

Türkiye's Policy in the South Caucasus

Navigating Normalization Efforts Amid
Ankara's "Azerbaijan First" Policy

October 2025





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Introduction

The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020 and ensuing geopolitical developments revealed Türkiye's instrumental and ambivalent role in the South Caucasus. Notwithstanding tensions between Ankara and Moscow or between Moscow and the collective West, Türkiye positioned itself as the regional power whose increased presence in the South Caucasus is not met with opposition—either by Russia or by the collective West—at a time when geopolitical polarization is on the rise. Developments in the last few years in the South Caucasus, once exclusively under the control and influence of Russia, have raised questions as to Türkiye's plans for the region.

In this research, we have endeavored to identify the primary goals and directions of Türkiye's policy in the South Caucasus. We examined the main directions of Türkiye's foreign policy at large and with the three countries of South Caucasus, in particular, and provided policy recommendations on how to maneuver the normalization of relations between Armenia and Türkiye against the backdrop of Türkiye's "Azerbaijan First" policy in the South Caucasus.

Methodology

The desk research was complemented by interviews undertaken in July–August 2025 with 18 Turkish and foreign experts on Türkiye's foreign policy, discussions with the foreign diplomatic corps in Armenia, and contacts made during international conferences and workshops focused on South Caucasus geopolitics in 2025 in the Netherlands, Türkiye, and Georgia, as well as during the 2025 APRI Forum.

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Background

Since the end of the Cold War, Türkiye, along with Russia, has been one of the principal powers influencing South Caucasus geopolitics. Its influence was based on shared geography, history, and linguistic and ethnic affinity with Azerbaijan, articulated in the "One Nation, Two States" slogan. The South Caucasus is strategically located. The region allows energy resources to reach international markets while bypassing Russia and Iran, and connects Europe to Central Asia. Both make the region important for Ankara.

While Türkiye was successful in developing a trilateral strategic partnership with Azerbaijan and Georgia, institutionalized by the signature of the Trabzon Declaration of 2012, Türkiye did not have diplomatic relations with Armenia, and closed its border in 1993, supporting Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Türkiye and Armenia launched a normalization effort in 2008–2009, known as "football diplomacy," but it failed—mainly due to the aggressive resistance of Azerbaijan.



The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War marked a new era of Türkiye’s involvement in the South Caucasus, as Ankara succeeded in changing the regional status quo by facilitating Azerbaijan’s victory in that conflict. Despite Turkish support for Azerbaijan, however, Türkiye and Armenia initiated a new normalization process soon after the end of the 2020 war. The Armenian government viewed normalization with Türkiye as a part of its “peace agenda,” while Ankara perceived it as a part of its broader strategy of increasing its influence in the region. The start of the Russia-Ukraine War undermined Russia’s capacity to influence South Caucasus geopolitics as Moscow shifted resources mostly toward the war and conflict with the United States and the European Union (EU). The September 2023 military takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan and the forced displacement of the Armenian population under the passive eye of Russian peacekeepers further weakened Russia’s position in the South Caucasus, creating new opportunities for Türkiye to increase its influence.

These shifts in the regional balance of power mirror President Erdoğan’s plan to elevate Türkiye from a middle power to a global force capable of projecting influence in multiple regions, including the Middle East, Western Balkans, Black Sea, South Caucasus, Central Asia, Eastern Mediterranean, and Northern Africa.



Executive summary

- The current Turkish foreign policy is based on the concept of the “Century of Türkiye” crystallized by President Erdoğan in 2023. Its primary goal is to elevate the country's role in regional and international affairs, making Türkiye a country that projects power globally.
- Türkiye views the South Caucasus as a significant region from both a geopolitical and geoeconomic point of view; a bridge connecting it to Central Asia, a buffer zone with Russia, and a neighboring region that can propel Türkiye as the main energy, transport, and logistics hub.
- Türkiye's policy in the South Caucasus is, and will likely remain, based on its strategic alliance with Azerbaijan and can be articulated as an “Azerbaijan First” policy.
- Two ambivalent drivers have shaped Türkiye's policy in the South Caucasus. The first seeks to establish a condominium with Russia and jointly manage the region based on shared interests. The second seeks to slowly push Russia out of the South Caucasus and transform Türkiye into the regional hegemon.
- Türkiye does not view Iran as a potent rival in the South Caucasus due to Tehran's recent geopolitical setbacks and growing economic problems. Having said that, Türkiye is concerned that Iran could spoil Ankara's regional design and so maintains contact with Tehran to prevent any potential harm to its interests.
- Türkiye is interested in normalizing relations with Armenia, viewing it as the missing piece in its plan to establish itself as a regional hegemon. However, due to its “Azerbaijan First” policy, Türkiye will continue to wait for Azerbaijan's green light before taking concrete steps in the normalization process.
- Türkiye will remain one of the influential powers in the South Caucasus for the foreseeable future. Armenia should pursue a dual strategy with regard to Türkiye. As well as continuing negotiations toward normalization, Armenia should be prepared to better manage Türkiye's practice of procrastinating in order to push Armenia into conceding Azerbaijan's expectations. Diplomatic support from partners in favor of opening the Armenian/Turkish border will be needed to help erode Türkiye's procrastinating behavior.



The “Century of Türkiye” at the heart of Türkiye’s foreign policy

Since 2023, Türkiye’s foreign policy has been based on the concept of “The Century of Türkiye.” The term was coined by President Erdoğan,¹ with further details subsequently provided by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2023.²

The fundamental tenets of this strategy center on establishing security in Türkiye’s neighborhood and advancing Türkiye’s global goals in changing the world order. When it comes to the South Caucasus, Türkiye applies this strategy in combination with the “One People, Two States” motto, thereby reinforcing its ties with Azerbaijan, as set out in the Shusha Declaration of June 2021, while pursuing normalization with Armenia. Türkiye views the establishment of a connection with Azerbaijan via the Syunik province of Armenia as vital to its policy in the South Caucasus.³

Key elements of the “Century of Türkiye” concept are active diplomacy in nearly every region of the world and relying on Türkiye’s multifaceted features (as an influential power in the Turkic world, in the Muslim world, and in Southern Europe) to exert influence on global issues. To achieve these aspirations, Türkiye has significantly increased its engagement abroad by opening numerous diplomatic missions, expanding the remit of its development agency TİKA, and establishing the Yunus Emre Institute and Maarif Foundation.⁴

