenarios of future developments in relations between Armenia and Turkey relations developed by ICHD experts based on ideas, opinions and analysis published in the press.

During each town hall meeting, the participants voted on what they thought were the most preferable and the most probable options.

The ICHD's town hall meeting format captured the ideas and suggestions voiced during the discussions. Those ideas were then summarized, analyzed and presented to the public and decision makers. All ideas voiced during town hall meetings were posted on the official web-site of the ICHD at <http://www.ichd.org> (Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement and Related Concerns).

As a result, conclusions and recommendations regarding the process of the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey were developed through the participation of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia.

Many of the practitioners preferred resorting to the media to transfer the effects of their projects. However, many also complained that their media outlets were sometimes too limited, including only nearby networks. Activities with journalists became popular recently due to their ability to multiply the potential of the media between Armenia and Turkey. Several initiatives targeting media people as participants have been initiated. So, unlike the workshops held with small numbers of grassroots level people where the repetition of the

same intervention with more of the same people is seen as necessary for spill over, in the projects that are undertaken with journalists, such repetition is less important because the few that go through the projects have a wider reach in society. Furthermore, in a conflict where the main causes are defined as perceptions, attitudes, and prejudices, media representation and reporting inevitably become a natural outlet to address such causes. One other advantage of the media projects we observed was that unlike other parts of society, involving journalists in these projects from all sorts of different political and ideological backgrounds was easier. Therefore, when journalists are concerned it is easier to reach out to the mainstream in Turkish-Armenian projects. It is the nature of the profession that drives different people to explore and learn further regardless of where they stand on the issue.

On the other hand, no consensus existed among those who were in favor of publicizing their activities on the best way to engage journalists. Should there be more projects targeting specifically journalists? Should they be considered as natural stakeholders in designing projects? Should their role be limited to publicizing the outcomes of the projects rather than becoming participants for activities? Several practitioners preferred to involve journalists in their core activity: projects should support the development of information channels and create opportunities to travel between the two countries as often as possible. In this respect, a project initiated by the Hrant Dink Foundation is particularly important. Since 2007, the Hrant Dink Foundation has been organizing Young Journalists Exchange Programs in Turkey and Armenia. Journalists stay in each other's countries for one week. They visit television studios, participate in seminars and workshops with the collaboration of various NGOs, and are given access to members of parliament. Throughout the course of this multi-phase program, Armenian and Turkish journalists have the chance to pair up to develop cross-border reporting projects. By participating in these conferences and workshops, those selected for the program learn the customs and cultures of one another's homeland to improve the quality of their own journalism. The articles and impressions of participating journalists receive sizeable coverage in newspapers in both countries.

Journalists as opinion makers have of course the capacity to contribute directly to Turkish-Armenian relations. They have been

instrumental in popularizing the Turkish-Armenian issue. Starting with football diplomacy in 2008, the Armenian media has covered the Armenia-Turkey normalization process with its social-cultural aspects extensively; whereas the Turkish media portrayed the Armenia-Turkey normalization process mainly as an issue of foreign affairs. Turkish journalists generally see the normalization process as an issue to be solved in order to contribute to the stabilization of the region. In addition, especially considering Turkey's EU accession process and the EU's neighborhood policies, the normalization process is seen as a compulsory step to be taken. While some of the media coverage of Turkish-Armenian relations has been dogged by allegations of bias on both sides, generally there has been a positive attitude toward the normalization process. We believe that the visit of President Abdullah Gül to Yerevan created a demand for news originating from Armenia. Many journalists accompanied him during the trip. Turkish TV stations broadcasted live from Republic Square during the news hour. Some Armenian analysts and NGO members who were interviewed got the opportunity to address a Turkish audience directly.

**Box 4: The Presidents' "Track Two" Efforts**

The president of the Republic of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, visited Armenia on 6 September 2008, on the invitation of his Armenian counterpart, Serzh Sargsyan, to watch a World Cup qualifying match between Armenia and Turkey. This was the first visit ever made by a Turkish head of state to Armenia in the history of the two republics.

Gül accepted the invitation despite strong public opposition from each country. The main opposition parties in Turkey, namely the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), condemned the visit. Members of parliament from the CHP and MHP criticized him for unilaterally compromising on foreign political interests and deviating from state policy. Gül said that he considered the match an opportunity to improve relations between the two countries: *"I hope today's match will help to lift*

*the barriers to closer relations between two nations that share a common history, and contribute to the establishment of regional friendship and peace,"* he stated at a news conference before his departure for Yerevan.<sup>16</sup> Ali Babacan, the minister of foreign affairs, and Ahmet Davutoglu, the chief foreign policy adviser of the prime minister, accompanied Gül on the visit. In addition, journalists Hasan Cemal, Mustafa Karaalioglu, Ali Bayramoglu, Yavuz Baydar and Cengiz Çandar were at the stadium to watch the match. Nevertheless, none of the members of parliament from the AKP went to Armenia as the Prime Minister Erdogan has declared that *"our parliamentarians shall not go with our permission since the opposition parties have politically exploited the visit."*<sup>17</sup>

Despite small-scale protests during the visit, there were several gestures made by the Armenian government such as temporarily suspending visa requirements for Turkish visitors. The Turkish media for the most part covered the visit in a positive way, though there was some general criticism regarding the normalization process. The newspapers *Hürriyet* and *Zaman* headlined the visit as *"Historical Decision"* and *"New Beginning with Yerevan."* Moreover, the columnists mostly condemned the opposition parties for their negative attitude.

The Armenian media exhibited positive attitudes towards Turkey and Turks in pro- government newspapers *Golos Armenii* and *Azg* during the visit and there were many positive articles published related to the rapprochement process in *Lragir*, *168 Zham* and *Arovat* newspapers. The Armenian media covered the event from different aspects, such as political, economic and societal, regional development, and stated the prospective outcomes of the normalization process.

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<sup>16</sup> *New York Times*. "Turkey's President Makes Historic Visit to Armenia," 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/07/world/europe/07turkey.html>.

<sup>17</sup> *Radikal*. "AKP'den vekillere 'Erivan' izni yok", 2008. <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=Detay&ArticleID=896851&Date=04.09.2008&CategoryID=78>

Mr.Sargsyan stated that Armenia and Turkey would work together to solve regional conflicts. “We are going to resolve the issues and not pass them on to next generations,”he said.<sup>18</sup> The historic trip was widely seen as a symbolic gesture to normalize relations between the countries, which had recognized each other but not established diplomatic relations. This symbolic gesture contributed to attempts to normalize relations between Armenia and Turkey. The movement was backed by the will and determination of the leaders. The FIFA awarded the Football Associations of Armenia and Turkey with 2008 Fair Play Reward for their contribution to the normalization process between the two countries.

The second leg of “football diplomacy” between Armenia and Turkey took place on 14 October 2009 in Bursa, Turkey. Serzh Sargsyan, was invited by his Turkish counterpart to watch the 2010 World Cup qualifying group match between two countries’ national teams. It was the first visit of Mr.Sargsyan personally to Turkey and he was the first head of the state to visit Turkey for a bilateral meeting. Arrangements were made to create a friendly atmosphere throughout his stay in the city. Strict measures were implemented to prevent the game turning into a political event. The tickets were not sold, but distributed according to a special scheme to minimize the risk of unrest during the match. Flags were not allowed into the stadium. The police force was increased for security.

Despite all of these precautionary measures, some undesirable events occurred during the match. For instance, there was loud booing during the opponent team’s national anthem and unfurling of the Armenian flag. However, overall, the atmosphere was peaceful and the friendship between the two leaders stood in the forefront. As a symbolic gesture, some white doves were released above the stadium right before the kickoff. Another sentimental movement was a banner written *Welcome to Hrant’s*

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<sup>18</sup> Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı. “Cumhurbaşkanı Gül Ermenistan’ı Ziyaret Etti.” 2008. <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/47535/cumhurbaskani-Gul-ermenistani-ziyaret-etti.html>

*Homeland* in three languages. After the event, the Turkish media mostly reported the event positively. Mr.Sargsyan’s visit was a landmark in the normalization process between Armenia and Turkey, since it was the first meeting of the highest level between two countries after the signing of protocols by foreign ministers of two countries on 10 September 2009 in order to establish diplomatic relations and open the shared border which had been closed since 1993.

Journalists – especially columnists – are also public intellectual figures and have a moral authority. Those convinced of the importance of the reconciliation of Turks and Armenians can have a far-reaching impact. In this context, a phone interview with Mr. Kadri Gürsel, a columnist at the Turkish daily *Milliyet*, gives some insights into the role of the journalists in Turkish-Armenian relations. According to Gürsel, Turkey needs to normalize its relation with Armenia not only for the EU process, but also to come to terms with its own history. He was the recipient of the first Turkish-Armenian Journalism Award, given by the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Global Political Trends Center of Kültür University (GPoT) and the Yerevan Press Club. The award was given to him for his contribution to the normalization of the Turkish-Armenian relationship with his coverage of the issues between Armenia and Turkey. Gürsel said he believed a journalist should reflect his or her own personal experience and opinion with a professional and neutral approach to the problems between Armenia and Turkey. Only these kinds of publications could help these countries understand each other. He stressed that reporting about Armenian issues used to be taboo for Turkish journalists in the past, and today, although this taboo had not been lifted completely, it was not as strong as it had been.

