

Alternative Destinations of Migration

*Dzovinar Derderian, Tufts University, USA
E-mail: dzovinar.derderian@tufts.edu*

Abstract: *In this paper, I will discuss the overall social, legal and economic conditions of Armenian migrants in Turkey and the Russian Federation (the largest attractor of Armenian migrants). This paper aims to show how the migration from Armenia to Turkey could change with the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border*, its negative and positive implications on both Armenian migrants and Armenia's geo-political position.*

Part of the research of this paper derives from official statistics available by the government of the Republic of Armenia, the Russian Federation and Turkey. To base the research about migration on state statistics however, presents difficulties since much of the migration that concerns this paper is irregular, without any record from the government. My other sources of information are based on migrant related surveys and interviews carried by various organizations, such as the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In addition, the paper will include interviews carried with various government officials. Finally, I will also draw comparisons between Georgia's and Armenia's migration patterns because they are both states newly emerged from the Soviet Union, they have about the same size of population and are geographically close. Thus, comparing the two countries' immigration patterns can lead to valuable information.

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* The opening of the Turkish-Armenian border does not imply that the Armenian-Azeri border will be open as well. In this paper I only talk about the effects of the possible opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, assuming that the Azeri-Armenian border will remain closed. Furthermore, I assume that in case of the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, diplomatic relations will be established between the two countries.

Definitions:

Migrant: An individual who has resided in a country other than his/her country of origin for more than one year. The term, however, can also include seasonal laborers who sometimes stay in the country for only nine months.

Irregular migrant: A foreigner who enters a country with illegal means (evades document checks, or uses false documentations or false marriage). A foreigner, who enters a country legally or illegally, but remains in the country beyond the authorized time, thus does not have legal documents (IOM, 2001).

Labor migrant: An individual who leaves his/her country of origin for the purpose of temporarily (1 or 2 years) working and residing in another country.

Trafficking: “Trafficking in human beings shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitutes, of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (IOM, 2001).

Abbreviations:

AIM-Armenian International Magazine

EU-European Union

IOM-International Organization of Migration

OSCE-Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe

RF-Russian Federation

RA-Republic of Armenia

UNHCR-United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

US-United States

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, much of the migration has occurred outward from the Republic of Armenia. Most Armenians migrated because of social and economic hardships at home. Thus, their destination was determined upon the social and economic conditions that existed in the host country but also upon visa requirements, various laws regarding the status of migrants, the distance between Armenia and the host country, as well as, the existing Armenian community in the migrant destination. According to the OSCE survey of 2002-2005, “When choosing the country of destination, the future migrants were considering the following main factors: friends, relatives living in the country (66.1%), less barriers for entering the country and getting employed (28.2%), and knowing the language (19.3%)” (Minasyan, 2005).

Social Aspects

Social Conditions of Armenian Migrants in Russia

Within the past fifteen years the majority of the immigration from Georgia and Armenia was directed toward Russia. The following table indicates the migration to Russia within the past decade. The data shows similar patterns between migration from Armenia and Georgia towards Russia, and indicates a sharp decline of migration from both countries.

Table 1: Armenian and Georgian Departures and Arrivals to and from Russia

<i>Arrivals</i>	1997	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Armenia	19'123	15'951	5'814	6'802	5'124	3'057	7'581
Georgia	24'517	20'213	9'674	7'128	5'540	4'886	5'497
<i>Departures</i>							
Armenia	2'578	1'519	1'362	1'114	1'098	654	620
Georgia	3'286	1'802	1'339	964	939	740	691

Source: Russia Federal State Statistics Services, International Migration http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/2006/rus06e/05-09.htm (Accessed November 3, 2006)

Three factors within the Russian and Armenian societies contribute to a large migration towards Russia. These are the Armenian community in Russia, the linguistic ties, as well as, the past and present ties between the two countries. First and foremost, Russia has the largest Armenian Diaspora community with an estimated two million Armenians. Moreover, it is also a significantly powerful community with a number of rich businessmen and politicians. The Armenian community in Russia provides a protection net for Armenians migrating to Russia, and further encourages the migration flow. Secondly, most Armenian citizens speak Russian, which eases integration into the host society and creates better job opportunities. Thirdly, through the historical ties between Russia and Armenia, the present strong political ties and the reception of Russian television and radio, Armenians are quite familiar with developments in Russia. Even Armenians, who have previously never been in Russia, experience less cultural shock and less social barriers when they are in Russia, as supposed to other destination countries.