Another goal of Türkiye’s foreign policy is to gain influence across the Global South. Türkiye officially applied to become a BRICS member ahead of the group’s 2024 Kazan summit (the BRICS is an intergovernmental organization named after its initial members—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), with the aim of bolstering its global influence and forging new ties beyond and despite its traditional Western allies. Türkiye aimed to gain access to alternative development financing through the New Development Bank, reduce transaction costs through local currency settlements, and deepen sectoral cooperation in infrastructure, defense, green energy, and digital innovation.⁵

Interestingly, some experts interviewed for this project mentioned that **there is a mismatch between Türkiye’s growing geopolitical and geoeconomic ambitions and its resources and capacities, which, sooner or later, will force Ankara to moderate its ambitions and may undermine the realization of the “Century of Türkiye” concept.** They argued that an assertive foreign policy is not sustainable without strong domestic institutions and a healthy economy. Playing all sides can lead to isolation, and pursuing every opportunity for engagement can overstretch countries that simply do not have a superpower’s resources.

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1. “The Century of Türkiye Is a Comprehensive Roadmap that Will Raise Our Country Above the Level of Contemporary Civilizations,” Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, May 31, 2023, accessed July 1, 2025, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/haberler/detay/the-century-of-turkiye-is-a-comprehensive-roadmap-that-will-raise-our-country-above-the-level-of-contemporary-civilizations>.
 2. “National Foreign Policy in the ‘Century of Türkiye’: A Synopsis,” Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed July 1, 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa>.
 3. Hakan Fidan, “Turkish Foreign Policy at the Turn of the ‘Century of Türkiye’: Challenges, Vision, Objectives, and Transformation,” Insight Turkey 25, No. 3 (2023): 11-24, accessed October 14, 2025, <https://www.insightturkey.com/commentary/turkish-foreign-at-the-turn-of-the-century-of-turkiye-challenges-vision-objectives-and-transformation>.
 4. Muhittin Ataman, “The ‘Century of Türkiye’: A New Foreign Policy Vision for Building the Türkiye Axis,” Insight Turkey 25, No. 3 (2023): 73-96, accessed October 14, 2025, <https://www.insightturkey.com/article/the-century-of-turkiye-a-new-foreign-policy-vision-for-building-the-turkiye-axis>.
 5. Serhat Süha Çubukçuoğlu, “Türkiye and BRICS+: Strategic Ambitions in a Shifting Global Order,” August 31, 2025, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/turkiye-and-brics-strategic-ambitions-in-a-shifting-global-order>.



Indeed, this foreign policy concept of Türkiye cannot be fully understood without assessing the domestic political transformation over the last decade. After the failed attempt at a military coup in 2016, Erdoğan's Türkiye has become a highly hierarchical state, led by a strong president with few, if any, checks and balances. These developments strengthen the role of President Erdoğan in foreign policy, often making him a sole decision-maker on important issues and sidelining the role of relevant state institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁶

These factors complicate analysis and assessment and should be considered when seeking to assess the future trajectory of Türkiye's foreign policy.

6. M. Hakan Yavuz, *Erdoğan: The Making of an Autocrat* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 230–257.



Türkiye's policy in the South Caucasus: The nexus of geopolitics and geoeconomics

The South Caucasus has both geopolitical and geoeconomic importance for Türkiye.

Based on their official documents, the main aspects of Türkiye's South Caucasus policy are to strengthen the independence and sovereignty of the countries in the region and support their integration efforts with Euro-Atlantic structures, while preserving and enhancing regional cooperation and political and economic stability.⁷

From a geopolitical point of view, **the South Caucasus serves as a buffer zone between Türkiye and Russia, preventing the two countries from having a common land border**—a situation which, in the words of one of the interviewees, ended badly for Türkiye in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It also allows Türkiye to reach Central Asian Turkic republics, which is important for Ankara's quest to increase its influence there and facilitate the development of the Turkic world⁸ as envisioned in the "Turkic World Vision 2040" document adopted by the Organization of Turkic States in 2021.⁹

Geoeconomically, **the South Caucasus is an important pillar in Türkiye's strategy of becoming a significant transport and energy link connecting different continents.** In this context, connectivity projects such as the Middle Corridor (the transport route connecting China with Europe through Central Asia, and the South Caucasus) and the Southern Gas Corridor (a network of gas pipelines bringing Azerbaijani gas to Europe via Georgia, Türkiye, and the Adriatic Sea) play a significant role in shaping Türkiye's regional policy. In addition, Türkiye brings Caspian oil to world markets via the network of pipelines starting from the region and passing via Türkiye. The South Caucasus plays a vital role in any new routes connecting China and Central Asia with Europe via Türkiye.¹⁰ (There is an alternative route connecting Central Asia with Türkiye via Iran, but given the complexity of Türkiye-Iran relations, international sanctions on Iran, and the limits of an unstable Iran, this route is not fully reliable.)

In recent years, the growing involvement of Türkiye in the South Caucasus came in parallel with the decline of Russia's once-uncontested hegemony in the South Caucasus due to its war in Ukraine. These developments ushered in a more fragmented regional order, with three key emerging features: imbalanced multipolarity, fluid patterns of cooperation and rivalry, and a growing interconnection between the South Caucasus and the Middle East.¹¹

Almost all the experts interviewed for this project argued that Türkiye is interested first and foremost in maintaining the independence of the South Caucasus countries as a tangible way of preventing the restoration of full Russian control over the region.

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7. "Türkiye's Relations with Southern Caucasus Countries," Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed July 5, 2025, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye_s-relations-with-southern-caucasus.en.mfa.
 8. Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun, "Türkiye's South Caucasus Policy and the West's Conflicting Approach," Avim Commentary, No. 2025/4, January 9, 2025, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/TURKIYE-S-SOUTH-CAUCASUS-POLICY-AND-THE-WEST-S-CONFLICTING-APPROACH>.
 9. "Turkic World Vision 2040," Organization of Turkic States, November 13, 2021, accessed September 22, 2025, <https://www.turkicstates.org/en/news/turkic-world-vision-2040>.
 10. For more details on Türkiye's policy in the South Caucasus in recent decades, see Mustafa Aydın, "Turkey's Caucasus Policies, 2000-2022," *Connections, The Quarterly Journal* 22, No. 1 (2023): 79-90.
 11. Natalie Sebanadze, "How Russia, Turkey, and Iran Are Reshaping the Caucasus," Chatham House, July 24, 2025, accessed July 30, 2025, <https://kalam.chathamhouse.org/articles/how-russia-turkey-and-iran-are-reshaping-the-caucasus/>.