The role of journalists in the Turkish-Armenian normalization process is essential. As Gürsel explained, discussing and reporting on Turkish-Armenian relations is no longer taboo; however, the media should elaborate on this issue in order to create better public awareness. The first step to be taken to pave the way for a neutral discussion is to have an environment where the freedom of speech prevails. At this stage the media’s role should go parallel with the work of the NGOs in engaging the peoples of both sides to keep the

discussion process going by publishing extensively in a constructive way. Although Turkey and Armenia have yet to normalize bilateral relations, things are moving much faster in the civil society wing of the normalization efforts. The journalist exchange programs are very encouraging, as journalists have a role in shaping their country's today and tomorrow. In this way, they obtain direct knowledge about their neighbors and better understand each other.

### **Social media**

Social media has shown some interest in the revitalization of Turkish-Armenian relations. However, the impact of social media on Turkish-Armenian relations has not reached an influential level as an open and neutral debate run by social media users does not exist. The existing independent web blogs can create mistrust between the communities. The notion of anonymity may harm already delicate relations. Thus, a review of new technologies, such as weblogs, and social networking sites, and how these new media can be used to effect positive change in both communities remains a topic to be examined. Social media can be used to be more innovative and interactive, to announce the activities of the current joint projects and to provide a platform to ease communications between the NGOs.

#### **Box 5: Social Media**

The protests against Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement on 16 March 2010 in an interview with the BBC Turkish service in London, threatening to send back irregular Armenian workers in Turkey in retaliation for the US resolution, brought a much missing moral dimension to the Turkish political debate about Armenians. No doubt that an administration has the right and indeed the duty to fight illegal immigration; however, the intention to target irregular workers, selected on an ethnic basis, as a bargaining chip in relations with other countries, was condemned unanimously. Taking the needy Armenians hostage in a scheme of blackmail appeared profoundly immoral. What might be seen as a second deportation or forced relocation would tarnish Turkey's international reputation and overshadow its magnanimity.

### **Box 6: The Van Earthquake**

The humanitarian aspect of the relations also influences the public in a positive way. On 23 October 2011, an earthquake of a magnitude of 7.1 struck the city of Van, Turkey. According to the Disasters and Emergency Situations Directorate of Turkey, the earthquake killed 604 and injured 4,152. Following the earthquake, Armenian officials declared their readiness to send a plane load of humanitarian aid to the survivors. On 27 October, Turkey sent an official aid request to Armenia, which had offered to send rescue workers within hours of the quake. While on an official visit to Moscow, Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan expressed his condolences to Turkish president Abdullah Gul, adding that “a specialized group of the Armenian rescuers stands ready to arrive at the epicenter and instantly to proceed with the rescue work.” (*The Armenian Weekly*, 1 Nov 2011). Another example of positive news appeared on 28 October 2011, when *PanArmenian* published a piece titled “Armenian Musicians to Join Relief Efforts for Van Earthquake Survivors” (*PanArmenian*, 28 October 2011). The group, joined by famous percussionist/composer Arto Tunçboyacıyan and Armenian oud master Ara Dinkjian, took to the stage on 13 November at the Merkin Concert Hall in New York’s Kaufman Center. All proceeds from the concert were donated to relief campaigns aimed at the Van earthquake survivors.

## Chapter 6

### Discussing the Format and Participants: The Eventual Involvement of Secondary Actors

#### The role of Turkey's Armenians in joint projects, by Alin Ozinian<sup>19</sup>

In order to understand Turkey's Armenians, and especially Istanbul's Armenians, their views on and approaches to the joint projects that support the rapprochement and dialogue process between Turkey and Armenia, and identify their objectives of participation and detect their reasons for refraining from participation, it is necessary to look closer at the political and emotional atmosphere in which the Armenian community has been in recent years. The remaining Armenian population in Turkey started to decline in 1942 with the levying of the Wealth Tax; the events of September 6-7, 1955; the atmosphere of political and social unrest created by the climate of terror and rising discourse of ethnic nationalism. In the 1970 and 1980s, while the Armenians from Istanbul began to move abroad in large groups, the ones living in Anatolia who were already diminished in numbers, could not stand the pressure anymore and migrated to Istanbul, thinking big cities would be safer. During this time even though the Armenians were not subjected to a test on "loyalty to the motherland" or "loyalty to the state," they attempted to display this loyalty as a reflex because they were unable to overcome being regarded as potential "foreigners" and "suspects" in the eyes of society and bureaucracy. By the 1990s, this process of identity construction began to get more complicated. *The identity-construction process through which the Armenians in Turkey are going today is undoubtedly complex, multi-dimensional, in an ongoing dynamic process and influenced by different dynamics when it is compared to those of the other Armenians. The political change and turmoil in Turkey undeniably shape the Community's internal dynamics.*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Alin Ozinian is a dual Turkish and Armenian citizen. She was born in Istanbul and moved to Yerevan at the age of eighteen. She is collaborating with the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council and writing occasionally on Turkish-Armenian issues for the Turkish press.

<sup>20</sup> Ozinian, Alin "Türkiyeli Ermeni, Ermenistan'ı sever mi?" Zaman. 02 August 2009. <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do;jsessionid=602D39A6CFD8B5F7D4D4A8FC9A897854?haberno=875829>

Issues regarding Armenians that started to be discussed more comfortably at the end of 1990s in Turkey and discussions, research and projected opinions about being Armenian developed within the framework of the events of 1915 events. *It is known that besides the discriminative mentality and attitude in Turkey, criticism and the presence of opposition to this in the media, politics and public opinion started to rise only after mid-1990s.*<sup>21</sup> In general, for Armenians in Turkey who take part in the discussions within the framework of Turkey-Armenian and the Armenian diaspora relations, a new process was about to start. In this process, it was perceived that dropping the status of 'second-class citizenship' was possible, and the struggle to achieve this goal was inevitable. The idea of expressing their own suppressed identity as part of Turkey, presenting it and having the tendency to protect it included Armenians alongside with all of society in Turkey. As the Armenians started to make their voices heard, their efforts to confront history and bring a new perspective to the past reflected on all of Turkish society. Even a part of the Armenian community chose the path of struggle and option to support the projects on minority rights and democratization, the majority, as they did in the past, sought the ways of reconciliation with their alienated parts. *"There are 'others' in Europe, but it is different. They went from Africa to those lands. Mine is slightly discrete: you belong to this land, you have no other place. Besides, you are deeply rooted on this land. But, nevertheless, constantly you feel that you are someone else, for some reason you are pushed aside..."*<sup>22</sup>

### **The Promising Years-Projects that Were Launched**

Since the 1990s, minority rights have been re-shaping on the basis of some contracts in Europe. The Copenhagen criteria, which includes minority rights and aims to create a much more democratic society, was adopted by Turkey, which aims to be a member of the EU. In parallel to this, some regulations were implemented under the name of compliance with EU laws. In 1996, with Hrant Dink's efforts, the publication of *Agos* newspaper created a milestone. It gave voice to the Turkey's Armenians' presence, history and suffering on this land, expressed their demands for equal rights as citizens and respect for cultural identities, and called for a new unified voice

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<sup>21</sup> TESEV, Report "Türkiye Ermenlerini Duyamak: Sorunlar, Talepler ve Çözüm Önerileri"

<sup>22</sup> Yahya Koçoğlu. An interview with an Armenian youth. "Minority Youth Explains". 2001, p. 189.

to fight for the democratization of Turkey on the civil society level. This milestone changed the common perspective of the Armenian community towards the Turkish-Armenian projects, increased the participation level, and encouraged people in general. *Agos* is a publication compelled by the conditions in which the Armenian group in Turkey lives. A closed society became willing to open up itself. They had to defend themselves. During a certain period, the word "Armenian" was perceived as a curse, some people related it to the PKK, and some of them related it to ASALA. The Armenians, like someone locked up in a house, had listened to what was being said about them in media and had not been able to do anything. They rose up against it, shouted at it, said "it was all lie," but were not able to verbalize it loudly enough. This had to be broken.<sup>23</sup> Aras Publishing helped this process by publishing literary pieces and research studies on Armenian history, education, and culture.

The community members who believed in the efforts of "opening" and "self-confidence building" began to take part voluntarily in projects aiming to improve the principle rights and freedom of the different ethnic and religious groups in Turkey. Starting from the second half of the 1990s, the community members got rid of their fears for the first time and started to participate in conferences and meetings about the Armenians. The establishment of *Agos* newspaper and Aras Publishing was followed by the foundation of the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council in 1997. The Council's dialogue processes with the Armenian diaspora and Armenia were supported by some of the Istanbul Armenians. The Istanbul and Anatolian Armenians took part in the meetings, conferences, and research projects arranged by the Council in different periods. In this period where the relations were warming up and the idea of "encouragement" was rising, the most influential conference, without doubt, was the one held on 24 and 25 September 2005 with the title "The Ottoman Armenians in the Last Period of the Empire," with the aim of understanding the events of 1915. The conference was held despite all protests against it and the declaration of its organizers as "traitors." It brought not only the "opening," but also "mistrust" and "labeling".

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<sup>23</sup> *Hrant Dink* : "Ben kendi halkımın yaşadığı acının farkında olan ve bu yükü taşıyan biriyim." Interview by A. Ozinian. October 2006. <http://www.hrantdink.biz/tr/?p=550>

Civilian initiatives, at the outset such as the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, the Heinrich Boll Foundation, the Frederich Ebert Foundation, the Anatolian Culture Foundation, and the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) included Istanbul Armenians in the projects that dealt with minority rights in Turkey and initiated the rapprochement process with Armenia. While the EU integration process, harmonization laws and Turkey-Armenia rapprochement process were indicating that something was indeed changing, members of the Armenian community realized that they could transform themselves from the "suppressed minority" to "citizens with demands" only if they supported the altering dynamics of the whole society in which they lived and participated in society's mass transformation.