Unfortunately, fluency in Russian and familiarity with Russian culture fail to prevent discrimination against Armenians in Russia. The Freedom House emphasizes that discrimination on the societal level exists specifically against Caucasians and Central Asians, who are subject to various harassments and attacks. A simple list of the assassinations that have taken place in the first half of 2006 demonstrates the existing social discrimination in Russia against Armenians. In the first half of 2006, eight Armenians were murdered in Moscow among them were Yevgeny Baghdasarian, Hayk Dolkhanian, Harutiun Galstian, Robert Feroyan, Vigen Abrahamiants, Arthur

Sardarian, and Robert Feroyan (Hetq, June 5, 2006). In June 2006, a 17 year old, Vahan Abrahamian, was beaten to death in Moscow by gangs in public and no one was punished for the murder (Nouvelle d'Armenie, 2006). In July of the same year, four ethnic Armenians were attacked in Moscow (Mosnews, 2006). These are just some examples, and surely many more Armenians have been harassed in Russia, not just in 2006 and not just in Moscow.

In a survey, headed by Tatiana Yudina, 60.5 percent of the Muscovites questioned, admitted to have a “negative attitude towards migrants.” “Muscovites do not tolerate the Armenian community either: almost 40 percent of those surveyed do not want Armenian immigrants living in Moscow” (Yudina, 2005). Many believe that the authorities do not do enough in Russia to protect the ethnic minorities. The crimes committed against ethnic minorities often go unpunished or are punished inadequately. Similarly, the RF laws regarding ethnic minority discrimination are not strong enough (Avanisian, 2006). If the current societal condition remains the same or worsens, Russia not only attracts fewer migrants from RA but many Armenians might look for alternative destinations because of the threat they face in Russia.

The overall level of civil and political rights in Russia is quite low. According to the 2005 Freedom Right Reports of the Freedom House, Russia received the second lowest score, both on its political rights’ and civil liberties’ performance because of the decrease in the number of political opposition parties, increase in the executive power, oppression and censorship. At the same time, Freedom House rated Russia as a none-free country. Since this paper is mainly concerned about irregular migrants the civil liberties and political rights do not directly apply to the irregular migrants, because they have no legal basis to practice their rights. However, the 2006 laws in Russia regarding restrictions to various international NGOs is a result of low civil liberties in Russia, which indirectly affects migrants, in that if otherwise they could receive legal or humanitarian aid from these organizations now there are limitations halting the existence of NGOs.

Social Conditions of Armenian Migrants in Turkey

Turkey, already a destination of Armenian migrants, provides various factors that are attractive and others that are problematic for Armenian migrants. Three factors regarding Armenian migrants in Turkey might affect migration flows: the Armenian community in Turkey, linguistic and cultural component, and finally the, general civil liberties and political rights of Turkish citizens.

Istanbul is home to one of the oldest Armenian communities. There are many Armenian churches, schools (K-12), old-aged home, hospitals and cemeteries, along with three Armenian newspapers (Marmara, Akos and Zhamanak) in Istanbul. The Armenian community in Turkey specifically in Istanbul (although not as powerful and rich as in Russia) creates a shelter for Armenians coming from the RA. Mr. Arsen Avagian, representative of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation in Istanbul, has said that the Turkish police estimate the presence of 25 to 30 thousand Armenians (from Armenia) in Turkey (Icduygu, 2003). There are an estimated 80,000 Diasporan Armenians in Turkey (See Table 7). In an interview the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, His Beatitude Mesrob II emphasized that most Armenians from RA settle in the Kumkapi section of Istanbul, where the Patriarchate Church is located. The reason, however, is because it presents one of the cheapest sections of Istanbul. Nonetheless, new Armenian migrants often interact with the Church.

Unfortunately, no specific research has been done on the conditions of Armenians in Turkey and what type of problems they face, but the Patriarch said that their main problems regard visa issues and problems of schooling children (Kaplan, 2006). Huriette journalists also interviewed a few Armenian traders at the Kumkapi Bazar and found that as the Patriarch had mentioned, Armenian

migrants have not faced discrimination from Turks regarding their nationality. Finally, no records of harassment or murder against Armenians in Turkey have been recorded within the recent past.

Despite their geographical proximity of Armenia and Turkey, because their historical disagreements and enmity, little cultural and social interaction occurred between the two nations within the past century. Nonetheless, certain factors exist in Turkey that might be appealing to Armenian migrants. Unlike Russia, in Turkey Armenians cannot be randomly spotted on the street because of physical similarities to Turks as opposed to Russians and also because such practices do not exist in Turkey. Therefore, random discrimination on the street by the police is less likely.

According to Freedom House, Turkey ranks much higher than Russia in regards to civil liberties, and unlike Russia, Turkey is considered a partly free country. Freedom House believes that there is increase of civil liberties in Turkey. For instance, recently there is an initiation to broadcast in minority languages (Freedom House, 2005). All these changes have been initiated from the EU negotiations with Turkey as part of ongoing dialogue between them to prepare Turkey for a possible inclusion in the EU.

As a result, a stronger civil society culture exists in Turkey which could ease the stay of Armenian migrants in Turkey. Turkey's desire of succession in the EU opens new prospects for Armenian migrants. For example, various polyclinics have been set up in Turkey as NGOs (which used to receive grants from the EU), that provided medical services to illegal migrants free of charge¹ (IOM, 2004).

One has to point out that all is not bright in Turkey, but things are improving. For example in 2002 a radio station was shut down for a year for airing Kurdish and Armenian music but since 2004 the Kurds are allowed to have their own television program (Lungescu, 2004). While one might stress the human rights' violations against Kurdish minorities in Turkey, it has to be emphasized that Kurds unlike Armenians, Greek and Jews are not considered as official minority groups within Turkey because they are Muslim (Freedom House, 2005). Furthermore, they present a political and security threat in Turkey, which makes them a target for discrimination, while Armenians in Turkey do not present similar threats.

Legal and Bureaucratic Aspects

Legal and Bureaucratic Aspects in Russia

Besides being a target of racism within the society of Russia, Armenian migrants also face multiple bureaucratic and legal problems. Adults, in the RF, are required to carry their passports with them at all time. In certain regions adults are supposed to have registration documents which are hard to obtain for Caucasians and the latter group is unfairly targeted on spot checks by policemen. Corruption is high in Russia and often particularly affects migrants from the Caucasus (Freedom House, 2005).

Although Armenian citizens have a visa-free entry to Russia, three days after their arrival to Russia, they must register with a place of residency (Rodriguez, 2006). Not surprisingly, a survey carried by OSCE showed that Armenian migrants in Russia mainly face the following three problems:

- a) "bureaucratic problems (registration process, demand of bribes by the police and constant document being checked very often);
- b) problems with employment (general difficulty to find a job and being eventually paid less than it was initially agreed);

¹ EU stopped financing the polyclinics because it felt that the action was only encouraging the increase in the flow of illegal immigrants to Turkey.

- c) negative attitudes the host country authorities and native population” (Minasyan, 2005).

Legally a visa is not required for an Armenian citizen to enter Russia and Armenian citizens can stay in Russia up to 90 days according to the Federal Law, but local administrative bodies can put limits on this time frame. If a foreign citizen plans on staying more than three months he/she is obliged to obtain a temporary residency permit, on which the Federal Law has put a quota of up to three years. The applications for temporary residency in Russia are processed within six months (Gevorkyan, 2006). This means that if a RA citizen wants to stay in Russia for more than three months he/she has to apply for a residency permit at least three months before arriving to Russia, otherwise he/she would acquire an illegal status after his/her three month stay. Migrants always face problems with paperwork in the host country, but a country with better administrative, bureaucratic, low corruption records and a low discriminative culture would be more attractive for migrants.