As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the wider European political community, Türkiye strives to position itself also as a supporter of Western interests in the region and works toward not excluding Western involvement from the region entirely. In line with its ambivalent style, however, it has also been vocally opposed to Armenia's growing ties with the EU, as manifested in President Erdogan's staunch opposition to the April 5, 2024, High Level Meeting in Brussels of Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan with European Commission President von der Leyen and US Secretary of State Blinken.

Türkiye is also interested in the stability of the South Caucasus, as any serious destabilization would undermine its ambition of becoming an important transport and energy hub and using the region to reach Central Asia. Turkish experts interviewed during the project mentioned that Ankara now faces multiple external problems, including the developments in Syria and Gaza, and any additional complication near its borders will be damaging for Türkiye's regional posture.



Türkiye and Russia in the South Caucasus: Partners or rivals?

The overarching dynamic that describes Russia and Türkiye's bilateral relationship is compartmentalization. The two countries compete or cooperate in various regions, depending on whether or not their national interests overlap there. This concept first became operational in Syria, where Russia and Türkiye, together with Iran, established the Astana format of negotiations in 2017, sidelining Western involvement in the process. The cooperation/cooptation dynamics were also played out in Libya, when Russia and Türkiye were supporting rival groups but simultaneously sought not to cross each other's red lines.¹²

Compartmentalization separates economics and politics, as Russia and Türkiye continue to develop economic cooperation while competing in politics.¹³ Economic cooperation is significant for both Russia and Türkiye—in particular, Türkiye relies on gas and oil imports from Russia and the Russian state nuclear energy corporation Rosatom is constructing a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu, Türkiye. According to Reuters calculations, Turkish companies saved around US\$2 billion on energy bills in 2023 with imports of discounted Russian oil and refined products, showcasing the energy importance of Russia for Türkiye.¹⁴ As Gazprom's transit agreement with Ukraine ended in December 2024, the pipelines that go through Türkiye, Blue Stream (opened in 2003) and Turk Stream (opened in 2020), are Russia's last functioning gas export route to the EU.¹⁵ Total Russian gas supplies to Europe via TurkStream stood at around 9.93 billion cubic meters (bcm) in the first six months of 2025.¹⁶

Almost all experts interviewed for the project agreed that, in the last few years, **compartmentalization has also covered the South Caucasus**, with one of the Turkish experts interviewed for the project describing Türkiye's policy toward Russia in the South Caucasus as “fight and talk” simultaneously.

According to some experts interviewed for the project, another factor influencing bilateral relations in the South Caucasus and beyond in the last two decades is the personal relationship of President Putin and President Erdoğan. Personal contacts play a significant role in shaping bilateral relations,¹⁷ allowing leaders to find solutions to complex issues.

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12. Vicken Cheterian, “Friend and Foe: Russia-Turkey Relations Before and After the War in Ukraine,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 34, No. 7 (2023): 1271-1294.
 13. Robert Hamilton and Anna Mikulska, “Cooperation, Competition, and Compartmentalization: Russian-Turkish Relations and Their Implications for the West,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 8, 2021, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2021/04/cooperation-competition-and-compartmentalization-russian-turkish-relations-and-their-implications-for-the-west/>.
 14. “Exclusive: Turkey Saves \$2 Billion on Russian Oil as Imports Soar Despite Sanctions,” Reuters, December 18, 2023, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/turkey-saves-2-blb-russian-oil-imports-soar-despite-sanctions-2023-12-18/>.
 15. Alper Coşkun, Alexander Gabuev, Marc Pierini, Francesco Siccardi, and Temur Umarov, “Understanding Türkiye's Entanglement With Russia,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 15, 2024, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/10/understanding-turkiyes-entanglement-with-russia>.
 16. “Russian Pipeline Gas Exports to Europe Rose 37% m/m in July, Data Shows,” Reuters, August 1, 2025, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russian-pipeline-gas-exports-europe-rose-37-mm-july-data-shows-2025-08-01/>.
 17. “Putin Says Erdoğan Always Keeps His Word Despite Differing Views,” TASS, December 17, 2020, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://tass.com/politics/1236383>; Liz Cookman, “Putin and I Are the Only Significant World Leaders Left, Erdoğan says,” *The Telegraph*, December 9, 2024, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/12/09/erdogan-putin-two-leaders-turkish-backed-rebels-syria-town/>.



As an example of this cooptation, experts mentioned the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. Türkiye challenged Russia in the region by supporting Azerbaijan to change the status quo by military means, as Azerbaijan defeated Russia's ally Armenia. However, the sides managed to find a mutually acceptable solution by deploying Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh and establishing a joint Russian-Turkish monitoring center.¹⁸

The experts distinguished two ways of explaining the rationale behind Türkiye's policy toward Russia in the South Caucasus within the concept of compartmentalization. The majority argued that Türkiye views Russia as “an unavoidable evil” that will always be part of South Caucasus geopolitics and that Ankara is interested in managing relations with Moscow, creating a Russia-Türkiye condominium and significantly reducing the influence of the US and the EU and the role of NATO in the region. Their national interests overlap on this.¹⁹ Türkiye, like Russia and Azerbaijan, criticized the High Level April 2024 Brussels Meeting between Armenia, the EU, and the US,²⁰ and supports the 3+3 consultation mechanism in the region, which aims to exclude the West.²¹

Others stated that Türkiye seeks to capitalize on Russia's distraction by its war in Ukraine and push Russia out of the South Caucasus as much as possible, creating a “Turkish Caucasus,” a region where Türkiye will be the most influential power. As the US and its European allies are also interested in eroding Russia's influence in its near abroad, including in the South Caucasus, there may be an overlap between Western and Turkish interests in weakening Russia's position in the region.²²

Nevertheless, **all experts interviewed at the time of this project concurred that Russia and Türkiye remain the two most influential players in the region and that the future of the South Caucasus will be mainly shaped by their evolving relationship.**

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18. “Turkey, Russia Sign Agreement to Set up Joint Center for Nagorno-Karabakh,” TASS, December 1, 2020, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://tass.com/world/1229873>.
 19. Nikolas K. Gvozdev, “Russia's Assessment of Turkey's Policy in the South Caucasus: Implications for the EU,” CATS Network Paper, No. 11, December 18, 2024.
 20. “Türkiye Criticizes Armenia-US-EU talks without Azerbaijan,” Hürriyet Daily News, April 7, 2024, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkiye-criticizes-armenia-us-eu-talks-without-azerbaijan-192240>.
 21. “Türkiye to Host 3rd South Caucasus Regional Cooperation Platform,” TRT World, October 17, 2024, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://www.trtworld.com/article/18221226>.
 22. Jeffrey Mankoff, “Russia Is Losing Its Near Abroad: How America and Its European Allies Can Help Erode Moscow's Declining Influence,” Foreign Affairs, July 24, 2025, accessed July 30, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russia/russia-losing-its-near-abroad>.