When it was felt that something was really changing in Turkey, minority members or intellectuals attempting to talk about history started to be threatened. The attacks on the Armenian and Greek patriarchates were followed by some other threats. By using the 301st article of the Turkish Penal Code, people who supported reconciliation were presented as obvious targets. Even if the members of the Armenian community had just got rid of their fears and were a bit eager to participate in the projects, they could not help but perceive the law suits and judicial processes as a new "suppression policy." It was not only the Armenians, but that's what the Turks and people abroad felt as well. It was not a coincidence that among the victims of the 301st article of the penal code Hrant Dink was the only one sentenced by the judiciary with the accusation of "insulting the Turkish identity": this was inevitable because he was an Armenian.<sup>24</sup>

In 2007, Hrant Dink was killed as a result of a conspiracy. On the other hand, thousands of people participated in Dink's funeral. While it was thought that it was a good sign, the racist and hate speeches of well-known groups weakened hopes. When the genocide resolution bills came to the media's attention abroad and hate speech was rising in our country, some non-government organizations and intellectuals arranged commemorative activities and apology campaigns in order to confront history and started a debate in public.<sup>25</sup> While these confrontational actions gave the

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<sup>24</sup> Jerome Bastion, "Hrant'a: Ali Topu Agop'a at", p. 193

<sup>25</sup> "Türkiye'de Ermeniler: Cemaat-Birey-Yurttaş". *Bilgi Üniversitesi* 2009, p.470.

impulse to the Armenian community that there were different dynamics in Turkey, it also indicated that was unclear which side would overcome the other one. As these developments encouraged and mobilized a certain part of the Armenian community, it enlarged the rest of the community, who only defined themselves as “non-Muslims” by becoming more isolated. These dynamics and changes have shaped the role of the Turkey’s Armenians in the initiatives and projects.

The protocols signed following the process of “soccer diplomacy,” which was started when the two presidents attended the soccer games between their national teams became a new source of hope for the Armenians in Turkey. Afterwards, the Armenians were more visible in the projects in Turkey and Armenia. The Istanbul Armenians faced various problems when they participated in projects. Akin to ethnic Turks visiting Armenia for the first time, they were going to a country that they did not know actually. While most of them defined this new country as a foreign one, only a limited number of them had established emotional ties. The difference between the west and east Armenians created a barrier of language and the Turkish Armenians felt squeezed in between. So, it emerged as a fact that if the Istanbul Armenians were to take part in the joint projects between Armenia and Turkey, actually there were three different groups of participants.

If we look at the general picture and the level of participation, it becomes obvious that the Istanbul Armenians are more interested in participating in the projects on democratization and human rights in Turkey, rather than taking a part in the projects on the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement and supporting the dialogue process. As a result of the current political climate, the Istanbul Armenians are interested mainly in cultural projects. While activities related to Armenian architecture, handcrafts, literature and novelists have high levels of participation, the Armenians approach subjects involving political and economic issues in a selective and hesitant way. It is obvious that this is the result of the reservation of “nothing happens to the Turks if they take part in it, but since we are Armenians, we get in trouble.”

Both in the normalization projects between Turkey and Armenia, as well as the democratization and human rights projects, the

participation of Turkish Armenians is important. Non-governmental organizations should work to increase this participation. Not revealing the names of the participants for some critical and concerning issues can be an option. As the volume of the projects increase, there will be relief within the participants and willingness to participate in the projects. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that, although civil society projects are shaped with its own dynamics without political will, the participation of Turkish Armenians in these projects will be shaped by the political environment and participation level will increase in parallel to the democratization process.

### **The involvement of the diaspora in Armenian-Turkish projects**

The population of Armenia is approximately 3 million and twice larger Armenian population lives outside the country. The Armenian nation is defined by the totality of the Armenians in the world. The diaspora is older, larger, and more diverse than the Armenian state. The strengthening of diaspora-homeland socio-economic relations has a positive impact on the flow of remittances, investments, tourism revenues, and know-how transfer. Armenia, linking itself to its diaspora, is changing its identity. The country is becoming progressively multicultural with a tremendous increase in the number of visitors and, tourists, but also long-term residents. The development of a Middle Eastern identity, brought by the Armenians of the Persian Gulf, Iran, Syria, and Lebanon, is remarkable.

The diaspora is perceived at the same time as both an asset and liability. Armenian civil society activists perceive its obstruction power. Much effort is being spent to prevent the diaspora from hindering Turkish-Armenian initiatives. As highlighted in the ICHD report of the town hall meeting dedicated to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement, the issue of the normalization of relations with Turkey carries a risk for Armenia's relations with its diaspora. There is a fear that normalization will create division lines within the diaspora, cause damage to their identities, and hamper the natural course of cooperation between Armenia and the diaspora. Armenia-based civil society organizations show as well some reluctance to involve diaspora members in normalization projects. Normalization refers here to the establishment of good neighborly relations and the increase of cross-border interactions. There is a concern about losing the initiative on their agenda setting if the diaspora Armenians are

given a word. More explicitly, any diaspora intervention brings the issue of the genocide to the table.

Yet, the normalization projects carried out between Turkey and Armenia at the moment very rarely deal with the historical aspect of the dispute. The establishment of channels of communication and the socialization and cohesion processes through the conduct of joint initiatives come first. It is believed that this most difficult issue can best be tackled once trust has been established. Some cross-border partnerships are based on the candid agreement that *"they agree to disagree."* In this context, the diaspora intervention puts a stress on the partners from Armenia: they might be accused of not setting the priorities properly, of neglecting the most important point, and worse, of being instrumentalized by the Turkish state.

The Armenians from Armenia criticize the ghetto mentality of the diaspora, whose memories have stopped at the events of 1915, and how this has shaped the collective identity. The involvement of the diaspora in cross-border initiatives can be acceptable at certain stages; however, this should by no means restrict the margin of maneuver of those based in Armenia. The center of gravity has to be Armenia. The initiatives organized among the diaspora exclusively address the historical conflict: the central elements of the value system are based on the memory of the 1915 victims and the pan-Armenian efforts to address the consequences of that disaster. Among the dialogue initiatives held in the US, according to Ohanyan's survey, only very few decided to put the genocide issue aside in the beginning.

This contradicts the practical approach of Armenia-based organizations, in which the genocide issue is often put aside. In the process of normalization of relations between the two countries, the interests of Armenia and its diaspora sometimes collide. The projects are said to be aiming at normalizing Turkish-Armenian relations. Normalization is seen as a technical process, which will lead to the establishment of normal inter-governmental relations, the opening of the physical and the mental borders between the two nations. Normalization is a prerequisite, a first step, before the reconciliation phase. In other words, reconciliation is the deepening of the normalization which then brings to the surface the historical dimension. The common understanding is that the diaspora must wait until the end of the normalization and become involved in the reconciliation phase only.

Diaspora Armenians willing to support Armenia practically need to find ways of engaging positively with Turkey. A romanticized approach to Armenia determines the approach to Turkey. The above-mentioned ICHD report concludes that Armenia needs the elaborate principles and mechanisms of the Armenian diaspora's engagement in the process of the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey. In the process of the normalization of relations between the two countries the effectiveness of cooperation between Armenia and the diaspora is significantly conditioned by the degree of integration of the diaspora and its Armenian structures in the internal political life of Armenia.

*The diaspora Armenians are closely linked to Turkey*

Where is the homeland of the Armenians? An independent Republic of Armenia should logically strengthen the Armenian identity and channel energy and enthusiasm toward a national project. However, is Armenia the “*yergir*” – the homeland; the Turkish word “*memleket*” integrates the full meaning of the Armenian word – of the Armenians? Where is the territory of common identity? The western Armenian diaspora was formed by those who survived the massacres of 1915 by fleeing Anatolia. A large majority of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia are originally from Anatolia. Very few families are not connected with Anatolia. Turkey is the *yergir* for most of the Armenians, a land that is visited with the purpose of bringing back a handful of soil. Furthermore, the territory of common identity for Armenians is also Turkey. It is hardly possible to think of the Armenian identity without Mount Ararat, the ancient ruins of Ani, and the island Akhtamar in Lake Van.

*The Armenian diaspora and the politicization of the genocide issue*

The Turkish political class and society at large have developed deep fears and suspicions about the Armenian diaspora commensurate with the presumed implications of the adoption of the “genocide resolutions” by third country parliaments. The Armenian diaspora, which is perceived as ‘all-powerful and united,’ are feared because of their hostility towards Turkey and their capacity to do harm.

The genocide issue, raised within many Western parliaments, has strained Turkish-Armenian relations since 1998. The first attempt at

its recognition goes back as far as to 1965 Argentina. Until 1991, the debate on the recognition of the genocide was not linked to bilateral relations, since an independent Armenian state did not exist at that time. Between 1991 and 1998, the controversy went on without the participation of the Republic of Armenia. The Armenian government started to raise the issue of the recognition in 1998, when the incoming Armenian government recognized it as an important asset for its international communication strategy. The international controversy on the recognition of the genocide has set the Armenian diaspora and the Turkish government against each other.

