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Armenia's Reorientation: Identity, Peace, and Regional Order

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Hakan Ömer TUNCA



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EDITORIAL NOTE

This 53rd issue of the *Review of Armenian Studies* appears at a moment of exceptional historical significance for the South Caucasus, a conjuncture in which the long-deferred promise of regional peace is transforming from diplomatic aspiration into institutional reality. At the same time, Armenia’s fundamental geopolitical orientation and civilizational identity are being openly negotiated and redefined. The Facts and Comments section chronicles the pivotal developments of December 2025 through May 2026, a period punctuated by landmark events: the first-ever EU–Armenia Summit held in Yerevan on 5 May 2026, the hosting of the 8th European Political Community Summit on Armenian soil, the holding of parliamentary elections on 7 June 2026 that returned Prime Minister Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party to power—albeit short of a constitutional supermajority—and the continued, if still unfinalized, trajectory of the Armenia–Azerbaijan peace process toward its historic conclusion. Against this backdrop of simultaneous transformation and fragility, the contributions to this volume engage with the deeper structural, historical, and legal dimensions of the questions that these dramatic developments both illuminate and, in certain respects, have yet to resolve fully.

The normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia continues to advance along a constructive, if measured, path. The attendance of Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz at the Yerevan summits of May 2026—and his characterization of Türkiye–Armenia normalization as “extremely valuable” and “an example and inspiration for others”—reflects a broadly shared regional recognition that the architecture of post-conflict cooperation is actively being constructed. The 8th European Political Community Summit, the first to be hosted outside Europe’s traditional geographic core, placed Armenia emphatically at the center of continental diplomacy and was accompanied by the launch of an EU–Armenia Connectivity Partnership and the establishment of a new EU Partnership Mission in Armenia. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has reaffirmed Türkiye’s consistent position, linking the full opening of borders and normalization to the signing of a final Armenia–Azerbaijan peace treaty—with work on the Kars–Gyumri railway connection, the restoration of the Ani Bridge, and bilateral trade infrastructure continuing in anticipation of that moment. It is within this rich and rapidly evolving regional environment that the scholarly contributions of this issue must be read.

The special issues title will be *Armenia's Reorientation: Identity, Peace, and Regional Order*.

The defining theme of the present moment in the Armenian question is not simply peacemaking between states; it is a far more fundamental renegotiation of Armenian national identity, regional belonging, and geopolitical self-conception. Prime Minister Pashinyan's government has, with unusual candor, renounced what his predecessors treated as inviolable historical narratives, instead staking its political future on a platform of normalization, regional integration, and Euro-Atlantic openness. The June 2026 parliamentary elections, resulting in a Civil Contract victory that nonetheless fell short of the two-thirds qualified majority needed to call the constitutional referendum long demanded by Baku as a precondition for finalizing the peace treaty—illustrate both the breadth of this reorientation and its political limits. Armenia's formal application for European Union membership, backed by parliamentary decision since April 2025 and affirmed at the highest levels during the historic EU–Armenia Summit, marks a civilizational pivot of the first order. Yet this pivot is not frictionless: the Apostolic Church, significant segments of the diaspora, and pro-Russian opposition forces continue to contest its terms, framing the normalization agenda as a betrayal of national aspirations. The four articles of this special section engage directly with these realities, examining identity construction, peace-process dynamics, post-conflict justice, and ecclesiastical governance as interconnected dimensions of Armenia's ongoing transformation.

Alev Kılıç's Facts and Comments covering December 2025 through May 2026 map the full complexity of this conjuncture with analytical precision. Tracing the interplay between Armenia's accelerating westward reorientation, the evolving peace process with Azerbaijan, the church–state cleavage that structured the June 2026 electoral contest, and Türkiye's supportive yet conditioned posture, Kılıç demonstrates that the Armenian elections functioned as far more than a domestic political event—they were, in effect, a referendum on a civilizational choice. The broad, visible support of the EU and the United States for Pashinyan's platform confronted a church-backed, diaspora-supported conservatism that drew on the very historical narratives the government has sought to set aside. Kılıç's analysis reveals the structural tension between the imperatives of regional peace and the enduring gravitational pull of historical grievance, offering an indispensable contextual frame for all the scholarly contributions that follow.

Uğur Matıç's article examines Armenia's geopolitical limitations through the prism of identity construction and the systematic "othering" of Türkiye and the broader Turkic world. By analyzing how the designation of Türkiye as the constitutive "other" has functioned as a structuring constraint on Armenian foreign policy and regional cooperation—despite deep historical and cultural affinities—Matıç argues that the diplomatic opportunities opened by the Second Karabakh War and its aftermath create a genuine, if still fragile, opening for Armenia to reposition itself as a potential bridge between Turkic Central Asia and Europe. The proposal for observer status for Armenia within the Organization of Turkic States is advanced not as a utopian aspiration but as a strategic lever to encourage a reorientation of Armenian foreign policy beyond the limiting framework of ontological insecurity. This contribution is, in a very real sense, a meditation on what the ongoing normalization process means for Armenia's understanding of its own place in the regional order.

Erdinç Özdemir's rigorous application of *jus post bellum* principles to the Nagorno-Karabakh context offers a critical corrective to the dominant assumption that peace follows inevitably from the cessation of armed conflict. By examining the ethical, legal, and institutional dimensions of post-conflict justice—accountability, reconciliation, reconstruction, reparation, and border demarcation—Özdemir demonstrates that a durable settlement requires far more than a diplomatic instrument. This study provides the normative framework through which the current peace process must be assessed.

Hakan Ömer Tunca's systematic thematic content analysis of post-conflict diplomatic discourse—drawing on UN General Assembly speeches, OSCE and EU mediation documents, bilateral and trilateral communications, and treaty texts—provides an important empirical complement to Özdemir's normative analysis. Tunca's finding that formal diplomatic discourse in the South Caucasus has undergone a marked shift between 2023 and 2025, with connectivity and treaty-related themes increasingly displacing earlier preoccupations with sovereignty and security, constitutes a significant contribution to our understanding of the region's evolving diplomatic culture. The displacement of memory-centric narratives by a technocratic, forward-looking discourse focused on borders, infrastructure, and regional cooperation resonates directly with the political choices being made in Yerevan, Baku, and Ankara. It signals a broader transformation in the region's conceptual architecture of peace.

Ahmet Sertaç Eroğlu's annotated translation of Raffi's celebrated 1879 article in *Mshak* on Etchmiadzin's governance of its distant ecclesiastical

jurisdictions offers a historical lens of striking contemporary relevance. At a moment when the divide between the Catholics and the Pashinyan government has emerged as one of the structuring axes of Armenian domestic politics, Raffi's nineteenth-century critique of institutional religious corruption, of the erosion of ecclesiastical authority, and of the consequences of such erosion for national cohesion reads as an unexpectedly timely text. The article's argument—that the weakening of Etchmiadzin's capacity for governance constitutes a structural obstacle to national unity and awakening—resonates powerfully with contemporary debates about the church's role in contesting or legitimizing Armenia's geopolitical reorientation. By demonstrating how religion and nationalism have long been entangled as both mutually reinforcing and mutually destabilizing forces in Armenian political life, this contribution essentially broadens the historical horizon of the issue.

Serpil Asar's experimental study on the effect of in-service training on history and social studies teachers' content knowledge of "Armenian Claims" complements the special section with a methodologically rigorous empirical investigation of a domain underexplored in the existing literature. Using a pre-test/post-test control group design, Asar examines whether the Ministry of National Education's provincial seminar program produces measurable improvements in teachers' field knowledge of the subject, finding a statistically significant increase in the experimental group relative to the control group. The study raises important questions about the relationship between formal pedagogical intervention, teacher preparedness, and the broader discursive environment in which the Armenian question is understood, taught, and transmitted across generations. This contribution bridges the journal's historical and policy concerns with the domain of educational research, adding a dimension that enriches the volume's overall analytical scope.

As the South Caucasus undergoes its most consequential transformation since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and as Türkiye's role as a constructive actor committed to regional stability, connectivity, and peace becomes ever more visible, this 53rd issue of the *Review of Armenian Studies* remains committed to the rigorous, evidence-based, and multidisciplinary scholarship that has distinguished the journal since its inception. We extend our sincere gratitude to all contributors for the precision, depth, and intellectual integrity of their analyses, and we trust that this volume will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and all those engaged with the enduring and evolving dimensions of the Armenian question in its regional and global context.

EDITORIAL / BAŞYAZI

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FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

Alev KILIÇ*

Abstract: *This article covers the period from December 2025 to May 2026, on the internal situation in Armenia, the foreign dynamics shaping its international relations, the process of concluding the peace agreement with Azerbaijan, and the bilateral relations between Türkiye and Armenia in light of the normalization of their relations.*

The unfolding events of the period were primarily focused on the upcoming elections on 7 June. Prime Minister Pashinyan set aside historical goals, claims, and narratives, instead establishing a platform for peace, good-neighborly relations, and openness to the West, with the broad and visible support of the EU and the USA. The parliamentary opposition led by the pro-Russian parties of the three former presidents has been ineffective and not representative. As such, opposition to the Government has effectively been assumed by the Apostolic Church and its head, the Catholicos, on the grounds of safeguarding traditional aspirations, values, and narrative. A new party, aligned with the Church, was founded by a billionaire, Karapetyan, with dual Russian and Armenian nationality. Hence, a Russia-West divide, yet with blurred lines as support for the Apostolic Church by

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prominent Christian institutions in the West as well as radical elements of the diaspora in the West produced a curious situation. The election results reflected this dichotomy. Certainly a victory for Pashinyan, winning a majority of seats in the parliament, although leaving him short of the much needed absolute-two thirds majority, with two opposition parties also passing the threshold.

The peace process with Azerbaijan has progressed positively, with constructive steps following the 8 August agreement signed in Washington, D.C., at the trilateral summit. Since amending the constitution of Armenia, the only obstacle to concluding the Treaty of Peace has been deferred to the aftermath of the elections; during this period, the sides have concentrated on developing trade, economic cooperation, and transport, as well as promoting person-to-person and intercommunal relations. On the other hand, groups antagonistic to the Pashinyan government, the Apostolic Church, reputable international Christian institutions, and some political entities with ideological bias have willingly or inadvertently targeted the peace process.

Still much dependent in many ways and with strong ties to Russia but at a geopolitical conjecture in which Russia's influence has been diminishing, Armenia has increased and advanced its efforts to establish institutional bonds with the West while carefully gauging not to draw the ire of Russia, trying to neutralise its policy with a narrative of a multi-vector, balanced and balancing foreign policy as well as developing relations also with countries aligned with Russia. Armenia has nonetheless managed to establish regional cooperation with the USA, concluding a strategic partnership, and applying for membership in the EU. The holding of the historic first EU-Armenia summit in Yerevan, followed by the summit of the European Political Community, has clearly demonstrated the very strong support for Armenia's new trajectory.

Relations with Türkiye have continued on a constructive and positive path within the framework of the normalization process. For Türkiye, the priority, or "sine quo non," has remained the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the region, which is, above all, dependent on the signing of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace Treaty. As the Treaty was deferred until after Armenia's elections, Türkiye's expectations for early normalization have inevitably been dimmed. The misleading thesis that the full normalization of relations and the opening of the borders would facilitate the signing of the Treaty with Azerbaijan has lacked credibility. However, work on the infrastructure has advanced, with Türkiye projected to be fully ready as soon as the Treaty is signed. During the period, Türkiye has closely followed and

commended the visionary narrative and the courageous steps taken by the Pashinyan Government and expressed full support for its modern and far-sighted policies. This support was substantiated by several positive gestures, such as the restoration of the historic Ani Bridge, work on the Kars-Gyumri railroad connection, water regulation on the Aras River, a bilateral direct trade facility, and a railroad connection through Georgia.

Keywords: *Pashinyan, Mirzoyan, Karekin II, Dashnaktsutyun (ARF), Diaspora, Erdogan, Azerbaijan, Armenian Elections, Putin, Lavrov, Fidan.*

Öz: *Bu incelemede Aralık 2025-Mayıs 2026 tarihleri arasındaki dönemde Ermenistan'daki iç durum, dış ilişkiler, Azerbaycan ile barış antlaşması imzalanma süreci, Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkileri ve normalleşme süreci ele alınmaktadır.*

Dönemin gelişmeleri esas itibarıyla 7 Haziran'da yapılacağı açıklanan parlamento seçimlerine odaklanmıştır. ABD ve AB'nin siyasi desteğiyle Paşinyan yönetimi, tarihi emelleri ve söylemleri bir kenara koyarak komşularla iyi ilişkiler öngören, Batı'ya açılan ve barış yanlısı bir platform oluşturmuştur. Eski üç cumhurbaşkanının ön çektığı Rusya yanlısı muhalefet etkisiz ve yetersiz kalmış, muhalefet görevini geleneksel söylemleri savunan Apostolik Kilise ve onun gölgesinde yeni bir parti oluşturan Rus ve Ermeni uyruklu oligark milyarder Karapetyan üstlenmiştir. Böylece, bir yandan Rusya-Batı çekişmesi, diğer yandan din dayanışması kapsamında Batı'nın önde gelen dinî kurumları ile Batı'daki aşırı-radikal diaspora gruplarının Apostolik Kiliseye ortak desteği, ilginç bir görüntü oluşturmuştur. Seçim sonuçları bu ikilemi ortaya koymuştur. Kuşkusuz Paşinyan Parlamentoda elde ettiği çoğunlukla bir zafer kazanmıştır. Diğer taraftan çok ihtiyaç duyduğu üçte iki çoğunluğu sağlayamamış, rakibi iki parti parlamentoda temsil edilmeyi başarmıştır.

Azerbaycan ile barış süreci 8 Ağustos 2025'te Vaşington'da üçlü zirvede varılan mutabakatın ışığında, olumlu ve yapıcı adımlarla devam etmiş; antlaşmanın imzalanmasının önündeki tek engeli oluşturan anayasada gerekli değişikliğin yapılması keyfiyeti 7 Haziran seçimi ertesine bırakıldığı cihetle, dönem ticari, ekonomik iş birliği, ulaşım bağlantısallığının sağlanması, insandan insana ve toplumlar arası ilişkilerin geliştirilmesi gibi antlaşmanın altyapısını ve ruhunu oluşturan girişimlere odaklanmıştır. Diğer taraftan, Paşinyan yönetimi karşıtı çevreler, bunlarla aynı çizgide buluşan Apostolik Kilise ve

yandaş uluslararası din kurumları ile ideolojik ve siyasi bazı oluşumlar; barış sürecini de hedef alabilmişlerdir.

Rusya'ya hâlâ çok yönlü bağlı bulunan Ermenistan, Rusya'nın güç kaybettiği düzlemde, Rusya'nın potansiyel gazabını çekmeden Batı ile ilişkilerini kurumsallaştırma adımlarını ileri bir aşamaya taşımış; bunu çok vektörlü, dengeli ve dengeleyici bir dış politika söylemiyle, Rusya'ya yakın ülkelerle geliştirmeye çalıştığı ilişkilerle nötralize etmeye çalışmıştır. ABD ile yerleştirdiği bölgesel iş birliği ve AB ile stratejik ortaklık ve üyelik girişimi, bu siyasetin kuvvetle arkasında durulduğunu göstermek üzere, Erivan'da düzenlenen tarihi AB-Ermenistan zirvesi ve peşinden Avrupa Siyasi Topluluğu zirvesi döneme damgasını vurmuştur.

Türkiye ile ilişkiler normalleşme süreci kapsamında yapıcı ve olumlu seyrini sürdürmüştür. Türkiye bakımından önceliğin bölgede kalıcı barışın ve istikrarın tesis edilmesi, bunun da her şeyden önce Ermenistan-Azerbaycan barış antlaşmasının imzalanmasından geçmesi, Ermenistan'ın beklentilerini biraz törpülemiş, Türkiye ile ilişkilerin tam normalleşmesi ve sınırların açılmasının Azerbaycan ile anlaşmayı daha kolaylaştıracağı gibi yanılıcı görüşler itibar görmemiştir. Ancak altyapı hazırlıkları tamamlanmış ve Ermenistan-Azerbaycan normalleşmesinin hemen akabinde Türkiye'nin bütünüyle hazır olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Türkiye, Ermenistan'daki gelişmeleri ve Paşinyan yönetiminin ezber bozan, cesur adımlarını dikkatle izlemiş ve takdirle karşılaşmış; çağdaş yaklaşımına tam desteğini de ifade etmiştir. Bu destek, bazı olumlu jestlerle -Ani Köprüsü restorasyonu, Kars-Gümri demiryolu çalışmaları, Aras Nehri su düzenlemeleri, ikili ticaretin resmileştirilmesi, Gürcistan üzerinden demiryolu bağlantısının açılması- ile somutlaştırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Paşinyan, Mirzoyan, Karekin II, Taşnaksutyun (EDF), Diaspora, Erdoğan, Azerbaycan, Ermenistan Seçimleri, Putin, Lavrov, Fidan.*

1. Domestic Developments in Armenia

With the formal start of the election campaign, the opposition intensified its aggressive invectives against the Pashinyan administration. However, as the traditional political opposition represented in parliament has completely lost its influence, credibility, and trust in the public eye, the guardianship of the opposition has been assumed by extremist groups with a documented dark past, fuelled by the support of radical, militant, and revanchist actors within the diaspora, and by the Patriarchate-Apostolic Church, which aligned with them. The conflict between the government and the head of the Church, the Catholicos, has reached the point where, for the first time in history, a Catholicos has been subjected to judicial proceedings with a criminal indictment and has been barred from traveling abroad. This conflict has caused significant unease, cracks, and divisions within the diaspora, whilst also providing an opportunity for external powers to intervene. Parties opposed to Pashinyan's peace process, his vision of "real Armenia rather than historical Armenia", his assertion that the Karabakh issue was an issue of the past and no longer a problem, his policies of distancing Armenia from Russia, opening up to the West, and fostering good neighbourly relations, have sought refuge with the Church and the Catholicos to create a platform appealing to the conservative base to achieve their aims. Meanwhile, leading organizations of the Christian world, whilst providing widespread and effective support to the Apostolic Church within the framework of religious solidarity, have found themselves in the dilemma of having to simultaneously align with different political aims.¹

During this period, whilst Pashinyan was at odds with the Church leadership, he made a point of emphasizing and projecting himself as having no issues with religion or the Church. His attendance at Sunday services led by priests who shared his views—even those whom the Catholicos had defrocked—was featured in television news reports. In this vein, he also organized the first-ever "Armenia Prayer Breakfast" held on 15 November.²

At the breakfast attended by representatives of the Apostolic Church, as well as the Yazidi, Jewish, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Evangelical, Syriac, and Orthodox churches, Muslims, and other faith communities, Pashinyan emphasized the importance of religious tolerance. On 6 January, on Orthodox

1 "Tucker Carlson Amplifies Claims Of Pashinyan's 'War On Christianity'," *OC Media*, November 10, 2026, <https://oc-media.org/tucker-carlson-amplifies-claims-of-pashinyans-war-on-christianity/>.

2 "'The Path of Peace Is The Path God Leads Us Through.' PM Pashinyan Participates In The First Prayer Breakfast Of The Republic Of Armenia," The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, November 15, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/11/15/Nikol-Pashinyan-Prayer-Breakfast/>.

Christmas, he also invited the public to join him on a “Christmas Pilgrimage” in Yerevan, which included visits to several churches.

A notable development that emboldened Pashinyan was his securing an absolute majority of the vote in the mid-term elections held in the province whose capital city is Echmiadzin, the country’s religious center and seat of the Catholicosate. On the other hand, senior clergy declared their unwavering loyalty to the Catholicos in a statement issued on 4 December. Pashinyan, however, stated in a speech to parliament that he was not seeking a Catholicos who would obey him, but rather one who would neither obey officials of foreign intelligence services, nor submit daily reports to them.³ Pashinyan also outlined his views on the necessary reforms within the Armenian Apostolic Church, stating that the first step would be the removal of Catholicos Karekin II from office and the election of a Vicar. On 19 December, ten bishops submitted an official petition demanding the Catholicos’s resignation.⁴

In a statement issued on 5 January in response to these developments, the Apostolic Church stated, in summary, that the state’s interference in the Church’s affairs constituted a violation of the constitution; that the anti-Church initiative of the ten bishops was a reprehensible act; that the Church’s internal order and the need for reform were not matters for state intervention; and that such inappropriate steps could lead to division, which might have grave consequences.⁵

On 15–16 November, a meeting of the Central Committees of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was held in Yerevan at the invitation of the Armenian Dashnak Party. The meeting, attended by delegates from 13 countries, discussed coordinated strategies for a common goal. The conflict between the government and the Church has also caused a rift within the diaspora.

In an article published on 23 December, the founder and president of the Zoryan Institute, one of the leading radical organizations in the diaspora, in summary, noted that the state cannot have two heads, that the supremacy of the state is not open to debate, that the separation of church and state does not

3 “Pashinyan: I Need A Catholicos Who Will Not Obey Foreign Special Service Lieutenant,” *ArmenPress*, December 3, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1236739>.

4 “10 Ruhani Katolikos Karşıtı Mektubu Vermek İçin Eçmiadzin’e Geldi, Hareketli Saatler Yaşandı,” *Agos*, December 19, 2025, <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/haber/10-ruhani-katolikos-karsiti-mektubu-vermek-icin-ecmiadzin-e-geldi-hareketli-saatler-yasandi-38904>.

5 Arshaluys Barseghyan, “Pashinyan Launches ‘Reform’ Of Armenian Church, Renews Call For Karekin II’s Resignation,” *OC Media*, January 5, 2026, <https://oc-media.org/pashinyan-launches-reform-of-armenian-church-renews-call-for-karekin-iis-resignation/>.

constitute hostility towards religion, and that the Apostolic Church is a vital spiritual, cultural and moral institution but cannot possess power equal to that of the state.

Archbishop Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, also issued a detailed and reasoned statement announcing his support for the “Church Reform” initiative, describing it as an “undelayable imperative”.⁶

F. Devedjian, one of the leading radical figures in the French diaspora, also expressed in his statement published on 14 February that responsibility for the current conflict cannot be attributed solely to the government, that priority must be given to Armenia’s democratic development, and that the Church’s involvement in politics distances it from its mission to unite society.⁷

Meanwhile, in a statement issued on 28 December by the Lemkin Institute—which is also known for its radical and extreme views—it was claimed that there is great concern regarding the pressure exerted by the state on the Church, the arrest of clergy, and the targeting of religious institutions, that these developments constitute a dangerous assault on Armenia’s democratic institutions and the fundamental institutions of Armenian identity. A paragraph in the five-page comprehensive statement, which also refers to Türkiye, is presented below as it reflects the Institute’s approach regarding the matter:

*“Historically, the Turkish state viewed Christianity as the heart of Armenian distinctiveness and thus as an obstacle to national homogenization. Today, the Armenian Apostolic Church is being framed by some political actors in Armenia as a competing power center; a vestige of the old order, or a destabilizing force. Such rhetoric, combined with the use of legal instruments to dismantle or intimidate the clergy, reflects a deeply troubling attempt to weaken the Church’s role as a moral authority and protector of national identity.”*⁸

6 “Western Diocese’s Archbishop Derderian Reaffirms Support For Pashinyan’s ‘Church Reform,’ Alleges Misconduct Against Catholics,” *Zartokn*, January 16, 2026, <https://zartoknmedia.com/2026/01/16/western-dioceses-archbishop-derderian-reaffirms-support-for-pashinyans-church-reform-alleges-misconduct-against-catholics/>

7 “Church’s Involvement In Politics Distances It From Its Unifying Mission – François Devedjian,” *ArmenPress*, February 14, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1242219>.

8 “Statement On The Suppression Of The Armenian Apostolic Church: Historical Continuities Of Identity Erasure Within Victim Groups,” Lemkin Institute, December 28, 2025, <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/statement-on-the-suppression-of-the-armenian-apostolic-church%3A-historical-continuities-of-identity-erasure-within-victim-groups>.

In a statement on 26 November, Pashinyan announced that the referendum on the new constitution currently being drafted would take place after the elections. The Minister of Justice issued a statement on 4 February announcing that the text of the new constitution would be finalized in March and made available to the public. In a statement on 12 March, Pashinyan expressed that the new constitution should not refer to the Declaration of Independence, which is combative in structure.⁹ On 16 March, the Minister of Justice announced that work on the draft text of the new constitution had been completed, but that it would be discussed within the party before being shared with the public.¹⁰

The 2026 parliamentary elections have increasingly come to the fore on the domestic agenda, with senior officials beginning to raise the possibility of foreign interference in the elections. In early December, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy warned that Moscow could interfere in the Armenian elections, as it had done in the Moldovan elections. Following this, the EU decided to allocate 15 million euros to support peace and strengthen Armenia's resilience, particularly to counter Russia's misleading propaganda during the election process.¹¹ The opposition responded negatively to this decision, alleging that Pashinyan had received a green light from the EU to rig the elections. Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov also accused the EU of interfering in Armenia's internal affairs to influence the election results.¹² Security Council Secretary Grigoryan issued a statement on 14 January, warning that the complex threats facing Armenia had increased several-fold and were likely to escalate further over the next five to six months. During his annual press conference on 20 January, Lavrov said, *"If I were in the place of the Armenian people, I would be seriously worried. We, of course, are following the situation surrounding the Armenian Apostolic Church with sadness."*¹³ In response to claims by high-ranking Armenian officials—in line with the EU Foreign Policy Chief's allegations—that hybrid threats were being directed at Armenia from the Russian Federation, he stated, *"This cannot cause us anything but bewilderment. I can only note that*

9 "Pashinyan: New Armenian Constitution Should Not Reference 'Conflict-Logic' Declaration Of Independence," *ArmenPress*, March 12, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1244511>.

10 "Justice Minister: Drafting Of Armenia's Proposed New Constitution Completed," *ArmenPress*, March 16, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1244779>.

11 "EU Accuses Russia Of Pre-Election 'Disinformation' In Armenia," *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, December 2, 2026, https://www.azatoryun.am/a/33611034.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawOcpmxleHRuA2Fl-bQIxMOBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzktNzg4MjAwODkyAAEeHVWO11mUecj0ZFafzjJ-hgXB-4faZ3UoVIY7-gbKJK9226OvpTwfQBW9yL7g_aem_fvKEkUSealkzICrYV3N7Bg.

12 "Russian FM Accuses EU of Election Meddling In Armenia," *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, December 19, 2025, <https://www.azatoryun.am/a/33628015.html>.

13 "We Regretfully Observe Situation With Armenian Church – Lavrov," *Alpha News*, January 20, 2026, <https://alphanews.am/en/we-regretfully-observe-situation-with-armenian-church-lavrov/>.

rapprochement with the European Union does not go without consequences, since it is the European Union that constantly talks about hybrid threats emanating from the Russian Federation. They provide funds for such work. Recently, Armenia was provided with a tranche of 15 million euros.”

On 16 December, an official from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the detention of Karapetyan, who is also a Russian citizen, for six months without a court ruling was a cause for concern, that they had raised the matter with the Armenian authorities.

On 20 January, the Armenian parliament passed a resolution by a majority vote declaring 27 January an official public holiday as “Day Of Remembrance For Those Who Gave Their Lives For Their Homeland”.¹⁴

On 13 January, the Supreme Religious Council convened under the chairmanship of Catholicos Karekin II and decided that the Bishops’ Synod, which is usually held in Echmiadzin but could not take place in December due to recent developments, would this time be held in Sankt Pölten, Austria, from 16 to 19 February.¹⁵ This decision caused considerable backlash from 10 reform-minded bishops, who demanded that the meeting abroad be cancelled. On 14 February, the Armenian Prosecutor General’s Office brought criminal charges against Karekin II and imposed a travel ban.¹⁶ This effectively prevented the Catholicos from attending the meeting he was due to chair. Thus, Karekin II became the first Catholicos in history to be subject to a criminal investigation. Karekin II refused to give a statement. By court order, the travel ban was lifted on 13 April.

On 4 March, the Armenian Parliament passed a law prohibiting the Apostolic Church from selling or transferring movable religious property to third parties without government permission. It has been claimed that this decision was influenced by rumors circulating on social media suggesting that the Catholicos would not return after travelling to Austria and would instead preside over the religious center from abroad.¹⁷ On 26 March, the government passed a resolution ending the allocation of free land to the Apostolic Church.

14 “Armenia Designates January 27 As Memorial Day,” *ArmenPress*, January 20, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1240031>.

15 “Armenian Apostolic Church Bishops’ Synod To Be Held In Austria On February 16-19,” *News.am*, January 19, 2026, <https://news.am/en/news/926022>.

16 “Katolikos Hakkında Kamu Davası Açıldı,” *Agos*, February 16, 2026, <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/haber/katolikos-hakkinda-kamu-davasi-acildi-39488>.

17 “Parliament Bans Armenian Apostolic Church From Alienating Religious Monuments Without Government Consent,” *News.am*, March 4, 2026, <https://news.am/en/news/934003>.

The Bishops' Synod was held in Austria on 17 February, attended by 25 Archbishops and Bishops out of a total of 50. The opening addresses were delivered by Catholicos Aram I of Antelias, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Archbishop S. Mashalyan, Patriarch of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul. Archbishop Derderian, who had previously given strong support to Pashinyan's call for reform, signed the document adopted at the meeting, which calls for an end to the interference of Armenian authorities in the Church. The statement issued at the conclusion of the meeting included the following: "*The Armenian Church has never served and does not serve foreign powers or external interests, but has kept its fidelity uncompromisingly and exclusively to the Armenian people, to their statehood, and to the preservation of national identity.*"¹⁸

A Presidential Decree published on 8 February announced that parliamentary elections would be held on 7 June.¹⁹

On 11 February, after legal barriers prevented the use of his own name, Karapetyan was elected leader of the party he had founded under the name "Strong Armenia", and was subsequently announced as a candidate for Prime Minister.²⁰ The Armenian Constitution stipulates that a candidate for this office must have held only Armenian citizenship for the preceding four years. It was noted that Karapetyan, who remains in custody, holds Russian and Cypriot (Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus) citizenship in addition to Armenian citizenship. On 17 April, following a court ruling extending his detention by a further three months, Karapetyan was barred from participating in the election campaign.