Legal and Bureaucratic Aspects in Turkey

Democracy in Turkey, although not nearly at the level of Western Europe, is much more developed compared to Russia because of its longevity. Furthermore, requirements presented to Turkey for its possible succession to the EU include changes in laws regarding migrants, administrative laws, as well as better control at the borders, both at points of entry and exit. The relatively improved social factors, and bureaucratic and legal factors concerning migrants could increase the flows of Armenian migrants to Turkey but it is important to observe what types of migrant flows would increase and what their goals would be.

The Turkish government passed the Law on Foreigners Work Permits, effective since September 2003, which allows foreigners to work as domestic servants and their work permits are issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. If foreigners overstay their visa, they pay a fine of \$200 to \$500, depending on the length of the overstay. Furthermore, after leaving Turkey they are not allowed reentry anywhere from 3 months to 5 years depending on the length of the overstay (Icduygu, 2006). In the next two sections I will discuss the case of transit migrants and temporary labor migrants, both of which encompass trafficking in Russia and Turkey.

Table 2: Destination of Armenians Leaving to Work Abroad in April-June 2002

	Russia	Georgia*	Ukraine	USA	Turkey	Iran	Belarus	Other countries**
Percent of Total	78	8	5	2	1	1	1	4

Source: NSS, “Survey of Arriving and Departing Passengers in April-June 2002”

*Most workers leaving for Georgia were retail traders

** Greece, France, Uzbekistan, UAE, Turkmenistan, Canada, Spain, UK, Poland, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic, India, Italy, Bulgaria, Germany, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgium.

Types of Migrants

Labor Migration

Temporary labor migration is a wide phenomenon that occurs out of Armenia to various countries but mostly to Russia. In a survey carried out by the OSCE between 2002 and 2005, OSCE estimated that about 7.3-9.2% of economically active population of the RA was involved in labor migration, 87.6% temporarily migrated to Russia. 1/3 of the labor migrants (who were questioned or whose families were questioned) resided at their workplace in barracks, 99.2% of who were from Russia (Minasyan, 2005). This indicates that a significant number of Armenian labor migrants in Russia do not have a formal residency, thus have an illegal status since an Armenian that arrives to Russia has to notify the authorities of his/her new residency (Rodriguez, 2006).

After flight 113 crashed in the spring of 2006, Armenia Liberty reported that most of labor migration from Armenia to Russia occurs in spring. Through interviews journalists observed that the vast majority of the 80 Armenian citizens on plane were temporary or permanent labor migrants (Bedevian, 2006).

While most Georgian migrants in Russia are involved in trade and business activities, in Turkey they are involved in the construction sector mostly. While in Turkey, Georgians on average earn about US\$ 460, in Russia they earn about US\$ 610 per month. Despite the salary difference, since living costs are less in Turkey, Georgian migrants sent more remittances (about an average of US\$ 200 per month) home than Georgian migrants from Russia do (Badurashvili, 2005).

In Turkey, since 2003 it has become legal for foreigners to work as domestic laborers (Gresh, 2005). At present most Armenian female labor migrants who go to Turkey work as domestic servants. Normally, this would put a labor migrant in a better position since it would provide for a relatively comfortable residency. If part of the labor migration is diverted from Russia to Turkey the remittances sent to Armenia could increase.

In Russia the most prominent sectors for labor migrants are the construction, retail and sex sectors, as well as, trade in markets (Yudina, 2005). In Turkey, the most prominent sectors are household services, entertainment and sex sector, construction, textile, restoration and agriculture (Icduygu, 2005). Consequently, the sectors in which migrants can work in Turkey are more abundant than that of Russia. Furthermore, Turkey will tend to attract more female workers, because of its large need of domestic service. Icduygu notes that as there are more women working in the Turkish Labor Market, there is increase in the demand for paid domestic labor (Icduygu, 2005). The phenomena of more Armenian women migrating to Turkey, in contrast to more men migrating to Russia has already been apparent, and it can have noteworthy affects. Women tend to keep relatively closer ties with home, than men do.