A great deal of effort has gone into passing resolutions from the Armenian side. What are they ultimately trying to accomplish? What do Armenian communities hope to accomplish through recognition? Most of the Armenian organizations are looking at a regional power balance in a realistic way. The recognition and acknowledgement is seen as a victory for the Armenian moral issue. The recognition is expected to heal the individual and collective emotional wounds of the survivors and the nation as a whole; and is sometimes depicted as a foreign policy issue as a way of maintaining vigilance against the Turkish threat. Twenty-three countries, together with Sweden, today officially qualify the events of 1915 as genocide, as do eleven of the member states of NATO and forty-two US states. Uruguay was the first country to adopt a recognition bill in 1965, followed in 1982 by Cyprus, in 1985 by a subcommission of the UN, in 1987 by the European Parliament, in 1995 by Russia, and in 1998 by the Council of Europe. The process accelerated in the 1970s and gained momentum after 1998, with support given to the international campaign under president Kocharian and the launch of the Turkey-EU accession process.

The international campaign had started well before the creation of an independent Armenia. Between 1991 and 1998, president Petrosyan had avoided politicizing history. The turning point with the accession of Kocharian to power gave a boost to the international recognition efforts. Until the creation of the independent Armenian state, the diaspora came to perceive themselves as the sole representatives of their nation. With the formation of the Republic of Armenia, they became the representatives of Armenia abroad. The recognition by France in 2001 provoked a strong reaction. Interestingly during the EU enlargement and Turkey-EU accession

process, many EU countries joined the list. New EU member countries, though with no significant Armenian community, have followed suit after their accession.

It is disputable whether the objectives of the international campaign have ever been met. Can a resolution by a third country bring satisfaction, justice, or even reconciliation? Resolutions cut communication. Groups advocating on both sides for the normalization of the Turkish-Armenian relations have to focus on damage control in the aftermath of each third party recognition.

*A direct channel of communication between Turks and Armenians living in diaspora*

The diaspora is a factor in Turkish-Armenian relations. Turkish and Armenian groups supporting the normalization of relations have tried to exclude diaspora Armenians from joint initiatives with little success. However, the best way to prevent them from spoiling any dialogue initiative is to involve them with the ultimate goals and the process. It seems important to help the diaspora define a positive agenda towards both Armenia and Turkey. Diaspora Armenians eager to deal with Armenia has to engage with Turkey as well. Diaspora Armenians are entitled to interfere in the Turkish domestic processes. The issue of whether they are entitled to become Turkish citizens, for instance, has become a recurrent theme for discussion. A positive redefinition or reframing of their link with Turkey will transform them into stakeholders in the conflict transformation processes underway in Turkey rather than spoilers of the process.

Is there a need to design specific projects targeting the diaspora? The general conviction is that they should support those working for the further democratization of Turkey and find ways to have an impact within Turkey. The struggle for the acknowledgement of the Armenian identity calls for engaging constructively with Turkey. The Turkish government has started recently developing an outreach towards the diaspora with very little efficiency. The Armenian diaspora have some reluctance about interacting with Turkish society at large. Mainstream groups need to be convinced of the sincerity of their undertakings. There is a need to fight the perception of being instrumentalized for the public relations purpose of the Turkish

government. The requirement to convince is a given for the stronger side in this asymmetrical relation. Projects implemented in Turkey do not have to target the diaspora specifically. It is, however, important that the diaspora be considered as a potential partner in Track Two efforts rather than an 'obstacle' by Turkish civil society actors.

Reconciliation requires the opening of a direct channel of communication between Turks and Armenians living in diaspora. The Turkish and Armenian Diasporas need to develop a bilateral agenda. Diaspora groups have a stake in the further democratization of Turkey and of Armenia. They have to develop a positive agenda towards Turkey. The strongest tie is with Anatolia; they should feel concerned with domestic dynamics and look at ways of affecting them.

### **A trilateral format? Discussing the participation of Azerbaijan**

On the official level there is a clear understanding in Turkey that Azerbaijan is part of the Turkish-Armenian equation. In fact, in some circles in Turkey, Azeris, both in Azerbaijan and in Turkey, are treated equivalent to diaspora for the Armenian state. The Nagorno-Karabakh conditionality has been reasserted clearly as the protocol process has reached a deadlock. The Azerbaijani factor has obstructed the last normalization attempt of the bilateral Turkish-Armenian relations. Azerbaijan is a stakeholder in Turkish-Armenian relations and in addition Turkey has become a stakeholder in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In other words, the issue of the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations has a regional dimension and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is affecting Turkish-Armenian relations. This does not contradict the fact that the processes of the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations and that of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are distinct.

Can a trilateral Turkish-Armenian-Azerbaijani format be relevant for Track Two activities? Can projects carried out with a regional format increase the efficiency of Turkish-Armenian initiatives? Can the involvement of Turkish partners in Armenian-Azerbaijani projects addressing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have any positive impact?

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at the moment has no central position in the conflict addressed by the existing Turkish-Armenian projects. Some Turkish organizations that have been active in the Turkish-Armenian field have started investigating ways of engaging with Azerbaijan. The underlying logic is that Azerbaijan, perceived as a main obstacle to the opening of the border, has to become part of the solution. Some Turks advocating for a trilateral format consider that Turkey has to discover constructive ways of having a positive impact on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Its inability to proceed further with its bilateral agenda with Armenia makes Turkey a stakeholder in the settlement of the Azerbaijani-Armenian dispute.

Armenian organizations show strong resistance to the extension of the bilateral format. The belief that the inclusion of an Azerbaijani side will kill any Turkish-Armenian process is deeply rooted: the integration of new elements to the equation seems likely to jeopardize and complicate bilateral efforts. The concept of a potential trilateral initiative has not been defined clearly yet. Is there room for addressing in a trilateral format the issue of Turkish-Armenian normalization? Can a trilateral Turkish-Armenian-Azerbaijani civil society initiative handle the Nagorno-Karabakh problem?

It is doubtful whether Armenians will agree to take part in any trilateral initiative on Nagorno-Karabakh. The official line of the Turkish government is being reflected in the narratives of Turkish civil society actors. Most of the Armenian civil society organizations advocating for the normalization of relations with Turkey would acknowledge the need to reach a peace deal with Azerbaijan. From an Armenian perspective, there is clearly a Turkish dimension in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. On the governmental level, the security concern that has arisen from the ambiguity associated with relations with Turkey pushed Armenia to a more intractable position at the negotiation table. Armenia is taken in a stranglehold between a ceasefire line with Azerbaijan and a sealed border with Turkey. The state of relations with Azerbaijan is clear enough: the two states are still at war, the decade-old ceasefire agreement is regulating their relations. However, it is difficult to get a clear understanding of the prevailing situation with Turkey. Uncertainties in its relations with Turkey increase the widespread feeling of a lack of security in Armenia. In the absence of diplomatic links, relations with the major neighbour become highly unpredictable. The situation looks

profoundly wrong: Armenia's search for reassurance should have driven it to pave its relations with Turkey with strong guarantees. The post Cold War context has reactivated deeply-rooted fears. The pursuit of the international recognition of the genocide is justified as a policy choice as far as it is thought to provide guarantees against any Turkish aggression. Yet, it is fueling Turkish aggression to the contrary.

Furthermore, it seems likely that the historical dispute between Turks and Armenians has had a negative impact on the relations between Azerbaijanis and Armenians as well. Interestingly the Track One level comes to mind first when a Turkish civil society organization is considering any project on the trilateral level. This does not question the format of the official negotiations for the settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The perception of a natural solidarity between Turks and Azeris points at the risk of being outweighed. Trilateral projects can help make Turkish society, experts, decision makers better understand the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. There is a need for an initiative aiming at addressing the deep lack of knowledge in Turkey about Nagorno-Karabakh, there is a clear difficulty in discerning the conflict sides. However, if this is to be done it should be done in a way that does not trigger the feeling of being "overwhelmed" on the Armenian side.

A trilateral reconciliation project can address the deep roots of the existing mistrust and can explore the interconnected aspects of the Turkish-Armenian and Azeri-Armenian conflicts. The dialogue and cooperation pattern set between the Turkish and Armenian civil societies can encourage Azerbaijanis to seek some form of exchange with Armenians. Turks and Armenians can interact much more easily and visit each other's country than the Azeris. Armenians and Azerbaijanis are two societies at war. The closed border impedes direct land communications, but nothing else prevents Armenians from travelling to Turkey and Turks to Armenia. Furthermore, the genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh issues have intertwined dimensions. The effects of the historical dispute between Turks and Armenians are being felt in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Interestingly, the Armenian language makes no difference between Turks and Azeris. "Turk" is a generic word used for both. A confidence-building initiative investigating the deep roots of the mistrust between Turks/Azeris and Armenians will require indeed a trilateral format. Azeris have a clear stake in the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation.

On another level, some trilateral initiatives can explain how the normalization of Turkish-Armenian inter-governmental relations can benefit Azerbaijan in the end. The conviction that the opening of the border without a breakthrough in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would be harmful to Azerbaijan is deep-rooted. There are fears that the opening of the border would alter the fragile balance of power in the region and push Armenia into pursuing military action. No explanation is given though on how these two issues are connected or how direct communication with Turkey might transform Armenia into a military threat for Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani reactions are more emotional than rational, and more connected with symbolism than the search for political efficiency. The fact that Turkey closed its border with Armenia on 3 April 1993, in the context of the escalation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Armenian attack against Kelbajar, underpins the conviction that the border could not be opened before the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijani territories. A decision to open the border in the current context would be tantamount to the renunciation of a symbolic, but powerful gesture of support. Regional projects, if held, should be differentiated from Turkish-Armenian initiatives: regional projects are regional projects.

Finally, Turks, Azeris, and Armenians can come together in numerous projects addressing regional challenges such as transboundary issues like the environment. There is an untapped potential for cooperation on transboundary problems in the south Caucasus at the regional level.