In a statement issued in early March, the Foreign Intelligence Service warned that signs of possible foreign interference in the 7 June elections were detected and that, without naming any specific country, pressure was being exerted on Armenians living abroad to vote for certain political parties.

The director of the "genocide" museum in Yerevan, known for her militant views and statements, was forced to resign due to behaviour contrary to government policy and discourse during the US Vice President's visit.²¹

18 "The Assembly Of Bishops Of The Catholicosate Of All Armenians Of The Armenian Apostolic Holy Church Issued A Statement," Armenian Apostolic Holy Church Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, February 20, 2026, <https://www.armenianchurch.org/en/news/the-assembly-of-bishops-of-the-catholicosate-of-all-armenians-of-the-armenian-apostolic-holy-church/12141>.

19 "Seçimler 7 Haziran'da," *Ermenistan Kamu Radyosu*, February 9, 2026, <https://tr.armradio.am/2026/02/09/secimler-7-haziranda/>.

20 "Strong Armenia Party Nominates Samvel Karapetyan As PM Candidate Despite Constitutional Barrier," *ArmenPress*, February 12, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1241999>.

21 "Pashinyan Says He Ordered Genocide Museum Director To Submit Resignation," *CivilNet*, March 12, 2026, <https://civilnet.am/en/news/1007739>.

In a speech on 19 March, Pashinyan warned that if the opposition won the election, the peace agreement would collapse and the path to a new war would be quickly opened. The opposition criticized this as a scare tactic.²² The “Strong Armenia” party stated that even if they were to win the election, the conditions for securing Nagorno-Karabakh’s independence did not exist, and therefore they could not pursue such a policy. Mirzoyan also reiterated the concern of the Prime Minister, stating that his was not a scare tactic, nor a form of blackmail.

In a speech delivered on 26 March as part of the ongoing election campaign, Pashinyan stated that he rejected the claim that Armenians from Karabakh had been subjected to “ethnic cleansing”, arguing that this would create an atmosphere of tension and conflict. He underlined that, as head of the Armenian Government, he rejected the agenda of “restoring historical justice”, adopted an agenda of “just reality” that the struggle for the “Armenian Cause” constituted an “anti-Armenian” policy.²³ Referring to the new constitution, Pashinyan stated that the Declaration of Independence would not be mentioned, thereby ensuring the establishment of a permanent state in the region. In response to the question of what would happen if the new constitution were not approved in the referendum, he explained that they would go to the people to explain and convince them, and hold another referendum. Pashinyan expressed that his government had developed a new National Security Strategy, that the old one was invalid because Armenia had never previously lived in peace, as then conditions of a frozen conflict existed. On 21 April, Pashinyan reiterated that the Declaration of Independence would not be included in the new constitution.²⁴

The rift created by Pashinyan’s administration within the diaspora has prompted the diaspora’s active and radical elements to implement a critical assessment of the situation and to work towards defining the diaspora’s role in light of recent developments, guided by certain principles. At the Western American Diaspora Conference organized by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the official body of the Dashnaks, in Los Angeles on 14–15 March, the current definition of the diaspora, which has existed for 1,600 years, and its objectives were discussed in line with the Dashnaks’ well-known radical

22 “Pashinyan Warns Of Possible New September War If Opposition Wins,” *MassisPost*, March 19, 2026, <https://massispost.com/2026/03/pashinyan-warns-of-possible-new-september-war-if-opposition-wins/>.

23 “Pashinyan Rejects ‘Historical Justice’ Agenda,” *ArmenPress*, March 26, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1245673>.

24 “Pashinyan: New Constitution Should Not Reference Declaration Of Independence,” *ArmenPress*, April 21, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1248012>.

and militant views.²⁵ A more comprehensive meeting was held in Paris on 11–12 April. The “Diaspora Mobilization Conference”, reportedly attended by over 150 delegates from Armenia, the so-called “Artsakh”, which is still imagined to exist, and 26 other countries, featured opening addresses by Catholicos Karekin II and Aram I, with the floor also given to the “President of Artsakh” and a representative of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. A comprehensive roadmap document was published at the conclusion of the meeting. It was expressed that the diaspora plays a strategic role and is of great importance in addressing the dangers facing the Armenian people, that the main priorities of the diaspora’s political agenda included the recognition of the “Armenian Genocide” and the issue of reparations, as well as the preservation and development of “Western Armenian”.²⁶

In summary, the history of the diaspora has been defined as one whole, comprising those who migrated for traditional reasons, after the “genocide”, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and for economic reasons following independence. The need for their political and ideological guidance has been emphasized. In this context, the difficulties created by the Pashinyan administration were harshly criticized. It was stated that the Armenian government has adopted an antagonistic stance towards established diaspora institutions across all sectors, that the burden of promoting the “genocide” has been left to the diaspora, that the “Artsakh” issue has been sidelined, that the diaspora ministry has been abolished, that pan-Armenian structures have been dismantled, and that relations between Armenia and the diaspora have been confined to a narrow, individualistic circle.

A serious blow to the ultra-militant wing of the diaspora was dealt on 29 April in Paris, when the co-chairs of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF), known for their radical views and proximity to Macron, were not invited to the opening ceremony of the Embassy’s new building, an event attended by Mirzoyan alongside the French Minister of Foreign Affairs and other officials. In this context, the head of the Armenian Church in France, the bishop, was also among those not invited.²⁷

25 “ARF Western U.S. Diaspora Conference Concludes: A Beginning, Not an End,” *Asbarez*, March 17, 2026, <https://asbarez.com/the-arf-wr-diaspora-conference-concludes-a-beginning-not-an-end/>.

26 “Declaration Of The Diaspora Mobilization Conference,” Armenian Revolutionary Federation, April 13, 2026, <https://www.arfd.am/eng/news/8453/>.

27 “Diaspora And Artsakh Representatives Excluded From Armenia’s New Embassy Opening In Paris, CCAF Voices Strong Disapproval,” *Orer*, April 29, 2026, <https://orer.eu/2026/04/29/diaspora-and-artsakh-representatives-excluded-from-armenias-new-embassy-opening-in-paris-ccaf-voices-a-stromg-disapproval/>.

Armenia's Central Election Commission has registered 17 political parties and two alliances to take part in the 7 June elections to be held under the system of proportional representation. The campaign started officially on 8 May. The parties will need to win at least 4% of the vote to be represented in the parliament. The legal threshold for alliances of two parties is set at 8%, 9% for three and 10% for alliances of more parties. Citizens with permanent residence in Armenia from 18 years old on, around 2.5 million, are eligible to vote. There is no minimum turnout required for the election results to be considered valid. Up to four seats in the parliament are reserved for national minorities (Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians and Kurds). These elections are the first regularly scheduled national elections since 2017, after two snap elections in 2018 and 2021.

The main contestants are: Civil Contract Party led by Prime Minister Pashinyan, Strong Armenia Party led by oligarch Karapetyan, Armenia Bloc, led by former president Kocharyan including the Dasnakhsutyun (ARF) and Prosperous Armenia Party led by another oligarch, Tsarukyan. An international polling institute published in its May 2026 pre-election survey that Civil Contract was polling at 38% while no single challenger could poll over 6%, indicating a landslide victory for Pashinyan. No doubt this possibility and the fact that a large number was undecided, has prompted Catholicos Karekin II to call, on 31 May, on the Armenian people to participate in the parliamentary elections. His appeal was also ornamented with a reminder that on 7 June, the Church celebrates the feast of the Mother Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin which was built 1725 years ago.

The 7 June elections have acquired a much wider significance than being a local, national contest, assuming a geo-political challenge way beyond the region, between the East and the West, the US, EU on the one side, predominantly Russia and its allies on the other. It has become a threshold for whether Armenia continues its westward turn, advances US-EU backed transport corridor connecting Central Asia through Azerbaijan and Türkiye and reduces Russian role in the South Caucasus. It is seen by some as a referendum on Pashinyan's effort to move the country out of Russia's orbit and normalize relations with Azerbaijan and Türkiye.

A total of 58.97% of eligible voters participated in the election. The ruling Civil Contract Party garnered 49.8% of the votes, thus a majority of the seats in the parliament, enabling a continuity, but falling short of the two thirds majority needed for calling a referendum on constitutional change. The main opposition

parties got over 33%, to have a strong representation in the parliament. The US, EU and Western leaders welcomed the vote and congratulated Pashinyan, whereas Russia opted to wait for the final official results. Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson pointed to Western interference and pressure on political opponents. Moscow emphasized that the future of bilateral relations now depended on practical steps by Yerevan.

Armenia celebrated the 108th anniversary of the proclamation of the first independent Armenian republic of 1918, a public holiday called the Republic Day, with a military parade displaying air-defense, artillery and rocket systems purchased from India and France. It was also publicly unveiled at the parade that Armenia has also purchased Chinese CH-4 Rainbow drones as well as Iranian AD-108 Majid short-range air-defense system, not officially announced previously, signalling a major geo-political and military development.

On this occasion a redesign of the traditional army emblem has also been introduced, as the former one, adopted in 2001, contained “heraldic, morphological and ideological shortcomings”.

According to the State Statistical Committee's November report, as of 1 October 2025, the population of Armenia was 3,090,500. Of this population, 1,977,400 live in 49 towns and 1,113,100 in 954 villages.²⁸ In a statement made on 12 January, the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, Sinanyan, noted that arrivals in Armenia from abroad have increased in recent years, that last year, due to the war in Ukraine, the largest number of returnees came from Russia, followed by Syria, Lebanon and Iran in that order up to the present day.²⁹ It is likely that the fact that Armenia is among the countries for which the US has discontinued its immigrant visa program has also played a role in this development. In a statement on 13 February, the Minister of Internal Affairs noted that in 2025, the number of people returning to Armenia was 5,201,747, whilst the number of those leaving was 5,171,270, meaning that for the first time in years, there was a net inflow of 30,477 people.³⁰

According to foreign trade data for the January–November 2025 period released by the State Statistics Committee on 27 January: the total volume of foreign trade amounted to 18 billion 908 million 366.3 thousand US dollars.

28 “Armenia's Permanent Population Increases By 14,300 In 2025,” *ArmenPress*, November 11, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1234715>.

29 Anna Gziryan, “Most Repatriates To Armenia In 2025 Came From Russia, Says Diaspora Commissioner,” *ArmenPress*, January 12, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1239324>.

30 “Migration Trends Reverse: More Armenians Returning Than Leaving In 2025,” *ArmenPress*, February 13, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1242080>.

This indicates a 33.2% decrease compared to the same period a year earlier. Exports fell by 40.6% to 7 billion 349 million 13.6 thousand dollars, whilst imports fell by 27.4% to 11 billion 559 million 352.7 thousand dollars. Russia took the top spot in exports with 2 billion 725 million 215.9 thousand dollars, followed by the UAE and China.

In a statement made on 20 February, Minister of Economy Papoyan announced that Armenia's Gross Domestic Product for 2025 was 29.2 billion dollars (11 trillion 317 billion 508.7 million Armenian drams), noting that this signalled a 7.2% increase compared to the previous year, bringing the per capita figure to 9,474 dollars.³¹

2. Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Agreement Process

The spirit of the agreement reached at the trilateral meeting in Washington on 8 August has continued throughout the period. As the issue of constitutional amendments, the only critical obstacle to the Peace Agreement, has been deferred until after the 7 June elections, the parties have prioritized steps to consolidate the atmosphere of goodwill.

In a speech to parliament on 3 December, Pashinyan stated that the entire Karabakh negotiation process was aimed at keeping Armenia and Azerbaijan “in a trap”.

Speaking at the international conference “Crossroads of Peace: Advancing Regional Connectivity and Cooperation” held in Yerevan on 14 November, Pashinyan noted that work on the TRIPP (Trump Route-Zangezur Corridor), a key element of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement, is expected to begin in the second half of 2026.³² The infrastructure work for the route will involve the use of the railway line from the Soviet era, as well as the construction of a natural gas pipeline and an energy line. Meanwhile, Velayeti, an adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader, claimed in a statement on 15 December that the “Trump plan” is, in practice, the same as the “Zangezur Corridor” project

31 “Armenia's GDP Grows 7.2% In 2025 To \$29.2 Billion,” February 20, 2026, *ArmenPress*, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1242737>.

32 “Am 14. November 2025 Haben Die Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Und Die Partei “Zivilvertrag” Eine Internationale Konferenz Unter Dem Titel “Crossroads Of Peace: Advancing Regional Connectivity And Cooperation” Organisiert. Die Konferenz Brachte Vertreter Aus Politik, Zivilgesellschaft, Wissenschaft Sowie Internationalen Organisationen Zusammen,” *Kas.de*, November 14, 2025, <https://www.kas.de/de/web/suedkaukasus/veranstaltungen/detail/-/content/crossroads-of-peace-advancing-regional-connectivity-and-cooperation-1>.

and that Iran is unconditionally opposed to it.³³ On 21 January, Pashinyan described the TRIPP project as a primarily economic initiative, rather than a political one, an investment project above all.

Speaking at a panel titled “Armenia-Azerbaijan Lasting Peace: The Washington Agreement and a Joint Future” at the 23rd Doha Forum held in Doha, the capital of Qatar, Grigoryan, Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, and Hacıyev, Adviser to the President of Azerbaijan, discussed the ongoing peace process. Both speakers stated that their governments remained committed to the spirit of the Washington Agreement and that there was a sincere will to achieve a lasting solution. During the meeting, Grigoryan reiterated that the term “corridor” was unacceptable to them, and that the name of the route passing through Armenian territory, as stipulated in the Washington Agreement, was TRIPP. The two speakers subsequently gave a joint interview to a news agency on 9 December. The parties described this groundbreaking step as “another brick in the wall of trust”.³⁴

In a speech delivered on 5 December at an international conference held in Baku, Azerbaijani President Aliyev stated that the return of Azerbaijanis who had been forcibly displaced, forced to migrate, and subjected to crimes against humanity from Western Azerbaijan must be ensured.³⁵ During his visit to Germany, Pashinyan also addressed this issue at a press conference and proposed that Azerbaijan, as a counter proposal for the non-return of Armenians to Karabakh, should abandon the “Western Azerbaijan” rhetoric. Pashinyan’s remarks on this matter, which are noteworthy and should be noted by third parties, as reported in the press, are as follows:

“Now I want to make an open and public proposal to Azerbaijan, because as much as they have problems with these topics, we have problems as well. I propose that we adopt a joint roadmap aimed at simultaneously putting these two issues to rest. I have also told our people from Karabakh that their return is not realistic. If we continue to maintain the agenda of return, it means we are once again restarting the Karabakh movement-but I have said that we must not restart the Karabakh movement. The Karabakh movement has come to an end, and

33 “Armenian Ambassador Briefs Iranian Supreme Leader’s Advisor On Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Process,” *ArmenPress*, December 15, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1237628>.

34 “Azerbaijan, Armenia Discuss Peace Roadmap, Regional Links At Doha Forum,” *Anadolu Agency*, December 6, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/azerbaijan-armenia-discuss-peace-roadmap-regional-links-at-doha-forum/3764113>.

35 “President Aliyev Stresses Azerbaijanis’ Right To Return To Armenia,” *News.az*, December 5, 2026, <https://news.az/news/president-aliyev-stresses-azerbaijanis-right-to-return-to-armenia>.

*attempts to revive it are not useful. But on the other hand, in Armenia we also see that Azerbaijan constantly uses the incomprehensible term “western Azerbaijan”. Now it is necessary to understand what causes what-what is the cause and what is the consequence. So, I am making a direct proposal: let us sit down and develop a roadmap for how we remove this issue, because removing this issue means, from a long-term strategic perspective, eliminating any potential conflict situation.”*³⁶

As one might expect, this proposal was harshly criticized by opposition groups, who reiterated that Karabakh would not be relinquished. A headline story in the press on 20 January reported that the Armenian Foreign Intelligence Report stated that Baku’s “Western Azerbaijan” rhetoric posed a serious threat.³⁷

Minister of Economy Papoyan explained at a press conference on 12 January that they were now purchasing oil from Azerbaijan and that this was making a significant contribution to the budget. Armenia’s President Khachaturyan and Azerbaijan’s President Aliyev spoke at a joint panel at the Davos Economic Forum on 20 January, expressing the hope that trade between their two countries would now take place directly without the need for Georgia.³⁸ This was the first meeting between the two presidents.

Speaking on the 34th anniversary of Armenia’s Army Day, Pashinyan emphasized that peace with Azerbaijan is the “most reliable” security guarantee for Armenia.³⁹

The President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia, both nominated for the “Zayed Award for Human Fraternity”, held bilateral and delegation-level talks in Abu Dhabi on 4 February on the occasion of the ceremony. The parties agreed to boost bilateral trade and economic cooperation. In a statement issued by the Office of the President of Azerbaijan, the two leaders expressed their satisfaction with the progress made on the issues agreed upon at the August Washington Summit. The importance of maintaining the positive

36 Damla Delialioğlu, “Ermenistan Başbakanı Paşinyan: Karabağ Halkımıza Da Geri Dönüşlerinin Gerçekçi Olmadığını Söyledim,” *Anadolu Agency*, December 11, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ermenistan-basbakani-pasinyan-karabag-halkimiza-da-geri-donuslerinin-gercekci-olmadigini-soyle-dim/3768270>.

37 “Ermenistan Dış İstihbarat Servisi: Ermenistan İle Azerbaycan Arasında Askeri Tırmanışı Neredeyse İmkânsız,” *ArmenPress*, January 20, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/tr/article/1240039>.

38 “Azerbaijan, Armenia Made Joint Decision To ‘Close Chapter’ On War: Aliyev,” *Türkiye Today*, January 21, 2026, <https://www.turkiyetoday.com/region/azerbaijan-armenia-made-joint-decision-to-close-chapter-on-war-aliyev-3213293>.

39 Ruslan Rehimov, “Paşinyan, Azerbaycan’la Sağladıkları Barışın “En Güvenilir Güvenlik Garantisi” Olduğunu Söyledi,” *Anadolu Agency*, January 28, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/pasinyan-azerbaycanla-sagladiklari-barisin-en-guvenilir-guvenlik-garantisi-oldugunu-soyledi/3812970>.

momentum in the normalization process at the bilateral level was highlighted and it was noted that both societies were beginning to see the “real benefits of peace on the ground” and concrete gains in trade, transport links and people-to-people contacts. The award presented to the two leaders was congratulated by numerous heads of state; among them, Pope Leo XIV described the two leaders as “sowers of hope”.⁴⁰

The President of Azerbaijan, attending the Munich Security Conference on 14 February, stated that if Armenia were to amend its constitution to remove territorial claims against Azerbaijan, a permanent peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia could be signed “the very next day”.⁴¹

Representatives of Azerbaijani civil society organizations and think tanks, visiting Armenia to meet with Armenian counterparts, were received by the Secretary of the Security Council on 14 February.⁴² The second round of these talks, which began in Yerevan on 21–22 October 2025, took place a month later in Baku on 21–22 November. It was decided to continue the process at the third meeting and it has been defined as the “Peace Bridge”. The fourth meeting of this initiative took place on 10–12 April in the city of Gabala, Azerbaijan. The Adviser to the President of Azerbaijan and Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs also welcomed the parties and delivered a speech.

Pashinyan and Aliyev, who attended the Board of Peace meeting held in Washington, held an informal meeting on 19 February. In a statement upon his return, Pashinyan said he felt “greater confidence in peace”.⁴³

The Parliament Speakers of Armenia and Azerbaijan held a bilateral meeting on 14 April on the occasion of the Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Istanbul.⁴⁴

Speaking at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum during a panel titled “The South Caucasus: An Emerging Strategic Hub”, Armenia’s Deputy Minister of

40 “Pope Leo XIV Calls Azerbaijan, Armenia Leaders ‘Sowers Of Hope’,” *Caliber*, February 4, 2026, <https://caliber.az/en/post/pope-leo-xiv-calls-azerbaijan-armenia-leaders-sowers-of-hope>.

41 Hoory Minoyan, “Peace On Baku’s Terms: Aliyev Says Treaty Possible ‘Next Day’ If Armenia Amends Constitution,” *Armenian Weekly*, February 19, 2026, <https://armenianweekly.com/2026/02/19/peace-on-bakus-terms-aliyev-says-treaty-possible-next-day-if-armenia-amends-constitution/>.

42 “Secretary Of The Security Council Meets Representatives Of Civil Society Of Armenia And Azerbaijan,” *ArmenPress*, February 14, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1242200>.

43 “Pashinyan Returns From Bop Washington Meeting With ‘Greater Confidence In Peace’,” *ArmenPress*, February 20, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1242648>.

44 “Azerbaijani And Armenian Parliament Speakers Meet In Istanbul,” *AzerTac*, April 17, 2026, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/azerbaijani_and_armenian_parliament_speakers_meet_in_istanbul-4132343.

Foreign Affairs Kostanyan stated, “*Now, the stability that we have in the South Caucasus is the biggest competitive advantage that we have*” and noted that the South Caucasus is currently one of the most stable regions in the world.⁴⁵

Claims that the Christian presence in Karabakh has come to an end and that religious buildings have been destroyed, which are mainly coming from the World Council of Churches and others, as well as propaganda to keep the Karabakh issue ongoing and blame Azerbaijan, were brought to the forefront in mid-April with footage of the cathedral in Khankendi being demolished. Pashinyan was put under pressure over the matter. In his statement, Pashinyan said that his government was still working to provide full information on the subject, but that such issues, particularly at this stage, required caution.⁴⁶ On 30 April, the Apostolic Church declared the destruction of churches in Karabakh to be “cultural genocide”, whilst the Caucasus Muslims Board announced that the reason for these demolitions was that these churches had all been built during Armenia’s occupation of Karabakh.

At a press conference on 30 April, Pashinyan stated that the recent reciprocal visits by the Deputy Prime Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan to each other’s countries to conduct negotiations, primarily for the border demarcation, marked a first, that this constituted an important step in the institutionalization of the historic peace process, and that he was very pleased that this stage had been reached. On 9 May it was announced that the sides agreed on a draft document related to border delimitation work.

A train carrying fertilizers was sent from Azerbaijan to Armenia on 3 May.

Based on a motion adopted by both chambers of the Swiss parliament, “Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno Karabagh”, an institution called “Christian Solidarity International” attempted on 5 May to implement it despite the realities on the ground, with the participation of opposition members from Armenia, as expected, to no avail. In fact, Pashinyan admitted on 10 May that it was a “deadly mistake” to unite Azerbaijan’s Karabagh region with Armenia, saying “*What made it ours? We built schools, kindergartens, factories there, we lived there, but fundamentally, how did it become ours? It was not ours; it was not ours*”.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, politically and religiously motivated, biased

45 “‘Armenia As A Bridge To Europe’ — Deputy Foreign Minister Speaks At Forum In Turkey,” *Jam News*, April 20, 2026, <https://jam-news.net/armenia-as-a-bridge-to-europe-deputy-foreign-minister-speaks-at-forum-in-turkey/>.

46 “Paşinyan’dan Karabağ’daki Kilise İddialarına Temkinli Yaklaşım,” *Ermeni Haber Ajansı*, April 23, 2026, <https://ermenihaber.am/ztr/29414/>.

47 “Pashinyan’s Groundbreaking Words: Karabakh Was Not Ours,” *Haberler*, May 10, 2026, <https://en.haberler.com/pashinyan-s-groundbreaking-words-karabakh-was-not-2251569/>

third party claims persisted. On 30 April, the parliament of the EU issued a resolution, criticizing Azerbaijan over the rights of displaced ethnic Armenians and the protection of Armenian cultural and religious heritage in “Nagorno Karabagh”. On 29 May a court has announced its verdict, allowing authorities to seize the building of the “Karabagh office” in Yerevan, its permanent representation in Armenia.

Catholicos Aram I of Antelias also brought up the “Artsakh” rights during his visit to the Vatican and his audience with the Pope. It appears that he did not get a favorable response. So instead, he advocated the Ecumenism versus Secularism argument to ingratiate himself with the Vatican on the side of ecumenical collaboration.

3. Armenia’s Foreign Relations

While Armenia took steps during this period that clearly indicated a shift in its foreign relations towards the US and, in particular, the EU, whilst taking the utmost care not to antagonize Russia, with which it has deep-rooted ties, it has become apparent that Russia’s tolerance is now reaching its limits.

The eleventh round of consultation meetings between Armenia’s and India’s Ministries of Foreign Affairs took place in Yerevan on 7 November.⁴⁸ On the same date, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the Chief of the General Staff visited Baku. A headline in the Indian press quoted the Pakistani Prime Minister as saying, “*The victory of Azerbaijan serves as a beacon of hope for oppressed people striving for self-determination, including those in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine*”.⁴⁹ On 19 November, the Indian press reported that preparations for a \$3 billion deal to sell 8–12 military jet aircraft to Armenia had reached the final stage. On 2 February, a delegation led by India’s Chief of Defense Staff visited Armenia to consolidate strategic interests.⁵⁰

48 “Armenia, India Boost Cooperation,” *ArmenPress*, November 7, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1234451>.

49 Alperen Aktaş, “Pakistan, Azerbaijan Vow To Boost Cooperation In Trade, Energy, Defense,” *Anadolu Agency*, November 7, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistan-azerbaijan-vow-to-boost-cooperation-in-trade-energy-defense/3738013>.

50 Javaria Rana, “CDS General Anil Chauhan Heads Indian Defence Delegation To Armenia To Boost Security Cooperation,” *The New Indian Express*, February 2, 2026, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2026/Feb/02/cds-general-anil-chauhan-heads-indian-defence-delegation-to-armenia-to-boost-security-cooperation>.

A delegation from the Saudi Arabia-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group visited Yerevan on 7 November. During talks with the delegation, Mirzoyan recalled that diplomatic relations had been established exactly two years prior.⁵¹

On 10 November, a spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speaking to the press, emphasized that Russia was prepared to discuss Armenia's concerns regarding bilateral relations, stating that the concept of "hybrid war" recently mentioned was a Western creation and foreign to them. At the weekly press conference on 20 November, the spokesperson announced that they were awaiting the decision of Baku and Yerevan regarding the venue and timing of the next 3+3 meeting.⁵² At a press conference on 8 December, the Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that if Armenia agreed to the next meeting being held in Armenia, his country would be able to host the 3+3 meeting.⁵³

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan paid an official visit to Georgia on 14 November, where he was received by the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament. The talks focused primarily on new transport links in the region, and it was underlined that these would not lead to Georgia being sidelined.⁵⁴ On 19 November, President Khachaturyan paid an official visit to Georgia, and the TRIPP issue was also the main item on the agenda. Khachaturyan stated that, far from posing a risk to Georgia, this route would further enhance Georgia's importance.⁵⁵

On 15 November, the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs visited Armenia to hold talks on the matters agreed at the Washington Summit, particularly regarding the implementation of TRIPP.⁵⁶

Pashinyan visited Kazakhstan on 20–21 November for an official visit. During the visit, numerous agreements were signed, and bilateral relations

51 "Mirzoyan: Armenia Highly Values Saudi Arabia's Position In Support Of Established Peace Between Armenia, Azerbaijan," *News.am*, November 7, 2025, <https://news.am/en/news/914084>.

52 "Moscow Is Ready To Discuss All Of Armenia's Concerns Regarding Bilateral Relations: Zakharova," *ILurer*, November 11, 2026, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2025/11/11/Moscow-is-ready-to-discuss-all-of-Armenia%E2%80%99s-concerns-regarding-bilateral-relations-Zakharova/1413602>.

53 "FM: Proposal Made To Hold 3+3 Format First In Azerbaijan, Then In Armenia," *Report*, December 8, 2025, <https://report.az/en/foreign-politics/fm-proposal-made-to-hold-3-3-format-first-in-azerbaijan-then-in-armenia>.

54 "Armenia, Georgia Discuss Expansion Of Regional Connectivity," *ArmenPress*, November 14, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1235051>.

55 "Presidents Of Armenia, Georgia Discuss TRIPP Project," *ArmenPress*, November 19, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1235464>.

56 "Armenian FM, U.S. Under Secretary Of State Note Progress In Implementing Washington Accords," *ArmenPress*, November 17, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1235217>.

were taken to a higher level. The President of Kazakhstan awarded Pashinyan the country's highest honor, the "Golden Eagle".⁵⁷

With the aim of reviving relations with Israel, which had been frozen for some time, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Kostanyan visited Israel on 26 November.⁵⁸ Prior to this, on 24 November, he visited Nicosia to hold political consultations with the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus.⁵⁹

A large government delegation led by Mirzoyan attended the sixth EU-Armenia Partnership Council meeting in Brussels from 1 to 3 December. Mirzoyan also held a bilateral meeting with EU Foreign Affairs Chief Kallas. A press release from the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "*Today's discussions include issues of deepening Armenia-EU partnership, including the adoption of a new partnership agenda, as well as regional topics, including the promotion of connectivity*".⁶⁰ At the conclusion of the meeting, it was announced that a new 70-page Strategic Agenda had been adopted to deepen the EU-Armenia partnership in the areas of political, economic and sectoral cooperation, and a detailed joint press release was issued.⁶¹ In a statement from the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was also announced that the first EU-Armenia Summit would take place on 5 May in Yerevan, with the Presidents of the Commission and the Council attending. Mirzoyan also attended the EU Foreign Affairs Council breakfast meeting on 15 December at the invitation of the organizers.⁶²

In an interview with the press, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and one of the co-chairs of the meeting, Kos, stated that the TRIPP project is between the US and Armenia, but that the EU is also engaged in discussions

57 "Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Official Visit To The Republic Of Kazakhstan," The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Accessed: May 5, 2026, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2025/11/20/Nikol-Pashinyan-visiting-Kazakhstan/>.