Transit Migrants

According to the IOM survey held in 2000, Russia represented a major transit country for Georgians, particularly because various illegal organizations function in the major cities of Russia that deal with forging travel documents and issuing visas. Other factors are its good international flight connections and the large Georgian population in Russia, who can help migrant Georgians on their route (IOM, 2001).

Although the IOM survey was held for Georgians, it can most likely hold true for Armenians as well, who compared to Georgians have much better ties with Russia, and have a larger and stronger community in Russia. Thus, Armenians will receive a similar type of aid in Russia to travel on to another country. Therefore, it can be concluded, that Russia also presents a major transit country for Armenian citizens. The US Department of State reported in 2006 that Moscow is often used as a transit destination for sex workers trafficked to Dubai, a major final destination of Armenian trafficked women (U.S. Embassy, 2006).

Turkey is well known for being a transit country, but does this hold true for all migrants? IOM 2001 found that Turkey is also a major transit country for Georgians, mostly because of its geographical location and the ease with which Georgians can obtain visas for Turkey. Certain Armenian citizens also migrate to Turkey, to use it as a transit country, to eventually migrate to the West. In this case, Turkey's geopolitical position plays a large role, in that it is located at the border of countries that are either already members of the EU (Greece), or will become a member of the EU (Bulgaria) in 2007.

Neither the US nor the EU countries easily give visas to foreigners from developing countries. In an interview with David McFarland from the US embassy in Armenia, he emphasized that for a non-Turkish citizen to get a visa to the US in Turkey is next to impossible. This is especially the case for Armenian citizens, who are often obliged to return to their home country to obtain a US visa. Document fraud, however, is not as high in Turkey, added David McFarland.

Celia Mannaert mentioned in a UNHCR paper in 2003 that Turkey has been criticized multiple times for having lenient rules regarding immigration and border control, thus, being used as a passage territory to the EU for non-Turkish citizens. Hence, one of the leading EU concerns regarding Turkey, and one of the requirements for Turkey, is to have stricter exit and entry controls at its borders (Mannaert, 2003).

In March 2000, journalist Max Svazlian accounts the story of three Armenian citizens who were trying to go to Greece from Turkey. Because of strict control at the Greek border, they are unable to cross the border into Greece, thus they try to go to Romania via Bulgaria, as they easily receive a visa for Romania in Turkey. They also easily cross the border to Bulgaria from where they try to get to Greece through the dangerous snow path in the mountains. After walking a considerable number of hours they bump into soldiers who take the three migrants and the journalist to their station. There the officer tells the journalist “that it’s not the first time he has stopped Armenians. He says he releases them and the Armenians return- one week, two days, three months later.” On their way to the police station, they met three other Armenians who had met a similar faith but with worse stories. It seems that Armenian citizens often try to cross the borders of Turkey to go to Greece, Bulgaria or Romania, but are deceived on their way by local taxi drivers or guides who rip them off their money and give them wrong geographical information. Many end up in prison, courts and later are deported back (Svazlian, 2000). “There are also occasionally boats that try to smuggle people directly on to Italy and France” (Kirisci, 2004).

Turkey might very likely be used as a transition country for Armenians to access the EU by land which is a cheaper alternative. Already Greece and Bulgaria are relatively popular destinations for Armenians. Both have large Armenian Diaspora populations (See Table 7). AIM in 2000 indicated that about 30, 000 Armenians from the RA reside in Bulgaria, more than the existing Armenian Diaspora population there. Furthermore, Bulgaria is an attractive country to Armenians because of more frequent use of Russian and the similarity of Bulgarian to Russian. Greece, on the other hand, is an economically prosperous country and it also has an old Armenian community, number to 20,000 Diasporan Armenians (See Table 7). Various news reports further accentuate Turkey’s role as a transit country for specifically Armenians. For example, in January 2006, illegal migrants were detained on the Greek border among who were Armenians (Anatolia news agency, 2006).