Türkiye and Iran in the South Caucasus: Competition or spoilage?

According to some experts interviewed for the project, the South Caucasus constitutes a secondary arena for Türkiye and Iran in bilateral relations, as the Middle East, especially the conflict in Syria, is more vital for their strategic interests. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, the military takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan, and the forced displacement of the Armenian population in 2023 raised concerns in Iran. It changed the regional balance of power, increasing Türkiye's influence.²³ Russia's distraction from the South Caucasus added an additional layer of concern for Iran²⁴ that it had been overlooking Turkish encroachment into the region.²⁵

Most experts interviewed for the project argued that Iran's primary motivation in the South Caucasus is to prevent further increase of Turkish influence in the region, which partly explains Tehran's strong objection to the establishment of the so-called "Zangezur Corridor."²⁶ Iranian officials frame the Turkish-Azerbaijani project as the "NATO and Turan corridor"²⁷ and consider that its goal is to weaken the Axis of Resistance, sever Iran's link with the Caucasus, and impose a land blockade on Iran and Russia.²⁸ Iran continues to have these concerns after the August 2025 Washington Summit.

The potential establishment of a US presence near the Armenia-Iran border, and complications in the border crossing with the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), is another source of concern for Iran.²⁹

The collapse of President Assad's regime in Syria in 2024, Israel's successful operations against Hezbollah and Hamas in 2023–2025, and the 12-day Iran-Israel War with the direct US military attack against Iranian nuclear targets have weakened Iran. **Many experts interviewed for the project believe that in this new configuration, Iran has limited capacity to compete with Türkiye in the South Caucasus, and Ankara does not view Tehran as a strong obstacle to a significant increase of Turkish influence in the region.**

Having said that, Türkiye still believes that Iran can act as a spoiler in the South Caucasus and the Middle East for Türkiye—for example, by seeking to undermine the peace process with the Kurds currently underway—and this could explain why Ankara is wary of pushing too hard against Tehran. Türkiye believes that Iran will continue to influence regional geopolitics for the foreseeable future, but with diminished capacities.

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23. Sergei Melkonian, "A New Balance in the South Caucasus: The Role of Iran," International Relations and Eurasia Studies (IRAS), April 2025, accessed July 20, 2025, <https://www.iras.ir/en/a-new-balance-in-the-south-caucasus-the-role-of-iran/>.
 24. Hamidreza Azizi and Daria Isachenko, "Turkey-Iran Rivalry in the Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus," SWP Comment, No. 49, September 2023, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2023C49/>.
 25. Vali Golmohammadi and Sergey M. Markedonov, "How Iran Perceives Turkey's Rise in the South Caucasus," Russia in Global Affairs 22, No. 1 (2024): 152–175, doi: 10.31278/1810-6374-2024-22-1-152-175.
 26. Siranush Ghazanchyan, "Iran's Khamenei Cautions Erdoğan Against Any Policy of Blocking the Border between Iran and Armenia," Public Radio of Armenia, July 19, 2022, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://en.armradio.am/2022/07/19/irans-khamenei-cautions-erdogan-against-any-policy-of-blocking-the-border-between-iran-and-armenia/>.
 27. "Conspiracy of Creating 'NATO Turani Corridor' with Geopolitical Consequences against Iran, Russia and China," Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, September 11, 2022, accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.scfr.ir/en/300/30101/146069/conspiracy-of-creating-nato-turani-corridor-with-geopolitical-consequences-against-iran-russia-and-china/>.
 28. "Velayati: Zangezur Corridor a US Project Targeting Iran, Russia," Tasnim News Agency, July 27, 2025, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2025/07/27/3362760/velayati-zangezur-corridor-a-us-project-targeting-iran-russia>.
 29. "Iran Opposes Presence of External Forces in Caucasus Region, Says Pezeshkian," IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency), September 1, 2025, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://en.irna.ir/news/85928533/iran-opposes-presence-of-external-forces-in-caucasus-region>



Türkiye also has concerns that an internally unstable Iran can create another wave of millions of refugees entering Türkiye, while jeopardizing natural gas exports³⁰ and other economic interactions with Iran. Importantly, some Iranian experts interviewed for the project argued that setbacks in the Middle East have increased the significance of the South Caucasus for Iran. According to them, Tehran cannot afford a new defeat in its neighborhood. From this perspective, Iran will allocate significant resources to the South Caucasus and will vehemently protect its interests. It will also be easier for Iran to project power in the South Caucasus, as it directly borders the region, unlike Syria or Lebanon.

30. "Iran Exports nearly 9b Cubic Meters of Natural Gas in 2024," Tehran Times, July 7, 2025, accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/515318/iran-exports-nearly-9b-cubic-meters-of-natural-gas-in-2024>.



Türkiye and Azerbaijan: “One Nation, Two States”

Azerbaijan is the closest ally of Türkiye in the South Caucasus, and arguably in general, and Ankara's alliance with Azerbaijan is the key pillar of its policy in the region. Türkiye's strategic relations with Azerbaijan are multifaceted, with frequent high-level contacts as the driving force in their relations.³¹ Ethnic, economic, and military ties, together with linguistic affinity, are at the basis of the relationship, amplified in the motto of “One Nation, Two States” coined by President Heydar Aliyev in the 1990s. The two sides solidified their partnership in 2010 by signing an agreement on strategic partnership and mutual support,³² and a declaration establishing the Council on Strategic Cooperation.³³ Türkiye played a crucial role in modernizing the Azerbaijani army—not only by supplying weapons, but also by training Azerbaijani soldiers and officers, thereby supporting the transformation from Soviet legacy to NATO standards that was instrumental in securing Azerbaijan's victory in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War.³⁴ Türkiye and Azerbaijan further solidified their alliance in 2021 by signing a new Declaration on Allied Relations, symbolically in Nagorno-Karabakh.³⁵

The experts interviewed for the project stressed the significance of Azerbaijan in Türkiye's policy in the South Caucasus, and some described it as an “Azerbaijan First” policy. They also pointed out that Azerbaijan-Türkiye ties should not be viewed from the perspective of a “big brother/small brother” narrative, but rather through heavy interdependencies in many fields, from political to social and economic. Importantly, Azerbaijan has its own leverage with Türkiye, including significant natural gas supplies (EPDK data indicates that Azerbaijan boosted gas exports to Turkey 11.9% year-on-year to around 11.478 bcm in 2024),³⁶ increased volume of foreign direct investments (Azerbaijan has invested more than US\$20 billion in Türkiye), and involvement in Türkiye's domestic politics with increased media influence (during the crucial 2023 presidential elections in Türkiye, an ethnic Azerbaijani candidate, Sinan Ogan, who secured the third place in the first round and previously was a representative of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency in Baku, for which he was awarded a state medal by Azerbaijan's President İlham Aliyev,³⁷ helped Erdoğan, by supporting him before the runoff).³⁸

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31. “Relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan,” Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. accessed August 7, 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-and-azerbaijan.en.mfa>.
 32. “Azerbaijan, Turkey Sign Document on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support,” AZERTAC, August 16, 2010, accessed October 13, 2025, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/azerbaijan_turkey_sign_document_on_strategic_partnership_and_mutual_support-594895.
 33. “Declaration on the Establishment of the Council on Strategic Cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey Has Been Signed,” Official Website of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, September 15, 2010, accessed September 22, 2025, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/721>.
 34. For details on Azerbaijan-Türkiye military cooperation, see Levon Hovsepyan and Artyom A. Tonoyan, “From Alliance to ‘Soft Conquest’: The Anatomy of the Turkish-Azerbaijani Military Alliance before and after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 35, No. 4 (2024): 622–655, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2024.2312957>.
 35. “Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey,” Official Website of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, June 16, 2021, accessed August 18, 2025, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/52122>.
 36. “Azerbaijan Boosts Gas Supplies to Turkey 1.9% to nearly 4.8 bcm in January–May,” Interfax, July 28, 2025, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/112920/>.
 37. Ariel Korgan, “Sinan Ogan, Turkey's Third Candidate with Azerbaijani roots,” i24NEWS, May 19, 2023, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/analysis-opinion/1684503786-sinan-ogan-turkey-s-third-candidate-with-azerbaijani-roots>.
 38. “Turkish Presidential Candidate Claims to Support Erdoğan, in Second Round of Election,” *Turkic World*, May 22, 2023, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://turkic.world/en/articles/turkiye/102795>.



Cooperation within the Organization of Turkic States is another bond connecting Azerbaijan and Türkiye, with the strengthening of connections with Turkic states becoming one of the important pillars of Azerbaijan's foreign policy in recent years,³⁹ and President Erdoğan emphasizing the importance of Turkic unity for Türkiye.⁴⁰

The experts interviewed for the project had two different visions regarding the current state of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations. One group argued that there are no significant issues in bilateral relations, as they are based on mutual interests and personal trust between the leaders. The second group pointed to the emerging tensions and dissatisfaction among parts of the Turkish establishment, especially in the leadership of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They mentioned the growing partnership between Azerbaijan and Israel, as well as Azerbaijan's "veto power" over Türkiye's relations with Armenia. However, experts had divergent views regarding the impact of Azerbaijan-Israel relations on the Azerbaijan-Türkiye partnership. Some emphasized that the Azerbaijan-Israel strategic partnership is beneficial for Türkiye, as it allows Ankara to have back-channel diplomacy with Israel, pointing out recent meetings held in Baku as an example.⁴¹

Nevertheless, all experts, regardless of their views about the current phase of relations between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, pointed out that **the strategic partnership with Azerbaijan will remain the cornerstone of Türkiye's policy in the South Caucasus, and Türkiye will refrain from any actions likely to undermine it, even when Ankara is dissatisfied with Baku's actions.**

39. "Azerbaijan's President Stresses Unity of Turkic World," AA, June 7, 2024, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/azerbaijans-president-stresses-unity-of-turkic-world/324265>.

40. "Erdoğan Rallies Turkic States for More Solidarity in New World Order," Daily Sabah, May 21, 2025, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/erdogan-rallies-turkic-states-for-more-solidarity-in-new-world-order>.

41. "Türkiye, Israel Meet in Azerbaijan to Prevent Syria Conflict," Daily Sabah, April 10, 2025, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkiye-israel-meet-in-azerbaijan-to-prevent-syria-conflict/news>; "Turkey, Israel to Hold Second Round of Talks in Baku to Prevent Clashes in Syria," Turkish Minute, May 8, 2025, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://turkishminute.com/2025/05/08/turkey-israel-to-hold-second-round-of-talks-in-baku-to-prevent-clashes-in-syria/>.



Türkiye and Georgia: Geoeconomics in action

Almost all experts interviewed for the project emphasized the significant role of Georgia in determining Türkiye's policy in the South Caucasus, pointing out that it serves as a transit route to connect with Azerbaijan and as a buffer to separate Türkiye from Russia. The trilateral Türkiye-Georgia-Azerbaijan partnership, launched in 2012, has further secured Georgia's connecting role between Türkiye and Azerbaijan and enhanced Turkish influence internally. Additionally, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipelines, the latter serving as part of the Southern Gas Corridor, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway all pass via Georgia, highlighting the significance of Georgia for Türkiye in its efforts to achieve its growing transit and energy hub ambitions.