58 "Meeting Of The Deputy Minister Of Foreign Affairs Of The Republic Of Armenia With The Director General Of The Ministry Of Foreign Affairs Of Israel," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, November 27, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/11/27/Kostanyan_Tal/13636.

59 "Meeting Of The Deputy Foreign Minister Of Armenia With The Negotiator Of The Greek Cypriot Side For The Cyprus Problem," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, November 25, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/11/25/Kostanyan_Menelaou/13634.

60 "Armenian Foreign Minister Meets EU's Top Diplomat In Brussels," *ArmenPress*, December 2, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1236574>.

61 "Joint Press Statement Following The 6th Meeting Of The EU-Armenia Partnership Council," European Council, December 3, 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/12/03/joint-press-statement-following-the-6th-meeting-of-the-eu-armenia-partnership-council/>.

62 "Ararat Mirzoyan's Participation In The Meeting In The Format Of The EU Foreign Affairs Council," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, December 15, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/12/15/Mirzoyan_Brussels/13691.

with the Americans as they are looking at the bigger picture, that TRIPP covers only 42 km, whereas the issue concerns the Central Asia-Europe connection, and therefore they are also discussing with Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and explained that the US' involvement is of a much higher importance than just building 42 km.⁶³ Kos also expressed that they will invest €500 million for the Caucasus Energy Transmission Network Project, that they were currently working on the Armenia-Türkiye power line, and that this would ensure Armenia's energy security and diversification whilst reducing dependence on Russia.⁶⁴

On 4 December, Pashinyan announced Armenia's wish to develop relations with China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, describing China as a reliable partner.⁶⁵

Pashinyan made an official visit to Germany on 9–10 December and was received by the President. During a meeting with the German Chancellor, a comprehensive joint statement was signed, which included the development of a strategic agenda between the two countries, though it was non-binding.⁶⁶

Pashinyan went to Moscow on 11 December to attend the Intergovernmental Council of the Eurasian Economic Union.⁶⁷

A delegation led by a brigadier general from US European Command went to Armenia on 10 December. According to information provided by the US Embassy in Yerevan, US European Command is working closely with the Armenian Ministries of Internal Affairs and Defense on enhanced cooperation, in line with shared objectives to support lasting peace, including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense and ongoing military modernization efforts.⁶⁸

63 Shant Khlghatyan, "EU Views TRIPP Connectivity Project In Armenia In Broader Central Asia-Europe Context," *ArmenPress*, December 2, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1236536>.

64 Shant Khlghatyan, "EU Supports Energy Diversification, Work On Armenia-Türkiye Power Grid Underway, Says Commissioner," *ArmenPress*, December 2, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1236532>.

65 "Armenia Eyes Closer Ties With 'Reliable Partner' China And SCO, Says Prime Minister Pashinyan," *ArmenPress*, December 4, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1236813>.

66 "Nikol Pashinyan And Friedrich Merz Sign Joint Declaration On The Strategic Agenda Between The Armenia And Germany," The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, December 9, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/12/09/Nikol-Pashinyan-Signing-of-the-Declaration/>.

67 "Armenian PM Participates In Eurasian Economic Union Meeting In Moscow," *ArmenPress*, December 11, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1237371>.

68 "Brigadier General Chris Mckinney Leads U.S. European Command Delegation To Armenia," *ArmenPress*, December 10, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1237241>.

Following his meeting with his British counterpart in the UK on 18 December, Security Council Secretary Grigoryan stated that there was mutual willingness to elevate relations between the two countries to the level of a strategic partnership.⁶⁹

On 18 December, Azerbaijan shipped 22 wagons of petrol via Georgia.⁷⁰ This marked a first.

The Deputy Secretary-General of NATO held high-level talks in Yerevan on 18 December. He met with Pashinyan, Mirzoyan, Minister of Defense Papinyan and the Speaker of Parliament.⁷¹ On 25 December, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson claimed at a press conference that NATO's activities in the South Caucasus threatened regional stability, asserting that its intentions were "far from defensive" and in fact "extremely aggressive".⁷²

On 19 December, Armenia and Greece signed a military cooperation program for 2026.⁷³

Following his participation in the Eurasian Economic Union Summit and the Informal Summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States in St. Petersburg on 22 December, Pashinyan was invited to a bilateral meeting with Putin. Reports in the press suggest the meeting took place in a spirit of mutual courtesy, with both sides presenting developments from their own perspectives.⁷⁴

On his return from Moscow, Pashinyan raised the issue of the railways, emphasizing that the railway operations, which are under Russian concession, were failing to meet the growing demand both in terms of connections with

69 "Armenia, UK Discuss Expansion Of Security And Defense Cooperation," *ArmenPress*, December 18, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1237862>.

70 "Azerbaijan Begins Fuel Exports To Armenia By Rail For First Time In Decades," *EuroNews*, December 18, 2026, <https://www.euronews.com/2025/12/18/azerbaijan-begins-fuel-exports-to-armenia-by-rail-for-first-time-in-decades>.

71 "NATO Deputy Secretary General Hails Growing Partnership With Armenia," North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), December 19, 2025, <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2025/12/19/nato-deputy-secretary-general-hails-growing-partnership-with-armenia>.

72 "Russian Foreign Ministry Warns That NATO's Moves In South Caucasus Threaten Regional Stability," *Caucasus Watch*, December 27, 2026, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/news/russian-foreign-ministry-warns-that-natos-moves-in-south-caucasus-threaten-regional-stability.html>.

73 "Armenia And Greece Sign Defense Cooperation Program For 2026," *The Caspian Post*, December 19, 2025, <https://caspianpost.com/armenia/armenia-and-greece-sign-defense-cooperation-program-for-2026>.

74 "Prime Minister Of The Republic Of Armenia And The President Of The Russian Federation Meet In St. Petersburg," The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, December 22, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/12/22/Nikol-Pashinyan-met-with-Vladimir-Putin/>.

Azerbaijan and Türkiye and on the Nakhchivan line, and that improvements were needed. Pashinyan also stated that the solution he proposed involved a country with good relations with both Russia and Armenia purchasing the operating rights from Russia.⁷⁵ In a statement on 30 January, a spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs described Pashinyan's call for the termination of Armenia's railway operations as "strange", and highlighted that the Russian state-owned company, Russian Railways, holds the right to operate the Armenian railways for a period of 30 years under an agreement signed in 2008.⁷⁶

The broadcast on Russian state television of a journalist's statement that Russia should also carry out a military operation in Armenia caused a stir and provoked a major reaction in Armenia. The Russian Ambassador was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 12 January to give an explanation.⁷⁷

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan met with his US counterpart Rubio in Washington on 13–14 January, and the parties signed a joint statement titled the "TRIPP Implementation Framework". The statement sets out comprehensive, detailed principles regarding implementation; it explains that a special "TRIPP Development Company" to be established for this purpose will be responsible for implementation, that the company will initially hold a 49-year concession with a 74% stake, that this may be extended for 50 years, and that during this period the shareholding will be 51–49%. Pashinyan spoke highly of the document signed on 14 January, describing it as a crucial step towards peace in the region. Mirzoyan expressed that the participation of Türkiye or Russia in the project had not been discussed, and that the project was essentially a joint commercial venture between Armenia and the US.⁷⁸

Iran's Ambassador to Armenia explained in a press statement on 14 January: *"The perception is forming in Tehran that Armenia is becoming a center of*

75 Shoghik Galstian and Ruzanna Stepanian, "Pashinian Insists On Repairs Of Armenia's Rail Links With Azerbaijan, Turkey," *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, December 25, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33632866.html>.

76 "Russia Is In Constant Contact With Its Armenian Partners Regarding Restoration Of Railway Sections In Armenia: Zakharova," *ILurer*, January 30, 2026, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2026/01/30/Russia-is-in-constant-contact-with-its-Armenian-partners-regarding-restoration-of-railway-sections/1455786>.

77 Artak Khulian, "Yerevan Protests Against Russian TV Host's 'Hostile' Statement," *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, January 12, 2026, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33646212.html>.

78 "Joint Statement On The Publication Of The U.S.-Armenia Implementation Framework For The Trump Route For International Peace And Prosperity (TRIPP)," U.S. Embassy in Armenia, January 13, 2026, <https://am.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-on-the-publication-of-the-u-s-armenia-implementation-framework-for-the-trump-route-for-international-peace-and-prosperity-tripp/>.

operations for forces hostile to Iran".⁷⁹ Pashinyan, in a statement the very next day, denied the allegation that Armenia was aiding Iran's enemies and reaffirmed its friendly intentions towards Iran.⁸⁰ Armenian officials offered their condolences in early March following the deaths of Iran's Supreme Leader and senior officials. On 9 March, Pashinyan sent a congratulatory message to the new leader who had succeeded his father.⁸¹

In a statement issued on 20 January, it was announced that Pashinyan had accepted Trump's invitation to join the Peace Board.⁸² Pashinyan attended the Washington meeting on 19 February.⁸³

On 26-28 January, Mirzoyan visited Strasbourg to address the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.⁸⁴

On 29 January, the European Council approved a second round of aid to boost the supply capabilities of the Armenian armed forces and allocated 20 million euros.⁸⁵

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned Armenia for the second time in two weeks regarding its relations with the EU. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs official stated on January 30, "*Russia respects the sovereign right of other countries to participate in integration associations, as well as their desire to seek additional opportunities for economic development and improving the well-being of their populations. However, given Brussels' strategic course of confrontation with Russia and the EU's rapid transformation into an aggressive military-political bloc, Armenia's desire to join this organization cannot but cause concern. We hope that Armenia, as a member state of the*

79 "Iran Accuses Armenia Of Aiding Its Enemies," *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, January 14, 2026, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33647962.html>.

80 "Armenian PM Reassures Iran After Criticism," *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, January 15, 2026, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33648959.html>.

81 "Pashinyan Congratulates Iran's New Supreme Leader," *Asbarez*, March 9, 2026, <https://asbarez.com/pashinyan-congratulates-irans-new-supreme-leader/>.

82 Bure Eruygur, "Armenia Says It Received Invitation By Trump To Join Gaza Board Of Peace," *Anadolu Agency*, January 20, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/armenia-says-it-received-invitation-by-trump-to-join-gaza-board-of-peace/3804913>.

83 "The Prime Minister Participates In The Inaugural Session Of The Peace Council," The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, February 19, 2026, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2026/02/19/Nikol-Pashinyan-participate-board-peace/>.

84 "Remarks By Minister Of Foreign Affairs Of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan At The Session Of The Parliamentary Assembly Of The Council Of Europe," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, January 28, 2026, https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2026/01/28/Mirzoyan_PACE/13751.

85 "European Peace Facility: Council Adopts The Second Bilateral Assistance Measure In Support Of Armenia," European Council, January 29, 2026, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/01/29/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-the-second-bilateral-assistance-measure-in-support-of-armenia/>.

*Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), would recognize the potential negative impact of accelerated rapprochement with Brussels both on its allied relations with Russia and on the broader development of integration processes in the post-Soviet region.*⁸⁶

To defuse tensions, Parliament Speaker Simonyan visited Moscow and met with Lavrov on 5 February and stated that Armenia has no intention of withdrawing from the EAEU and its relations with the EU are based on a win-win approach. Simonyan also noted that the rhetoric frequently voiced by Russia is causing concern, not only among the government, but also among the public, and that some of Russia's statements are perceived very negatively by the public, as Moscow is held in high regard and Russia is known as an ally; therefore, hearing such statements is painful.⁸⁷ Lavrov emphasized that Russia is Armenia's primary trade and economic partner. According to press reports, Lavrov and Deputy Prime Minister Overchuk warned Simonyan and his visit had not yielded the desired results.

Afterwards, Pashinyan said in a statement on state television, *"We will not act against Russia, but we will always act on the interests of Armenia"*. He also stated that the government had conveyed the same message to its international partners: *"We have never sought to undermine Russian interests"*.⁸⁸

The US Vice President visited Armenia on 10 February as the first step of his visit to Azerbaijan and Armenia from 9-11 February. This was the first visit at this level. The visit was important in terms of affirming the US's lasting interest in the region. It also served as a message of support for Pashinyan in the election. Vance explicitly stated that Pashinyan's re-election is necessary for the implementation of the Washington Agreement and the launch of the TRIPP project.⁸⁹

The TRIPP project, among other initiatives, was a key focus of economic cooperation during Vance's visit. Vance and Pashinyan signed a Peaceful

86 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "Russia Says Armenia's EU Aspirations Could Harm Ties And Post-Soviet Integration," *Public Radio of Armenia*, January 30, 2026, <https://en.armradio.am/2026/01/30/russia-says-armenias-eu-aspirations-could-harm-ties-and-post-soviet-integration/>.

87 Elena Teslova, "Russia Warns Armenia About Risks Of Moving Towards West At Expense Of Traditional Partners," *Anadolu Agency*, February 5, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/russia-warns-armenia-about-risks-of-moving-towards-west-at-expense-of-traditional-partners/3821864>.

88 "Pashinyan: Armenia's Interests Come First, No Intent To Harm Russia Ties," *ArmenPress*, March 5, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1243892>.

89 "Vance Promotes Peace Corridor In Historic First Visit By US Vice President To Armenia," *EuroNews*, February 10, 2026, <https://www.euronews.com/2026/02/10/vance-promotes-peace-corridor-in-historic-first-visit-by-us-vice-president-to-armenia>.

Nuclear Cooperation Agreement aimed at diversifying Armenia's energy sources and reducing its dependence on Russia. The agreement envisions an initial \$5 billion in technology and material exports from the US, plus an additional \$4 billion in long-term fuel and maintenance costs. Thus, Armenia has adopted US technology for small modular reactors (SMRs) to replace the aging Armenian Nuclear Power Plant.⁹⁰ The Secretary of the Russian Security Council reacted to this agreement, warning in a statement on 14 February about the dangers of this reactor, which has not yet been tested in the US.⁹¹

During Vance's visit, there was also a development that stirred up the ultra-radical segment of the Armenian diaspora in the US. Vance visited the Soviet-era "genocide" memorial in Yerevan and subsequently deleted the phrase "to honor the victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide," which had been attributed to him in connection with the visit.⁹² The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) responded by stating, "*The truth cannot be erased; this is clearly a denial of the facts.*"⁹³ In a statement issued by the co-chairs of the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), Vance was criticized and his stance was deemed unacceptable.⁹⁴ An editorial titled "Not One Armenian-American Should Vote for Vance in 2028 Presidential Election" was also published in one of the prominent militant media outlets of the diaspora.⁹⁵

Concerns regarding foreign interference in the 7 June elections (clearly referring to Russia without naming it) have become increasingly entrenched within the government. Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan officially appealed to the EU to send a "hybrid threat rapid response team" in a letter on

90 "US, Armenia Sign Agreement On Nuclear Energy," *World Nuclear News*, February 10, 2026, <https://world-nuclear-news.org/articles/us-armenia-sign-agreement-on-nuclear-energy>.

91 "Russia Retaliates Strongly Against The Prospect Of A US-Built Nuclear Facility In Armenia," *Energy News*, February 14, 2026, <https://energynews.oedigital.com/nuclear-power/2026/02/14/russia-retaliates-strongly-against-the-prospect-of-a-usbuilt-nuclear-facility-in-armenia>.

92 Kit Maher, "Vance's X Account Deletes Post Recognizing Armenian Genocide," *CNN*, February 10, 2026, <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/02/10/politics/jd-vance-x-post-armenian-genocide>.

93 "Vice-President Vance's Deleted Armenian Genocide Post Sends Shockwaves Across Armenian American Community," Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), February 10, 2026, <https://anca.org/press-release/vice-president-vances-deleted-armenian-genocide-post-sends-shockwaves-across-armenian-american-community/>.

94 Ashifa Kassam, "White House Deletes JD Vance's Social Media Post Referring To Armenian Genocide," *The Guardian*, February 11, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/11/jd-vance-armenian-genocide>.

95 Harut Sassounian, "Not One Armenian-American Should Vote For Vance In 2028 Presidential Election," *Armenian Weekly*, February 19, 2026, <https://armenianweekly.com/2026/02/19/not-one-armenian-american-should-vote-for-vance-in-2028-presidential-election/>.

13 February.⁹⁶ It is known that this potential threat was initially highlighted by EU Foreign Affairs Chief Kallas.

The President of Armenia paid an official visit to Greece from 17–20 February. Khachaturyan announced that Armenia aims to elevate its relations with Greece to the level of strategic partnership.⁹⁷

Minister of Defense Papikyan officially visited Iran on 23 February and was received by the President. The President of Iran reaffirmed Iran’s commitment to finalizing the “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement,” which also prioritizes regional corridor initiatives.⁹⁸

Mirzoyan visited Switzerland on 23–24 October and attended the opening ceremony of the Embassy in Bern.⁹⁹

Pashinyan visited Poland on 25 February for a two-day official visit. A military-technical cooperation agreement was signed between the two countries.¹⁰⁰

Pashinyan also visited Tbilisi on 3 March for a working visit to attend the 15th session of the Armenia-Georgia Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation. Pashinyan said in a statement that Georgia is a vital partner in Armenia-EU relations and a bridge to the EU.¹⁰¹

Pashinyan visited Paris on 9 March to participate in the Nuclear Energy Summit and met with Macron.¹⁰² He then went on to Strasbourg and delivered a speech at the European Parliament on 11 March. In his 25-minute speech, Pashinyan

96 Jeyhun Aghazada, “EU Deploys Rapid Response Team To Armenia Ahead Of Parliamentary Elections,” *Caliber*, March 25, 2026, <https://caliber.az/en/post/eu-deploys-rapid-response-team-to-armenia-ahead-of-parliamentary-elections>.

97 “Armenia Aims To Elevate Relations With Greece To Strategic Partnership, Says President,” *ArmenPress*, February 20, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1242669>.

98 “Iran, Armenia To Finalize Strategic Partnership,” *WANA News*, February 25, 2026, <https://wanaen.com/iran-armenia-to-finalize-strategic-partnership/>.

99 “The Opening Of The Embassy Of Armenia In Bern,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, March 13, 2026, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2026/03/13/Mirzoyan_BernEmbassy/13829.

100 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Official Visit To The Republic Of Poland,” The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Accessed: May 5, 2026, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2026/02/25/Nikol-Pashinyan-visiting-Poland/>.

101 Svetlana Alimova, “Armenia’s Pashinyan: Georgia Is Vital Partner In Armenia-EU Relations, And Future Cooperation Holds Great Promise,” *Georgian Public Broadcaster*, March 4, 2026, <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/armenias-pashinyan-georgia-is-vital-partner-in-armenia-eu-relations-and-future-cooperation-holds-great-promise/>.

102 “Armenian PM Pashinyan Meets French President Macron In Paris,” *ArmenPress*, March 10, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1244306>.

accused the Apostolic Church and his political opponents of attempting to reignite the conflict with Azerbaijan.¹⁰³

President Khachaturyan visited Chile on 11 March to participate in the inauguration ceremony of the new president.¹⁰⁴

On March 23, Pashinyan held a telephone conversation with Putin, and they agreed to meet face to face soon. This meeting took place on 1 April in Moscow. A notable and unusual aspect of the meeting was that it was videotaped and then broadcast live on television. This publicly accessible meeting was contentious; Putin warned Pashinyan that Armenia could not be a member in both the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union, stating that Armenia must choose one or the other. Pashinyan responded that his country is a democratic nation and it is the Armenian people who will decide. Putin's reminder that the price of natural gas in the EU is over \$600 per thousand cubic meters, whereas Armenia purchases it from Russia for \$177.50, was perceived as a threat.¹⁰⁵ Speaker of Parliament Simonyan reacted to these remarks in Yerevan, asserting that if Russia raises gas prices or imposes other economic sanctions, Armenia would withdraw from joint military and economic structures.¹⁰⁶

Putin expressed hope that the 7 June elections would not influence relations between Russia and Armenia, noting that he has many friends in Armenia and that over 2 million people of Armenian descent live in Russia. He stated that Russia wishes for all parties and politicians in Armenia to participate in the elections, pointing out that some of them are in prison despite holding Russian passports. Pashinyan reminded that legally only those holding a single Armenian passport are entitled to the right to vote.

Upon his return from Moscow, Pashinyan told the press that the talks during his visit to Moscow were "very successful," and that they had agreed to meet again in late June after the elections.¹⁰⁷

103 "Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan Addresses MEPs On Peace Efforts With Azerbaijan," *European Parliament News*, March 11, 2026, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20260306IPR37529/prime-minister-nikol-pashinyan-addresses-meps-on-peace-efforts-with-azerbaijan>.

104 "Armenian President Visits Chile For Inauguration Of José Antonio Kast," *ArmenPress*, 11 Mart 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1244332>.

105 "Nikol Pashinyan And Vladimir Putin Meet," The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, April 1, 2026, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2026/04/01/Nikol-Pashinyan-Vladimir-Putin/>.

106 Ulviyya Salmanli, "Armenia Warns Of Leaving CSTO And EAEU If Russia Raises Gas Prices," *News.az*, April 6, 2026, <https://news.az/news/armenia-warns-of-leaving-csto-and-eaeu-if-russia-raises-gas-prices>.

107 Sabina Mammadli, "Armenian PM Calls Moscow Visit 'Very Successful'," *Caliber*, April 2, 2026, <https://caliber.az/en/post/armenian-pm-calls-moscow-visit-very-successful-n>.

Minister of Defense Papikyan visited France on 26 March for an official visit and met with Macron’s chief military advisor.¹⁰⁸

Mirzoyan visited Brussels on 14 April to discuss the strategic partnership and the Armenia–EU summit in Yerevan with EU Chief of Foreign Affairs Kallas.¹⁰⁹

On 20 April, Special Representative of the NATO Secretary General Hamilton visited Armenia and held high-level meetings with the President, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defense, and Secretary of the Security Council on issues of cooperation and regional security.¹¹⁰

On 22 April, a bilateral agreement on defense cooperation between Armenia and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCSC), and a trilateral agreement on defense cooperation among Armenia, Greece, and the GCSC, were signed in Nicosia.¹¹¹

On 4 May, Armenia hosted the 8th European Political Community (EPC) Summit and on 5 May the first ever EU-Armenia bilateral summit, thus bringing nearly 40 leaders to Yerevan including Canada’s Prime Minister and NATO Secretary General, for the largest international gathering in the country’s history. The two summits back to back demonstrated on the one side that closer relations with Europe and the West in general, have become Armenia’s domestic political strategy ahead of the 7 June parliamentary elections, on the other hand, a powerful illustration on part of Europe and the West of its interest to draw Armenia to its realm.

The EPC summit itself was by and large uneventful, with seven-minute set speeches, during which leaders heaped praises on Pashinyan. Azerbaijan’s President addressed the summit online. Zelensky’s Belarus and Russia comments did draw the ire of Russia. On 10 May, Russia accused Armenia for providing Zelensky with “a platform for anti-Russian remarks”. Pashinyan is reported to have said in reaction that Armenia is not Russia’s ally on Ukraine.

108 “Defense Minister Papikyan Meets French President’s Military Advisor,” *ArmenPress*, March 26, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1245714>.

109 Kanyshai Butun, “Armenian Foreign Minister Meets EU Foreign Policy Chief, Discusses Strategic Partnership,” *Anadolu Agency*, April 14, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/eurasia/armenian-foreign-minister-meets-eu-foreign-policy-chief-discusses-strategic-partnership/3905560>

110 “NATO’s Special Representative For The Caucasus And Central Asia Pays First Visit To Armenia,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), April 22, 2026, <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2026/04/22/natos-special-representative-for-the-caucasus-and-central-asi-a-pays-first-visit-to-armenia>.

111 “Armenia, Cyprus, And Greece Strengthen Defense Cooperation With New Annual Bilateral And Trilateral Plans,” *ArmenPress*, April 23, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1248306>.

A comprehensive, 44-article joint EU-Armenia declaration was adopted at the end of the EU-Armenia summit. While the EU acknowledges Armenia as a strategic partner in the South Caucasus, it falls short of accession, security guarantees or economic counterweight.

France was at the forefront as Armenia's and Pashinyan's most solid supporter. Macron combined the two summits also with an official state visit, including the signing of a bilateral strategic partnership agreement, keynote speech at the Yerevan Dialogue on 6 May and emerged as the master of ceremonies. President Khachaturyan and Prime Minister Pashinyan were awarded France's Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, while Macron was awarded Order of Glory. One absentee in the summits was the German Chancellor.

Armenian opposition groups criticized the summits for highlighting support for Pashinyan and accused the EU of effectively meddling in Armenia's internal political processes. The opposition also criticized the fact that the Catholicos was ignored throughout the events.

As a sign of estrangement in relations, Pashinyan did not attend the Victory Day Parade in Moscow on 8 May. Furthermore, he let it be known on 11 May that he would not be attending the EAEU Summit on 28 May in Astana, citing the campaigning period in Armenia. At a press briefing on 10 May, Putin warned Armenia over EU ambitions, invoking the "Ukrainian scenario", urged Pashinyan to hold a referendum to choose between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), adding, there could be a gentle, civilized, mutually beneficial divorce. Pashinyan did not lose time to reject Putin's "divorce" idea, saying that his government is guided in its interstate relations by an interstate logic and not a marriage. He also added "*If we decide the time has come to make a decision, we will not wait for others to tell us so, because in the end this is our decision. We know better when the moment comes to make it*".¹¹²

Mirzoyan reiterated the same view on 19 May, saying "*We fully understand and it is not from Russia that we need to be told, that membership in the EAEU and membership in the EU are incompatible. It is impossible for us to remain in the EAEU and become an EU member at the same time. We will continue moving closer to the EU and when the time comes for us to make a decision about belonging to one or another group, we will make that decision*".¹¹³

112 "We know better when to decide": Nikol Pashinyan responds to Vladimir Putin on choice between EU and EAEU," *JAM News*, May 11, 2026, <https://jam-news.net/we-know-better-when-to-decide-nikol-pashinyan-responds-to-vladimir-putin-on-choice-between-eu-and-eaeu/>.

113 "Armenia Fully Understands EU And EAEU Membership Incompatibility, FM Mirzoyan Says," *ArmenPress*, May 19, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1250593>.

Russia's retort was not late in coming, saying that Armenia cannot “*dance at two weddings*”.¹¹⁴ Mirzoyan replied on 21 May saying “*The issue of Armenia's withdrawal from the EAEU cannot be discussed until Armenia submits an appropriate application and expresses a desire and we have not expressed such a desire, therefore, the issue of our exclusion cannot be considered*”.¹¹⁵

Following these exchanges and ahead of the elections, Russia has started imposing curbs on Armenian exports, including mineral water, wines, brandy, agricultural products, fruit and vegetables. Lavrov is reported to have said on 28 May, “*If Pashinyan thinks that Armenia will get rich without Russia, let him try*”.¹¹⁶ According to media reports, Russia's Minister of Energy sent a letter warning Armenia of unilateral suspension or cancellation of agreements on supplies of gas, petroleum products and uncut diamonds if Armenia continues its process of seeking membership in the EU. The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed on 27 May that it received the Russian Minister of Energy's letter and will respond. It was officially announced on 30 May that Russia has recalled its Ambassador to Armenia for “consultations” over Armenia's growing ties with the EU, a day after Putin again warned Armenia against pivoting to Brussels and the relevant statement by the leaders of the EAEU. In response, the EU pledged on 4 June to provide Armenia with at least 50 million euros in urgent economic assistance to help mitigate potentially severe consequences of Russian embargo on key Armenian exports.

The statement issued in Astana on 29 May reads as follows:

“Taking into account the significant risks to the economic security of the member states of the EAEU arising in connection with the preparation of the Republic of Armenia for accession to the EU, as well as the need to prevent the associated damage to the members of the EAEU, decided that the members of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council from the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation will report at the next meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in December 2026 on the possible consequences of the suspension of the Treaty on the Eurasian

114 “Russia Says Armenia Cannot ‘Dance At Two Weddings’,” *EurasiaReview*, May 21, 2026, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/21052026-russia-says-armenia-cannot-dance-at-two-weddings/>.

115 “Armenian Foreign Ministry: And You Will Not Be Able To Exclude Us From The EAEU Until We Want To,” *Eurasia Daily*, May 21, 2026, <https://www.eadaily.com/en/news/2026/05/21/armenian-foreign-ministry-and-you-will-not-be-able-to-exclude-us-from-the-eaeu-until-we-want-to>.

116 “Lavrov: If Pashinyan Thinks That Armenia Will Get Rich Without Russia, Let Him Try,” *Eurasia Daily*, May 28, 2026, <https://www.eadaily.com/en/news/2026/05/28/lavrov-if-pashinyan-thinks-that-armenia-will-get-rich-without-russia-let-him-try>.

Economic Union with respect to the Republic of Armenia. We share the position on the need to hold a national referendum in the Republic of Armenia as soon as possible on joining the EU or continuing to be part of the EAEU.¹¹⁷

The pro-government press gave prominence to the news that Putin sent warm birthday greetings and congratulations to Pashinyan who turned 51 on 1 June. Pashinyan, on his part, reiterated on 1 June in a video posted on social media that Armenia-Russia relations are “open and sincere”. He said that the relations are undergoing a “transformation” and that his administration places importance on further developing ties with Moscow.

State Secretary Rubio, returning from a trip to India, made a one hour refuelling and working stop in Yerevan, on 26 May, met with his Armenian counterpart Mirzoyan, initialled and signed three documents and held a press conference at the airport. The visit is the first by a Secretary of State to Armenia since Hillary Clinton’s visit in 2014.