Trafficked migrants

The IOM 2001 survey also found that human trafficking is widely practiced for those who migrate from Georgia to Turkey. Most men are trafficked to work in the construction sector or agricultural sector. Women who are trafficked sometimes work in the agricultural sector, or end up as servants in Turkey’s households, or as forced sex workers, who are mostly found in the beach resorts such as Riza, Kushadasi, and Marmaris, or other locations closer to Georgia. The monthly salary of the migrants usually ranges from \$100-\$500, but trafficked migrants normally obtain only part of their salaries (IOM, 2001).

Georgians who go to Turkey do not need a visa for up to 90 days (MFA, Turkey). Corso reported in 2006 that 800 to 1’200 people cross the border to Turkey from Georgia each day. Of that number three quarters get a one month visa extensions to stay in Turkey longer. The Georgian

NGO, People's Harmonious Development, believes that about 300 to 450 of those crossing the border every day are trafficked (Corso, 2006).

We do not know how many of these trafficked people are Armenian citizens, but we have to expect that there are a few among them, since other than by air the only way for Armenians to cross the border is by land through Georgia only. In case the borders open, one assumes that it will be easier to regulate the trafficking of Armenian citizens with the cooperation of the government. But the government has to recognize that there is a trafficking problem towards Turkey, and the methods of trafficking might change if the borders are open, thus they have to fight it from the beginning.

Conclusion

An observation of Georgian migration trends, could suggest about possible future Armenian migration trends. Georgians and Armenians are convenient for comparison, since both are small, post-communist states, with relatively same size populations (about 4 million and 3 million respectively), which have low economic and social development and both have a common border with Turkey. Both have seen similar migration trends after the break up of the Soviet Union, except Georgia has experienced a larger flow of migrants towards Turkey, than Armenia. Almost 50% of Georgian migrants had left for Russia as of 2000. After Russia, Turkey is the major destination country for Georgian migrants² (IOM, 2001). The large flow of Georgians into Turkey could also be seen in the number of arrivals to Turkey (see Tables 1 and 3), which is tremendously larger than that of Russia.

The difference between Georgian and Armenian migration towards Turkey can be explained by three factors: a) the Turkish borders are closed to Armenia, which makes for cumbersome travel for Armenians; b) three month visa free entry for Georgians, as supposed to Armenians for whom a one month visa is required upon entry; c) political and historical tensions between Armenians and Turks. Logically, if the first two factors are resolved, that is the Armenian-Turkish border is opened and diplomatic relations are established (with easier visa entry requirements from Turkey) the migration towards Turkey from Armenia could increase.

Of course, the third factor still remains. In the public survey carried in August 2006 in Armenia 80% of the respondent believed that Turkey presented a threat to Armenia economically and politically (IRI, Gallup, 2006). One might ask though, how big of a role does the third factor really play when economic resources at home are exhausted? Although, no statistics exist as to how many Armenians arrive to Turkey per year, one can notice a swift increase in the number of cases of apprehended irregular migrants (See Table 4). This increase could indicate an overall increase in the number of migrants, but also stronger law enforcements in Turkey.

Table 3: Georgian nationality arrivals to Turkey*

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
179'563	163'970	161'687	167'759	235'143

Source: *General Directorate of Public Security [Turkey]*

**Note the number of departures from Georgia to Turkey were not listed in the original document probably because the numbers were too small which means that either Georgians remained in Turkey or headed to another destination country.*

² Note that the Georgia migration to Russia is most likely not as large anymore due to the visa requirements that were imposed on Georgians by Russia in 2000. Furthermore, in July 2006 the last passage from Georgia to Russia was closed (Stephane, Armnews, 2006).