## Chapter 7

### A Cross-Border Agenda for Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation

Most of the practitioners we talked with had established a clear conceptual distinction, if not a practical one, between normalization and reconciliation as two separate steps of de-escalating the conflict. Most of the Turkish-Armenian cross-border engagements are aimed at normalizing state to state relations as the end goal, at correcting a situation which is abnormal (i.e. the closed border and lack of diplomatic relations). There is a willingness to contribute to the development of good-neighborly relations and to increase interactions between the two countries. Normalization here requires some technical readjustments for the removal of concrete obstacles impeding direct communication. Increased communication will open room for collaboration and better knowledge of each other.

Normalization does not aim to solve the conflict, but rather to manage it at a non-destructive level. It strives to achieve a ‘cold peace’ and usually is arrived at by state-to-state negotiations. The agenda of normalization is based on the minimum level of consensus for cross-border engagement. It does not even name explicitly the issues underlying the dispute for example. The genocide issue is not part of the normalization agenda. However, the relations have been poisoned by history, so it is of crucial importance that Turkey and Armenia directly confront their dispute over genocide recognition. Reconciliation – otherwise in depth and durable normalization – is precisely the stage at which the genocide issue has to come on the table. At the moment, there isn’t any agreed upon agenda for reconciliation between the civil society groups of the two countries. Armenians are extremely cautious of not giving the impression of ‘*discussing the Genocide*’ which is considered “*a fact and part of the mentality of the Armenian people*”.

Indeed, the concept of reconciliation and what it involves have long been debated. There are different meanings attributed to reconciliation. Here by reconciliation we mean a process which truly transforms a destructive and conflictual relationship

into a constructive and peaceful one.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, it goes beyond negotiations for conflict settlement and the resulting 'cold peace' targeted by normalization efforts. Different from normalization, which is usually used for state-to-state relations, reconciliation has multiple components and involves society-to-society relations in addition to governmental levels. The multiple components of reconciliation are: truth, justice, regard, and security.<sup>27</sup> Truth aims at unraveling past misdeeds and clarifying what happened. The aim of truth telling is to eventually be able to reach a 'shared understanding' about the conflict. The justice component, on the other hand, calls for a correction of past injustices in a way that will satisfy the parties. The third component of reconciliation is regard, which is the acknowledgement by the victim of the perpetrators' humanity, identity, and good intentions. In other words, it is the forgiveness granted to the perpetrators in return for their participation in truth and justice seeking. This component is crucial as truth and justice must be followed by 'forgiveness' in order to close the circle of conflict. Without this component the final stage of reconciliation, security can not be achieved. Security refers to a state of secure mutual co-existence and assurances that the past will not be repeated or revenge will not be taken.

Generally speaking, Armenians from Armenia who are involved in projects with Turks see reconciliation work as a second step in the de-escalation process. Normalization in which a practical solution is found to the current situation through negotiations is seen as the first step, even a prerequisite that will ultimately lead to reconciliation. Reconciliation should then follow this stage. However, most of the Armenians with whom we spoke with did not have yet a clear vision about what the reconciliation agenda should look like. Even the issue of the centrality of the recognition has not been discussed openly.

Diaspora initiatives differ in this respect. For them, justice is a prerequisite of reconciliation. The key challenge is the issue of advancing the two paradigms of dialogue and justice at the same time. In these initiatives, when genocide is one of the issues, the

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<sup>26</sup> Lou Kriesberg, "Comparing Reconciliation Actions within and between Countries". In Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, ed., *From conflict resolution to reconciliation*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 81-110.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

conflict resolution framework, based on mutual needs, parity, and reciprocity between the two conflict parties, is fundamentally inadequate. It is the “peace with justice” model that becomes the preferred conflict transformation strategy. As a result, often when the two communities come together, particularly in the Turkish-Armenian case, the recognition of mass violence by the other side immediately surfaces as a human rights and social justice issue, thereby complicating the dialogue processes and what kind of conflict resolution approach should be adopted.

Turkish civil society organizations, with a few exceptions of liberal groups and intellectual circles, have little interest in a reconciliation perspective. On the other hand, the few of them focusing on the reconciliation aspect have a domestic agenda: Turkish-Armenian reconciliation is seen as an important issue for the further democratization of Turkish society and the political system. The initiatives take place outside the NGO community and develop as intellectual forms of civic engagement. The issue is defined clearly as an internal Turkish question that only a societal awakening can address. Efforts aim at overcoming the collective amnesia and reactivating memories of the cosmopolitan culture, at the acknowledgment and remembrance of the Armenian past in Anatolia. The activities of the publishing sector are noteworthy in that respect. They often produce documents including oral history projects, oral history archives, and books. Most of the initiatives take place in the field of arts and culture. The main expectation from such activities is usually raising awareness and increasing historical knowledge about the daily lives of Ottoman Armenians. One common theme in these activities is the desire to revive the memory of common cultural heritage and years of Turkish-Armenian co-existence before the conflict began. Examples of this kind of work have been proliferating in the last several years. A noteworthy one in this regard is BirZamanlar Yayincilik and Osman Koker’s book series (see the Box) and a recent book published by Fethiye Çetin and Ayşe Gül Altınay presenting the stories of Armenians discovering their Armenian identity at a later stage of their lives and how they come to grips with this new discovery about their identity.

Thus, considering the elements of the reconciliation process, so far, there has been some discussion about the ‘truth’ and ‘justice’

components of reconciliation, albeit inadequate. The books mentioned above and the growing interest in historical research can be seen as examples of these components. The incorporation of a joint historian commission into the protocols can also be seen as a step towards this end. The justice aspect too has been addressed albeit to a limited extent. The debate took place at TARC and culminated with the application for an expert opinion to the International Center for Transitional Justice. A recent apology campaign (see Box below) was organized in Turkey. Other examples of seeking truth and justice can be listed. Yet, the last two components of reconciliation have hardly been discussed at all either inside Turkey or in joint activities. An all-encompassing reconciliation agenda is needed and this agenda should take this process as a whole and develop ways in which how all of the components can be addressed in an effective manner. All in all, reconciliation is a mutual process, involving both parties in a conflict. One sided events focusing domestically on Turkey alone may bring momentum, but eventually it will have to include the other party too especially when it comes to forgiveness and closure stages.

#### **Box 7: Özür Diliyorum...**

As a reaction to Hrant Dink's assassination approximately 275 Turkish academics, journalists and other liberal intellectuals signed a petition issued on December 5 by professors Baskin Oran and Ahmet Insel, liberal journalist and academic Cengiz Aktar, and Islamist-oriented "Yeni Şafak" columnist Ali Bayramoglu apologizing personally for the "great disaster" suffered by the Armenians in 1915. The organizers opened a secure website to collect signatures; the petition remains open. The number of signatories has reached some 30 000. In issuing the apology, Oran said the authors had thought about urging the state to apologize, but decided to let the individual act according to his or her own conscience to this "human tragedy." The text calls on the Turkish people to confront a controversial episode in their history. The organizers say the signatures are a demonstration of the reaction of the individual to their historical responsibility.

Reactions to this initiative have shed light on the existence of a public debate – as acknowledged by international observers

- on the disputed events of 1915. MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli was outraged by the campaign and issued a written statement. According to him, there was no one to whom the Turks should apologize. Sixty Turkish retired ambassadors and consuls general issued a statement on December 15 rejecting the apology and declaring the initiative wrong and harmful to Turkish national interests. A number of intellectuals and historians declared that the apology did not go far enough by avoiding to qualify the events of 1915 as genocide. Another criticism put forward the argument that apologizing was not the responsibility of the individual but that of the state. Others minimized the importance of an apology campaign, stressing the priority should be to ensure a suitable atmosphere for an open discussion.

The initiative paved the way for the commemoration of 24 April in Taksim.

The dichotomic approach introduced by some practitioners making a clear-cut separation between normalization and reconciliation can be challenged. Normalization can be seen inherently as a step towards reconciliation. Advocating for the border opening too is a step towards reconciliation. The opening of the border – together with the preparatory work for its opening – is of utmost importance for the reconciliation process. It will erase the human barrier, will create momentum for reconciliation efforts, and will increase the sense of security on both sides. The perception of a potential threat stemming from the border will vanish with its opening to trade and human interactions. The most stable and secure borders are those which have disappeared as a result of intense cross-border interactions. Furthermore, facing Ararat and Ani just from the other side of a sealed border does nothing to help lessen the nostalgia and yearning for the lost *historical homeland* nourished with the grief and pain of a wound that has never been healed<sup>28</sup>. This nostalgia and yearning can be satiated when the lost

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<sup>28</sup> *The public survey conducted by ACNIS on the genocide issue reveals that 73,5% of those interviewed expect “the return to historical lands and their inhabitation by heirs of the victims” as a result of the “acceptance of the genocide”. The Armenian genocide survey, “90 years and waiting”, ACNIS. April 2005.*

homeland becomes palpable and accessible with the removal of the barrier. The ICHD report of the town hall meetings dedicated to Turkey-Armenia Rapprochement highlighted that the *'open border is first of all viewed as passage to the territory of the historic homeland and the opportunity of interacting with the historic homeland is seen as guarantee for reinforcement of the Armenian identity'*. Therefore, the meaning associated with the opening of the border is beyond establishing diplomatic and economic relations, but has a highly symbolic value for the Armenians. It not only brings a feeling of security diminishing the perceived threat, but also relieves frustration emanating from being barred from reaching the historical homeland. In this sense too, normalization and reconciliation processes are intertwined and cannot be separated.