The two ministers initialled a framework agreement on strategic cooperation concerning the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP). The 11-article agreement, initially for a period of 49 years, to be extended for an additional 50 years, covers in full detail the implementation of the project. On 28 May, Pashinyan said, “*The TRIPP project has no direct linkage to the signing and ratification of the peace treaty. A separate agreement is being signed and that agreement will be implemented*”.¹¹⁸

The two ministers signed a memorandum titled “Framework for Securing Supply in the Mining and Processing of Critical Minerals and Rare Earths”. The sides intend to support the supply of raw and processed critical minerals crucial to the commercial and defense industries.

The two ministers signed the “Charter on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” further elevating their strategic partnership. The comprehensive document consists of a Preamble and six sections, including Economic, Trade, Energy, Space and Mining Cooperation as well as Defense and Security.

At the press event Rubio expressed support for Pashinyan and praised Armenia’s path toward more independent future. Having briefed President

117 “Russia Adds Pressure On Armenia Ahead Of Key Elections; Recalls Ambassador In Yerevan For Consultations,” *Commonspace.eu*, May 31, 2026, <https://www.commonspace.eu/node/13960>.

118 “Pashinyan Says TRIPP Project Not Dependent On Formalization Of Peace Deal With Azerbaijan,” *ArmenPress*, May 28, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1251421>.

Trump in Washington D.C., Trump wrote in a post in his Truth Social platform “*Soon, the United States and Armenia will break ground together on the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, which will transform the South Caucasus, and help our wonderful American Energy Companies gain access from Central Asia all the way to the United States. For these reasons, Nikol has my COMPLETE and TOTAL Endorsement for Re-Election on June 7, 2026*”.¹¹⁹ So, a needed strong boost to Pashinyan was unequivocally given.

4. Relations with Türkiye

Relations continued on a constructive and positive course as part of the normalization process. Although efforts by Pashinyan’s opponents and those opposed to the peace policy to poison the atmosphere with anti-Türkiye discourse as a campaign tool against Pashinyan during the election campaign have created a negative atmosphere, such efforts did not affect Pashinyan.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia on 15 November, it was reported that Türkiye had been officially informed about the work being carried out in the Arax River basin, that additional contacts had been made when necessary, and that this was part of the cooperation between the neighboring countries.¹²⁰

According to the Armenian press, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan stated in his speech to Parliament on 18 November, “*Armenia is demonstrating an open position in normalizing relations with our country, and we sincerely continue our joint efforts to take concrete steps. Türkiye will continue its efforts to establish peace in the South Caucasus and create an environment of shared prosperity in the region.*”¹²¹ Afterwards, reports and commentaries in the press, referring to reports by the Anadolu Agency, noted that Minister Fidan had clearly stated that the normalization of relations with neighboring Armenia was conditional upon the signing of an Armenia–Azerbaijan peace agreement.

119 “Trump Endorses Pashinian For Reelection,” *Azattyun*, May 28, 2026, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33767434.html>.

120 “Armenia Explains Why It Consulted Turkey On Arax River Barrier Project,” *Panorama*, November 15, 2025, <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2025/11/15/Arax-River-barrier-project/3145360>.

121 “Turkish Foreign Minister Reiterates Türkiye’s Determination To Normalize Relations With Armenia,” *Anadolu Agency*, November 19, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/turkish-foreign-minister-reiterates-turkiye-s-determination-to-normalize-relations-with-armenia/3747543>.

Mirzoyan responded to questions from the official news agency ArmenPress regarding the matter:

***Question:** “Türkiye’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Fidan, said that the normalization of relations with Türkiye is “essential” for Armenia, and, according to him, if Ankara normalizes relations at this point, it would have “taken away the biggest reason for Armenia to sign a peace agreement with Azerbaijan.” FM Fidan also said that the concept of the connection linking Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan was approved during the Washington meeting. Do you have any comment?”*

***FM Mirzoyan:** “First of all, establishing diplomatic relations with Türkiye and opening the border are indeed important for Armenia. Likewise, further institutionalizing the peace established with Azerbaijan is also important. Armenia is making sincere efforts in both directions. However, neither of these components is conditioned on the other, and if we were to insist on seeing a causal link between them, it might turn out that the full normalization of relations with Türkiye could have—not a negative but, on the contrary—a positive impact on the normalization process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As for the unblocking of transport infrastructure, at the peace summit held in Washington on August 8, the main principles of this process were agreed upon—territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, sovereignty, jurisdiction, and reciprocity. Within this framework, the TRIPP route will connect Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan, Armenia with other countries, and—on a broader geographic scale—different regions with one another through Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenia is actively and constructively striving to implement this as soon as possible.”¹²²*

Pashinyan also got involved in the discussion and criticized the term “Zangezur Corridor”, stating that there are only the TRIPP and “Crossroads of Peace” within Armenian territory, and no other terminology is acceptable for Armenia.¹²³

In a statement published in the Armenian press on 26 November regarding the National Security Council meeting chaired by President Erdoğan, it was noted

122 “Normalization With Türkiye Could Positively Impact Normalization With Azerbaijan: Armenian FM Responds To Fidan,” *ArmenPress*, November 20, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1235489>.

123 “Pashinyan: “There Is No ‘Zangezur Corridor,’ Has Never Been, And Will Not Appear In Any Armenia–Azerbaijan Document”,” *Armenian Life*, October 12, 2025, <https://armenianlife.com/2025/10/12/pashinyan-there-is-no-zangezur-corridor-has-never-been-and-will-not-appear-in-any-armenia-azerbaijan-document/>.

that “in view of the recent positive developments in the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia, bilateral and regional cooperation opportunities were discussed. The Turkish side reaffirmed its will to establishing peace and stability and ensure development in the South Caucasus.”¹²⁴

On 29 November, a report in the Turkish press stated that the second round of talks regarding the opening of the Kars-Gyumri railway was held on 28 November at the Akyaka-Akhurik border, and was later moved to Gyumri.¹²⁵ The statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye regarding the last meeting held on 28 April is as follows:

“Based on the agreements reached within the Türkiye-Armenia Normalization Process, the meeting of the Türkiye-Armenia Joint Working Group on rehabilitation and operationalization of the Kars-Gyumri railway was held in Kars on 28 April 2026.

The parties emphasized the significance of the early operation of the Kars-Gyumri railway in the context of enhancing regional transport communications.”¹²⁶

This meeting has received international attention. The US embassies in Yerevan and Ankara issued simultaneous and similar statements, welcoming this “historic progress” with praise. Likewise, the EU expressed strong support, describing the meeting as a sign of broader positive dynamics in the region.¹²⁷

Minister of Economy Papoyan visited Istanbul on 28 November to participate in the Zero Waste Forum and, on this occasion, met with Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Yumaklı. Armenia’s representative to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) also participated in the meeting.¹²⁸

124 Siranush Ghazanchyan, “Turkish National Security Council Discusses Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Process,” *Public Radio of Armenia*, November 27, 2025, <https://en.armradio.am/2025/11/27/turkish-national-security-council-discusses-armenia-azerbaijan-peace-process/>.

125 “Türkiye, Armenia Hold Second Round Of Talks On Reopening Kars–Gyumri Railway,” *Türkiye Today*, November 29, 2025, <https://www.turkiyetoday.com/nation/turkiye-armenia-hold-second-round-of-talks-on-reopening-karsgyumri-railway-3210549>

126 “No: 78, 28 April 2026, Regarding The Meeting Of The Joint Working Group Between Türkiye And Armenia For The Rehabilitation And Operationalization Of The Kars-Gyumri Railway,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye, April 28, 2026, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-78_-kars-gumru-demiryolunun-rehabilitasyonu-ve-faaliyete-gecirilmesi-amaciyla-olusturulan-turkiye-ile-ermenistan-arasindaki-ortak-calisma-grubu-nun-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa.

127 Melike Pala, “EU Welcomes Armenia–Türkiye Talks On Restoring Rail Connectivity,” *Anadolu Agency*, April 29, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/eu-welcomes-armenia-turkiye-talks-on-restoring-rail-connectivity/3921951>.

128 “Armenian Economy Minister Participates In Zero Waste Forum In Istanbul,” *ArmenPress*, November 28, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1236318>.

Press reports noted that in Minister Fidan’s speech during debates of the 2026 budget in parliament, he stated, “*The process of normalizing relations with Armenia has continued in a coordinated manner with Azerbaijan throughout 2025. In the coming period, we will continue to contribute to establishing lasting peace in the region and will encourage the parties to take advantage of this historic opportunity.*”¹²⁹

During his visit to Germany, Pashinyan stated in a speech he delivered at the German Council on Foreign Relations on 10 December that the TRIPP connectivity project and the opening of transport links between Armenia and Türkiye have the full potential to become major components of the Middle Corridor. Addressing relations with Türkiye, Pashinyan noted that ties with Türkiye have intensified in recent years, adding that he, President Erdoğan, foreign ministers, special representatives and related ministers have held exchanges. He stated that despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations, “very active negotiations and relations” are ongoing. Pashinyan expressed hope that Türkiye will “make the long-awaited political decision” to open its border with Armenia and establish diplomatic ties, noting that normalization with Türkiye, peace with Azerbaijan, and the improved relations with Georgia, Iran, and Russia together could position the South Caucasus as a major transit hub along both north–south and east–west routes.¹³⁰

Pashinyan stated to the press on 18 December that he had called on Russia to restore the railways connecting Armenia to Türkiye and Azerbaijan, which are managed by a Russian company.¹³¹

The press closely followed and reported on various interpretations of President Erdoğan’s remarks at the 16th Ambassadors’ Conference held in Ankara on 16 December, in which he stated that Türkiye is advancing its normalization process with Armenia in coordination and close dialogue with Azerbaijan, and that, “God willing, some symbolic steps” will be taken at the beginning of next year.¹³² When asked for his views on the matter at a press conference on 25

129 “Türkiye To Continue Contributing To Regional Peace, Says FM Hakan Fidan,” *ArmenPress*, December 10, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1237208>.

130 “Armenia–Türkiye Link, TRIPP Project Could Redefine Middle Corridor: PM Pashinian,” *Türkiye Today*, December 10, 2025, <https://www.turkiyetoday.com/region/armeniaturkiye-link-tripp-project-could-redefine-middle-corridor-pm-pashinian-3211117>.

131 Arshaluys Barseghyan, “Armenia Asks Russia To Urgently Restore Railway Near Nakhchivan And Turkey,” *OC Media*, December 19, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/armenia-asks-russia-to-urgently-restore-railway-near-nakhchivan-and-turkey/>.

132 “Erdoğan: Türkiye Advances Armenia Normalization Through Azerbaijan Dialogue,” *The Caspian Post*, December 16, 2025, <https://caspianpost.com/politics/erdogan-turkiye-advances-armenia-normalization-through-azerbaijan-dialogue>.

December, Pashinyan said, “*Within the framework of our bilateral dialogue, the time has come for symbolic—and even non-symbolic, broader, and more concrete—steps to take place, and I hope that they will happen.*”¹³³

In the press on 29 December, citing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, it was announced that Türkiye and Armenia had agreed to facilitate visa procedures for their diplomatic and service passport holders as part of efforts to normalize relations, and that the measure would take effect on 1 January.¹³⁴

At a press conference on 15 January, Minister of Foreign Affairs Fidan stated, “*As you know, elections will be held in Armenia in early June. This will also be an important stage. But we see that Mr. Pashinian is currently leading in opinion polls. We sincerely support his constructive role in this matter. This line, this determination must continue.*”¹³⁵ These remarks received extensive attention in the Armenian press.¹³⁶ Leaders of the opposition reacted harshly to this, accusing Türkiye of interfering in Armenia’s internal affairs, the elections, and the formation of the future government. On the other hand, Parliament Speaker Simonyan expressed his gratitude to Minister Fidan for his support of the peace agenda. Referring to this issue in his speech in Parliament, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan also stated that Minister Fidan’s remarks reflected Ankara’s stance in supporting the peace process in the South Caucasus and Prime Minister Pashinyan’s role in efforts to normalize relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and noted that these remarks provided encouragement to both sides to continue and further institutionalize the process. Mirzoyan added that he saw no grounds to consider these remarks as interference in Armenia’s internal affairs.¹³⁷

On 18 January, Rubinyan, Vice Speaker of Parliament and Special Representative, stated in response to a question that the participation of Russia and Türkiye in the TRIPP project is not being discussed.¹³⁸ (On the

133 Burc Eruygur, “Armenia Welcomes Turkish President’s Remarks On Advancing Normalization,” *Anadolu Agency*, December 25, 2025, <https://aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/armenia-welcomes-turkish-president-s-remarks-on-advancing-normalization/3780963>.

134 Serdar Dincel, “Türkiye, Armenia Agree To Ease Visas For Diplomatic, Special Passport Holders,” *Anadolu Agency*, December 29, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkiye-armenia-agree-to-ease-visas-for-diplomatic-special-passport-holders/3784043>.

135 “Armenian Opposition Decries ‘Turkish Endorsement Of Pashinian’,” *Azatutyun*, January 16, 2026, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33650776.html>.

136 “Did Ankara Just Endorse Pashinyan For The June Elections?,” *Asbarez*, January 15, 2026, <https://asbarez.com/did-ankara-just-endorse-pashinyan-for-the-june-elections/>.

137 “Mirzoyan Dismisses Opposition Criticism Of EU, Turkish Statements As ‘A Matter Of Taste’,” *ArmenPress*, January 21, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1240203>.

138 “No Russian Or Turkish Participation Discussed For TRIPP Project, Says Vice Speaker,” *ArmenPress*, January 19, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1239962>.

other hand, on 13 April, it was reported in the press that with the prospect that the US's focus would remain on Iran and the Gulf for some time, Pashinyan and Mirzoyan are open to the participation of third countries in the TRIPP project.¹³⁹) In response to a question regarding the state of the normalization process with Türkiye, Rubinyan stated: “*As for further developments, allow me not to say anything at this time. When the time comes, I will inform you in an appropriate manner. Please allow me not to comment now, because I prefer to announce something only when it has actually happened.*”¹⁴⁰

On 26 January, Armenian officials announced that the Margara Crossing Point, across from Alican, has been fully equipped with all necessary technical infrastructure, passenger, and cargo facilities and is ready for opening.¹⁴¹

President Erdoğan praised the President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia on 4 February on the occasion of their receiving the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity, emphasizing that the steps taken by the two countries to establish lasting peace are extremely valuable.¹⁴²

A press report dated 9 November announced that the governor of the Turkish province of Iğdır inspected the Alican border crossing and stated that the opening of the border would boost the regional economy.¹⁴³

At a press conference on 13 February, Secretary of Armenia's Security Council Grigoryan responded to a question about when the border crossing with Türkiye would open by stating, “*I cannot say anything about specific timeframes. We expect to implement the agreements we have reached with Türkiye. We continue discussions with the Turkish side in order to make those agreements a reality as soon as possible.*”¹⁴⁴ Pashinyan also addressed the same issue during his visit to Poland on 25 February in a speech at the Institute of International Relations, stating, “*We have a very positive dialogue with*

139 “Armenia Looking For Additional Partners For TRIPP Implementation,” *Eurasianet*, April 13, 2026, <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-looking-for-additional-partners-for-tripp-implementation>.

140 “Armenian Envoy For Normalization With Türkiye Comments On Possible Developments,” *ArmenPress*, January 9, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1239946>.

141 “Armenia's Border Crossing Checkpoint With Türkiye Ready For Opening,” *ArmenPress*, January 26, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1240558>.

142 Merve Yıldızalp Yormaz, “Steps Taken By Azerbaijan And Armenia Toward Establishing Lasting Peace Are ‘Extremely Valuable,’ Says Turkish President,” *Anadolu Agency*, February 4, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/steps-taken-by-azerbaijan-and-armenia-toward-establishing-lasting-peace-are-extremely-valuable-says-turkish-president/3820667>.

143 “Turkish Governor Inspects Border Checkpoint With Armenia, Says Reopening Will Boost Regional Economy,” *ArmenPress*, February 9, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1241606>.

144 “Armenia And Türkiye Continue Talks On Implementing Agreements, Says Official,” *ArmenPress*, February 13, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1242116>.

Türkiye. We constantly hold meetings and consultations. However, of course, the most important development and our expectation is the establishment of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Armenia and the opening of the land border. Why do I particularly emphasize the land border? Because the air border is already open. We have regular flights from Armenia to Türkiye. I expect the volume of bilateral flights to increase and, naturally, for the land border to open as well. Incidentally, we will need new infrastructure on the border with Türkiye, and we are currently discussing how the EU can support this issue. The process is moving forward, and I believe we will see developments very soon. There is no obstacle on the Armenian side; we are ready to do this at any moment, but it depends on Türkiye's decision."¹⁴⁵

According to a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Minister Mirzoyan held a telephone conversation with his Turkish counterpart on 6 March discussing the developments in the Middle East. The parties expressed their concern over the ongoing escalation and emphasized the importance of ensuring stability and security in the region.¹⁴⁶

Turkish Airlines began operating scheduled flights to Yerevan on 11 March.¹⁴⁷

A group of Turkish reporters participated in a media tour organized by Armenia, and a statement issued on 17 March announced that the meetings had been very successful.¹⁴⁸

Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Khudatyan said in a statement on 19 March that he and his Turkish counterpart had discussed the interconnection of the two countries' energy systems, noting that this is a project that will have a significant economic impact and that the parties have decided to conduct further studies on the matter.¹⁴⁹ The two ministers met on the sidelines of the Nuclear Energy Summit organized by the International Atomic Energy Agency, in Paris.

145 "There Is Real Peace In Our Region, Pashinyan," *ILurer*, February 25, 2026, <https://www.1lurer.am/en/2026/02/25/There-is-real-peace-in-our-region-Pashinyan/1469720>.

146 Muhammet Tarhan, "Turkish Foreign Minister Discusses Regional Developments With Armenian Counterpart," *Anadolu Agency*, March 6, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkish-foreign-minister-discusses-regional-developments-with-armenian-counterpart/3853048>.

147 "THY Makes Its First Flight To Yerevan," *Agos*, March 13, 2026, <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/haber/thy-makes-its-first-flight-to-yerevan-39798>.

148 "Armenia Organizes Media Tour For Turkish Reporters," *ArmenPress*, March 12, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1214201>.

149 Nazrin Babayeva, "Khudatyan: Yerevan, Ankara To Evaluate Investments In Energy Grid Unification," *Report*, March 19, 2026, <https://report.az/en/energy/khudatyan-yerevan-ankara-to-evaluate-investments-in-energy-grid-unification>.

Responding to a question from the opposition during his speech at the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs on 23 March, Mirzoyan stated, “*The Armenia–Türkiye dialogue has matured enough that, alongside the ongoing processes, it can achieve a complete outcome — namely, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and the full opening of the border. There is no dispute on this, and we are conveying the same message to our Turkish partners*”. In his speech, Mirzoyan also noted that the two countries had discussed the possibility of providing scholarships to students at university exchanges within the framework of their ongoing dynamic dialogue.¹⁵⁰

The detailed information provided by Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Uraloğlu on 26 March regarding the Zangezur Corridor and its links was published in the Armenian press.¹⁵¹

It was announced in the press on 14 February that Mirzoyan would not attend the 2026 Antalya Diplomacy Forum. It was also noted that Special Representative Rubinyan, who attended the last four conferences alongside the Minister, would not be attending, and that Deputy Minister Kostanyan would be representing Armenia.¹⁵² No explanation was provided for the absence. It is open to speculation that it may indicate a reaction to unmet expectations.

Kostanyan, who met with his Turkish counterpart Ekinçi, also participated in a panel as a speaker. He reiterated to the press that Armenia is politically and technically ready to open its border crossing and stated that they expect the agreement reached in 2022 to be implemented.¹⁵³

Armenian Parliament Speaker Simonyan attended the 152nd Session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), held in Istanbul from April 16 to 19, and held a meeting with the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Simonyan also met with his Azerbaijani and Georgian counterparts. In his speech at the session, Simonyan stated that in order to achieve a genuine reconciliation with Azerbaijan, the release of Armenian detainees and clarification of the fate of

150 “Armenia: Dialogue With Türkiye Has Matured For Diplomatic Ties And Full Border Opening,” *ArmenPress*, March 23, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1245370>.

151 Mucahithan Avcioglu, “Memorandum Reached On Zangezur Corridor, Aiming To Be Completed In 4-5 Years: Turkish Transport Minister,” *Anadolu Agency*, March 26, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/memorandum-reached-on-zangezur-corridor-aiming-to-be-completed-in-4-5-years-turkish-transport-minister/3880005>.

152 “‘Hint Of Discontent’: Armenia’s Foreign Minister Skips Antalya Diplomacy Forum,” *JAM News*, April 17, 2026, <https://jam-news.net/why-armenias-fm-skips-antalya-forum/>.

153 “Armenia Ready To Open Border With Turkey, Process Depends On Ankara – Deputy FM,” *ArmenP-ress*, April 17, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1247721>.

missing people should be achieved.¹⁵⁴ Simonyan also visited the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul and met with Patriarch Sahag II Mashalian.¹⁵⁵ He also met with Turkish and Armenian press representatives in the Patriarchate's hall.

In his remarks to the press, Simonyan criticized Türkiye, claiming that Türkiye refuses to implement the agreements reached, that Armenia is ready to open the border, but that Türkiye has not taken any new steps.¹⁵⁶

This year's 24 April commemorations also took place in the shadow of the elections, with anti-Pashinyan forces attempting to use genocide allegations and anti-Turkish sentiment as a political tool against Pashinyan's well-known views. Organized primarily by radical elements of the diaspora, the ceremonies were more obscure, but more aggressive than in previous years. During a torchlight march organized by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnak Party in Yerevan, a group with a documented dark past carried the provocation to the extreme by burning a Turkish flag. Pashinyan immediately issued a statement condemning the incident, stating that the act was irresponsible and unacceptable, and that the burning of the flag of an internationally recognized state, especially a neighbouring country, cannot be described otherwise.¹⁵⁷

The disparaging statements issued by the World Council of Churches, well-known radical organizations within the diaspora, and countries where radical elements of the Church and the diaspora hold influence came as no surprise. On the other hand, the fact that the US President's traditional statement, which drew everyone's attention, followed the same line as the previous one and did not use the word "genocide". This has greatly disturbed influential diaspora organizations in the US, leading them to the audacity of personally targeting President Trump with their criticism. A regrettable statement this year came from Russian President Putin, which was primarily aimed at discrediting Pashinyan and served as a demonstration of how the "genocide" card can still be used as a political tool.

154 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Yerevan Says Release Of Armenian Prisoners Key To 'Genuine Reconciliation' With Baku," *OC Media*, April 17, 2026, <https://oc-media.org/yerevan-says-release-of-armenian-prisoners-key-to-genuine-reconciliation-with-baku/>

155 "Speaker Simonyan Meets Armenian Patriarch In Istanbul," *ArmenPress*, April 18, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1247783>

156 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Yerevan Says Azerbaijan Hindering Normalisation With Turkey," *OC Media*, April 21, 2026, <https://oc-media.org/yerevan-says-azerbaijan-hindering-normalisation-with-turkey/>

157 "Armenian PM Condemns Burning Of Turkish Flag At Torchlight Procession In Yerevan," *ArmenPress*, April 23, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1248347>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye has issued the following announcement “Regarding the Statements by Authorities of Some Countries on the Events of 1915”:

“The climate of peace and reconciliation emerging in the Southern Caucasus is a vigorous response - from those who aspire to see the region become a basin of stability and cooperation - to those who try to generate hostility from history.

In the debate regarding the events of 1915, the parties share a clear stance in objecting to the political exploitation of this issue.

On the contrary, it is observed that some third country politicians seek to exploit this issue for their narrow political interests or attempt to cover up their own responsibilities.

Türkiye, which has harbored the strongest examples of a culture of coexistence for centuries, opened its archives and proposed to establish a Joint History Commission with a view to researching the events of 1915 in a just and objective manner. This proposal remains on the table.

We invite third parties with constructive intentions to support the efforts towards reaching a shared and just memory, and the recently developed positive atmosphere of dialogue.”¹⁵⁸

Pashinyan’s statement was also followed with great attention. Although Pashinyan used the word “genocide” twice, he placed greater emphasis on the term “Great Catastrophe” (Meds Yeghern), which he used five times, and stated that the real culprits were third parties who exploited the Armenians, who were Ottoman subjects, as pawns in their international intrigues during World War I. The main thrust of Pashinyan’s speech was nevertheless within the framework of the well-known Armenian perspective.¹⁵⁹

The message issued by Sahag II Mashalian, Patriarch of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, is as follows:

158 “No: 75, 24 April 2026, Regarding The Statements By Authorities Of Some Countries On The Events Of 1915,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, April 24, 2026, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-75_-bazi-ulkelerin-yetkililerince-1915-olaylarina-iliskin-yapilan-beyanlar-hk.en.mfa

159 “Prime Minister Pashinyan’s Statement On Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day,” *ArmenPress*, April 24, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/video/1248352>.

“Dear faithful people,

Today is once again April 24, a day that calls us to stand with humility before one of the most painful pages of our history. This day brings us back to the memory of the tragedy experienced a century ago, which has left a deep mark on our national and spiritual life.

We remember the losses, deportations, exile, and immeasurable suffering endured by our people during the years of the First World War. This remembrance, however, is not meant only to remain within the dark pages of the past. It is also a call to give meaning to what we have endured and to move forward toward the future.

On this land, where for centuries different peoples lived side by side, the tradition of peaceful coexistence suffered a severe blow during those years. Yet this same geography also reminds us of an inescapable truth: peoples are not condemned to perpetual conflict, but are called to coexistence, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

We must acknowledge that beneath this land lie not only our own sorrows, but also the wounds of others. It is not enough to recount only our own history in order to find a true resolution. We are also obliged to listen to others, to understand their experiences, and to seek common ground that can serve as a foundation for the future.

In this sense, we reaffirm our call for the establishment of peace, reconciliation, and friendship between the Armenian and Turkish peoples. The tragedy of the past should not become a permanent dividing wall, but rather a heavy yet instructive experience from which lessons can be drawn to build a more just and peaceful future.

Neither denial nor hostility can heal wounds. Likewise, political exploitation does not serve the rapprochement of peoples. True progress is born from sincerity, mutual respect, and dialogue grounded in human values.

Therefore, we call on all sides to build bridges of friendship, encourage cultural and economic cooperation, and create an atmosphere in which history can be discussed without fear or hostility, but with a commitment to truth and justice.

We appreciate all steps, past and present, that are directed toward mutual sensitivity and rapprochement. In this context, it is also worth

mentioning the annual messages of His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye, on April 24, which are also addressed to the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and our community. The expression of condolence in these messages and the respect shown for the memory of those who lost their lives among our people under the difficult conditions of the First World War are, in our view, important steps toward the formation of an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

We value these messages as an expression of human conscience and as gestures that can contribute to the gradual restoration of trust between peoples. Such approaches remind us that even in the face of the heaviest historical burdens, it is possible to choose the path of mutual respect and communication.

Today, on this day of remembrance for the holy martyrs, we turn to their intercession. Through their lives and martyrdom, they have become not only part of our memory but also living witnesses of our faith. They call us not to remain in the darkness of the past, but to live with hope and build the future.

As the prophetic word says: “Behold, I am doing a new thing” (Isaiah 43:19). We must seek this newness in our hearts by transforming our thoughts and attitudes.

Beloved,

May this day of remembrance become not only an occasion of mourning, but also of renewal. May God, in His mercy, touch our hearts and those of our neighbors, so that we may pass beyond the heavy shadows of the past and build a future based on justice, peace, and brotherhood.

May Almighty God, through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God and all our holy martyrs, bless the Armenian and Turkish peoples, guide them toward reconciliation and peaceful coexistence, and remove wars and hatred from the world.

May the love, mercy, and grace of God dwell within us and upon all humanity, now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”¹⁶⁰

160 “Istanbul Armenian Patriarch: Neither Denial Nor Hostility Can Heal Wounds,” *ArmenPress*, April 24, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1248373>

The message takes a very positive approach, calling for dialogue, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence. By referring to a tragedy that occurred a century ago, the message employs a neutral tone. On the other hand, the answer to the question of what exactly is being denied in the statement “neither denial nor hostility can heal the wounds” is important. Indeed, President Erdoğan’s condolence message to the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul and the Armenian community, the full text of which is given below, also constitutes a clear response to the issue of denial.

“Reverend Sahak Maşalyan, Armenian Patriarch of Türkiye,

Distinguished Members of the Armenian Community,

Dear Citizens,

I greet you with my most heartfelt feelings and affection.

This year, I once again remember with respect the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives under the harsh conditions of World War I, and convey my condolences to their descendants.

During the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, all Ottoman peoples—those who lost their lives due to occupation, conflicts, rebellion, militia activity, terrorist acts, and other causes such as epidemics; driven from their lands in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Arab Peninsula; all those engulfed in conflagrations across Anatolia—suffered deeply.

Unfortunately, there were also people who experienced great sufferings among the Ottoman citizen Armenians who were present in every sphere of human life under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and made valuable contributions to it.

We succeeded to establish the Republic of Türkiye without forgetting these pains, but knowing how to cope with them.

We are working and striving together with all our citizens and friends, regardless of their ethnic or religious identity to reach better days on the basis of peace, harmony, and brotherhood.

Our effort is to leave future generations as legacy not bitter memories but a future where we convey the truth through the language of conscience.

We give the best response to those who seek to create animosity from history with an approach that upholds the language of peace, empathy, and dialogue without being confined to ideological frameworks, one that is based on reconciliation rather than conflict.

As a nation of 86 million, we will build together our future and the legacy we will leave to our grandchildren.

With these thoughts in mind, I reiterate that I share in the suffering endured by the Armenian community in the past and pay my respects once again to all Ottoman citizens who lost their lives.”¹⁶¹

Türkiye participated at the European Political Community (EPC) summit in Armenia on 4 May at the level of Vice-President, the highest level visit to Armenia since 2008. Vice-President Yılmaz was accompanied by the Special Representative For Normalization Of Relations, Ambassador Kılıç who on this occasion signed with his Armenian counterpart Rubinyan a protocol for the restoration of the historic Ani Bridge on the border, in the presence of Yılmaz and Pashinyan.

The two special representatives also took part in a panel discussion within the framework of the third “Yerevan Dialogue” forum. Rubinyan said he was confident that both the EU and Türkiye will play a very positive role in the South Caucasus in the near future. Kılıç emphasized that the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process is, first and foremost, not simply a matter of restoring relations, but a process of building and strengthening trust between the sides.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan, who also addressed the forum, said that dialogue between Armenia and Türkiye has matured sufficiently to produce positive results. He described the dialogue between the two countries as “excellent”.

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced on 13 May that, within the framework of confidence building measures, Türkiye has completed the procedures to start direct trade with Armenia. When Pashinyan was asked by the press to elaborate on this development, he explained that it referred to changes in Türkiye’s export documentation procedures for shipments to Armenia. He said that under previous Turkish regulations, Armenia was not

161 “Erdoğan’dan 24 Nisan Mesajı: ‘Ermeni Toplumunun Geçmişte Yaşadığı Acılarına Paylaşıyorum,’” *Euronews*, April 24, 2026, <https://tr.euronews.com/2026/04/24/erdogandan-24-nisan-mesaji-ermeni-toplumunun-gecmiste-yasadigi-acilari-paylasiyorum>.

included in the list of destination countries, which meant that goods were first registered as exports to a third country and only then re-exported to Armenia.

The first meeting of the Türkiye-Armenia commission on joint use of water resources met on 21 May at the border checkpoint and then in Yerevan.

Pashinyan reiterated on 1 June Armenia's willingness to fully normalize relations with Türkiye and Azerbaijan. He said in a video posted on social media: *"I am convinced that we will achieve the goal of normalizing relations with Azerbaijan and Türkiye, which means that the balanced and balancing foreign policy will reach its completion, creating new opportunities for Armenia to become a state of a new quality. If we do not have relations with Türkiye, it means that one side of that scale is empty. It means that some relations are imbalanced and have gone out of balance"*.¹⁶²

It was announced by the Prime Minister's office that Pashinyan called on President Erdoğan on 2 June extending greetings for "Kurban Bayramı" while Erdoğan congratulated Pashinyan's birthday. The two leaders exchanged views on the bilateral agenda, noted the intensification of engagements, highlighted the visit by the Turkish Vice-President, the decision to enable direct trade as well as the railroad access through Georgia for Armenian exports and imports.

Turkish and Armenian Businessmen met in the eastern border province Kars on 3 June to discuss potential joint projects, new investments and areas of economic cooperation. The meeting was organized by the Kars Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Reporting to the parliament, Mirzoyan said on 8 June, *"Our dialogue with Türkiye has continued. My expectation and belief is that in the very near future, at some stage, we will have tangible progress in terms of full normalization of our relations with Türkiye"*.¹⁶³

Speaking following the tenth trilateral meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye, Minister Fidan said on 7 June said that significant progress has been achieved in the normalization of relations between Türkiye and Armenia over the past four years. He added that the process of normalizing relations with Armenia was continuing along the same lines and in close coordination with Azerbaijan.

162 "Normalization Of Ties With Türkiye, Azerbaijan To Create New Opportunities For Armenia, Says Pashinyan," *ArmenPress*, June 1, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1251632/amp>.

163 "Armenian Foreign Minister Confident Of Full Normalization With Türkiye Soon," *ArmenPress*, June 8, 2026, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1252382>.

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the following announcement on 8 June regarding the parliamentary elections in Armenia:

We welcome that the parliamentary elections held in Armenia on 7 June 2026 were concluded in a peaceful and calm atmosphere.

In the post-election period, we hope that Armenia will take bolder steps towards peace and normalization in the region.

*Türkiye will continue to contribute to regional stability and prosperity, as it has done to date, based on the common interests of the countries of the region.*¹⁶⁴

164 “No: 111, 8 June 2026, Regarding The Parliamentary Elections Held In Armenia,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, June 6, 2026, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-111_-ermenistan-da-duzenlenen-parlamento-secimleri-hk.en.mfa

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ARMENIA’S GEOPOLITICAL LIMITATIONS AND REGIONAL COOPERATION POTENTIAL WITH THE TURKIC WORLD

(ERMENİSTAN’IN JEOPOLİTİK SINIRLILIKLARI VE
TÜRK DÜNYASI İLE BÖLGESEL İŞBİRLİĞİ POTANSİYELİ)

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Abstract: *This study examines Armenia’s strategic position in the South Caucasus and its strained relations with Türkiye and Azerbaijan within the framework of nation-state building and modernization. By analyzing the formation of Armenian identity through historical memory and cultural references, it scrutinizes the processes of nation-state formation in the context of relations with Russia and the West. Constructing Türkiye specifically - and the Turkic world broadly - as the “Other” has functioned as a primary constraint on Armenia’s foreign policy and regional cooperation efforts. The study emphasizes how Armenia’s designation of Türkiye as the “Other” and its refusal to acknowledge historical*

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and cultural ties - despite shared affinities - have restricted diplomatic and regional cooperation. However, the study argues that the potential to serve as a bridge between Türkiye and the Turkic states of Central Asia offers a strategic opportunity to overcome Armenia's current limitations. While it is suggested that granting Armenia observer status in organizations such as the Organization of Turkic States could encourage policies in this direction, factors such as Russia, the West, and the diaspora make such a radical change in Armenia's foreign policy vision difficult. The diplomatic opportunities that emerged after the Second Karabakh War in 2020 have increased Armenia's ability to reshape its regional cooperation and modernization strategies, necessitating a reassessment of the country's international policy perspective. In this context, the study highlights the importance of re-examining Armenia's identity construction and foreign policy strategies in light of historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors.

Keywords: *Nation-state, Identity Construction, Othering, Modernization, Ontological Insecurity.*

Özet: *Bu çalışma, Ermenistan'ın Güney Kafkasya'daki stratejik konumunu ve bu bağlamda Türkiye ve Azerbaycan ile sorunlu ilişkilerini, ulus devlet inşası ve modernleşme süreçleri çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Ermeni kimliğinin oluşumu, tarihsel hafıza ve kültürel referanslar üzerinden analiz edilirken, Rusya ve Batı ile ilişkiler bağlamında ulus devletleşme süreçleri sorgulanmaktadır. Özellikle Türkiye ve genel olarak Türk dünyasının "öteki" olarak konumlandırılması, Ermenistan'ın dış politika ve bölgesel işbirliği alanlarını sınırlamaktadır. Çalışma, Ermenilerle Türklerin, tarihsel ve kültürel açıdan birçok ortak noktaya sahip olmasına rağmen, Ermenistan'ın bu yakınlığı reddederek Türkiye'yi öteki olarak tanımlamasının diplomatik ve bölgesel işbirliği açısından kısıtlayıcı etkilerini vurgulamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, Türkiye ve Orta Asya Türk devletleri arasında köprü rolü üstlenme potansiyelinin, Ermenistan'ın mevcut sınırlılıklarını aşmak için stratejik bir fırsat sunduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı gibi yapılanmalarda Ermenistan'a verilecek gözlemcilik gibi bir statünün onun bu doğrultuda politika izlemesini teşvik edici olabileceği, bununla birlikte Rusya, Batı ve diaspora gibi faktörlerin Ermeni dış politika vizyonunda böylesine radikal bir değişimi zorlaştırdıkları dile getirilmiştir. 2020'deki İkinci Karabağ Savaşı sonrası ortaya çıkan diplomatik fırsatlar, Ermenistan'ın bölgesel işbirliği ve modernleşme stratejilerini yeniden şekillendirme imkânını artırmakta ve*

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ülkenin uluslararası politika perspektifini yeniden değerlendirmesini gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu çerçevede çalışma, Ermenistan'ın kimlik inşası ve dış politika stratejilerini tarihsel, kültürel ve jeopolitik faktörler bağlamında yeniden sorgulamanın önemini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ulus Devlet, Kimlik İnşası, Ötekileştirme, Modernleşme, Ontolojik Güvensizlik.*

Introduction

Armenia is located in the South Caucasus, a region of great geopolitical importance. Despite its limited natural resources, it occupies a critical position on the energy and trade routes connecting Türkiye, Russia, Iran, and Southeast Asia. Ethnically Armenian and religiously Gregorian Christian, its population distinguishes itself from the surrounding Turkish, Muslim, Persian, Shiite, Georgian, Russian, and Orthodox identities. On the other hand, the fact that Armenia has coexisted with these groups for centuries and shares cultural commonalities creates a context that cannot be ignored in the construction of Armenian identity. However, in its nation-state construction, Armenia has focused primarily on its differences with the Turks. Indeed, the construction of the enemy is not merely a psychological process, but a strategic instrument used in consolidating the nation-state's internal legitimacy.¹

This study first addresses the concept of the nation-state and the debates within the nation-building literature. While emphasizing that the nation-state concept is directly linked to modernization, it notes that modernization processes vary by country. The study discusses the differences between empires that voluntarily entered the modernization process and those that modernized under colonial influence or were created artificially. Ottoman modernization and the formation of Turkish nation-state identity are included as a comparative case due to the historical "otherness" of Armenian national identity and its application of modernization as a prescription for state survival.

Subsequently, the structural and historical elements of Armenia's nation-state building are examined, and the impact of its national identity definition on foreign policy and regional cooperation is assessed. Historical memory, diaspora influence, and external interventions play a critical role in shaping this identity. The Gregorian religious identity has been a defining factor in maintaining the cohesion of Armenian communities who migrated from Ottoman and Iranian territories to settle in their current lands. Additionally, relations with the West and diaspora activities have increased external influence on Armenia's national identity construction. This process has confined Armenia to certain patterns in both post-Soviet and contemporary regional relations, creating a structure that limits its options. Perceptions and discourses shaped by such recurring conflicts further entrench this identity, making diplomatic normalization difficult.

1 Özkan Avcı & Caner Çakı. "Milan Nedić İktidarında Sırp Toplumunda Düşman İnşası Propagandasına Yönelik Bir İnceleme." *Uluslararası Suçlar ve Tarih Dergisi* 21 (2020): 81-110.

When viewed solely through the lens of its geopolitical position, Armenia's foreign policy options appear advantageous. However, when considering relations with its neighbors, these advantages are largely limited. Among the countries that gained independence from the Soviet Union, Armenia has particularly restricted options compared to other former Soviet states due to historical and geographical conditions. The following section problematizes how Armenia's nation-building process, shaped by historical othering and identity policies, constrains the country's regional and international options. Armenia's historical memory, diaspora influence, and post-Soviet geopolitical position are evaluated as both reference points and limiting factors in national identity construction.

This study analyzes the restrictive effects of Armenia's other-centered identity construction on regional cooperation and evaluates the opportunities for strategic partnerships that could be established with the Turkic world in light of the new geopolitical realities that emerged after the 2020 Karabakh War. This perspective not only reveals Armenia's limited options but also analyzes the existence of new strategic opportunities in its relations with the Turkic world and regional actors. The study proposes that the definition of national identity be re-examined realistically - a difficult task for any nation-state requiring significant decisions and processes. Therefore, like many critical discussions regarding the nation-state concept, it may seem unlikely to find practical application. However, developments following the Second Karabakh War appear to have forced Armenia to abandon its confrontational stance, at least with Türkiye and Azerbaijan, in line with what is envisaged here. Although Armenia is not an organic part of the Turkic world, this study argues that including Armenia as a strategic partner in Türkiye's relations with the Turkic world would significantly advance mutual interests.

The Nation-State and Modernization

The nation-state stands as one of the most significant outcomes of modernity. Nationalism, which gained momentum in Europe following the French Revolution, gradually found resonance worldwide. National consciousness was not non-existent prior to the 19th century; rather, the modern era popularized and redefined this concept. Ernest Gellner posits that modern nation-states emerged alongside industrialization and that nationalism is a product of the need for "cultural homogeneity"² essential for the functioning of modern

2 Ernest Gellner, *Uluslar ve Ulusçuluk*, Trans. Büşra Ersanlı, Günay G. Özdoğan (İstanbul: Hil Yayınları, 1992): 34-38.

society. Moreover, the redefinition of identities in the post-Soviet space has demonstrated that identity construction is not merely a modern phenomenon but a historical process capable of generating conflict dynamics.³ Anthony Smith, conversely, argues that modern nations are nourished by older ethnic cores, implying they are not entirely modern inventions.⁴ Benedict Anderson famously described nations as “imagined communities,”⁵ arguing that through print capitalism and media, vast groups of people who have never met imagine themselves as belonging to a shared community.

The conflation of the nation with the state is largely a 19th-century phenomenon. This new Eurocentric interpretation influenced multi-ethnic empires such as the Ottoman Empire, precipitating their disintegration. While minorities sought secession driven by the desire for their own nation-states, the core elements of these empires also began to question their identities, seeking answers through modern phenomena rather than tradition. Ultimately, the 20th century became the era of nation-states.

A defining feature of European-style nationalism - and the nation-state it shaped - is identity construction. Constructing the “nation” necessitates a mythology and historical foundations. In this context, ethnicity, religion, language, and shared history have served as crucial distinguishing factors. Beyond these cohesive elements, which can be considered the binding agent in nation-building, there is also the concept of the “Other,” which is the hallmark of European nationalism. As Edward Said argues in *Orientalism*, the West constructed its own identity by “othering” the East.⁶ Here, defining oneself through an Other - identifying a historical enemy to consolidate national consciousness and unity - is at play. Stuart Hall emphasizes that identity is always defined in relation to an “Other.”⁷

The historical “Others” of European nations have been the Turks and Russians, but predominantly the “Turks.”⁸ When the religious factor is considered, Turks are further marginalized on the basis of Islam. Said notes that for Europe, Turks are the symbolic representatives of the East.⁹ Similarly, Karpat emphasizes

3 Pınar Köksal, “Orta Asya’da Tarihsel Kimlikler ve Çatışma”, *Uluslararası Suçlar ve Tarih*, 21 (2020).

4 Anthony D. Smith, *Ulusların Etnik Kökeni*, Trans. Sonay Bayramoğlu & Hülya Kendir (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 2002): 22-29.

5 Benedict Anderson, *Hayali Cemaatler: Milliyetçiliğin Kökenleri ve Yayılması Üzerine Düşünceler*, Trans. İskender Savaşır (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1993).

6 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978).

7 Stuart Hall, “Who Needs ‘Identity’?,” (in) *Introduction to Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London, Sage, 1996): 1-17.

8 Kemal Karpat, *Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Kimlik ve İdeoloji* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları., 2011).

9 Said, *Oryantalizm.*, 15-28.

that Turks have been consistently utilized as the “Other” in the construction of European identity.¹⁰ At this point, Russian identity construction involves references to the Eastern Roman Empire and Orthodoxy.¹¹ From a religious perspective, European and Russian identities may find converging grounds. However, in the othering of Turks, expressions such as “Muslim Turks” or even historically pejorative terms like “barbarian” or “infidel” Turks are encountered. Here, Christianity - specifically Orthodoxy¹² or Protestantism - is instrumentalized as a unifying element in nation-building. Likewise, anti-Semitism¹³, which broadly implies hostility towards Semitic peoples rather than solely Jews, also stems from this exclusionary root. Similarly, recent studies compare anti-Semitism with Islamophobia, revealing common exclusionary mechanisms.¹⁴

Ottoman modernization was inextricably linked to this wave of Eurocentric nationalism. Şerif Mardin, examining Ottoman modernization through “center-periphery”¹⁵ relations, notes that state elites imposed modernization from the top down. Feroz Ahmad evaluates Ottoman modernization within the context of international balances, pointing out that nationalist movements forced empires to disintegrate.¹⁶ In this context, the literature’s emphasis on the Ottoman modernization experience as a “survival strategy” is particularly noteworthy. Berkes evaluates the essence of post-Tanzimat reforms not as mere emulation of the West, but as an effort to ensure the state’s survival - interpreting modernization as the Ottoman Empire’s existential strategy.¹⁷ Carter Findley assesses these reforms as “the rise of a new bureaucratic elite.”¹⁸ It is evident that Ottoman modernization was not only an ideological choice but also a pragmatic effort to survive international competition. Indeed, the culmination of this process was the emergence of the Republic of Türkiye as a fully independent nation-state.

10 Karpat, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze...*, 55-63.

11 Geoffrey Hosking, *Rusya ve Ruslar: İlkçağlardan 21. Yüzyıla*, Trans. Kezban Acar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004).

12 Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

13 Bauman has interpreted antisemitism as part of the modern nation-state’s process of producing an exclusionary other. See also: Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, (Ithaca - NY, Cornell Uni. Press, 1989): 5-17.

14 Enes Bayraklı & Oğuz Güngörmez, “İslamofobi ve Anti-semitizm Karşılaştırmasını Anlamlandırmak: Kapsamlı Bir Literatür Değerlendirmesi”, *Muhafazakâr Düşünce Dergisi* 14/53 (2018).

15 Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, 1st Syracuse University Press ed, Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East (Syracuse University Press, 2000), 40-45.

16 Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, (London: Routledge, 1993): 11-12.

17 Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, facsimile ed (Hurst, 1998), 23-45.

18 Carter Vaughn Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, Princeton Studies on the Near East (Princeton University Press, 2012), 112-115.

It must be noted that the fundamental factor in Turks being considered the “Other” is not solely religious. Turks possess a state tradition predating the modern concept of the state. The Ottoman Empire’s role as the protector of Islam and its influence on European history have long positioned it as a threat from the East. According to Akkaş, the legitimacy of authority in Turkish society is based on its position of defending and protecting Islam.¹⁹ This is a primary source driving the European perspective to position Turks as the “Other.” Therefore, the arduous modernization processes the Ottoman Empire underwent in the 19th century were not essentially an imitation of the West but rather a struggle for survival - an effort to maintain the capacity to compete with Western powers.

One of the most fundamental factors determining the Ottoman Empire’s position in the international system in the 19th century was the “Eastern Question.” The colonial rivalry among European powers constantly made the empire’s territorial integrity and political existence a subject of debate.²⁰ During this period, while pursuing modernization efforts, the Ottoman Empire also became an integral element of the “European balance” as a power at the center of European diplomacy. In this context, the marginalization of the Ottoman Empire stemmed not only from cultural and religious motives but also from its perception as an obstacle to colonial expansionism.²¹

Considering all this, the Ottoman Empire became the only power capable of acting as a barrier against colonial expansionism, standing as the counterweight to European powers. The Eastern Question, which continued in parallel with modernization, summarizes the story of European powers’ influence and division over the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century.²² The secession of Ottoman minorities was not merely a process driven by the wave of ideas created by the French Revolution, but rather a stage in the strategy of keeping them out of colonial competition while the great powers weakened the Ottoman central authority. In fact, throughout the history of the secession of all minorities, including the Muslims of the empire, European powers - especially Great Britain and Russia - adopted a strategic pattern that included intervention or non-intervention in the name of support, patronage, or the

19 Hasan Hüseyin Akkaş, *Türklerde Hakimiyet*, (İstanbul: Efe Akademi Yayınları, 2024): 23-30.

20 Roderic Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West*, (University of Texas Press, 1990).

21 J. C. Sharman, *Zayıfların İmparatorlukları: Avrupa Yayılmacılığının Gerçek Hikâyesi ve Yeni Dünya Düzeninin Kuruluşu*, trans. Fahrettin Biçici (İstanbul: Vakıfbank Kültür Yayınları, 2021).

22 Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol. II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, (New York: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1977): 1-20.

balance of power. The most concrete example of this was the joint action of these rival powers against the Ottomans during the Greek uprising.²³ Indeed, the First World War, often cited as the outcome of the 19th century, was, in one sense, the Ottoman Empire's final struggle against colonialism.

Following World War I, despite losing a large portion of its minority populations, the Balkans, and the Arab regions, a national struggle began, rejecting any form of guardianship, mandate, or colonial rule. This led to the establishment of the fully independent Republic of Türkiye. While Türkiye, as a fully independent state, built a nation-state and national identity based on the remaining demographic elements, none of the elements that broke away became fully independent states; instead, they built their new identities under the influence of their patrons.

The historical "Other" of nations that transitioned from Ottoman minorities to nation-states has predominantly been the Turks, similar to the case of European nations. In this context, the historical "Other" of Greek and Slavic elements in the Balkans and Eastern Europe were the Turks, and in their stories of breaking with the Ottoman Empire, the influence of Tsarist Russia was as significant as that of the European states. Even in the identity construction of Arab states that broke with the Ottoman Empire and entered into mandate rule, despite the common ground of Islam, the historical enemy has been the Ottomans and Turks²⁴, influenced by their mandate powers. For centuries, Armenians, who had lived scattered across Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus region under the protection of Turkish states without major problems, now find themselves in a new situation where the "Other" is the Turks.²⁵

The Republic of Türkiye emerged as a nation-state as a result of a modernization process, directly or indirectly influenced by nationalist ideas developing in Europe. However, rather than defining its nation in relation to others, it focused on the elements within the *Misak-ı Milli (National Pact)* borders that would hold it together. The identity built on Islam helped ensure unity within these borders, primarily among Turks and Kurds.²⁶ At the same time, this nation-state, shaped within a secular framework, has tried to use an inclusive language regarding its minorities. The evolution of Turkism

23 Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1992): 47-60.

24 Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*, (Berkeley, LA & London: University of California Press, 1997): 210-225.

25 Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 12-18.

26 Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics," *Daedalus*, 102/1, (1973).

or Turkish nationalism stemming from Islamism - and an understanding in which Turkish and Muslim identities are equated - has led to this result.²⁷ Throughout the history of the Republic, different situations have arisen in the implementation of this understanding. Although the national identity of the Turkish state has been questioned from time to time, this core characteristic has not changed.

Therefore, Türkiye does not predicate its national definition on the “Other.” Certain historical claims or reactive stances against the attitudes of states that otherize it have shown a tendency to view Greece, Armenia, sometimes Arab countries, Iran, and predominantly the Soviet Union/Russia as the “Other” at certain times. Here, indirect reflections of the modernization process’s effects on different dimensions of the intellectual world can be observed. However, historical competition and ideological divisions are particularly prominent in Russia’s perception as the “Other.”

The Nation-State Identity of Armenia

One of the most striking examples of the modernization and nation-building processes of different communities within the Ottoman Empire is that of the Armenians. The construction of the Armenian nation was shaped not only by the internal dynamics of the Ottoman Empire and its “millet system,” but also by the rise of nationalism in Europe, missionary activities, and the interventions of colonial powers.

The Armenians, referred to as *millet-i sadıka* (the loyal nation)²⁸ in the Ottoman system and enjoying a relatively autonomous status, began to make their identity more visible in the political arena in the new environment created by the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts in the 19th century.²⁹ Historical analysis indicates that the factors influencing the Armenian statehood process were shaped significantly by external interventions and the shifting dynamics of the Ottoman millet system.³⁰ The wave of nationalism in Europe, combined with missionary schools and press activities, triggered a mobilization in Armenian

27 Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: “Who is a Turk?”* (London: Routledge, 2006): 15-35.

28 Kemal Karpat, *Osmanlı’da Milletler ve Milliyetçilik: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyal ve Politik Düşünce*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2013): 45-50.

29 Benjamin Braude & Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, (NY: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982): 69-90.

30 Ayşegül Güler, “The Statehood Process of Armenians, the Factors That Influenced Them and the Evaluation of the Current Situation.” *Review of Armenian Studies* 51 (2025).

society. Following this process, described by Armenian historians as *Zartonk* (social awakening),³¹ the Armenian identity began to take on the character of a national movement. It quickly assumed a political character, paving the way for the emergence of organizations such as the Hunchak (1887) and Dashnaksutyun (1890) in the last quarter of the 19th century. Although these organizations initially appeared to demand reforms, they later pursued a separatist agenda due to interventions by European states and Tsarist Russia.³² Armenian volunteers who collaborated with the Russian army during World War I led to an irreversible deterioration in relations between the Ottomans and Armenians.³³ Thus, the Armenian issue ceased to be merely an internal matter for the Ottomans and became a problem at the center of international politics.

Following World War I, the Armenian movement - directed by the Soviet administration through organizations such as the Dashnaksutyun against the Ottoman Empire - laid the foundations for the establishment of Yerevan and its surroundings, which also formed the basis for present-day Armenia. The short-lived Transcaucasian Republic,³⁴ formed in 1917 in the Caucasus region by Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani nations, provided Armenians with an experience of statehood. However, the Ottoman Empire's liberation of Baku by the Caucasian Islamic Army under the command of Nuri Pasha not only demonstrated that it would not tolerate imperialism in the region but also played a decisive role in securing the territorial integrity of the nascent Azerbaijani state.³⁵ This was also an extremely important historical turning point for Azerbaijani independence. In order to maintain their presence in the region This was also an extremely important historical turning point for Azerbaijani independence. In order to maintain their presence in the region, Armenian organizations remained in close contact with post-Tsarist Soviet Russia - as they had during World War I - and consolidated their presence in the Caucasus as a Soviet republic.³⁶ Indeed, the definition of the Karabakh

31 Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat...*: 45-50.

32 Davison, "The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914," *The American Historical Review* 53(3), (1948).

33 Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey...*, 315-320.

34 For a study that examines in detail the Transcaucasian Republic, Russia's influence, and particularly issues such as Azerbaijan's identity construction and its incorporation into Soviet rule, also see: Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Müslüman Cemaatten Ulusal Kimliğe Rus Azerbaycanı: 1905-1920*, Trans. Nuray Mert (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1988).

35 Swietochowski, *Müslüman Cemaatten Ulusal Kimliğe...*: 175-85.

36 For a detailed study on Russia's active role in the establishment of the Armenian state and its influence on the Karabakh issue, see: Zühre Nur Pehlivan Celep, "Rusya'nın Ermeni Devleti Kurma Politikasının Sonucu: Karabağ Sorunu," *Asia Minor Studies - International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(6), (2016).

region (also known as “Stalin’s Finger”),³⁷ which separates Azerbaijan from Nakhichevan and would often be a source of problems in later periods, and Zangezur, which extends to the Iranian border within Armenia, was also a product of Soviet policies.

Today, Armenia is one of the nation-states that gained independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and is located in the Caucasus region. However, the Armenian identity dates back to ancient times and has existed not only in the region where Armenia is located today, but also in a vast area stretching from the Caucasus to Europe, primarily in Anatolia, Iran, and the Arabian Peninsula. They have generally existed as minorities and, while mostly adhering to the Gregorian rite, have also embraced different denominations of Christianity. As a result of certain developments in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Armenians migrated to various parts of the world. Therefore, although there is a state called Armenia today, Armenian identity is not limited to it. Consequently, Armenian identity has been shaped not only by Armenia’s political borders but also by the historical and political experiences of diaspora communities scattered across the world.

In the post-Soviet era, as countries in the region regained independence, their nation-building processes came back into focus. In this context, Armenia, as an independent state, has sought to construct its nation-state identity using historical references. Although historical references such as the Ancient Armenian Kingdom provide a mythological foundation, the most decisive factor uniting Armenians - most of whom migrated from Ottoman and Iranian territories to settle in their current geography - has been their Gregorian religious identity. On the other hand, the need to be accepted in the West and to build a national identity in the Western sense has made Armenia significantly influenced by the relationships established by Armenians outside Armenia and by diaspora activities.³⁸ Therefore, while Armenia was largely based on Soviet rule in the atmosphere following World War I, since the 1980s, lobbying activities in Western centers have led to the emergence of an Armenia that continues to have deep ties with Russia while also being under Western influence.

37 Also see: Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia And Azerbaijan: A Borderland In Transition*, (New York: Columbia Uni. Press, 1995): 154-160; Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity Under Russian Rule*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1992): 113-118; Charles Van Der Leeuw, *Azerbaijan: A Quest For Identity*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2000): 85-90.

38 For the impact of the Armenian Diaspora on Armenian politics, see: Ebru Çoban Öztürk, “Türkiye ve Ermenistan İlişkilerinde Çatışma Çözümü ve Uzlaşma Yaklaşımları, Yeni Öncelikler ve Çatışmanın Yönetilmesi.” *Ermeni Araştırmaları Dergisi*: 73 (2023).

Developments that began at the end of the 19th century, particularly the pressure exerted by the United States and European states on Türkiye over the 1915 deportations, played a central role in the construction of Armenian identity beyond the genocide claim to which the Armenian diaspora clings. The Soviet Union, as part of its policy of managing ethnic balances, allocated some territories belonging to the Azerbaijani Turks to the Armenians; this situation led to Armenia experiencing chronic problems with Azerbaijan and defining this state as a historical “Other,” similar to Türkiye. Therefore, Armenia, which did not stop at historically othering the Ottoman Empire it lived within for centuries, also aimed to construct its national identity by antagonizing the Turkish and Azerbaijani Turkish communities living in the same geography and sharing cultural similarities.³⁹

Since Armenia's identity - which disregards geographical and historical realities - has been formed in this manner, the country has become a source of conflict in the region rather than a peaceful nation-state. This exclusionary approach transforms foreign policy into a field of ontological insecurity rather than rational interest calculation.⁴⁰ Its position as a buffer between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, aside from its occupation of Karabakh, has made Armenia a focal point of tension in regional relations. This positioning has greatly limited the country's foreign policy options and constrained its economic and diplomatic relations. As discussed earlier, the foundations of identity shaped by the diaspora and Soviet policies explain the structural reasons behind this situation. Relying on claims divorced from reality has prevented the proper construction of Armenian identity, pushed the country into a position of limited options, and created the image of a conflict-oriented state, distant from regional harmony and cooperation. Consequently, this process has shaped Armenia's stance in regional relations and its state structure in light of historical and structural constraints.