Türkiye-Georgia relations are developing in three main areas: the economy, defense, and culture/soft power. In 2024, Türkiye was Georgia's largest trading partner (at US\$3.2 billion turnover).⁴² Türkiye and Georgia have developed defense cooperation at a bilateral level and as part of the Türkiye-Georgia-Azerbaijan partnership.⁴³ Georgia's Aviation and Air Defense Command received two units of specialist airfield equipment and spare parts for UH-1H Huey helicopters from Türkiye free of charge in December 2022.⁴⁴ In 2024, the Defense Forces of Georgia received new VURAN armored personnel carriers, built to NATO standards, as part of an agreement with Türkiye.⁴⁵ Ankara also uses soft power tools in Georgia. Since 2000, TİKA has been implementing the Turkology project, through which departments of Turkology have been established in Georgian universities to expand research on this topic and to increase the interest of the Georgian population in Türkiye. The Yunus Emre Turkish Culture Center is engaged in popularizing Turkish culture and language in Georgia.⁴⁶

Although Türkiye remains one of Georgia's most important partners, parts of Georgian society are concerned at the level of Turkish influence. According to International Republican Institute (IRI) polls published in November 2023, 28 percent of Georgians viewed Türkiye as Georgia's most important economic partner and 16 percent as its most important political partner, while 12 percent considered Türkiye as the greatest political threat to Georgia.⁴⁷ The presence of the Muslim population in the Autonomous Republic of Ajara along the Georgian Black Sea coast, which comprises around 40 percent of the Ajara population,⁴⁸ as well as the Azerbaijani minority living in the areas bordering Azerbaijan, is another factor facilitating Türkiye's influence in Georgia.⁴⁹

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42. "External Merchandise Trade of Georgia, 2024 (Preliminary)," National Statistics Office of Georgia, January 20, 2025, accessed August 20, 2025, <https://www.geostat.ge/media/67898/External-Merchandise-Trade-of-Georgia-in-2024.pdf>.
 43. "Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey Hold Regular Command and Post Drills," Civil.ge, October 11, 2023, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/562724>.
 44. "Turkey Donates UH-1H Spare Parts, Equipment to Georgia," ITV, December 18, 2022, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://itv.ge/lang/en/news/turkey-donates-uh-1h-spare-parts-equipment-to-georgia/>.
 45. "Georgia Receives NATO-Standard Armored Personnel Carriers from Turkey," Civil.ge, June 12, 2024, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/612500>.
 46. For details, see Rashid T. Mamedov, "'Soft Power' as a Part of Turkish Foreign Policy in Georgia," Vestnik RUDN, International Relations 23, No. 4 (2023): 734-747, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://journals.rudn.ru/international-relations/article/view/37259>.
 47. "Georgia Poll Shows Political Threat from Russia, Concerns with the Presence of Russian Citizens, High Political Polarization," IRI, November 15, 2023, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://www.iri.org/resources/georgian-survey-of-public-opinion-september-october-2023/>.
 48. "Georgian Muslims Demand Recognition," Institute for War & Peace Reporting, September 16, 2016, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/georgian-muslims-demand-recognition>.
 49. According to the 2014 census, the number of Azerbaijanis in Georgia was 233,000, see "Geostat Releases Final Results of 2014 Census," Civil.ge, April 28, 2016, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/124561>. The data for the 2024 census will be published in 2026.



The presence of the Abkhazian diaspora in Türkiye also plays a role in Türkiye–Georgia relations. In 2011, the de facto President of Abkhazia visited Türkiye,⁵⁰ and, in 2023, the de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Türkiye.⁵¹ According to experts interviewed for the project, while part of the Georgian establishment is concerned about Türkiye–Abkhazia contacts, others view Türkiye as a possible means of balancing Russian influence there. Having said that, Ankara has consistently advocated for Georgia’s territorial integrity, seeking to avoid undermining relations with Georgia.

50. “President Sergey Bagapsh visits Turkey,” Abkhaz World, April 7, 2011, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://abkhazworld.com/aw/diaspora/158-president-sergey-bagapsh-visits-turkey>.

51. “Inal Ardzinba Visits Turkey,” Civil.ge, June 30, 2023, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://civil.ge/archives/550077>.



Türkiye and Armenia: Old adversaries and hopeful neighbors

Armenia is the only country in the South Caucasus with which Türkiye has no diplomatic relations and no open borders. The bilateral relations are strongly intertwined with the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the Türkiye-Azerbaijan alliance. Türkiye has supported Azerbaijan since the early days of the conflict through diplomatic, economic, and defense means, with Türkiye being instrumental in Azerbaijan's strategy of isolating Armenia and forcing its exclusion from any regional projects. According to the interviews, **Türkiye's "Azerbaijan First" policy is central to setting its trajectory in the South Caucasus, and Ankara will not take any actions in its relations with Armenia that might undermine its alliance with Azerbaijan.**

Significant changes in regional geopolitics in recent years have created new opportunities for Türkiye-Armenia normalization. After the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, the Armenian government launched its "peace agenda" policy centered on normalizing relations with Azerbaijan and Türkiye. At the same time, the Azerbaijani victory in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and "deoccupation of Azerbaijani lands" paved the way for the reopening of normalization negotiations, according to Ankara. The negotiations officially restarted in 2022. In July of the same year, Türkiye and Armenia agreed to enable the crossing of their common land border for third-country citizens and to commence direct air cargo trade between Armenia and Türkiye.⁵² However, despite the many events and positive gestures or statements about progress in negotiations since then, no tangible results have occurred so far, and the July 2022 agreement has still not been implemented. **According to all experts interviewed for the project, the primary reason for the absence of any advance is Azerbaijan's position toward Türkiye, which demands that any steps on the Armenia-Türkiye track, including the opening of the border, take place only after the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement is signed.**

This contradicts the underlying understanding since the Washington Summit of August 8, that Azerbaijan would be satisfied with partial communication being open with Armenia through the TRIPP without having the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement signed. As a result, it appears that while Azerbaijan accepts the principle of restoring communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan without a peace agreement, Türkiye's position does not, considering its stance that the Armenia-Türkiye border can be opened only after the signature of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement remains unchanged.

This inconsistency underlines the fact that if Türkiye is interested in normalizing relations with Armenia this cannot be at the expense of relations with Azerbaijan. In other words, Türkiye considers the benefits from its close alliance with Azerbaijan (such as access to Central Asian Turkic republics and making Türkiye the main energy and transport hub connecting China and Central Asia with Europe, as well as bilateral economic and investment opportunities) to be greater than the benefits it can gain from normalizing with Armenia (such as improving its image in the West, getting economic—and potentially political—influence in Armenia, decreasing Armenia's dependence on Russia, and weakening Russia's influence in the South Caucasus) at the expense of undermining the alliance with Azerbaijan and losing benefits from it.