Table 4: Deportation of Georgians

	2000	2001	1996-2004*
Deported for prostitution	575	663	
Deported for STD's	223	150	
Total Deported	2'670	2'527	12'000

Source: General Directorate for Foreigners, Ministry of Interior [Turkey]

*Cumulative data of 1996 to 2004 provided by IOM Ankara Office (IOM, 2004).

Table 5: Irregular Migration in Turkey, apprehended case, 1995-2005

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Armenia	4	2	--	1	98	474	452	505	494	835	858	3'723
Georgia	37	9	9	5	809	3'300	2'693	3'115	1'826	2'294	2'348	16'445

Source: Compiled by Ahmet Icduygu from data obtained from UNHCR Ankara office (2002-2005), Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum at the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of the Interior (2000-2005).

Table 6: Entry of Persons to Turkey

	1996	2000	2003	2004	2005
Armenia	5'345	17'704	23'596	32'982	36'633
Georgia	116'709	180'481	172'935	234'535	367'148

Source: Compiled by author from data obtained from the Foreigners Department of the Turkish Ministry of the Interior and State Statistical Institute Annual Report.

It is cheaper to reach Istanbul by land than to reach any major city of Russia from Armenia. If the Armenian-Turkish borders open the travel cost would decrease, so will the journey time. Worsened social conditions in Russia compared to relatively peaceful conditions for the average migrant to Turkey might be another factor that might alternate the destination of Armenian migrants. Right now migrating to Russia is attractive to Armenians because of three month visa free entry to Russia, and the same goes for Georgian to Turkey. If similar conditions are created for Armenians going to Turkey, the latter could become a more attractive destination of migration for Armenians. As the flow of migrants will increase, Armenians will consider Turkey as an increasingly favorable place for migration.

Policy Implications

The chances of Turkey being used as a transit country will still remain high, unless under the pressure of EU Turkey increases control at points of exit and entry, and so does Bulgaria. Trafficking of human beings will also depend on the local enforcement of laws in Turkey and in Armenia, thus the establishment of diplomatic relations and the cooperation of the two countries on this issue are vital, because trafficking has reached to an industrial level in both countries and needs to be tackled.

Various treaties should be signed between the two countries as a declaration of cooperation but as Gagik Yeganyan, Head of Department of Migration and Refugees, mentioned in an interview such treaties exist between Russia and Armenia but have very little functional purposes because migration is mainly irregular, thus laws are difficult to impose.

Russia on the other hand might give legal status to migrants because of its motivation to increase population. This might increase the number of labor migrants and permanent migrants in Russia. On the other hand, the larger flow of migrants to Turkey could ease diplomatic relations between the two countries, since people will get to know each other better, and this could eventually act on the governments of both countries as regards to how they behave towards each other.

Immigrants are normally never liked because they represent the lower class of society, with low-skill, low-salary jobs and with an illegal status. With the cooperation of the Diasporan community in Turkey and the Patriarchate and hopefully diplomatic representation in Turkey these concerns should be confronted. Once Armenia and Turkey establish diplomatic relations, they should cooperate to confront human trafficking, as well as, reduce the number of Armenian illegal migrants in Turkey.

Table 7: Estimated Armenian Diaspora Populations

Russia	2, 250, 000
Turkey*	2, 080, 000
Bulgaria	30, 000
Greece	20, 000
Romania	3, 000

Source: estimates provided by the AGBU organization.

See: <http://www.armeniadiaspora.com/follow/population.html>

**Value for Turkey includes an estimated 2,000,000 Armenians whose ancestors converted to Islam but who retain an Armenian ethnic identity.³*

Table 8: Comparison between Russia and Turkey

	Russia	Turkey
Transportation	0	+1
Salaries/living costs	0	0
Visa/bureaucratic matters	0	0
Remittance	+1	+1
Community/available social welfare help	+2	+1
Discrimination	-2	0
Language/culture	+1	-1
Total	2	2

³ For the sake of not altering the source, I will keep this number at 2,080, 000 Armenians, but consider the meaningful number of the Diaspora Armenians in Turkey to be 80, 000.

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