The Former Soviet States and Armenia's Options

In the post-Cold War era, the strategic options available to the states that broke away from the Soviet Union were quite limited. Without exception, all former Soviet states that gained independence were bound by historical and geographical necessities to the Russian Federation. It was therefore inevitable

39 Zeynep Tekinalp & Yavuz Cankara, “Ermeni Kamu Diplomasisinde Türk Karşıtlığı” *Uluslararası Siyaset Dergisi*, 2(1) (2024): 42-43.

40 Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, “The Fabricated Pontus Narrative and Hate Speech”, *Uluslararası Suçlar ve Tarih*, 17 (2026): <https://doi.org/10.54842/ustich.1883823>.

that many of them would join an organization such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), founded in 1991. Although they had become independent, these states - possessing internal structures inherited from the Soviet era and dependent relationships with Russia in commercial, economic, and political spheres - began to explore other options in the new international system. Just as acting in line with Türkiye's regional policies became a viable option for Turkic states, their geographical locations also offered certain strategic opportunities.

Geographically, countries in Eastern Europe had the opportunity to align themselves with the West and join Western alliances such as NATO or the European Union (EU). The pro-Western policies of countries such as Georgia and Ukraine, which occupy positions of great strategic importance for the Russian Federation, have caused serious friction with Russia since the 1990s.⁴¹ Conversely, countries in Central Asia like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), signalling a potential rapprochement with China. Since Russia is also a founding member, this offers a relatively less problematic option for Moscow. However, the fact that Russia and China are rivals in this region, despite their common ground against Western alliances, casts doubt on whether the SCO will prove to be a satisfactory long-term alternative for its Central Asian members.⁴²

Against this general backdrop, Armenia's situation is markedly different; its options are far more limited than those of other former Soviet states. Analyzing Armenia's foreign policy through the 'Small State' concept reveals how its security concerns and dependency on external patrons restrict its trans-Caucasian strategies.⁴³ Due to Soviet-era cartography and historical events, it is unable to fully align itself with the West, nor can it develop strategic relations with Central Asian or East Asian countries. Soviet-era border drawing designed Armenia effectively as a buffer between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. This prevents it from establishing full unity with the West like the countries of Eastern Europe, or proximity to China or East Asian countries like the Turkic Republics of Central Asia. To the west, it shares borders with Türkiye and Georgia. Türkiye's historical status as the "Other" - rather than a gateway to the West - coupled with Georgia's own difficulties in establishing stable

41 Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (London: Routledge, 2001): 52-55.

42 Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*: 60-63.

43 Murat Jane, "'Küçük Devlet' Kavramı Bağlamında Ermenistan'ın Trans-Kafkasya Politikasının Analizi (1991-2020)", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, 75 (2024).

relations with the West, has constrained Armenia in this regard. This situation persists despite its policies being shaped by a Western-centric approach since the Cold War. Consequently, Armenia's foreign policy remains stuck between its historical dependence on Russia and its desire for integration with the European Union, creating a strategic paradox.⁴⁴ Even if it establishes close relations with its southern neighbor Iran to gain leverage against Azerbaijan, closer ties to the West could be overshadowed; thus, Iran also represents a limited option.

Given all these considerations, Armenia's international and regional position offers very limited options. It is unable to achieve full integration with the West, nor can it establish strategic proximity with the countries of East and Central Asia. Historical problems with neighboring countries, geographical constraints, and economic dependencies place Armenia in a fragile position both diplomatically and economically. Consequently, Armenia's current structural conditions often force it to pursue a problematic and conflict-oriented policy rather than one of regional harmony and cooperation.⁴⁵

External Policy Options for Armenia and the Prospect of a Turkic World

The Karabakh issue emerged in the late 1980s, when Armenia, backed by the support of the then-intact Soviet administration, entered the independence process with the occupation of this region. The concept of the "Other" remains a contentious issue in nation-state theory; the question of whether the "Other" is a necessary figure in the construction of identity has long been debated in the social sciences.⁴⁶ While demonizing the Ottoman Empire - and therefore Türkiye - as the historical "Other," Armenia has also positioned Azerbaijan as the geographical "Other." However, even if defining one's identity through the "Other" is accepted, a state's position of being surrounded by identities that it antagonizes leaves that state's existence perpetually under threat.

This situation not only limits Armenia's domestic policy choices but also has significant implications for regional actors, particularly the Russian Federation. One of the influential actors in the Western world is not Armenia

44 Olgun Ukşal, "Rusya ve Avrupa Birliği Arasında Sıkışan Bir Dış Politika: Ermenistan Örneği", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, 78 (2025): <https://doi.org/10.36542/erma.1740735>.

45 Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat...*: 310-315; Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*: 68-70.

46 Anderson, *Hayali Cemaatler...*: 42-45; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 224-233.

itself, but the Armenian diaspora.⁴⁷ It is known that claims far removed from historical reality, such as the “Armenian genocide” - which Western countries, primarily the USA and France, utilize as a tool in their relations with Türkiye - are largely driven by diaspora activities.⁴⁸ In other words, diaspora activities compel Armenia to adopt certain policies, further restricting its diplomatic maneuvering space. Moreover, the negative effects of Western-oriented policies on the Russian Federation are becoming increasingly visible. In situations where Armenia’s Western-centered diplomatic initiatives could limit Russia’s influence in the Caucasus, Moscow’s stance may shift in favor of Azerbaijan and Türkiye. For example, during the Second Karabakh War and the subsequent operations to liberate occupied territories, Russia was not inclined to intervene actively on behalf of Armenia.⁴⁹

It is possible to assess this stance of Russian foreign policy as *realpolitik*. Although Armenia is important to the Russian Federation, pursuing policies that are in harmony with Türkiye and Azerbaijan - rather than confronting them - offers a more realistic option for protecting Russian interests in the region. Unlike many global rivals seeking to establish influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the post-Cold War era, Türkiye’s initiatives in the region were seen by Russia as manageable and open to cooperation. As stated by Aleksandr Dugin, a prominent representative of Eurasianist thought, while Türkiye was initially seen as a Western proxy, this perception has evolved.⁵⁰ Over time, developments such as the acceleration of Turkish-Russian relations and the shift in Türkiye’s state policy against organizations like FETÖ - which served US interests rather than Türkiye’s - allowed Russia to view Türkiye not as a rival in Central Asia but as a partner against Western hegemony. At this point, Türkiye’s economic and cultural activities through structures like the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) do not pose a fundamental threat to Russia.

Within this framework, a new opportunity for Türkiye and Azerbaijan to exert influence over Armenia has emerged following the Second Karabakh War. With the Zangezur corridor becoming a topic of discussion, Armenia’s image as a barrier to Türkiye’s contact with the Turkic world has also begun to change. Projects such as the Development Road and the Zangezur Corridor

47 Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...*: 102-110.

48 Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, (New York: New York Uni. Press, 2013): 245-250.

49 Greg Simons & Iulian Chifu, “Realist and Constructivist Interpretations and Representations of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War: As an Event and as a Process,” *Journalism and Media*, 6(1), (2025).

50 Aleksandr Dugin, *Rus Jeopolitiği: Avrasyacı Yaklaşım*, Trans. Vügar İmanov, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2003).

are not only transit routes but also vital mechanisms for integrating the South Caucasus into global trade networks.⁵¹ Here, too, a real-political situation exists. Although Western powers and diaspora factions may create difficulties, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan acted on the assumption that an intransigent stance would result in much greater costs for his country. These developments bring a new alternative to the table for Armenia's limited options: to act together with Türkiye and the Turkic world.

Türkiye has adopted a flexible and constructive approach in its relations with Armenia, aiming to keep opportunities for regional cooperation open. Although there was no emphasis on kinship ties, as was the case with the Turkic states, Türkiye invited Armenia to join the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) in 1992.⁵² In the subsequent years, especially regarding energy corridors, a stance of strictly excluding Armenia was not initially adopted; rather, Armenia's own exclusionary identity construction and geopolitical choices led to oil and natural gas pipelines bypassing the country.⁵³

This situation brings cooperation with Türkiye and the Turkic world to the agenda as a new strategic option that could overcome Armenia's identity-based limitations. However, recurring conflicts and entrenched perceptions continue to hinder this normalization.⁵⁴ The resolution of the occupation in Karabakh has removed a primary obstacle, fundamentally altering the dynamics of Türkiye-Armenia relations and opening new avenues for diplomacy.⁵⁵ In this context, the 2020 operation to liberate Nagorno-Karabakh can be seen not as a defeat for Armenia, but as the removal of a major obstacle to resolving long-standing issues. With the resolution of the occupation, the option of diplomatic compromise has become more apparent than a hostile approach based on rigid patterns.⁵⁶

Following developments in Karabakh, a basis for reconciliation with Armenia's historical adversaries has emerged. This option is extremely

51 For a detailed analysis of the new power balance created in the region by the Karabakh War, see: Harun Semerciöglü, *The New Balance of Power in the Southern Caucasus in the Context of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in 2020*, *R&S Research Studies Anatolia Journal*, 4(1) (2021).

52 KEİ, *Kuruluş ve Amaçlar*, [Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation (BSEC), Establishment and Objectives], accessed 04.09.2025: <https://www.bsec-organization.org>.

53 Brenda Shaffer, *Energy Politics*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press): 2009.

54 Aslan Yavuz Şir, "Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Think-Tank Etkisi: Düşünce Kuruluşu Raporlarında Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri Algısı," *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, 33 (2009): 103.

55 Esengül Ayaz Avan, "Karabağ Meselesi ve Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkilerine Etkisi," *Ermeni Araştırmaları* 78 (2025).

56 Tolga Otabatmaz, "Ermeni Milliyetçiliğinin Karabağ Sorununa Etkisi," *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 7(2) (2023): 412-415.

important as it enables direct contact between Türkiye and Azerbaijan and offers an alternative route between the Turkic world and the West. If Armenia acts on the basis of reconciliation, it will not only avoid harm but may also benefit in the long term. A geopolitical scenario in which Armenia is open to transportation and communication on a much larger scale will bring primarily economic, but also political and cultural benefits.

Although it would maximize gains for Armenia, the fundamental factor preventing cooperation is the country's current identity definition. It is essential to encourage Armenian politics to recognize that its exclusionary rhetoric is self-limiting. In this context, Türkiye and the Turkic world can demonstrate that they are more effective partners than the diaspora or distant Western powers. Inviting Armenia to participate in economic, political, and cultural organizations developed within the framework of the OTS - perhaps even granting it observer status - could be an effective incentive. Although Armenia represents an ethnically and religiously distinct element, centuries of geographical proximity present a reality where Turks and Armenians share more common ground culturally than with their Western neighbors. Therefore, Armenia must recognize that contributing to cooperation in the Turkic world offers progress far beyond the limitations imposed by its current identity. Moreover, the shortest and most direct route to the Western world it aspires to join also passes through Türkiye.

Cooperation with Türkiye and the Turkic world is not limited to the political sphere. Economic cooperation, particularly through energy and transportation corridors, creates new opportunities. If Armenia can overcome its issues with Türkiye and Azerbaijan, it can directly benefit from regional trade and logistics networks. In the cultural and academic spheres, Armenia's world vision will broaden when its connections are diversified through practical steps such as student exchange programs and research collaborations. Ultimately, for Armenia, transforming its strategic flexibility and identity understanding in cooperation with Türkiye and the Turkic world is the key to protecting its national interests.

Conclusion

To capitalize on its geopolitical position, Armenia must develop constructive relations with Türkiye and the Turkic world. The primary obstacle to this is an Armenian identity constructed upon specific historical claims. The nation-

building processes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries have served as the main reference point not only for Armenia but for many nation-states. Indeed, the security reflexes developed by the Turkish state during the late Ottoman period - when Armenians living in Anatolia were in the process of forming their own national identity - have been interpreted differently in Turkish historiography compared to Armenian historiography. Similarly, there are divergent interpretations of the relocation policy during World War I and subsequent developments. Historically, scholars have assessed these events through detailed research from conflicting perspectives.

In any assessment, these historical developments have the potential to generate hostility and “othering.” While the narrative concerning the allegations of genocide regarding the 1915 events is central to Armenian identity construction and widely supported in the West, Türkiye frames this period within the context of shared sufferings and a struggle for national survival. Nevertheless, this historical divergence continues to shape Turkish public opinion, where reactive stances and security-based perceptions of Armenian identity remain prevalent among certain segments of society, influenced by long-standing regional conflicts. This is largely due to the context of the relocation decisions (*tehcir*) and the atrocities committed against Turks by organizations such as the Dashnaktsutyun Party during that period. Furthermore, the strategic significance of the Zangezur corridor, which also garnered international attention during the Trump administration as a mechanism for regional connectivity, stands as a critical geopolitical reality that could redefine these relations. However, recent examples such as the illegal occupation of Karabakh demonstrate that relations between Azerbaijanis and Armenians remain fraught with tension. In such an environment, without a fundamental shift in identity politics, peaceful regional cooperation naturally appears difficult to achieve.

When viewed from a broader historical perspective - beyond the scope of recent history - there is a long tradition of Turks and Armenians living side by side without conflict. Cultural similarities far outweigh differences. A constructive cultural and historical perspective allows for a more rational evaluation of geopolitical opportunities. Armenia's potential to develop close relations with the Turkic world will be determined more by geopolitical realities and mutual interests than by rigid historical interpretations. In this context, Armenia requires a broader perspective to break free from its self-imposed limitations.

Türkiye's recent initiatives have encouraged Armenia to overcome these constraints. The main factor limiting Armenia is the "otherness" inherent in the foundation upon which it built its nation-state identity. Reconstructing or updating a nation-state identity is no easy task. Even if political leaders are convinced of this necessity, they must undertake difficult steps, such as persuading the public, explaining the shift to patron states, and enacting constitutional changes. The Second Karabakh War has provided a unique opportunity for the current Armenian administration in this regard. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has made statements criticizing the rigid diaspora discourse, occasionally acknowledging that this historical identity construction has constrained his country. Therefore, only time will tell whether Pashinyan represents a genuine hope for Armenia to break out of its shell.

It must be acknowledged that the termination of the occupation in Karabakh and the opening of the Zangezur corridor were achieved not through soft power diplomacy, but through the hard power of Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that a shift in identity politics was the primary driver of this change. However, this new reality, established by force, may open certain doors for a transformation in identity politics. Paradoxically, the geopolitical reality established by the victory in Karabakh offers a window of opportunity not only for the Turkic world but also for Armenia, despite its military defeat. It is also worth noting that the Zangezur corridor's potential for regional connectivity gained international attention during the Trump administration. The U.S. focus on diversifying global trade routes and securing energy corridors added a global strategic dimension to the corridor, framing it as a vital link for integrating the South Caucasus into international networks.

Consequently, two distinct scenarios emerge for Armenia's future. Constructive relations developed with Türkiye and the Turkic world could break the country's geopolitical isolation, offering new opportunities for economic development and political stability. Conversely, if Armenia fails to adapt, it will inevitably remain caught between the expectations of the West and the pressure of Russia, constrained by the discourse of the diaspora. Therefore, the most critical choice facing Armenia is to move beyond the boundaries imposed by its historical identity construction and to embrace the cooperation opportunities offered by geopolitical realities.

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JUSTICE AFTER WAR IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH: A STUDY OF JUS POST BELLUM PRINCIPLES

(KARABAĞ'DA SAVAŐ SONRASI ADALET:
JUS POST BELLUM İLKELERİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME)

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the new political and legal dynamics emerging after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, focusing on the principles of jus post bellum (justice after war), the third component of the just war doctrine, within the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The study, based on document analysis, a qualitative research method, examines the ethical, legal, and institutional dimensions of the post-conflict period, exploring the applicability of justice after war in the Nagorno-Karabakh context. It analyzes the principles of accountability, reconciliation, reconstruction, restitution, reparation, and proportionality, considering their practical applications in the region. Key issues such as the investigation of war crimes, confidence-building measures, mine clearance, infrastructure projects, the return of displaced persons, the restoration of cultural heritage, and border demarcation*

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are also assessed. The study argues that post-war justice can be achieved through the cessation of armed conflict as well as through legal, ethical, and institutional transformation. A peace treaty drafted solely based on the demands of the winning side will not guarantee a just and lasting peace. The permanence of peace in conflict zones is only possible through a peace treaty that takes into account the demands of all parties and is written fairly. Otherwise, the ceasefire achieved now will likely lead to a return to armed conflict later. The study argues that lasting peace in Nagorno-Karabakh is achievable not only through the cessation of armed conflict but also through the implementation of jus post bellum principles.

Keywords: International law, jus post bellum (justice after war), regional security, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Öz: Azerbaycan ile Ermenistan arasındaki Karabağ ihtilafının, 2020'deki ateşkes anlaşması ve 2025'te ABD arabuluculuğunda imzalanan ortak deklarasyon sonrasında ortaya çıkan yeni siyasi ve hukuki dinamiklerini incelemeyi amaçlayan bu çalışma, yakın zamanda haklı savaş doktrininin üçüncü bileşeni olarak ortaya çıkan jus post bellum (savaş sonrası adalet) ilkeleri ışığında bu dinamikleri değerlendirmektedir. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden doküman incelemesine dayanan çalışma, savaş sonrası dönemin etik, hukuki ve kurumsal boyutlarını ele almakta, savaş sonrası adalet konseptinin Karabağ anlaşmazlığı bağlamında uygulanabilirliğini araştırmaktadır. Bu maksatla hesap sorma, uzlaşma, yeniden inşa, iade etme, onarma ve orantılılık ilkeleri somut uygulamalarla ele alınmış; savaş suçlarının soruşturulması, güven artırıcı önlemler, mayın temizliği, altyapı projeleri, yerinden edilenlerin geri dönüşü, kültürel mirasın restorasyonu ve sınır belirleme süreçleri bu ilkeler doğrultusunda analiz edilmiştir. Ermenistan'ın anayasal ve eğitim reformları ile iki ülke arasındaki karşılıklı jestler, bölgesel barış ve güvenliğe katkı sağlayan yapısal dönüşümler olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Çalışma, savaş sonrası adaletin, silahlı çatışmaların sona ermesinin yanı sıra yasal, etik ve kurumsal dönüşüm yoluyla da sağlanabileceğini savunmaktadır. Çatışma bölgelerinde elde edilen barışın kalıcı olması ancak ve ancak bütün tarafların talepleri dikkate alınarak adalete uygun biçimde yazılan bir barış antlaşması ile mümkün olacaktır. Aksi takdirde şimdi sağlanabilmiş olan ateşkes daha sonra tekrar silahlı çatışmaya dönecektir. Bu çalışma, Karabağ'da kalıcı barışın sağlanmasının, yalnızca silahlı çatışmanın sona ermesiyle değil, jus post bellum ilkelerinin uygulanmasıyla mümkün olabileceğini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası hukuk, jus post bellum (savaş sonrası adalet), bölgesel güvenlik, Karabağ sorunu.

INTRODUCTION

The armed clashes that began in 1991 between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region remained largely frozen for a long period, except for sporadic border violations. The Second Karabakh War began on 27 September 2020 and came to an end shortly after Shusha came under Azerbaijani control. This outcome was formalized through a Russia-brokered ceasefire agreement signed on 9 November 2020, followed by a trilateral statement issued on 10 November 2020 by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia.

According to the agreement reached, Armenia undertook to withdraw its forces from the districts of Kalbajar, Aghdam, and Lachin, and to allow the opening of a transportation route connecting Azerbaijan's western regions with Nakhchivan (the Zangezur Corridor or Nakhchivan Corridor)¹. Azerbaijan, in turn, agreed to place the regions of Khankendi, Askeran, Khojaly, Khojavend, and Aghdere, as well as the Lachin Corridor, under the temporary control of a Russian peacekeeping force for a period of five years, and to allow Armenians living in Karabakh to travel to and from Armenia via this corridor (Sadıgov, 2020). Internally displaced persons and refugees were to be enabled to return to Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The parties also agreed to exchange prisoners of war and to keep records regarding hostages, other detainees, and missing persons (TRT Haber, 2020).

Within the framework of *jus post bellum*, ceasefire agreements are not merely instruments to end active hostilities but form part of a broader normative process aimed at structuring the transition from conflict to peace. From this perspective, while ceasefires may create the initial conditions for stability, the realization of a sustainable and meaningful peace ultimately depends on the development of a comprehensive and carefully negotiated peace settlement that addresses legal, institutional, and ethical dimensions of the post-conflict order (İsmayılov, 2023).

1 Nakhchivan, whose population consisted predominantly of Azerbaijanis, remained within the borders of Azerbaijan, which had declared its independence following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Subsequently, the Soviet authorities transferred the Zangezur region—the land corridor between mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan—to Armenia. As a result, Nakhchivan's overland connection with the rest of Azerbaijan was severed. Today, the absence of a land link between Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan's western provinces is widely regarded as the greatest obstacle to the region's development (Tarhan, 2024).

Following the end of the Second Karabakh War, efforts shifted toward transforming the ceasefire into a stable and sustainable regional peace framework. As part of this process, Azerbaijan and Türkiye proposed the “3+3” cooperation format, bringing together the South Caucasus states and their regional neighbors as a platform for dialogue and normalization. In parallel, Russia, which had played a central mediating role in securing the ceasefire, facilitated further diplomatic engagement by inviting the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia to direct negotiations. By the end of 2021, Western actors had also become more actively involved in the process through concrete diplomatic initiatives. For instance, the Council of the European Union facilitated high-level meetings between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Brussels, while the United States hosted bilateral talks and supported dialogue through diplomatic channels. In addition, France, both independently and within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group, called for confidence-building measures and the resumption of structured negotiations. However, in line with its “near abroad doctrine”² in foreign policy, Russia acted swiftly to prevent other actors from gaining influence in the region and to position itself as the architect of lasting peace, as well as the guarantor of the ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia (Sadık, 2023, p. 17). Over time, however, Russia’s attention was diverted due to the war in Ukraine, leading it to lose initiative in resolving the issue in favor of the United States.

Ultimately, on 8 August 2025, Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a joint declaration mediated by the United States, committing to ending their conflict, establishing trade and diplomatic relations, and respecting each other’s territorial integrity.

The concept of *jus post bellum* (post-war justice), which is considered helpful for understanding the process leading from the end of armed clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia toward lasting peace following the Karabakh conflict, constitutes an important component of just war theory, which addresses issues of war and ethics. Within this framework, *jus post bellum* discusses how a lasting and just peace can be established in the post-war period. Rather than

2 According to the “Near Abroad Doctrine,” Russia seeks to ensure that former Soviet states remain politically, militarily, and economically dependent on Moscow, as they were in the past, often invoking the presence of Russian minorities living in these countries as a justification. Particularly since the early 2000s, Russia—benefiting from its energy wealth under Putin’s leadership—has pursued a more assertive foreign policy and expanded its influence in regions it considers part of its near abroad, including the Caucasus, the Central Asian republics, and Eastern Europe. The color revolutions that took place in Georgia and Ukraine after 2003, Kosovo’s declaration of independence, and Georgia’s and Ukraine’s strengthening relations with the West prompted Russia to take action (TUIÇ Dictionary, 2024).

being limited to a peace treaty that merely ends armed conflict and specifies post-war conditions in detail, this approach aims to construct a fair and healthy social order after war. As a relatively new concept, *jus post bellum* cannot be fully understood without reference to its sister concepts—*jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*—and the just war tradition upon which all three rest (Özdemir, 2024, p. 174). Therefore, these better-known concepts must first be addressed.

The Karabakh issue is a long-standing, multilayered conflict with broad socio-political implications. Although recent military developments have altered the de facto situation, the principles of *jus post bellum*, which are gaining increasing importance in international law, must be considered for lasting peace. This concept does not question how a war should end, but rather how it should be transformed into a just peace order.

This article evaluates the steps taken by the parties to bring lasting peace to the region in the post-ceasefire period that followed the agreement ending the armed clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Karabakh conflict, within the framework of *jus post bellum* (post-war justice), described as a missing component of the just war tradition (Özdemir, 2024).

The main research question of the article is as follows: To what extent is it possible to establish a lasting and just peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia after the Second Karabakh War within the framework of *jus post bellum* principles, and to what extent are the steps taken by the parties compatible with these principles?

Although the hot phases of the conflict in Karabakh have ended, the establishment of lasting peace is possible not merely through “the end of war,” but through the realization of post-war justice. In this study, the *jus post bellum* concept will be applied to the Karabakh conflict through the principles of retribution, reconciliation, rebuilding, restitution, reparations, and proportionality. Through these six principles, the applicability of the *jus post bellum* framework will be tested using the Karabakh case.

The study aims to contribute to the literature in a normative-analytical manner by addressing the Karabakh peace process not only from a geopolitical or military perspective, but also through legal, ethical, and societal dimensions.

1. *Jus Post Bellum* in Just War Theory

Just War Theory (Walzer, 2017) acknowledges that while war is horrific, it can be less terrible if conducted justly, and it is not always the worst option. It is a military ethics doctrine developed by military leaders, theologians, moral philosophers, and policymakers, aiming to morally justify war through a set of criteria, all of which must be satisfied for a war to be considered just (Kolb, 1997, p. 553). Traditionally, the criteria for a just war are divided into two categories: *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. While *jus ad bellum* determines the conditions under which the use of force may be deemed legitimate, *jus in bello* governs how war should be conducted by minimizing harm during armed conflict regardless of the justice of the war itself. In recent decades, scholars have proposed the inclusion of a third element, *jus post bellum*, which deals with the morality of post-war agreements and reconstruction (Guthrie & Quinlan, 2007, pp. 11–15).

In this context, theorists such as Gary Bass, Louis Iasiello, and Brian Orend (*Morality of War*, 2006) have proposed a third category within just war theory. *Jus post bellum* concerns justice after war, including peace treaties, reconstruction, environmental restoration, prosecutions for war crimes, and war reparations. It was developed to address the reality that some hostile acts may occur outside the traditional battlefield. Accordingly, it encompasses the end of conflict, the fairness of peace agreements, and the prosecution of war crimes (Guthrie & Quinlan, 2007, pp. 11–15).

Jus post bellum is a relatively new academic concept that emphasizes the responsibilities of states and actors involved in conflict to end wars justly and appropriately. This approach aims to establish a lasting and equitable peace after armed conflict while preventing actions or omissions that could sow the seeds of future conflict (Lucas, 2018, p. 31).

In summary, *jus post bellum* can be defined as “the set of codified and soft law rules, best practices, and recommendations—binding or non-binding—governing the transitional period from armed conflict to sustainable peace, perceived as just by the parties involved” (Hilpold, 2015, p. 292).

For a peace to be sustainable, it is vital that all disputes between previously opposing parties are resolved. Otherwise, a situation labeled as “peace” risks triggering new conflict. A peace agreement that does not address the underlying causes of war is effectively no more than a ceasefire. A ceasefire,

however long it lasts, does not end a war; it merely suspends it temporarily (Lesaffer, 2010, p. 227).

This is where the importance of *jus post bellum* lies. Its principles are what guide the parties to armed conflict toward a just and lasting peace—not only in the affected region but for the world as a whole—after hostilities have ended.

2. The Azerbaijan–Armenia Peace Process Through the Principles of *Jus Post Bellum*

Unlike the first two elements of the just war tradition, *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, *jus post bellum* is a relatively recent concept. Consequently, it is less developed compared to the others and does not yet have established criteria for evaluating the challenges it addresses (DiMeglio, 2005, p. 118).

The majority of research on *jus post bellum* either aims to adapt the well-established principles of the just war tradition to post-war issues or seeks to identify certain *jus post bellum* principles based on approaches considered best practices in the aftermath of conflict. However, the principles proposed in the literature have largely been articulated at a high level of abstraction within conceptual discussions of *jus post bellum* and have rarely been subjected to systematic analysis. For example, core ideas such as proportionality in post-conflict settlements, accountability for past violations, and the restoration of governance institutions are often outlined as guiding norms, yet their practical application, prioritization, and interaction in specific post-conflict contexts remain insufficiently examined. Moreover, each author often proposes new principles without sufficiently engaging with previous research (Rojas-Orozco, 2021, p. 32).

Although numerous studies on *jus post bellum* exist in the international literature, there remains no full consensus regarding its definition, scope, or principles. To address this, in 2013 the American Society of International Law convened a group of scholars under the editorship of Larry May and Elizabeth Edenberg to examine *jus post bellum* and transitional justice. As a result of this initiative, six principles of *jus post bellum* were identified: retribution, reconciliation, rebuilding, restitution, reparations, and proportionality (Edenberg & May, 2013, p. 3).

2.1. Retribution

Retribution, which constitutes a moral response to wrongdoing, must be distinguished from revenge, which is an immoral reaction. The difference lies not in anger arising from having been wronged, but in the moral judgment that the offender deserves punishment. By committing a crime, the offender disrupts moral equilibrium, implicitly devalues the victim, or attributes excessive value to themselves. The principle of retribution restores moral truth by defeating the wrongdoer and invalidates claims that injustice has diminished the worth of the victim (Luban, 2011, pp. 319–322).

This principle entails the investigation of serious violations committed during war and the prosecution of those responsible through appropriate legal mechanisms. In the context of the Karabakh conflict, the following measures may be implemented:

- Impartial investigation of violations against civilians by both sides, including forced displacement, detention, torture, and unlawful attacks.
- Strengthening national judicial mechanisms or involving international monitoring bodies due to concerns about impartiality.
- Ensuring that the retribution process is conducted on the basis of individual criminal responsibility rather than collective blame or ethnic punishment.

Past injustices—whether violations of *jus ad bellum* or *jus in bello*—must be addressed. Failure to do so sends a strong signal of disregard for victims and the rule of law, thereby raising legitimate doubts about future peace and security (Murphy & Radzik, 2013, p. 324). Therefore, post-war criminal tribunals constitute an integral part of the international institutional system aimed at upholding the rule of law, as exemplified by institutions such as the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which have played key roles in prosecuting serious violations of international law and promoting accountability in post-conflict settings.

