

## **Online discussion “Turkey in the Regional Politics of the South Caucasus: Interests, Challenges, and Opportunities”**

On December 21 the Department of World Politics and International Relations at the Institute of Law and Politics of the Russian-Armenian University held an online discussion entitled "Turkey in the Regional Politics of the South Caucasus: Interests, Challenges, and Opportunities". The panel included Dr Irina Svistunova, who is a senior Researcher at IMEMO of Russian Academy of Sciences Dr Irina Svistunova, Michael A. Reynolds – Associate Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, Dr. Vicken Cheterian – lecturer in History and International Relations at the University of Geneva, and Dr Vassilis Kappis, who is the Deputy Director of BUCSIS and Lecturer in Security Studies at the University of Buckingham.

The panelists talked about Turkey's foreign policy, its bilateral relations with a number of countries and the challenges and opportunities for the country in the South Caucasus.

Particularly, Dr. Svistunova presented the history and dynamics of the development of bilateral relations between Russia and Turkey, as well as its impact on the South Caucasus. She emphasized that “there is a great potential of Russian influence in the region (South Caucasus – note.) and it remains a kind of challenge foe Ankara”.

Dr. Cheterian presented the stages of the development of relations between Armenia and Turkey, as well as some prospects for their development after the Third Artsakh war. He mentioned that Turkey did not set preconditions for improving bilateral relations before any post-Soviet country except Armenia.

In his presentation, Dr. Kappis talked about the Turkish factor in Eastern Mediterranean. He touched upon the development of the Turkish economy and also graphical indicators of military investment in the period 2009-2018, stressing that “top performance’s China, only second is Turkey expending its military spending by 65%”.

Referring to the Third Artsakh war, during the presentation of US-Turkey bilateral relations, Professor Reynolds said that there was a lack of interest in the South Caucasus and sympathy for Turkey and Azerbaijan on the part of the US, in contrast to Iran, which appreciated its relations with Armenia.

During the Q&A session the experts presented their positions on strengthening the influence of Turkey and Russia in the South Caucasus region and touched upon the development of relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan.