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# What role can USA play in normalization of Armenian-Turkish Relns?

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Producers of the performance 'Normalization of Armenian-Turkish Relations' are now drawing up various models of behavior for Yerevan, Ankara and Baku.

President Barack Obama's visit to Europe ended in an optimistic note: he visited the Mosque of Hagia Sophia, communicated with the religious figures and students in Turkey. From the point of view of maintaining President Obama's own image, the visit was obviously successful. Both in Europe and Turkey Obama was received as a new US figure, who is trying to speedily do away with the heritage of George Bush Jr. It is difficult to assess the extent to which Obama's efforts have been a success so far, but it's a fact that in certain foreign issues the new US president is still acting «in a typically American manner».

/PanARMENIAN.Net/ What was the cost of Obama's statement on the necessity of Turkey to join the EU? Obama couldn't but be aware of President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel's expected reaction, but he simply thought 'it might work'. In fact, it didn't. To take Turkey into the EU would mean to put an end to Europe in its present situation, and if the advisers of the US President have not made it clear to him, there is nothing more to speak about!

As Mark Almond writes in The Times, repairing the rifts that George W. Bush left in America's relations with old friends is the key thrust of the early Obama agenda. 'When the Turkish parliament failed to back the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, it left the State Department's spokesman speechless. 'The Turks have done what?!' he wailed as he ripped up his script about America's reliable NATO partner backing the war against Saddam Hussein. Worse still for President Obama is the fraught triangular relationship between the United States, Turkey and the EU. Turkey has spent decades trying to join the EU, only to see former Communist states in Eastern Europe leapfrog over it,' notices Almond.

Obama's visit is interesting for Armenia from the point of view of the US role in fence-mending between Yerevan and Ankara. On the whole, Barack Obama justified the Armenian hopes: not uttering the word 'genocide' he yet underlined that his position is unchanged and urged Turkey to 'reckon with its past'. Naturally, the border will be opened neither on April 16, nor after April 24. Producers of the performance 'Normalization of Armenian-Turkish Relations' are now drawing up various models of behavior for Yerevan, Ankara and Baku. The «dress rehearsal», as usual, may end in nothing: they will hold discussions, feel out each other's positions and leave it till next football match, due in October. But much may occur in the near future - the expected meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents at the summit of 'Eastern Partnership', due in Prague on May 7. In other words, once again everything rests on the regulation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which, by value for Armenia, is equal to the US recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

There exists also the Azeri factor, which not once has been dwelt on in our analyses. In connection with Obama's visit to Istanbul, Baku has started an unprecedented campaign for hindering the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border. Letters, requirements - everything is used. Even Ilham Aliyev refused to attend the summit 'Dialogue among Civilizations'; In the words of Azeri political analyst Zardusht Alizade, opening of border between

Armenia and Turkey is the job of two independent states, and Azerbaijan must not meddle with it. Azerbaijan must herself solve her problems and the Karabakh conflict in particular, and not ask it of Turkey. Opening of border between Armenia and Turkey is the domestic affair of these countries, where Azerbaijan is a third party and has nothing to do with opening the border. `It is a bit difficult to give the precise date of opening the border as it depends on the negotiation process between the two countries,' Alizade said, Azeri media reports.

The Turkish opening to Armenia has potentially significant implications for the balance of power in the Caucasus, says annual report issued by Stratfor analytical center. `The August 2008 Russo-Georgian war created an unstable situation in an area of vital importance to Russia. In this regard, normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia is of extreme importance. Armenians had long held Turkey responsible for the mass murder of Armenians during and after World War I, a charge the Turks have denied. The U.S. Congress for several years has threatened to pass a resolution condemning Turkish genocide against Armenians. The Turks are extraordinarily sensitive to this charge, and passage would have meant a break with the United States,' the report says in particular.

Even if we take into consideration the fact that Turkey is somehow moving away from America, trying to play her own role in the region and also in the whole world, the US Congress' resolution on the Armenian Genocide would really affect the balance in the region that includes not only the Great Middle East, but also the Central Asia or, to be more exact, the Turkic world. Armenia will appear in complete isolation and will have to make concessions that may put the country on the verge of existence. This is the worst scenario, but, unfortunately, predictable.

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