With respect to violations of international humanitarian law committed during the Karabakh War, “the states of Azerbaijan and Armenia must fulfill their obligations under international law and their domestic legal systems by prosecuting the individuals concerned. Establishing concrete findings

regarding these violations and crimes, collecting evidence, prosecuting suspected perpetrators, distinguishing actual offenders, ensuring lasting peace in the subsequent process, and meeting the justice expectations of victims are of critical importance” (TİHEK, 2021, p. 69).

For example, Amnesty International analyzed and verified 22 videos documenting extrajudicial executions, ill-treatment of prisoners of war and detainees, and desecration of enemy soldiers’ bodies, and subsequently called on Azerbaijani and Armenian authorities to immediately launch independent and impartial investigations, identify those responsible, and bring them to justice in relation to the recent armed clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh (Amnesty International, 2020). Following this, Azerbaijan promptly initiated investigations into war crimes committed by its soldiers after the ceasefire and arrested four soldiers on 14 December 2020 (Al Jazeera, 2020).

Granting amnesty or allowing impunity for perpetrators is a common practice in post-conflict societies, as the inclusion of amnesty provisions in peace agreements is often implicitly assumed within the concept of peace itself (Kant, 1887, p. 222). Amnesty constitutes an intentional and affirmative act, whereas impunity refers to a negative exemption that shields individuals from punishment, harm, or loss (Bassiouni, 1996, p. 19). Amnesty often emerges as a commitment by ruling parties not to investigate or punish past legal violations, and in some cases is codified in formal legislation. While accountability may be deemed necessary in cases of serious human rights violations, leaders negotiating peace agreements may choose to abandon traditional justice mechanisms to bring violence to an end. Amnesty laws may cover former heads of state, government officials, military personnel, or individuals directly involved in armed conflicts (Binningsbø et al., 2012, p. 735).

As many commentators have noted (Pensky, 2013; Freeman, 2011; O’Brien, 2005; Mallinder, 2008), post-Nuremberg international treaty law contains only a single reference to amnesty measures. Article 6(5) of Additional Protocol II (1977) to the 1949 Geneva Conventions does not prohibit amnesty but rather encourages it as a component of *jus post bellum*: “Upon the cessation of hostilities, the authorities in power shall endeavor to grant the broadest possible amnesty to persons who have participated in the armed conflict or those deprived of their liberty for reasons related to the armed conflict” (Batur Yamaner et al., 2008, p. 266).

While amnesty has important benefits for achieving social peace, it also carries negative consequences. First, it allows perpetrators to evade accountability. Second, victims and survivors may be denied access to legal remedies, leading to secondary victimization. Both individual and broader amnesty programs risk indirectly undermining the rule of law by demonstrating the flexibility of legal institutions for political ends (Pensky, 2013, p. 167). Nonetheless, this risk may be deemed acceptable to facilitate the reintegration of combatants and the establishment of peace between societies.

Indeed, during the armed clashes in September 2023, Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh reportedly requested security guarantees from Baku before laying down their arms. Azerbaijani Presidential Advisor Hikmet Hajiyev stated that Azerbaijan would grant amnesty to Armenian fighters in Karabakh who disarm, potentially covering former soldiers and individuals who had previously participated in fighting, and emphasized that the rights of Karabakh Armenians would be respected as part of their integration into Azerbaijan (Euronews, 2023).

One of the most significant humanitarian issues in establishing trust and peace between the parties in the Karabakh dispute is Armenia's failure to provide necessary information regarding the 3,890 Azerbaijanis missing since the First Karabakh War (Veliyev, 2022).

In this context, by a decree of Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev dated 13 January 1993, the State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Prisoners of War, Hostages, and Missing Persons was established to take measures for the social rehabilitation and health recovery of those freed from captivity; to enhance efforts to locate citizens; to cooperate with international organizations; and to disseminate legal and historical documents reflecting Armenia's genocide and ethnic cleansing policies against Azerbaijanis, as well as materials related to prisoners, hostages, and missing persons, to the international community (E-qanun, 2024).

The Commission declared its readiness to cooperate with Armenia, noting that while 3,890 Azerbaijani citizens were recorded as missing during the First Karabakh War, only 25 identities had been established, and that joint efforts could be undertaken to locate the missing (Kırım Haber Ajansı, 2024). Armenian authorities likewise expressed readiness to cooperate in determining the fate of those missing during military operations, a stance welcomed by Azerbaijan, which emphasized the importance of consolidating efforts in this regard (Rehimov, 2024a).

In our view, resolving this issue constitutes one of the most critical turning points on the path to lasting peace. Wars result in the disappearance of numerous military personnel and civilians, causing pain and uncertainty for their families. Individuals have the right to know what happened to their missing loved ones. Governments, armed forces, and armed groups bear the obligation to provide information on the fate of missing persons and to help reunite families (ICRC, 2024). Azerbaijan has attached great importance to identifying missing persons from the outset and expects the same sensitivity from Armenia.

2.2. Reconciliation

Although this principle involves confronting the past, it is future-oriented insofar as it views former enemies as stakeholders in a shared future. At the same time, it implies mutual efforts by both parties to overcome past conflicts and to reshape their relations on the basis of partnership (Patterson, 2012, p. 226).

Reconciliation does not merely mean bringing parties together. It may involve a temporary agreement in which parties decide to refrain from hostile actions against one another, or it may enable them to coexist side by side in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation (May, 2012a, p. 75).

Societal reconciliation aims at rebuilding trust between communities. In the context of the Karabakh conflict, the following measures may be undertaken:

- Establishing cultural, academic, and civil dialogue mechanisms between Azerbaijani and Armenian societies.
- Implementing reforms in law, media, and education to reduce hostile and demonizing rhetoric between the parties.
- Addressing past traumas transparently, where necessary, through mechanisms such as a “Joint History Commission.”
- Prioritizing mutual trust-building during the return processes of forcibly displaced populations.

In the Karabakh conflict, civil society has also been incorporated into the peace process by both states. In this context, civil society representatives

from Baku and Yerevan have recently conducted reciprocal visits. It has been reported that such activities will continue in order to establish and sustain trust at the societal level (Ermeni Haber, 2025).

Following the Khojaly Massacre in 1992, many families were forced to migrate to different regions of Azerbaijan. After Azerbaijan's military success in Karabakh, reconstruction efforts were launched in Khojaly, and 634 families returned from the cities to which they had been displaced and resettled in their hometowns (Yıldız & Çelik, 2025).

Although emotional narratives such as “from Karabakh without Azerbaijanis to Karabakh without Armenians” (Balyan, 2023) emerged following the migration of Armenians from Karabakh after the military advance, the most realistic response came from Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan:

“I consider the bilateral discussion of the return of persons who have become refugees in Armenia and Azerbaijan since the beginning of the conflict to be a dangerous factor that undermines the peace established between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Attempts to discuss these issues bilaterally will not benefit the refugees themselves; on the contrary, they will create a new source of tension between states. Our understanding regarding the future of our citizens displaced from Karabakh is as follows: they should settle in the Republic of Armenia with the support of us and the international community.” (Agos, 2025).

Peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot be conceived or pursued independently of Türkiye. Moreover, Armenia's signing of a peace treaty with Azerbaijan would simultaneously facilitate the normalization of its relations with Türkiye. Efforts toward a peace treaty and the normalization of relations with neighbors necessitate certain adjustments in Armenia's domestic legal framework. Indeed, Nikol Pashinyan has emphasized the need to reassess Armenia's constitution and its declaration of independence, arguing that a lasting peace would be unattainable as long as state policy continues to prioritize the reunification of Karabakh with Armenia, a stance he suggests would risk perpetuating future conflict. He further maintains that revising the declaration would strengthen Armenia in the long term (Karacakaya, 2024).

Normalization debates in Armenia are not limited to constitutional change. Officials have recognized the need to reconsider the lyrics of the national anthem, which include references to killing and death, as well as the state coat

of arms featuring Mount Ararat. In addition, the Armenian administration has proposed changing the title of history textbooks in the education curriculum from “History of Armenians” to “History of Armenia.” While the government explains this shift as an effort to focus on the present rather than remain fixated on the past, opposition groups perceive it as an attempt to sever ties with history and to erase the past, including the so-called “genocide.” A significant development in Turkish–Armenian relations arose from two related initiatives. First, Nikol Pashinyan called for the disclosure of the identities of the 1.5 million Armenians reportedly killed during the events of 1915. Second, Andranik Kocharyan, a leading member of the ruling party, urged that each victim be individually identified and the numbers verified (Karacakaya, 2024).

Most recently, Nikol Pashinyan proposed the joint preparation of a roadmap with Azerbaijan. At the same time, he suggested closing discussions on the return of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians and addressing the “Western Azerbaijan” narrative present in Azerbaijani public discourse, arguing that resolving these issues from a long-term strategic perspective would completely eliminate the risk of a new conflict (Armenpress, 2025).

The Pashinyan administration’s firm stance and determination to continue peace-oriented initiatives—despite pressure from extreme Armenian nationalists—are of great importance for achieving peace in the South Caucasus. At this stage, support from the Azerbaijani leadership is also necessary. Indeed, the mutual confidence-building measures and steps taken by the parties toward peace have already reached a certain threshold.

On 8 August 2025, Aliyev and Pashinyan signed a joint declaration in Washington—described as a “roadmap for peace”—hosted by U.S. President Donald Trump. Agreeing on “the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for territorial acquisition,” the two leaders declared to the world that they “categorically reject and exclude any acts of revenge now and in the future,” thereby demonstrating significant progress within the framework of the reconciliation principle (Anadolu Agency, 2025).

Within the ongoing peace process, the two countries continue efforts to normalize relations, engage in trade, and open their long-closed borders in order to establish regional connectivity. One of the core elements of the peace agreement is the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), a transit corridor project that will connect mainland Azerbaijan

with Nakhchivan via Armenian territory (Agos, 2025). Through this project, Azerbaijan will gain direct overland access to Nakhchivan, while Armenia will receive international investment and sovereignty guarantees. Although the route will again pass through Zangezur, this agreement differs significantly from the corridor model envisaged in the Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020.

Whereas the earlier Zangezur Corridor proposal largely envisioned a legal status outside Armenian control, TRIPP explicitly emphasizes Armenian sovereignty. While security along the Zangezur Corridor was to be provided by Russian FSB border units, under TRIPP this responsibility will rest with Armenian security forces. Moreover, whereas the previous agreement envisaged operation of the corridor by Azerbaijan/Türkiye and Russia, TRIPP will be operated by a U.S.-led consortium (Euronews, 2025).

In announcing that Azerbaijan had lifted all existing restrictions on cargo transportation to Armenia, President Aliyev stated, “I believe this is a clear indication that peace now exists not only on paper but also in practice.” In response, Armenian officials declared: “This step is important in terms of opening regional transit links, strengthening mutual trust, and institutionalizing peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan; it is also consistent with the agreements reached in Washington” (Agos, 2025).

Finally, during a visit to a delimited section of the Azerbaijan–Armenia border, Pashinyan emphasized that legitimacy is also a crucial condition for ensuring security, announcing that Armenian and Azerbaijani border units deployed in the area had agreed to carry out their duties without loaded magazines and without helmets or body armor (Ermeni Haber, 2025).

2.3. Rebuilding

It is widely accepted that individuals who engage in positive actions bear a higher level of responsibility than those who remain passive. This principle applies not only to individuals but equally to states. For instance, in situations where a massacre is ongoing, unilateral military intervention may not always represent the ideal response; nevertheless, it often emerges as the only feasible option under existing conditions. Following such interventions, the intervening state is held responsible not only for the occupation and liberation processes but also for the political and social reconstruction of the occupied country (Walzer, 2012, pp. 40–41). Türkiye’s construction of schools, marketplaces,

mosques, clinics, and hospitals in areas of Syria cleared of terrorism through Operations Euphrates Shield, Olive Branch, and Peace Spring—aimed at providing education, healthcare, and religious services—can be cited as an illustrative example (Özdemir, 2024, pp. 144–145).

The principle of reconstruction encompasses the repair of the physical and institutional destruction caused by war. In this regard, the following considerations are particularly relevant in Karabakh:

- Re-establishing infrastructure (roads, energy, water, communication), as well as healthcare and educational institutions.
- Enhancing international cooperation for mine and explosive ordnance clearance.
- Strengthening local administrations and restructuring security, judicial, and public service institutions in an impartial manner.

As the Second Karabakh War was fought primarily on Azerbaijani territory, the destruction it caused naturally occurred there. Both the 28-year Armenian occupation and the subsequent 44-day war devastated the entire region—particularly Fuzuli, Jabrayil, and Aghdam—rendering these cities uninhabitable. Consequently, following its historic victory, the Azerbaijani state launched comprehensive reconstruction and development efforts in the liberated territories.

The post-war reconstruction program initiated by the Azerbaijani government in the areas previously de facto controlled by the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and transferred to Azerbaijan under the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Ceasefire Agreement is referred to as the Great Return (*Böyük Qayıdış*). Within this framework, numerous projects have been implemented to facilitate the return of Azerbaijani citizens who were displaced from Karabakh when the conflict first erupted and to promote regional development. The Azerbaijani authorities initially prioritized the clearance of landmines laid during the occupation and simultaneously launched the region's first infrastructure projects (Rehimov, 2021).

As part of these efforts, two new roads—known as the Victory Road—were constructed to Shusha, which was designated the country's "cultural capital," followed by the commencement of construction on the international airports of Fuzuli, Zangilan, and Lachin. In addition, the smart city and smart village

concepts have been implemented across the region. For example, the Baku administration reported that over the past three years, construction projects have transformed more than 110 hectares in the cities of Aghdam and Zangilan. These developments include 200 fully insulated ecological housing units, four two-story commercial and non-residential buildings, a school accommodating 360 students, and a kindergarten for 60 children, all built using innovative construction materials (Altan, 2024).

The reconstruction process in Karabakh has not been limited to compensating for existing damage; it has also encompassed the region's long-term development dynamics in areas such as agriculture, education, healthcare, employment, and energy. Socially, necessary steps have been taken to ensure the integration and sustainable livelihoods of the returning population. As in all liberated territories, the Azerbaijani government has initiated rapid repair and construction works in Khankendi as well, where recreation facilities and public buildings are currently being built. Although the city is not yet inhabited by the general population and currently hosts only workers and public officials involved in reconstruction, the government is also working to transform Khankendi into a university city. To this end, by a decree of President Aliyev, a university named Karabakh University has been established in the city. The university, whose construction and renovation are ongoing, is expected to welcome its first students in the upcoming academic year (Rehimov, 2024c).

To date, within the scope of the Great Return program, formerly displaced persons have been resettled in the villages of Lachin, Fuzuli, Aghali, Zabukh, and Talish. By 2026, it is planned that approximately 100,000 formerly displaced persons will return to their homes (Sputnik Türkiye, 2023).

The post-Second World War reconstructions of Germany and Japan are regarded as some of the most impressive examples of post-war rehabilitation in modern history. In this context, the education systems of Germany and Japan were comprehensively revised by the United States, as they were deemed to have played a significant role in propaganda and were characterized by curricula saturated with racism, extreme nationalism, and distorted perceptions of the outside world (Özdemir, 2024, pp. 224–225). A similar step is currently being taken by the Armenian government. To this end, a proposal to replace the term “Armenian History” with “History of Armenia,” emphasizing the modern Armenian state in school history curricula, was submitted by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports, Zhanna Andreasyan, and subsequently approved by the cabinet (TRT Haber, 2024).

2.4. Restitution and Reparations

Ensuring corrective justice—the principle that wrongs should be rectified by restoring victims and holding perpetrators accountable—in post-war periods is often more complex than it may seem. In this context, two fundamental principles deserve particular emphasis: first, providing full compensation to those who have suffered harm; and second, ensuring that individuals who committed wrongful acts do not gain any benefit from their actions (May, 2012a, p. 192). These principles are grounded in multiple sources of law, including the International Law Commission Articles on State Responsibility, which outline obligations of states for internationally wrongful acts, and international human rights law, as reflected in the case law of bodies such as the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Together, these frameworks establish both the legal and moral basis for ensuring that victims are compensated and that perpetrators do not benefit from their wrongful acts.

Reparations refer to the provision of material or moral support aimed at remedying the harm suffered by victims. In this regard, the following measures may be considered in Karabakh:

- Establishing damage assessment commissions for both Azerbaijani and Armenian civilians.
- Creating funds to compensate for material losses, including destroyed homes, agricultural land, and places of employment.
- Developing psychosocial support programs and rehabilitation mechanisms at the community level for individuals who have experienced the psychological trauma of war.

While restitution may allow for the restoration of certain conditions to the *status quo ante*, achieving this outcome is far more difficult within the context of reparations. Moreover, unlike restitution, the reparations approach allows claims for emotional harm and other non-material losses (May, 2012a, pp. 202–205).

Restitution, understood as returning something to its pre-damage or pre-loss condition, embodies the moral idea of correcting a wrong. Correction entails restoring a disrupted balance and is considered one of the most fundamental

moral means of addressing injustice (May, 2012a, pp. 183–184). In the context of war, restitution refers to “returning property taken during the conflict, or its equivalent” (May, 2012b, p. 38).

The principle of restitution aims to restore property, rights, or status as closely as possible to their pre-war condition. In this context, the following considerations are particularly relevant in Karabakh:

- Restoring the property rights of individuals who were displaced or forcibly relocated, or providing fair compensation.
- Offering reasonable alternatives—such as financial compensation, new housing, or economic assistance—where return is not possible.
- Restoring and returning to communities religious, cultural, and historical sites destroyed during the war in a manner faithful to their original form.

For example, numerous historical and cultural structures—including the Shusha Fortress walls, Khan’s Daughter Spring, the Lower and Upper Govhar Agha Mosques, Saatli Mosque, the Ghazanchetsots (Kazanchi) Cathedral, as well as the mausoleum of the renowned Azerbaijani poet, statesman, and diplomat Molla Panah Vagif—were severely damaged or destroyed during the period of Armenian occupation. Azerbaijan has implemented projects aimed at restoring these historical and architectural monuments as a priority (Aydın24Haber, 2021).

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of restitution concerns the return of occupied territory. Territory acquired through bloodshed is rarely returned to its former owner. For instance, Israel did not return the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War, and unilaterally annexed the territory in 1981. This action was explicitly addressed by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 497, which declared the annexation null and void under international law and reaffirmed Syria’s sovereignty over the area. Similarly, in the Russia–Ukraine war, the Donbas region—comprising the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic, which declared independence from Ukraine with Russian support—was officially annexed by the Russian Federation on 30 September 2022, as announced by Russian President Vladimir Putin (BBC News Turkish, 2022).

During the First Karabakh War, Armenia occupied Karabakh and surrounding districts, as well as seven villages in the Gazakh district and one village in

Nakhchivan. Following the Second Karabakh War, while Karabakh and its surrounding districts were liberated, eight villages—four of which were exclaves—remained under Armenian control. In a decision that was extremely difficult from its own perspective, the Armenian government agreed to return four border villages to Azerbaijan in accordance with the agreement reached between the two countries. The return of the villages of Baghanis Ayrim, Ashagi Eskipara, Heyrimli, and Gizilhajili constituted one of the most significant and effective steps toward normalizing Baku–Yerevan relations. As a result, a 12.7-kilometer section of the border between the two countries was redefined (T24, 2024).

The parties also agreed to implement the border delimitation process on the basis of the 1991 Almaty Declaration and to continue delimitation across all remaining sections of the border, including enclaves and exclaves. Following the return of the four non-exclave villages, the status of the four exclave villages still under Armenian control—Yukhari Eskipara, Sofulu, Barkhudarly, and Karki—will be clarified through negotiations conducted as part of the ongoing border delimitation process (Rehimov, 2024b).

Finally, it is evident that Azerbaijan retains the right to seek both material and financial war reparations for all damages incurred within the framework of the Karabakh conflict (Sadıgzade, 2024, p. 322).

2.5. Proportionality

The principle of proportionality emphasizes that post-war arrangements should be just and measured rather than punitive. In this context, the following considerations must be considered:

- Peace agreements should not include asymmetric provisions aimed at fully punishing one party.
- Security-related arrangements must be implemented without infringing upon the rights of civilians.
- Post-war administrative arrangements should avoid creating ethnic dominance.
- Fairness and moderation should guide decisions regarding territory, status, and population arrangements.

Walzer defines proportionality as “a matter of fitting means to ends” (2017, pp. 176–177). When examined within the framework of *jus post bellum*, the principle of proportionality reveals that the ultimate objective is a just and sustainable peace. Various means may be employed to achieve this objective; however, only one of these means can be considered appropriate. The critical point that must be emphasized here is that a just and sustainable peace does not possess infinite value. If the objective were regarded as infinitely valuable, any means—even those costing the lives of many people—could be justified to achieve it, which would result in a logically unacceptable situation (May, 2012a, p. 221).

Within the *jus post bellum* framework, the principle of proportionality underscores that efforts to establish a just and sustainable peace after war should not cause greater harm than benefit to the affected communities. In this respect, *jus post bellum* proportionality is grounded in the same foundation as proportionality in *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. However, *jus post bellum* proportionality goes beyond the scope of the other two principles by highlighting the necessity of taking responsibility for the full spectrum of a war’s consequences and addressing them within this broader framework (May, 2012a, p. 226).

Initiatives aimed at resolving the Karabakh dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia—and, moreover, at securing lasting peace—such as the delimitation of the two countries’ shared borders and the opening or activation of transportation routes, should be assessed within this context.

According to Article 9 of the Ceasefire Agreement dated 9 November 2020, “All economic and transport connections in the region shall be unblocked. The Republic of Armenia shall guarantee the security of transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in order to organize the unobstructed movement of citizens, vehicles, and cargo in both directions. Transport control shall be carried out by the Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. By agreement of the parties, new transport connections linking the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with the regions of Azerbaijan shall be constructed.”

While Azerbaijan claims that this provision reflects an agreement between the two countries regarding the Zangezur Corridor, Armenia maintains that although it supports the opening of transport routes, the term “Zangezur” is

not mentioned in the article, nor does it envisage a corridor project of the type proposed by Baku (BBC News Turkish, 2023). Fortunately, the declaration signed on 8 August 2025—in which the parties once again emphasized the importance of opening transportation links—helped eliminate these ambiguities. The declaration stated:

“These efforts include ensuring unobstructed connectivity between the main part of Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, as well as mutual benefits for Armenia in terms of international and domestic connectivity. Armenia will cooperate with the United States and mutually designated third parties to define the framework for the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) connectivity project on its territory. We reaffirm our determination to make good-faith efforts to achieve this objective as soon as possible.”

This statement highlights a concrete initiative aimed at fostering regional integration and post-conflict cooperation in the South Caucasus. By emphasizing “unobstructed connectivity” between Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, the agreement seeks to address longstanding logistical and territorial challenges, while also offering Armenia tangible benefits in terms of both domestic and international transport links. The mention of collaboration with the United States and other designated third parties to implement the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) reflects an effort to institutionalize multilateral oversight and ensure that infrastructure projects serve broader goals of economic development and lasting peace. Overall, the passage underscores a strategic approach to post-war reconstruction that links practical infrastructure initiatives with diplomatic engagement and conflict prevention.

Thus, uncertainties surrounding the issue were clarified (Anadolu Agency, 2025).

Transportation routes of this nature—planned to pass through the Zangezur region, which belongs to Armenia and has not been affected by active conflict, and whose security is guaranteed by Armenia—are regarded as a significant gain obtained by Azerbaijan through the Ceasefire Agreement (Yüksel & Yüce, 2022, p. 1058). However, it is Armenia that stands to gain the most from this corridor by normalizing its relations with both Azerbaijan and Türkiye and opening its borders. Therefore, the planned transportation route should not be interpreted as a concession extracted by victorious Azerbaijan from

defeated Armenia. The Zangezur Corridor represents a win-win outcome for all parties involved.

From Türkiye's perspective, the Zangezur Corridor will complete the missing link of the Middle Corridor initiative³—designed since the 2010s to connect Türkiye with the South Caucasus and Central Asia along the East–West axis—by establishing road and railway connections extending through Armenia to Azerbaijan. Viewed from this angle, Türkiye's natural national interest lies in identifying pathways toward achieving lasting peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia as soon as possible (Ongun & Ceylan, 2024).

Moreover, the Middle Corridor is expected to contribute to the diversification of Azerbaijan's national economy and reduce its dependence on oil. The development of Azerbaijan–China relations will also help attract greater Chinese investment to the region and improve the business environment. This, in turn, will integrate the region more firmly into the country's international supply networks and enhance its potential as a transportation hub. Politically, China's growing influence in the region may help balance Russia, expand Azerbaijan's room for maneuver in the political arena, and strengthen its relations with international institutions in which China plays a leading role, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Yüce, 2024).

Considering that countries connected economically—particularly through trade and land and railway networks—are less likely to engage in future wars, it should be emphasized that the prospective Zangezur Corridor constitutes an opportunity for all countries in the region. Of great geopolitical and geoeconomic significance, the Zangezur Corridor is expected to remove long-standing obstacles to regional cooperation and pave the way for new integration initiatives in the South Caucasus (Tarhan, 2024). For these reasons, the planned transportation link is considered to be of substantial importance

3 The Trans-Caspian East–West Middle Corridor, which starts in Türkiye, extends through the Caucasus region, crosses the Caspian Sea, and reaches Central Asia and China via Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, constitutes one of the most important components of the project to revive the historical Silk Road. Beginning in Türkiye, the Middle Corridor stretches via railway and highway connections through Georgia and Azerbaijan to the Caspian Sea, and from there follows routes through Turkmenistan–Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan to China. Within this framework, the ports of Baku/Alat (Azerbaijan), Aktau/Kuryk (Kazakhstan), and Turkmenbashi (Turkmenistan) are utilized for combined transportation across the Caspian Sea.

The Middle Corridor Initiative attracts considerable interest from regional countries, particularly landlocked states. If the Middle Corridor route is used effectively, Central Asian countries will be able to benefit economically from the Europe–China trade flow, which currently amounts to approximately USD 600 billion annually. In particular, the establishment of logistics centers and free trade zones at ports in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan will contribute to the development and deepening of Trans-Caspian cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022).

from the perspective of post-war justice and is expected to make a major contribution to regional peace.

CONCLUSION

The Second Karabakh War ended in Azerbaijan's victory. This outcome placed a strong punctuation mark—rather than a full stop—on the Karabakh issue. Although this military success strengthened Azerbaijan's position, achieving a permanent peace between the two sides remains difficult. While a ceasefire has been established, lasting peace has yet to be secured. The resolution of a dispute rooted in decades of conflict cannot be achieved in a short period of time. Moreover, given the roles played by regional states and global powers in the formation and perpetuation of the conflict, it is widely acknowledged that the anticipated peace is too significant to be left solely to these two countries.

According to just war theory, war—despite its horrific consequences—is not always the worst option, and under certain conditions, crises can be transformed into opportunities. When viewed from this perspective, the Karabakh conflict presents the possibility of achieving lasting peace for both parties. Most importantly, Azerbaijan's current counterpart in Armenia is the Pashinyan administration, which favors reconciliation. For this reason, the prompt signing of a peace treaty is in Azerbaijan's interest. At the same time, the Pashinyan government—facing strong domestic opposition—seeks to normalize relations with both Azerbaijan and Türkiye by concluding a peace agreement. In short, peace is a desired outcome for both sides, although differing views persist regarding its form and implementation. At this juncture, *jus post bellum* principles should serve as a guiding framework for the parties.

The steps taken by Azerbaijan and Armenia toward building a just and sustainable peace in Karabakh are largely compatible with *jus post bellum* principles, though certain shortcomings remain.

- The principle of accountability ensures justice; however, progress in this area within the Karabakh context has been limited, and the risk of impunity persists.
- The principle of reconciliation embeds peace at the societal level; in this regard, constitutional, curricular, and discursive reforms in Armenia are particularly encouraging.

- The principle of rebuilding restores normal living conditions; efforts in this direction have been comprehensive and systematically pursued by Azerbaijan.
- The principles of restitution and reparations repair the disrupted order caused by war and compensate for victimization; in this context, border demarcation and the return of villages have made tangible contributions to peace.
- The principle of proportionality delineates the ethical boundaries of the process; compliance with this principle is of critical importance for the sustainability of peace.

When these principles converge, a just peace architecture emerges—one that transcends armed conflict and seeks to enable societies to coexist peacefully. Recognizing that war belongs to the past and must not be revisited, the parties must ensure accountability for this period, adopt a conciliatory approach, rebuild societies and institutions damaged by war, implement restitution and reparations, and exercise proportionality in pursuit of the ultimate objective of peace.

Following the Second Karabakh War, a ceasefire agreement was signed, and the parties have fulfilled most of its provisions. As the parties have agreed on connecting mainland Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan through the Trump Route, the only remaining step is for Armenia to amend its constitution as a concrete demonstration of its renunciation of territorial claims against Azerbaijan. In other words, “what remains for peace is for the Armenian government to formally declare its recognition of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity by making the necessary constitutional amendments and to sign the peace treaty” (Valiyev, 2025).

Despite having gained independence, Armenia has struggled to achieve true autonomy, remaining constrained between Russia, the West, and the Armenian diaspora, and growing weary of using anti-Turkish sentiment as a unifying glue that no longer sustains the country. Armenia’s future is now tied to peace negotiations with Azerbaijan and the normalization of relations with Türkiye (Karaca, 2024). To date, Armenia has demonstrated a constructive stance in the peace process. Its withdrawal from previously occupied territories, the return of certain villages, initiatives to amend its constitution and educational curricula, and efforts toward normalization with Türkiye all serve as examples of this approach.