While waiting for the official opening of the border, normalization efforts can incorporate a reconciliation dimension, while pointing at the reconciliation between the two nations as its ultimate goal. Shaping the present and building the future are the best ways to deal with the past. Geography indeed can provide tools to bridge historical divides. That the fall of the Iron Curtain in Europe has led paradoxically to the closure of the Turkish-Armenian border should be interpreted as a lost opportunity. Yet, it is exactly because Turks and Armenians live right next door to each other that the willingness and preparation to transcend the past is an obligation. The way forward necessitates a pathway for collaboration between Turks and Armenians. An open border would intensify contacts and create opportunities for new experiences, new memories, and new interactions to build up alongside the old. Furthermore, by opening the border, Turkey will send a symbolic message indicating that it cares about the 'security' of Armenians and will cooperate towards the development and well-being of this country and its people regardless of what happened in the past. Actively working to safeguard a positive and secure future for this country will reduce the feeling of insecurity that is fed by the historical events and the current negative environment.

The rediscovery of the common past is necessary to better deal with the most sensitive issues and try to bridge progressively the historical gap so sadly symbolized by the sealed border between the two countries. It is therefore important for Turkish-Armenian cross-border initiatives – even the most technical ones to allow a re-reading

of the past in a way that binds peoples of the region together and the revisiting of the concurrent memories. In short, normalization efforts need to be sensitive to the historical component and need to reflect on how to address this component. Joint efforts aiming at the rediscovery of the common history and the protection of the Armenian cultural heritage can be prioritized in this respect.

We suggest that normalization and reconciliation processes should be advanced in parallel, not at the expense of each other. Normalization is the first step towards reconciliation. They may look separate and sequential, but they are not mutually exclusive processes. However, civil society actors on both sides need to first confront with the notion of reconciliation and develop a common agenda jointly.

**Box 8: Rediscovering a Common History and Constructing a Shared Identity**

Turks and Armenians share five centuries of common history, which the nationalist narratives constructed in the twentieth century almost have entirely erased from the memory on both sides of the border. At times independent, the culturally and linguistically distinct Armenians were eventually absorbed into the Ottoman Empire, but their cultural patrimony under the Ottoman system of government remained largely intact for hundreds of years. Armenians were an important and visible part of the Ottoman Empire's economic and cultural life and they prospered until the last decades of the nineteenth century; Istanbul was the main cultural center for Armenians at a time when Yerevan was a small trading post. Past events must be seen in the context of a far longer period of history. Just as most Turks visiting the Genocide Museum in Yerevan would be troubled by the manner in which the Ottoman Empire is depicted in snapshot fashion as a homogenously murderous entity, similarly, Armenian visitors to Turkey would be troubled to find that most Armenian traces in Turkey have been destroyed or renamed. On both sides, five centuries of commercial, social and political interaction seem to have been erased.

To counter the effects of ninety years of conflicting narratives, research and education about Turkey in Armenia, and about Armenia in Turkey – currently virtually non-existent – should be developed as a matter of priority. The opening of a Turkish cultural center in Armenia which that would depict the Ottoman Empire and Turkey in a realistic manner would be a highly effective tool of cultural diplomacy.

A more nuanced and contextualized approach to the history of the Ottoman period is also imperative to encourage reconciliation and give back to both Turks and Armenians a larger share of their collective identities. Improving mutual knowledge and rediscovering a shared past would foster reconciliation by eroding stereotypes and enemy images of the other. Literature and architecture act as powerful testimonials of the common Turkish-Armenian past. The Armenian contribution to Ottoman art and architecture is as striking as it is hidden, while Turkish language literature in the Armenian script would provide a fascinating field of historical investigation. Evidence of the latent interest in both communities in rediscovering their shared past was the record number of visitors who attended the exhibition in Istanbul in 2005 on the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. Thus joint studies by Turkish and Armenian academics should be encouraged. This could be done first by promoting the study of Ottoman, Armenian and Turkish languages and literature in Turkish and Armenian universities. In particular the Turkology departments at the Yerevan State University and the Oriental Studies Institute need to be supported through new teaching and research materials and the establishment of student and scholar exchange programmes. Second, incentives should be given to academic institutions to establish collaborative research programmes. Here international funding could help greatly to induce such joint research activities.

Of the 70 million citizens in Turkey, 70,000 are citizens of Armenian descent. There are also approximately 30,000 Armenians who have immigrated into Turkey. Supporting the cultural revival of Armenians in Turkey today would act as a powerful signal of the Turkish-Armenian common past, identity and peaceful coexistence. It also would be an important symbolic gesture towards reconciliation by creating a safe space and giving a sense of security. This would require the protection and restoration of the Armenian historical heritage in Turkey.

### **Box 9: Shared Culture Heritage and Tourism**

Cultural heritage has proven to be a vital asset for reconciliation and recovery efforts. Cultural heritage is a shared value: a bridge between cultures and communities, as well as from past, to present and to the future. Cultural heritage, a powerful symbol of the identity of peoples, can become a unifying factor for national and regional reconciliation and serve as a foundation for a shared future.

Promoting reconciliation by fostering Turkey's Armenian heritage also boosts Turkey's tourism sector, which, while burgeoning and representing an important source of income for the western part of the country, remain profoundly underdeveloped in the east. Tourism in fact has been developing steadily in Armenia over the last few years. With economic development, demand for international travel is gradually increasing. Travel agencies have improved their services and some have started to offer packages to Turkey, mainly to Istanbul and Antalya. It is likely that Armenians from both Armenia and the diaspora – as well as others – would be interested in visiting the eastern part of Turkey.

**Box 10: Armenians in Turkey 100 Years ago through the Postcard Collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno**

Osman Koker attempted to launch a book setting about the Armenian presence in Turkey at the beginning of the 20th century. As a result of a 5-6-year process he did a research on how many Armenians were located in Anatolian cities; which neighbourhoods of which cities belonged to Armenians; which villages were Armenians; where the Armenian churches, monasteries, schools were; what kind of roles Armenians played in the economic and social life of their environment...He identified these elements by city to city, town to town, village to village. Thanks to the relationship he established with a postcard collector named Orlando Carlo Calumeno, the book turned into an album book. Since, Osman Koker was not able to find a publisher for the book; he was obliged to establish his own publishing agency. In January of 2005, the book with the title of *"Armenians in Turkey 100 Years ago through the Postcard Collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno"* was announced in parallel to an exhibition named 'Sireli Yeğpayrıs' (My Dear Brother- Sevgili Kardeşim). Koker explains the exhibition process:

"The exhibition was open to public for eleven days, more or less seven or eight thousands people visited it. We made a very good announcement. We announced the event very well through our own channels and it had a distinct coverage in the press as well. An Armenian friend of ours distributed two thousands brochures at the entrance of the cemetery after the Armenians Christmas ceremony. At an unexpected time, while the Armenian issue still was not outspoken, those brochures were passed into the hands of the people and they came to the exhibition with a great curiosity. There were around six hundred people coming to the opening ceremony. Not only on the opening day, but also for the whole event people flocked to the exhibition. There were hundreds of people in the venue at the same time. There were people who were crying, or the other ones who attended to the event and visited the exhibition one more time with their children or mothers the following day. I think the most impressive part of the exhibition was; the stands were set up according to the location of the cities. The person entering the venue was

approaching to his or her city's stand instinctively. Firstly, they were looking at the pictures in silence for a while, and then they began chatting such as "There were Armenians here as well. Which neighbourhood were you from? When did you leave?" and so on."

Osman Koker tells that since the ceremony, exhibition received much attention from the media such as Agence France Press, German newspapers, Armenian press and Armenian Diaspora's press and he started receiving proposals to launch the exhibition abroad especially in Armenia. However, Koker adds that it took a while to fulfill the idea of exhibiting it in Armenia and before it; the exhibition was launched in several European Countries.

'Also it was not easy to set up the exhibition in Armenia. Like all of other goods, to take the exhibition from one country to another is almost impossible when there is lack of diplomatic relations between two countries. There were companies shipping out import-export goods informally through Georgia, but it was not very easy to build relationships in order to do this for the exhibition and it would take time. The exhibition was not a minor one; each was a square meter with one hundred thirty boards. I prepared seven big boxes to move them. I realized that it seemed impossible to bring them to Armenia under legal customs allowance. I had special suitcases done and travelled with them from Turkey as an extra baggage. It was not very difficult to enter to and exit from Armenia, but while taking them to Turkey I had to prove that the material was actually made in Turkey and I brought them with me.'

Koker states that the exhibition was opened to public between 15 and 28 of September 2009 in Moscow Cinema's foyer of Yerevan, and the exhibition received a lot of attention in this city as well:

'At the opening ceremony there were representatives of cultural institutions, people from press and academia. First days, there was not much coverage in the press. It was the third day I think I was invited to a television programme. After the programme, the exhibition turned out to be a popular one. I could not return to Turkey during the whole duration of exhibition since all exhibition

materials were registered under my name at the customs of Armenia. It was announced to schools and non-governmental organizations that the exhibition could be visited accompanied by the curator. I think I guided about twenty groups each consisted of fifteen people throughout the exhibition. For example, groups of Turkology students, women who were taking painting classes, and high school students visited the exhibition with my guidance. Very strong dialogues were established during these visits. Cinema itself was already an attraction; the audience who happened to be at the cinema were definitely hanging out at the exhibition. I think our exhibition left a distinct mark on the cultural life of Yerevan in that period. Also thanks to the television, almost everybody could recognize me on the street. For instance, while passing by one of the widespread coffee houses, someone would stand up and salute me, in particular would try to greet me in Turkish.

Apart from Turkey and Armenia, the exhibition was launched also in France, Germany, Switzerland and England in six years. Osman Koker made the similar presentations besides the exhibition launch. He has made approximately thirty presentations in Turkey and in Syria, Holland and the USA as well.

