

Uneasy Promises: Critical Reflections on the Negotiated Reopening of Road and Railway between Armenia and Turkey.

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Paper short abstract:

Exploring the impacts of the negotiations on the reopening of the border between Armenia and Turkey on the people in Armenia, this paper discusses the uneasy aspects of the promises of border infrastructures. It aims to disrupt discourses of linearity and progress in conflict transformation.

Paper long abstract:

Against the background of the currently shifting world order by the latest Russian invasion into Ukraine, the Armenian borders and boundaries with Turkey and Azerbaijan (both guarded by Russian military) too are subject of new movements, attentions, damages and promises. The territorial sealing and failed attempts at diplomatic rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey originate in diplomatic disputes regarding the recognition of the Armenian genocide, which peaked in 1915, and the ongoing territorial conflict between Armenia and Turkey's ally Azerbaijan over the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh. In these "uneasy times" (Pandian: 2019) reopening the border as "progressing step" towards peace within discourses of conflict transformation however widely provokes fears in the Armenian society. What affective ambiguities – promises of economic opportunities, hopes, fears, economic and military threats – does the reopening of the border infrastructures evoke in the people in Armenia? How are the border infrastructures instrumentalized in order to unite as well as divide in this ethno-nationalized conflict?

Basing my analysis on the "Promise of Infrastructure" (Annand, Appel and Gupta 2018) I aim to explore how the lived experiences of people with the mentioned border infrastructures challenge what could be seen as a promising milestone in conflict transformation. This paper questions the linear and state-centered understanding of conflict transformation processes, predicting growth, progress and peace in an uneasy, post-capitalist environment. It aims to blur the dichotomous separations between war and peace as well as stagnation and progress in the Armenian-Turkish diplomatic conflict