52. "Armenia, Turkey Agree on the Issues of Land Border Crossing and Direct Air Cargo Transportation," Armenpress, July 1, 2022, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1087402>.



It is worth noting that some Turkish experts interviewed for the project argued that the main benefit from Armenia for Türkiye is the opening of land access to Azerbaijan via the Syunik region of Armenia, the establishment of the so-called “Zangezur Corridor”—overlooking the benefit of opening the borders with Armenia as a whole. This means that if land access from Azerbaijan to Nakhijevan—and then directly to Türkiye—via the Syunik region is established, Türkiye may lose any incentive to continue normalization and open borders with Armenia.

Türkiye welcomed the signing of the Washington Declaration on August 8, and the initialing of an Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement.⁵³ However, according to some Turkish experts, the absence of President Erdoğan at the Washington Summit, and the establishment of direct contacts between President Aliyev and President Trump, sidelining Erdoğan as a facilitator, could have irritated the Turkish leader, creating further tensions in Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations. The September 2025 Erdoğan-Trump meeting in the White House, however, may have assuaged Türkiye's perception of being sidelined,⁵⁴ potentially bringing more Turkish support to the implementation of TRIPP.

The effects of the Washington Summit on the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process will become apparent in the months ahead. The negotiations between Ruben Rubinyan and Serdar Kılıç, Special Representatives for the Normalization Process between Armenia and Türkiye, in Yerevan in September 2025, apparently have not resulted in any breakthrough, and further talks are to be expected.⁵⁵

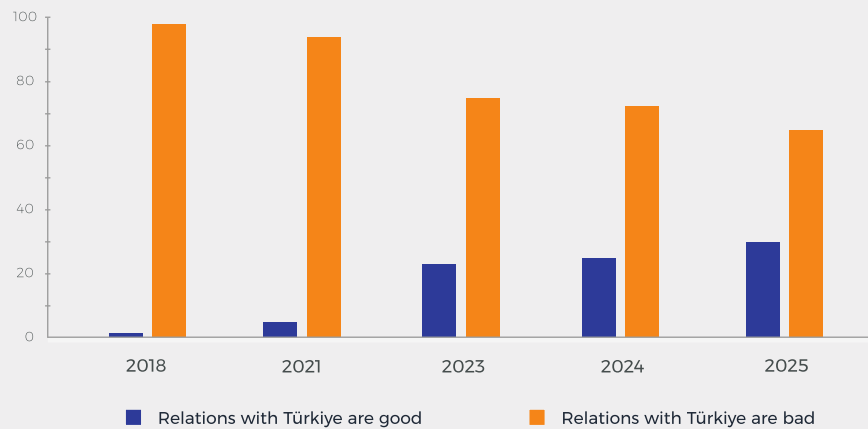
A tangible gesture by Türkiye, such as executing the July 2022 agreement, can be expected.⁵⁶ But Türkiye could also continue holding the pre-Washington Azerbaijani position and stall the normalization process to force Yerevan to accede to Baku's additional demands, such as accepting its expectations of the TRIPP modalities or that Azerbaijanis settle in Armenia within the concept of so-called “Western Azerbaijan.”

Notwithstanding the lack of tangible results at the state level, the normalization process has affected the perception of Türkiye among Armenians, highlighting a gap between political engagement and societal readiness (Figure 1).⁵⁷

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53. “No. 167, 8 August 2025, Regarding the Peace Process Between Azerbaijan and Armenia,” Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 8, 2025, accessed September 22, 2025, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-167_-azerbaycan-ve-ermenistan-arasindaki-baris-sureci-hk.en.mfa#:~:text=No%3A%20167%2C%208%20August%202025,Türkiye%20Ministry%20of%20Foreign%20Affairs&text=We%20welcome%20the%20progress%20achieved,8%20August\)%20in%20this%20regard.](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-167_-azerbaycan-ve-ermenistan-arasindaki-baris-sureci-hk.en.mfa#:~:text=No%3A%20167%2C%208%20August%202025,Türkiye%20Ministry%20of%20Foreign%20Affairs&text=We%20welcome%20the%20progress%20achieved,8%20August)%20in%20this%20regard.)
 54. “President Trump Welcomes Turkish President to White House,” C-SPAN, September 25, 2025, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://www.c-span.org/program/white-house-event/president-trump-welcomes-turkish-president-to-white-house/666244.>
 55. “Sixth Meeting of the Special Representatives of Armenia and Türkiye,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, September 12, 2025, accessed September 30, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/09/12/Armenia_Turkiye/13439.
 56. “The Washington Summit: Implications for Armenia and the Region,” APRI Armenia, August 14, 2025, accessed August 15, 2025, [https://apri.institute/the-washington-summit-implications-for-armenia-and-the-region/.](https://apri.institute/the-washington-summit-implications-for-armenia-and-the-region/)
 57. “Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia | June 2025,” International Republican Institute, July 21, 2025, accessed October 13, 2025, [https://www.iri.org/resources/public-opinion-survey-residents-of-armenia-june-2025/.](https://www.iri.org/resources/public-opinion-survey-residents-of-armenia-june-2025/)



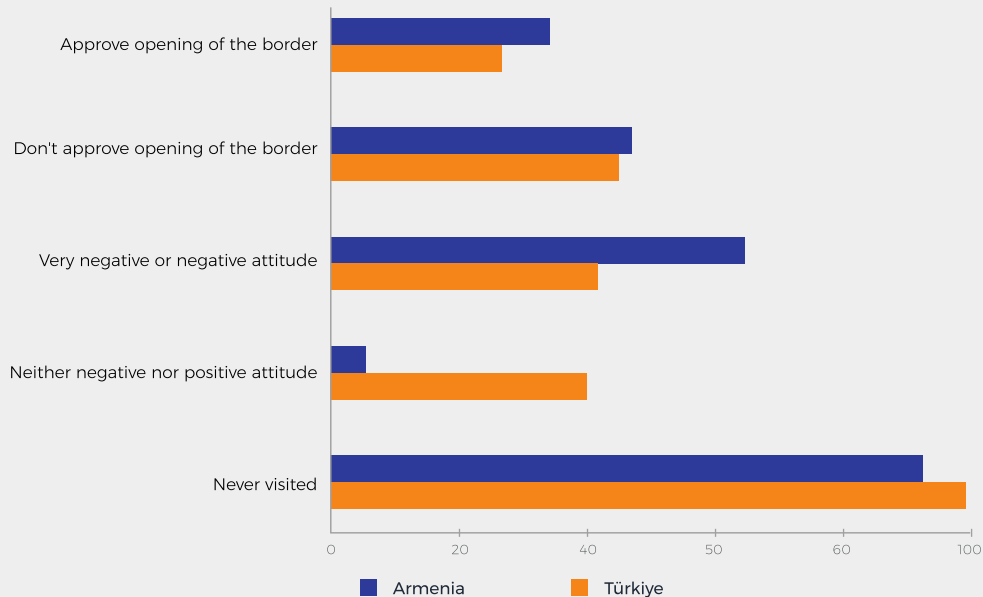
Figure 1. Perceptions of Armenia's relations with Türkiye (Percent of Armenian respondents)