*Birzamanlar Yayıncılık*, which was set up by Osman Koker to publish this book and formulated its aim to 'publish books and hold cultural events on cultural diversity which Turkey used to have and its extinction', has published twenty books in six years. The publisher organized four exhibitions on similar issues besides book publishing.

When the political significance of his work was asked, Koker states that he does not set very ambitious political targets; he wants to make people in Turkey understand the advantages of multi-cultural structure. Koker says: 'It is even enough for me if people notice our lost parts or think what a 'pity' when they read my books or visit my exhibitions. I do not have any claim to fix relations between Turkey and Armenia, if I serve people to approach each other in a more amicable way, I am happy. Overall, if you cannot develop this friendship between people, you cannot solve any problem in the long run.'

## Chapter 8

### **Linking Track 1 and Track 2: Towards a more effective relationship**

While some Track Two practitioners are not interested in having an impact at the Track One level, for others “what is the purpose of Track Two if it is not going to contribute to Track One.” In fact, in many parts of the world second track channels are created especially when mistrust and misunderstanding between governments prevail and block the progress of formal or official negotiations. They are particularly meaningful when governments do not want to engage in formal negotiations for one reason or another, but need to ‘feel the air’ to explore the potential room for negotiations or to require a limited form of policy coordination. Practitioners that are in the first mindset tend to focus on building relations at the grassroots level only and are hardly interested in linking their initiatives with high level diplomats, policy-makers, or negotiators. On the other hand, those that internalize the second modus operandi struggle at the moment with the question of “how to better connect Track Two and Track One.”

#### **Did the Track Two activities have a positive impact on the process of the normalization of intergovernmental relations?**

It is difficult to argue that Track Two activities contributed significantly to the signing of the protocols. The process leading to the protocols was initiated as back-channel diplomacy under the auspices of Swiss foreign affairs. However, this back channel was limited to officials. In fact, unlike other conflicts that are at the pre-negotiation and/or negotiation stage, there are very few politically-focused high level working groups in the Turkish-Armenian case that specifically target a concrete contribution geared to the negotiation process. In our survey, except for TARC, we did not identify any high level Track Two activity that had this specific goal. This aspect is very different from other conflicts at the pre-negotiation or negotiation stages, such as the Israeli-Palestinian one, which almost exclusively focused on back-channel and quasi-official Track Two activities between the signing of the Oslo peace agreement in 1993 and the final status negotiations in 2001.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cuhadar and Dayton, *forthcoming*.

The situation in the Armenian-Turkish case may be due to the fact that official negotiations moved too fast after 2008 and resulted in the signing of the protocols without leaving any need for or relevance to Track Two. It also may be due to the primary focus of Track Two on the grassroots level and relationship building rather than on negotiations. However, with the freezing of the official process now, there is an increasing room once again for high level political Track Two activities in order to reinvigorate the frozen negotiation process. High-level (elite and quasi-official) Track Two is especially effective as a pre-negotiation tool and is more relevant at this stage of the relations. The focus on grassroots level and relationship building is important especially to garner public opinion support for a negotiation process, but it should not be an “either-or” approach that is at the expense of high-level Track Two efforts especially when negotiations are stuck. While the official negotiations are moving on, like during the protocol negotiation process, Track Two can solely concentrate on the grassroots level in order to garner support in the public opinion. At other times, policy level Track Two and grassroots level Track Two should move together in a complementary fashion.

An important point to make about the Track One-Track Two connection is that during the protocol negotiation process, there have been more efforts in Armenia on the side of Track Two to have a positive input for Track One. Track Two actors in Turkey have been less active and less relevant in providing this type of input for Track One. Two exemplary attempts in Armenia in this regard were the Town Hall meetings held by the ICHD in different parts of the country and the Civil Chamber. Civil Chamber is a network of civil society actors directly connected to the president of Armenia and has been used occasionally as a channel for consultation on issues related to Turkish-Armenian normalization. It provided a direct channel between the civil society actors and the President and helped the former to provide feedback to the latter. At the same time during the negotiations, town hall meetings were held in Armenia to understand and elaborate on people’s fears and hopes concerning the protocols. This was an effective method to mobilize public opinion support for a controversial issue.

The problem of asymmetry once again confronts us in this particular context as well. Track Two efforts to contribute to Track One should be held on both sides otherwise the effect would be one-sided and would create ineffectiveness in the negotiation process.

Perhaps then, the next questions to ask at this moment are: What are the barriers to a more effective involvement of Track Two in the negotiation process? and How to proceed from this point onwards?

When we asked these questions to the practitioners, we received very different answers. Not only there was no consensus with regards to how to proceed, there were also conflicting suggestions. Here are some areas of disagreement about how Track Two should proceed in relation to Track One:

- “Separate Track Two and Track One clearly, don’t allow political issues to influence civil society efforts, stay at the civil society level” versus “link Track Two and Track One more closely”
- “Track Two should be prioritized at the moment to build relations and interdependence first and then we should move on to Track one” versus “ Track Two should act quickly to jump start Track One.”
- “Track two should shift weight from artistic and cultural activities to business and practical cooperation (e.g. the environment)” versus “Track Two should stay at the grassroots level and avoid political issues.”
- “Track Two should start with easy issues and move on to more difficult ones later”versus “Deal with the most critical “political” and “historical” issues first: the ‘heart of the matter”
- “History is the problem, but political and geographic ties are the solution” versus “history is the problem and should be prioritized.”
- “Historians should be handled separately from the current political problems and processes”versus “Historians should be integrated into the political process.”

Perhaps there are no clear answers as to which of these roads is the right one to take when it comes to Track Two-Track One linkage. Some Track Two practitioners are not interested at all in connecting with Track One. Track Two actor’s preferences in this

direction should be respected by the governments and Track One. Grassroots level activities involving youth, artists, etc. do not have to interact with Track One actors. However, for high level political Track Two, because of the nature of their work, a close interaction is inevitable. Thus, many of the questions listed above need to be tackled by the participants, funders, and project organizers with the help of a participatory planning process before initiating a project. The goals and expectations of each party, including that of the third party facilitators, need to be laid out clearly and streamlined in the beginning of a project. This also would prevent some of the mistakes that happened in the TARC process and the resulting disappointment felt by the participants. A joint process of elaboration regarding expectations and how to proceed with Track One, with the help of the facilitator, clearly would enhance the effectiveness of a high level political Track Two and its linkage to Track One.

Although the expert communities on both sides of the border have been very active during the protocols, the work by think tanks has had little effect on the inter-governmental negotiations. It has not involved parties or issues to explore opportunities that the governments could not put on the negotiation table. A high number of meetings have focused on the discussion of protocols. However, these discussions (except in the town hall meetings and civil chamber examples) have not been systematic and were not held in a way that could contribute to the policy making process. In fact, experts very often at the request of the media, have started competing by providing the most in-depth analyses. This dangerous tendency to interpret and read between the lines of a text of diplomatic consensus contributed to making the common ground reached at the intergovernmental level increasingly fragile. Their approach has generated confusion: the process required speed and clarity, the pace was slow and paved with ambiguity.

Finally, the think tanks involved in the dialogue processes have not always had the necessary contacts with the political decision-making bodies in order to have an impact on governments. In both countries, the think tank communities face difficulties identifying the pace to manoeuvre and developing advocacy channels. A number of experts and NGO practitioners share the opinion that the civil society organizations of both countries have failed to support efficiently the inter-governmental normalization process. As a result,

the impression that the Track Two has been left behind Track One after 2008 has become widespread.

Still, one could argue that the contribution of Track Two efforts to the negotiation process have been more subtle and more at the public opinion level. Aside from the town hall meetings and consultations with the policy makers in Armenia, these efforts mainly contributed to the breaking of the taboos and opening up of the cognitive space for the negotiations.

### **Impact of the failure of the inter-governmental talks on civil society activities**

The other side of the coin in Track One-Track Two relations is how Track One influences Track Two. The degree of disappointment and disillusionment has been commensurate with the intensity of hope generated by the visits of the presidents and the breathtaking signature ceremony in Zurich. However, the fear that the interruption of the process would push the region back far behind where the talks started was not founded. This feeling of frustration led for a certain period of time to the insistence that the first move must come from the formal inter-governmental level.

Civil society engagement is very much dependent on the perception of 'permissiveness' as it is perceived in the respective domestic contexts. Track Two activism increases when there is an opening at the political level. The request for official endorsement voiced openly by NGOs contradicts with the essence of any civil initiative, which is pioneering dialogue in the society. For instance, some of the main stream actors we interviewed in Armenia and Turkey said they were willing to engage with the other side, but were waiting for a move in the Track One first. Some of them even did not want their efforts to reach out to the other side of the border to be known publicly before the protocols become official. Turkish-Armenian relations are still perceived as being highly sensitive by mainstream organizations in Turkey and to some extent in Armenia. Many in Turkey asked for some kind of state warrantees. There is clear call for a leader ready to display the political courage and vision to pull the issue of the normalization of bilateral relations above domestic politics.

In this respect the personal initiative of President Gül and President Sargsyan has brought an additional source of legitimacy to the Turkish and Armenian civil society and the business community looking forward to increased interaction between the two countries. Armenian civil society also is looking to the Turkish state. Turkish initiatives often are perceived as incoherent or lacking consistency. The impression that "*Turkey is wavering*" and doesn't have a clear stance does not help in building confidence or extricate from minds the belief that Turkey will always hide something. Armenian nascent civil society would like to believe that the Turkish state can be sincere.