Source: International Republican Institute.

Data highlights the paradox that even if more Armenians have a negative attitude toward Turks than Turks have toward Armenians, more Armenians than Turks approve of the border opening (Figure 2).⁵⁸

Figure 2. Attitudes of Turks and Armenians toward each other (Percent of respondents, 2024)



Source: ICRRC Armenia Foundation, and Konda Research and Consultancy.

58. Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia Foundation & KONDA Research and Consultancy Company, *Insights Beyond Borders: Turkey-Armenia Relations Through Public Eyes*, Analytical Report (Istanbul: Hrant Dink Foundation Publications, 2024, <https://hrantdink.org/en/activities/projects/turkey-armenia-relations-programme/4276-insights-beyond-borders-turkey-armenia-relations-through-public-eyes>).



As Armenia continues negotiations with Azerbaijan⁵⁹ and seeks to navigate its foreign policy diversification without completely alienating Russia, continuing the normalization process with Türkiye—even without tangible results—creates a positive regional environment and decreases the risk of new military escalation by Azerbaijan. Establishing diplomatic relations and opening the border fully would provide more flexibility to Armenian foreign policy and help Türkiye increase its influence in the region. Economically, open borders with Türkiye are expected to increase Armenia's trade with the EU⁶⁰ and decrease Armenia's dependence on transit routes via Georgia and Iran. If regional connectivity is established without the opening of the Armenia-Türkiye border, Armenia will gain little, if anything, and the window of opportunity for normalizing relations with Türkiye is likely to close.

Türkiye will remain one of the influential powers in the South Caucasus for the foreseeable future, and its regional policy will continue to be based on an "Azerbaijan First" policy. Armenia should consider these facts and seek to move ahead simultaneously in the normalization processes with Azerbaijan and Türkiye, to avoid a situation in which Türkiye maintains the status quo in its relations with Armenia while pushing for Armenian concessions in its relations with Azerbaijan.

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59. For details on the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiation process before the Washington Summit, see Benyamin Poghosyan, "Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2025: Peace, War or Continuation of the Status Quo?," in Rusif Huseynov, Benyamin Poghosyan, and Hugo von Essen, *How Close Is Peace Between Armenia and Azerbaijan?*, SCEEUS Report No. 5 (2025), April 17, 2025, accessed October 13, 2025, https://sceeus.se/en/publications/how-close-is-peace-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan/?filter=gt_kb_cat%3Dquest-report-2.
60. Veronika Movchan, Ricardo Giucci, and Emily Haentschel, *Opening of Common Border between Armenia and Turkey: Impact on Armenian Trade*, June 2022, https://www.german-economic-team.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GET_ARM_PB_07_2022.pdf.



Conclusion

The South Caucasus plays a more significant role in Türkiye's foreign policy than is typically appreciated. Ankara's policy hinges on its "Azerbaijan First" policy and its ambition to become the main energy and transport hub connecting Asia with Europe, which it sees as best served through Azerbaijan, giving access to the Central Asian Turkic states. Türkiye's policy in the region is based on a strategic alliance with Azerbaijan and will remain so. As a result, establishing additional access between Türkiye and Azerbaijan through the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhijevan and the Armenian region of Syunik remains a priority.

Importantly, Türkiye does not seem to see benefits in opening the border with Armenia as a whole, but views this exclusively from the perspective of the "Zangezur Corridor." The start of construction of the Kars-Iğdır-Nakhijevan railroad, bypassing the Kars-Gyumri-Yerevan-Yeraskh-Nakhijevan railroad, is part of that strategy.

Türkiye is interested in normalization of relations with Armenia, because this will allow Ankara to broaden its presence in the region, but Türkiye will not jeopardize its relations with Azerbaijan for the normalization with Armenia. However, Ankara's strategic ambitions—economic linkages, connectivity, and soft power projection—requires a more direct engagement with Armenia, thus the current ambivalence is untenable in the longer term, and a change might occur, breaking this circle.

The start of the Russia-Ukraine War, the refocusing of Russia's resources toward Ukraine, and its confrontation with the West opened new possibilities for Türkiye to increase its presence in the region. However, Türkiye understands that Russia is and will remain an influential power in the South Caucasus and is inclined to co-opt rather than confront Russia.

Policy recommendations

- Armenia should share with its Western partners the insight that the August 2025 Washington Summit created additional opportunities for, at least, the realization of the July 2022 Armenia-Türkiye agreements and should encourage them to continue raising the significance of Armenia-Türkiye normalization in their contacts with Turkish counterparts.
- Armenia should insist that the opening of the Armenia-Türkiye border is an integral part of the restoration of communications envisaged by the August 2025 Washington Declaration and should take place simultaneously with the launch of TRIPP.
- Armenia should also share the message that the window of opportunity for normalizing relations with Türkiye will not be open forever, given potential changes in the regional balance of power in the post-Ukraine War era, and Türkiye's current policy of procrastination may complicate efforts to bring lasting stability to the region.
- Armenia should share its concerns with US counterparts that lack of progress in the Armenia-Türkiye normalization process creates obstacles for the full realization of the August 2025 Washington Declaration.
- The Armenian government should communicate more efficiently with Armenian citizens and the Armenian diaspora about the motivation, benefits, and potential risks of the border opening and its strategy to mitigate the negative implications and ensure that its normalization efforts are better accepted by the Armenian population.



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