Still, as a result the belief that Turkish-Armenian relations will be normalized sooner or later has developed. There has been a crack in the wall with the opening of mental borders. This has paved the way for more operational relations. Turkish and Armenian civil society organizations have developed a web of personal and institutional connections.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### The main challenges ahead for higher effectiveness:

- **There is a pressing need to increase the impact of the initiatives in Turkey**

Turkey and the issue of the normalization of relations always rank among the three first priorities on the Armenian agenda. However, for a country of the size and dynamism of Turkey, Armenia becomes an issue only on specific occasions, and is forgotten the rest of the time. This asymmetry not only influences operational aspects of the projects, such as the selection of participants, but also has important implications in terms of the impact of the projects. It is very likely that the effects of civil society projects have a greater impact in small Armenia than in large and diverse Turkey. Such an asymmetrical impact may do more harm to normalization and reconciliation as it eventually generates frustration, especially on the Armenian side. At the moment, the scope of the activities of Turkish-Armenian projects fails to address this fundamental asymmetry. There are more efforts to connect Track One and Track Two in Armenia whereas much more has yet to be achieved in Turkey.

- **More advocacy work is necessary to raise public awareness and reach out to the political level**

Practitioners voiced several barriers to the effective spill over of the effects of their projects. The recycling of the same people over and over between different activities. This hampers the ability to expand to a wider circle and is especially a problem in grassroots level initiatives that limit themselves to relationship building.

How to make Turkish-Armenian relations a popular issue for both the grassroots and the political level is an important challenge. The issue is still perceived as being too sensitive to be addressed in an advocacy campaign. No one has ever tried to mobilize the public in favor of normalization. Civil society engagement is very much dependent on the perception of “permissiveness” of the state in

both domestic contexts. Very few projects have developed advocacy work. Policy-oriented projects usually pursue a closed circle advocacy. Information bulletins and policy notes are circulated by means of institutional mailing lists. NGOs have not developed direct channels with the political level. The Turkish-Armenian field appears to be closed to political activism. Although this implies a higher risk, projects should start developing an outreach towards political parties. In targeting the elite and quasi-official level, organizers should strive to reach out to those that are of high policy-relevance at that time rather than sticking to the same elites or limiting themselves to the most easily available people. It is important that the issue be raised in the public arena.

Because of the asymmetry which is a characteristic of bilateral relations, the task ahead is much more needed in Turkey. It would be misleading to take for granted that there is a strong opposition to normalization and reconciliation efforts within Turkish society. It is just not an issue on the national level.

- **Expanding the reach of the initiatives requires overcoming the center-periphery dichotomy**

The propensity for cross-border engagement remains low on the borderland. The need to concentrate more efforts on the borderland and empower the border communities has been acknowledged by most of NGOs practitioners and donor organizations.

Building capacity on the borderlands should be a priority. The best way of building capacities will go through the promotion of a mentoring approach from the centers towards the borderland. NGOs based in the centers should establish strong linkages with the peripheries. The partnership with a mainstream institution established in the center will provide a sort of immunity for the local actor by legitimizing the initiative.

- **Broadening the “peace” constituency and go to the mainstream**

The number of NGOs and individuals involved in cross-border activities increased significantly from 2005 to 2010. However, a quick look at the characteristics of the NGOs and the profile of the

individuals involved shows that behind the initiatives are usually the same individuals or groups. This is a concern repeatedly mentioned by most of the practitioners as well. Easier said than done, but we put forward a few suggestions that may move the practitioners and funders towards thinking on this problem:

Despite the dominance of the grassroots level activities, some stakeholders at that level (e.g. women) have not been involved adequately in projects. An effort can be made to reach out to those people. The aim to reach ordinary people should push projects to connect with daily life on both sides of the border. While targeting the grassroots level, new projects should include those groups that have not been included before, such as women, nationalist and conservative youth, and young entrepreneurs.

In order to achieve this, the focus of the projects needs to be broadened in order to be appealing to such people. Activities should deal with domestic and local issues and even issues that specifically concern that particular stakeholder. This leads to a redefinition of the priorities in the selection of the issues where there is a direct connection between the size of the target group and the selection of the issues.

- **Democratizing access to funds and diversification of sources**

Fixed project formats provided by major international donors used elsewhere in the world may not be the best that suits the needs of this conflict especially at that particular time. Locals' culture-sensitive input need to be valued and encouraged by donors as they are the most knowledgeable about the specific context.

The ability of the donors to share the vision of local NGOs is considered the key for success. Access to funds is highly selective. Donors have to assume risks and democratize access to funds. The capacity of local NGOs needs to be strengthened in writing grants and implementing projects. Otherwise, beneficiaries of grants remain limited to English-speaking urban organizations.

Most project designs have to be done by an Armenian organization and only after that is a Turkish partner found to fit that design. Joint designs from the beginning would increase the effectiveness of partnerships as well as the implementation and success of the

projects. The asymmetry in Turkish-Armenian relations implies that the scale and the scope of the task that has to be carried out on the Turkish side is massive.

An EU grant scheme specially designed for Turkish-Armenian initiatives will allow a diversification of the funding sources. The creation of local sources for funding is essential in terms of the development of ownership and the sustainability of the actions. However, joint Turkish-Armenian initiatives may be on stronger grounds with support from a third country.

**Issues of importance in the design of the overall strategy and definition of the rationale of the project:**

**• Rethinking the Track One - Track Two Linkage**

Some Track Two practitioners are not interested at all in connecting with Track One. Track Two actor's preferences in this direction should be respected by the governments and Track One. Grassroots level activities do not have to interact with Track One actors. However, for high level political Track Two, because of the nature of their work, a close interaction is inevitable. A joint process of elaboration regarding expectations and how to proceed with Track One clearly would enhance the effectiveness of a high level political Track Two and its linkage to Track One.

**• Overcoming the dichotomy of reconciliation vs normalization is necessary. These two processes are “complementary” and should move forward simultaneously**

Most of the practitioners had established a clear conceptual distinction between normalization and reconciliation as two separate steps of de-escalating the conflict. Normalization does not aim to solve the conflict, but rather to manage it on a non-destructive level. It strives to achieve a “cold peace” and usually includes state-to-state negotiations. Reconciliation, on the other hand, is a process which truly transforms a destructive and conflictual relationship into a constructive and peaceful one.

Reconciliation and normalization should go parallel to each other. Normalization can be seen inherently as a step towards reconciliation. Advocating for the border opening is meaningful for the purposes of

reconciliation. While waiting for the official opening of the border, normalization can incorporate a reconciliation dimension, otherwise point at the reconciliation between the two nations as its ultimate goal.

**• The extension of the format of Turkish-Armenian projects with the inclusion of Diaspora Armenians or Azerbaijani participants remains a controversial issue having both pros and cons**

However, the diaspora is a factor in Turkish-Armenian relations. It seems important to help the diaspora define a positive agenda towards both Armenia and Turkey. A positive redefinition of their link with Turkey will transform them into stakeholders of the transformation processes underway in Turkey. On the other side Turkish-Armenian-Azerbaijani trilateral reconciliation projects can address the deep roots of the existing mistrust. The dialogue and cooperation pattern set between the Turkish and Armenian civil societies can encourage Azerbaijanis seeking some form of exchange with Armenians. Trilateral projects can help to make Turkish society, experts, decision makers better understand the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Armenians of Turkey are considered as a real asset for Turkish-Armenian initiatives. It is important to make their voice heard.

**More precisely the priorities of future projects should be:**

The Turkish-Armenian peace-building process in the next years should adopt a strategy that aims at: 1) building and strengthening relationships, 2) building capacity of the civil society and organizations to better address the conflict; and 3) creating institutions or processes to constructively address the conflict. In light of this strategy:

- Relationship-building has been adopted as a priority activity so far, however very little is known about their effectiveness. Do they change attitudes? Do they improve relations? There needs to be systematic assessments required by donors concerning relationship focused initiatives, some may be based on pre- and post-project designs.
- Capacity building is severely lacking as an activity among the Turkish-Armenian activities and needs to be developed.

Training programs addressing particular needs should be encouraged.

- Track Two projects created processes to address the conflict, yet these were mostly ad hoc activities and were hardly institutionalized. Future projects should focus more on institutionalization. Reconciliation is a long-term process.

**Besides, the following are the types of activities that can be adopted in line with the above-mentioned overall strategy:**

**To build cross-border professional partnerships through practical projects:** The advantage of these types of projects is that because of the profit and other pay-off incentives, they are more likely to involve mainstream actors and to be durable and sustainable. Cooperation on transboundary issues, such as environmental protection and public health, presents new possibilities for professional level cooperation.

**To establish information channels between the two societies:** These information channels need not only be free of prejudice, but also need to be strengthened and institutionalized.

**To establish a new high-level Track Two process to jump start the frozen negotiations:** Aside from TARC, we haven't come across with a similar initiative. Now that the Track One level is stuck, it is timely to start a TARC-like high level Track Two process in order to specifically discuss the impediments to the signing of protocols and how they can be overcome. The purpose of such an initiative can be to jointly analyze the obstacles blocking the negotiation process and to develop recommendations to overcome them. In addition to the governments of both countries, third countries that can help overcome the impediments can also be involved in this process.

**To help rediscover the common past and shared memory:** Turkish-Armenian cross-border initiatives -even the most technical ones- allow a plural re-reading of the past that bind peoples of the region together and the revisiting of the concurrent memories. Furthermore, unravelling the shared memory and the common past before 1915 will create a new cognitive space for the two societies, which holds extremely polarized views at the moment.