Azerbaijan, having emerged victorious with the support of Türkiye, Russia, Israel, and Pakistan, has effectively leveraged its advantageous position in peace negotiations. At the same time, it has facilitated the return of displaced families through newly constructed housing, continued extensive infrastructure development—particularly in transportation—and worked to ensure the region’s integration with the rest of the country. Transportation projects such as TRIPP/Zangezur are not zero-sum; they generate mutual gains. In the long term, these initiatives will contribute both to Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity and to regional peace and security.

The emergence of a truly independent Armenia depends on making peace with Azerbaijan and establishing healthy relations with Türkiye. For Azerbaijan, having secured territorial integrity and strengthened its national identity, the decisive victory over Armenia must be crowned with a peace treaty. From Türkiye’s perspective, establishing regional peace, securing overland connectivity with Azerbaijan, and subsequently opening the Middle Corridor are of paramount importance. Ultimately, a peace treaty drafted solely on the basis of the victor’s demands will not guarantee a just and lasting peace. Durable peace in conflict zones can only be achieved through a peace agreement written in accordance with justice and taking into account the demands of all parties. Otherwise, the ceasefire achieved today risks reverting into renewed armed conflict in the future.

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**RAFFI’S ARTICLE “HOW DOES
ETCHMIADZIN ADMINISTER ITS
DISTANT ECCLESIASTICAL DISTRICTS IN
OTHER COUNTRIES?”: AN ANNOTATED
TRANSLATION AND THE DEBATE ON
INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY***

(RAFFI’NİN ‘EÇMIADZİN DIĞER ÜLKELERDEKİ UZAK RUHANI
BÖLGELERİNİ NASIL YÖNETİYOR?’ MAKALESİ:
AÇIKLAMALI ÇEVİRİ VE KURUMSAL OTORİTE TARTIŞMASI)

Drs. Ahmet Sertaç EROĞLU**

Abstract: *This study presents an annotated Turkish translation of Raffi’s article titled “How Does Etchmiadzin Administer Its Distant Ecclesiastical Districts in Other Countries?”, published in the Mshak newspaper in Tbilisi in 1879. Raffi deliberately excludes the debate over the claim of sole catholicship and doctrinal legitimacy, focusing his criticism on*

* Source of the original text used for the translation: Բաֆֆի, Երկերի ժողովածու, Հատոր Տասնմեկերորդ, “Հրապարակախոսական Եվ Գրական-Քննադատական Հոդվածներ”, Երեվան, Նաիրի, 1991, էջ 193-199:
Raffi, Collected Works, Volume 11, “Public and Literary-Critical Essays,” Yerevan, Nayiri, 1991, pp. 193–199.

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concrete administrative issues in the Parskaston (Atrpatakan) and Isfahan–India ecclesiastical districts, thereby making Etchmiadzin’s loss of authority visible within a document-based framework. The study adopts a translation approach that preserves the coherence of meaning, and through footnotes, Raffi’s discourse is analyzed within the framework of the relationship between religion and nationalism, institutional accountability, and the concept of moral authority. Through the example of the two-year “spiritual leadership vacuum” in Atrpatakan and the case of Bishop Grigoris in India, the study demonstrates that the weakening of spiritual authority led to consequences such as social vulnerability within the Armenian community, susceptibility to missionary influence, institutional corruption, and recourse to external interventions. Thus, this study offers a unique primary source contribution to the literature discussing the connection between the Armenian Church’s crisis of authority in the 19th century and the religious foundation of Armenian nationalism.

Keywords: *Catholicos, Etchmiadzin, Raffi, Isfahan, Calcutta*

Öz: *Bu çalışma, Raffi’nin 1879’da Tiflis’te yayımlanan Mşak gazetesindeki “Eçmiadzin Diğer Ülkelerdeki Uzak Ruhani Bölgelerini Nasıl Yönetiyor?” başlıklı makalesinin açıklamalı Türkçe çevirisini sunmaktadır. Raffi, tek katoliklik iddiası ve doktrinel meşruiyet tartışmalarını bilinçli olarak dışarıda bırakarak eleştirisini Parskaston (Atrpatakan) ile İsfahan–Hindistan ruhani bölgelerindeki somut yönetim sorunlarına odaklamakta ve Eçmiadzin’in otorite kaybını belge temelli bir çerçevede görünür kılmaktadır. Çalışmada anlam bütünlüğünü koruyan bir çeviri yaklaşımı benimsenmiş, dipnotlar aracılığıyla Raffi’nin söylemi din–milliyetçilik ilişkisi, kurumsal hesap verebilirlik ve ahlaki otorite kavramları çerçevesinde çözümlenmiştir. Atrpatakan’daki iki yıllık “ruhani öndersizlik” ve Hindistan’daki Piskopos Grigoris örneği üzerinden, ruhani otoritenin zayıflamasının Ermeni cemaatinde toplumsal savunmasızlık, misyoner etkisine açıklık, kurumsal yozlaşma ve dış müdahalelere başvuru gibi sonuçlar doğurduğu gösterilmektedir. Böylece çalışma, 19. Yüzyılda Ermeni Kilisesi’nin otorite krizi ile Ermeni milliyetçiliğinin dinî zemini arasındaki bağı tartışan literatüre özgün bir birincil kaynak katkısı sunmaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Katolikos, Eçmiadzin, Raffi, İsfahan, Kalküta*

1. Introduction

This article presents an annotated Turkish translation of Raffi's 1879 article titled "How Does Etchmiadzin Administer Its Distant Ecclesiastical Districts in Other Countries?" published in the *Mshak* newspaper. The aim of this study is to use this article to discuss the loss of authority experienced by Etchmiadzin in the 19th century and to demonstrate, within an analytical framework, how this weakening of authority manifested itself at the institutional, regional, social, and individual levels.

The study adopts a translation approach that preserves the text's semantic integrity, while the footnotes analyze Raffi's discourse within the framework of the religion–nationalism relationship, institutional accountability, and the concept of moral authority. Thus, the article aims both to incorporate the primary source into the Turkish literature and to discuss the social and political dimensions of the authority crisis in Etchmiadzin¹.

Raffi's criticism of Etchmiadzin does not remain limited to a mere debate over institutional competence; it evolves into a multi-layered discussion that questions the limits of the ecclesiastical center's capacity to govern, the social consequences arising when this capacity weakens or disappears entirely, and the destructive effects of corrupt representation on national consciousness. Etchmiadzin's neglect or mismanagement not only creates a religious vacuum among Armenians but also indirectly serves as a structural obstacle to national unity and awakening.

Within the context of the historical development and institutional structure of the Armenian Church, Etchmiadzin has been the subject of numerous studies. However, this article—written through concrete examples within the religion–nationalism framework—offers a unique contribution to the literature by critically examining the relationship between religious corruption and national disintegration.

Raffi is regarded as one of the most significant writers in modern Armenian literature, with a large readership. His historical novels, in particular, are considered to have provided the intellectual foundation for the formation and development of Armenian nationalism. Throughout his life, the author was occasionally accused of atheism due to his harsh criticism of the church and clergy, and he even became the target of an assassination attempt because of certain criticisms in his novels.

1 The Holy See of Etchmiadzin, the seat of the Armenian Apostolic Church

The newspaper in which the article was published, *Mshak*, was a periodical that began publication in Tiflis in 1871 and was regarded as the liberal newspaper of the Caucasian Armenians in the last quarter of the 19th century. It played a central role in disseminating the ideas of writers of the period to a wide audience, particularly through themes such as social reform, education, cultural modernization, criticism of existing institutions, and Armenian nationalism.

2. Translated Text

Setting aside the question of whether the jurisdiction of Etchmiadzin should extend over the spiritual authorities of the entire Armenian nation, scattered in every direction, regardless of where or under what circumstances they may be, and again, whether the Supreme Patriarch of Etchmiadzin should be recognized solely as the holder of the throne of Saint Lusavorich and the highest representative of the church, and whether all other Catholicosates should be regarded as rival (anti-throne) and “illegitimate”—an issue that has been raised repeatedly in the past and, unfortunately, continues to be debated today—no matter how important and serious all these matters may be, we still consider it a more prudent stance to remain silent rather than bring these issues to the public’s attention today.

There is, however, one thing we must address: how does Etchmiadzin currently administer the regions located within foreign states that are directly under its jurisdiction? This will illustrate the extent to which Etchmiadzin has lost its significance and how it has become unable to maintain its authority beyond Russian borders.

We are referring to the Armenians of Parskastan (Iran) and India.

Our article was inspired by several letters and official documents recently received by *Mshak*’s editorial board from Isfahan in Parskastan and Kolkata in India, and we deem it necessary to bring certain painful truths to light by basing the content of our article primarily on these documents.²

2 Raffi has emphasized that he deliberately excluded topics such as the claim of sole catholicship and debates over legitimacy from the scope of the article. In doing so, he has shifted the focus of his critique from a doctrinal level to a local administrative level. While acknowledging the importance of these issues, the author adopted a document-based approach to the administrative problems of Etchmiadzin—which could be resolved more quickly—rather than these unresolved matters, thereby strengthening its discursive legitimacy. Additionally, the author adopted a tone that brought the debate over Etchmiadzin’s loss of authority to the forefront and demanded “institutional accountability” in the modern sense.

Outside Russia's borders, only the Armenians of Parskasthan and India have not severed ties with Etchmiadzin, remaining subject to the spiritual authority of the Holy See (the Apostolic See). When considered together, the Armenians of the two aforementioned states form two major dioceses or ecclesiastical regions governed by two separate spiritual leaders sent from Etchmiadzin. The first is the Atrpatakan region, and the second is the Isfahan and India³ region. Let us now examine each of them separately.

The Atrpatakan ecclesiastical region has been completely deprived of a spiritual leader—and the spiritual care of the people has been left unattended—ever since Archbishop Andreas was summoned to Etchmiadzin, which was two years ago. Etchmiadzin seems to have forgotten that Armenians live there, that their needs are great, and that it is therefore necessary to give them more consideration and show greater care in meeting their demands. To concretely demonstrate the importance of a spiritual leader—and especially the harm caused by his absence—we must consider his position within the Islamic world and what it signifies. Here, the spiritual leader is not viewed merely as the religious representative of his community; his authority is not limited to the narrow confines of church affairs. The spiritual leader in Muslim Parskasthan was also recognized by the government as the temporal head of his diocese and had the right to intervene in relations between the Armenian people and the local administration. He is the one who protects the oppressed Armenians from the violence of judges, khans, beys, landowners, and influential figures. And if there were no spiritual leader, the people would be completely defenseless and would suffer greatly. Furthermore, today Protestant and Catholic missionaries are spread throughout Parskasthan; only a spiritual leader could have prevented the missionaries' activities among the Armenians by increasing the number of schools, improving existing ones, and appointing suitable priests/pastors to every location. A spiritual leader soothes the divisions that arise among the people—divisions that often have destructive consequences—and resolves disputes among influential figures.

From all this, it is clear what kind of chaos could result from a large ecclesiastical region like Atrpatakan—which includes approximately ten Armenian cities—remaining without a spiritual leader for two years due to Etchmiadzin's negligence.

3 In addition to India, the Iranian cities of Tehran, Hamedan, Shiraz, and Bushehr, along with their villages, have been incorporated into the province of Isfahan.

We deem it unnecessary to present in detail all the disturbances that have emerged over these two years and are well known to us—such as how the Tabriz National School was completely destroyed and abandoned, how the abduction of Armenian girls in the provinces and their forced conversion to Islam came to be tolerated, how Armenian peasants were oppressed and plundered here and there by abusive local power holders, and how foreign missionaries began to establish themselves everywhere among the Armenians and gradually draw them away from their own Church, and so on. All of these are quite evident, yet at the same time deeply painful events. But there is one thing we do not understand: What compelled Etchmiadzin to leave the Atrpatakan region without a spiritual leader for two years; what was the reason for this stubborn indifference? Does a people paying various religious taxes—such as the first harvest tax, marriage, and life-and-death fees—not have the right to ask, “If you’re taking my money, give me a spiritual leader. Since you’re not providing one, why are you taking my money?” We view this as a form of humiliation against the people—a kind of oppression that *only* clergy could commit.⁴

Considering this sufficient regarding Atrpatakan, *let us now turn to* the Armenians of Isfahan and India, who, when considered together, form a single administrative-ecclesiastical region.

The Armenians in Isfahan and India have a spiritual leader named Bishop Grigoris, sent from Etchmiadzin. However, as can be understood from correspondence received from Isfahan and Calcutta, perhaps it would have been better for them to remain without a spiritual leader, as in Atrpatakan, than to have a bishop like Grigoris.

4 Raffi states that Etchmiadzin neglected not only its religious responsibilities but also its social obligations. The author’s anti-missionary discourse, meanwhile, reflects a protective stance that emerged within the context of the nationalist movements among 19th-century Armenians and the defense of Christianity. Raffi, who additionally assigns the spiritual leader the task of reconciling divisions within society, recounts the events resulting from the “two-year spiritual leadership vacuum” in Atrpatakan, presenting the discussion not so much on the basis of concrete evidence but rather on a moral plane and with a sense of urgency. Phrases such as “completely devoid of a spiritual leader,” “leaderless,” “neglect,” and “immense suffering” were deliberately used to create a perception of corruption and neglect among readers while also generating public pressure on the authority of Etchmiadzin. The lack of authority in Etchmiadzin led the author to develop a critical stance that escalated to the level of holding Etchmiadzin accountable and questioning its moral legitimacy, given the political, legal, and social consequences this deficiency had in the Atrpatakan region. His assessment that the absence of spiritual leadership would create a state of social vulnerability and could consequently lead to national disintegration is crucial for understanding the author’s approach. For Raffi, religion is viewed as a fundamental foundation for the preservation of nationalism. If the Church fails to fulfill its duty, the protection of the nation and national consciousness will not be possible, and foreign influences such as missionary activities will rapidly gain strength.

The center of leadership for the ecclesiastical regions of Isfahan and India has always been, and continues to be, the Monastery of St. Amenaprkich in New Julfa. According to local traditional laws, if the spiritual leader needed to travel from Isfahan to India as a representative, he could be absent from his post for three months, for a total of no more than six months. However, Grigoris spent nearly four years in India, leaving the entire Isfahan diocese—which included Tehran, Hamedan, Shiraz, and Bushehr—without a spiritual leader; he traveled at times in Batavia, at times in Burma, at times in Java, and at times in Calcutta.

Had Grigoris's mission during his visits to our scattered and nearly lost compatriots in the distant regions of the East been aimed at meeting their spiritual needs rather than pursuing self-serving objectives, and had he paid attention to *the necessary institutions* to keep them connected to their churches and their nation, we would have found *these journeys* highly beneficial and entirely praiseworthy. However, as is evident from the correspondence we have received, the sole purpose of Grigoris's representative mission among the Armenians scattered across the two peninsulas of India is to extort money. He was merely rummaging through old wills, church ledgers, and unclaimed inheritances; he was attempting to extract a share for himself and the See of Etchmiadzin.

Such behavior on the part of a spiritual leader would, of course, on the one hand create dissatisfaction among the people who expected only good from him, and on the other hand lead to various divisions. One such instance is the major upheaval that arose in Calcutta between the people and the "Church Official" and "Church Treasurer"⁵, who were elected by the people. The turmoil escalated to the point where church doors were closed, services were suspended, the case was referred to the British High Court for review, and the church was fined a thousand gold coins. All of this took place before Grigoris's eyes and, in part, at his instigation.

Of course, all of this was bound to cause a spiritual collapse among the Armenian people in India, who were already disgusted with the clergy, alienated from their church, and estranged from their people. And when Grigoris became completely unbearable to the Armenian community in Calcutta, the people

5 We do not fully understand what the terms "Church Official" and "Church Treasurer" mean, nor what role they play in national matters; but as far as can be understood from the contents of a letter from Calcutta, the term "Church Official" carries the same meaning as our terms "priest" or "treasurer." And "Church Treasurer" must refer to a type of treasurer appointed to manage church funds collected during the prosperous periods of the Armenian community in India and preserved to this day for the purpose of aiding the poor or those who have migrated to India from foreign countries.

presented him with a petition signed by 53 people⁶, informing him that they no longer needed him, that he should leave India and depart as soon as possible, and that otherwise they would treat him differently.

But Grigoris has not budged from his position and continues his activities under the patronage of Petros Hakimyan, a well-known Tbilisi native whom he personally knows.⁷

It is a well-known fact that all of this cannot remain hidden from Echmiadzin, as the same individuals have repeatedly conveyed their complaints. So, why has Echmiadzin not recalled its representative in India? While expecting other benefits from Grigoris, it is quite understandable that the calls of the Armenian people in the distant regions of the East hold no significance for Echmiadzin.⁸

While the aforementioned disorder in India was unsettling the people and Grigoris was occupied with his own affairs there, far worse turmoil was unfolding in Isfahan—another part of the ecclesiastical region entrusted to that bishop's administration and left neglected for four years. The Armenians of Isfahan, on the one hand recognizing Grigoris's inadequacy and his unsuitability to meet their needs, and on the other hand believing that even if he wished to provide any benefit, he could not do so — since he was merely the nominal spiritual leader of Isfahan, while in reality he was traveling in India in accordance with Echmiadzin's instructions and had left Isfahan vacant for years — on May 27, 1876, they appealed to Echmiadzin, requesting that the Catholicos recall Grigoris and send them a new spiritual leader.⁹

6 A copy of the petition was sent from Calcutta to the editorial office of the *Mşak* newspaper, and the petition listed the disturbances caused by Grigoris one by one.

7 We wonder what sources the *Ararat* magazine was using when it consistently published stories about Grigoris's heroic deeds a few years ago.

8 By reducing the weakness arising from Raffi Echmiadzin's loss of authority to a level of personal corruption, he has exemplified the moral collapse among members of the spiritual authority. The conflicts between material interests and spiritual duties are seriously undermining the bond between Echmiadzin and the people. The absence of a spiritual authority is a major crisis for society, but a spiritual leader who has lost his legitimacy and moral guidance can lead to even more severe consequences. Because such misguided leadership will cause fragmentation not only in the realm of faith but also at the levels of national unity and social cohesion. The corruption of the Church will divide the religious community, weaken national bonds, and diminish nationalist sentiments. The fact that Armenians are forced to take their internal issues to foreign courts rather than resolving them internally is also a result of the failure of spiritual and institutional authority to fulfill its national responsibilities.

9 Grigoris failed to win the sympathy of the people of Isfahan from the very beginning and was met with hatred, because, as we learned from a private letter, shortly after the great famine in Iran, he was appointed as the spiritual leader of Isfahan and India, and while traveling to Isfahan via Tehran, he was given a sum of money collected to be distributed to the famine victims in Isfahan. Grigoris brought the money but, instead of using it for its intended purpose, kept it for himself... The starving people realized this several years later.

Despite the people's request being repeated three times via telegram, it was not fulfilled, and no response was even given. After all these efforts, on February 4 of this year, a general assembly of 117 people convened in Isfahan and elected a man named Movses Nahapet (apparently a layman), the administrator of the Holy Amenaprkiç Monastery in New Julfa, to replace Grigoris. Not content with this, the assembly appealed to Tehran, deciding to seek the mediation of a foreign (ambassador-level) envoy capable of influencing Echmiadzin to have Grigoris removed from office and a new spiritual leader sent in his place.¹⁰

We fully condemn the attitude of the Isfahan community that permits the intervention of a foreign (high-ranking) ambassador in the functioning of the Armenian spiritual administration; however, we cannot justify Echmiadzin's stubbornness, which, by leaving the community's problem unaddressed and unanswered, has driven it to resort to extreme measures. We ask: On what grounds can Echmiadzin's policy of retaining a person like Grigoris—against the will of the people in the two distant regions of Isfahan and India—be justified? One of two possibilities exists: Either Echmiadzin seeks to convey that the people have no say in the selection or removal of a spiritual leader, or, as stated, Grigoris is an agent sent to India in the name of the spiritual leader, tasked with special and shadowy affairs. Both possibilities are futile and entirely harmful. For since Echmiadzin lacks the authority to compel an Armenian people scattered across the distant regions of the East, beyond Russian borders, into obedience, they will turn to a foreign envoy today, a missionary tomorrow, and the British government the day after. Everyone can foresee the consequences.¹¹

Of course, we would be pleased if the information we received was only partially incorrect, but at the same time, it is impossible not to mention Echmiadzin's indifferent and dismissive attitude toward the matter. We conclude our article by requesting more detailed information from our representatives in Parskan and Calcutta, and at the same time, we appeal to

10 A copy of the meeting's decision was sent to the editorial office of the *Mşak* newspaper.

11 Raffi has provided a backdrop suggesting that this was not merely an individual failure, but rather a more systematic collapse, as evidenced by the examples he cited. The sidelining of Echmiadzin—a centralized and authoritarian institution—is not merely a matter of neglect; it will transform into an attitude that not only weakens the community's sense of loyalty and belonging, but also brings to the fore the community's will for self-determination. Religious governance issues will render the current understanding of nationalism vulnerable to external interventions and pave the way for the erosion of the established nationalist ideology from within. The community's selection of its own spiritual leader is an extremely unusual situation from the perspective of the traditional Armenian church order. Thus, the people have narrowed the scope of authority of the clergy and filled the resulting power vacuum with civil intervention. The institutional gridlock in Echmiadzin is leading to a loss of authority and making it inevitable for the community to turn to foreign envoys.

His Holiness the Supreme Catholicos's fatherly attention to put an end to these problems and to take care of **his sheep** who are scattered, lost, and strayed in the distant regions of the East.¹²

3. Discussion

This study has illuminated the loss of authority experienced by Echmiadzin in the spiritual regions of Parskistan and India during the 19th century—at institutional, social, and individual levels—through an annotated translation of Raffi's 1879 article. Raffi focuses his criticism on local administrative practices, setting aside debates over the claim to sole catholicoship and doctrinal legitimacy; in doing so, he addresses Echmiadzin's governance issues within a document-based framework and develops a style that demands institutional accountability. His account of missionary activities, spiritual leadership vacuum, and examples of individual corruption demonstrates that the weakening of religious authority directly affects not only the realm of faith, but also national unity, social cohesion, and the community's will for self-determination. The fact that the people are turning to civil initiatives to

12 In this article, rather than adopting an anti-church, destructive, and uncompromising tone, Raffi clearly expressed his expectation of institutional ownership from Etchmiadzin. He stated that if religious institutions were to collapse entirely, the nation would disintegrate, and that the preservation of national unity and solidarity would only be possible through the reform of these institutions. At the end of his article, the author both softened his criticisms and positioned the Catholicos as the natural authority in resolving the issues through his appeal to the Catholicos and the "lost sheep" metaphor. This rhetorical strategy served as a crucial balancing element between critical discourse and the establishment of legitimacy in the article.

The "lost sheep" metaphor appears in the following two passages in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew in the New Testament:

1. Luke 15:3–7: Jesus tells this parable as follows: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until he finds it? When he finds it, he joyfully carries it on his shoulders. When he gets home, he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me! I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in the same way, the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner who repents more than over ninety-nine righteous people."
2. Matthew 18:12–14: In the same way: "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, won't he leave the ninety-nine in the mountains and go in search of the one that is lost? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he rejoices over that one more than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. In the same way, your Father in heaven does not want even one of these little ones to be lost."

In this metaphor, the lost sheep represents not only the sinful person in the Bible who has strayed from God or gone astray from the right path, but also implies a community that has been politically and administratively neglected. The shepherd, on the one hand, theologically represents God (or Christ) and His love, while on the other hand, points to the Catholicos, who bears administrative responsibility. In the biblical narrative, the shepherd takes the initiative and sets out to search for the lost one. In his article, Raffi uses the "sheep" metaphor to express that the spiritual leader must voluntarily assume this responsibility.

Raffi's Article "How Does Etchmiadzin Administer its Distant Ecclesiastical Districts in Other Countries?": An Annotated Translation and the Debate on Institutional Authority

fill the spiritual void—and even appealing to foreign courts and ambassadors—indicates that the institutional gridlock in Echmiadzin, a centralized and authoritarian structure, has created a rupture that leaves the concept of nationalism vulnerable to external intervention. Raffi's use of the "lost sheep" metaphor and his appeal to the Catholicos at the end of the article, however, indicate a stance favoring the reform rather than the complete dissolution of the church institution; while repositioning the Catholicos as the natural seat of legitimacy in resolving issues, he forcefully warns that the collapse of religious institutions would lead to the disintegration of the nation.

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THE EFFECT OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING ON INCREASING THE KNOWLEDGE LEVEL OF HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS ON “ARMENIAN CLAIMS”

(TARİH VE SOSYAL BİLGİLER ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN “ERMENİ İDDİALARI” BİLGİ DÜZEYLERİNİN ARTMASINDA HİZMET İÇİ EĞİTİMİN ETKİSİ)

Dr. Serpil ASAR*

Abstract: *The aim of this study is to reveal whether there is any change in the level of “Armenian Claims” content knowledge of secondary school history and basic education social studies teachers after their participation in the in-service training programme. 110 history and social studies teachers participated in the study. Pre-test-post-test control group design was used as the method in the study. The experimental group teachers participated in the in-service training programme called “History and Social Studies Teachers’ Provincial Council Presidents Information Seminar” organised by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, Board of Education and Board of Education in Erzurum province. The control group teachers did not participate in any in-service training programme. As a data collection*

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tool, an academic achievement test consisting of 21 multiple-choice questions on “Armenian Claims” developed by the researcher was applied to both groups. As a result of the study, it was seen that the experimental group history and social studies teachers increased their field knowledge on “Armenian Claims” compared to the control group teachers.

Keywords: *Armenian Claims, In-service Training, History Teachers, Social Studies Teachers*

Öz: *Bu araştırmanın amacı ortaöğretim tarih ve temel eğitim sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin hizmet içi eğitim programına katılımlarından sonra “Ermeni İddiaları” alan bilgileri düzeylerinde herhangi bir değişiklik olup olmadığını ortaya koymaktır. Araştırmaya 110 tarih ve sosyal bilgiler öğretmeni katılmıştır. Araştırmada yöntem olarak ön test-son test kontrol gruplu desen kullanılmıştır. Deney grubu öğretmenleri T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı tarafından Erzurum ilinde düzenlenen “Tarih ve Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenleri İl Zümre Başkanları Bilgilendirme Semineri” adlı hizmet içi eğitim programına katılmışlardır. Kontrol grubu öğretmenleri ise herhangi bir hizmet içi eğitim programa katılmamıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak her iki gruba, araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen “Ermeni İddiaları” konusunda 21 çoktan seçmeli sorudan oluşan akademik başarı testi uygulanmıştır. Çalışma sonucunda deney grubu tarih ve sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin “Ermeni İddiaları” konulu alan bilgilerinde, kontrol grubu öğretmenlerine göre artış sağladıkları görülmüştür.*

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Ermeni İddiaları, Hizmet İçi Eğitim, Tarih Öğretmenleri, Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenleri.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Professional success of teachers is of great importance both for themselves and for the success of students. The continuity of teachers' success is directly related to the concept of professional development. According to Guskey (1997; 2000), professional development is a comprehensive and sustainable training process carried out both before and during the service in order to increase the efficiency of educators' performance and students' success.¹ In-service training is the process of training professionals to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes related to their duties. In this process, people acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that were lacking in their pre-service education, as well as having the opportunity to update themselves.² Preparation for the teaching profession is a lifelong process that is not limited to the education received at universities. For this reason, the Ministry of National Education organises many in-service training activities that teachers from different branches can benefit from every year.³

In the study titled "Support to Basic Education Project (TEDP) Teacher Education Component" published in 2006 by the General Directorate of Teacher Training and Education of the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey, it is stated in the "General Qualifications for Teaching Profession" that "Improving the quality of the teaching profession is possible by first knowing the general and special field competencies that teachers should have, and then providing these competencies to prospective teachers and teachers through pre-service and in-service training programmes". In the same study, "Teachers should be able to attend in-service training, meetings, seminars and follow publications related to their field in order to improve themselves and the teaching-learning process by being aware of their professional needs. They should be able to endeavour to contribute to such activities."

In the fifth article of the Regulation on In-Service Training for Ministry of National Education Personnel, the principles of considering and monitoring the professional development needs of the personnel in the planning of in-

1 Ertuğ Can, Öğretmenlerin Meslekî Gelişimleri: Engeller ve Öneriler. *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırmalar Dergisi – Journal Of Qualitative Research In Education*, 7(4), (2019) 1619-1621.

2 Serkan Keleşoğlu, Emine Özlem Yiğit, Yenilikçi Tarih Öğretimi Hizmet İçi Eğitim Programının Öğretmen Görüşlerine Dayalı Olarak Değerlendirilmesi, *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi* 50(1) (2017). 167.

3 Semih Aktekin, Hayat Boyu Öğrenme ve Sürekli Mesleki Gelişim. *Tarih Nasıl Öğretilir?* (İstanbul: Yeni İnsan Yayınevi 2019). 417-418.

service training activities are included.⁴In the 1966 ILO(International Labour Organization) and UNESCO(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)Joint Document “Recommendation on the Status of Teachers”, we see the statements that “the progress of teaching should be recognised as depending to a great extent on the qualifications and ability of the mass of teachers and on the human, educational and professional qualities of each member of this mass”.⁵ Beyci and Aslan (2010) defined the second dimension of teacher leadership as professional development. According to the authors, in this dimension of teacher leadership, teacher leaders should lead students and other teachers in critical processes such as learning, development, development, research and enquiry while continuing their own professional development.⁶

In the 20th National Education Council Decisions, under the title of “Professional Development of Teachers”, it is stated that “Professional development programmes of teachers should be determined on the basis of current needs and accreditation of the trainings provided by institutions and organisations supporting their professional development should be ensured”. On the other hand, in the presentation text of the Turkish Qualifications Framework, which was put into effect by Article 23/A of the Law on Vocational Qualifications Authority dated 21/9/2006 and numbered 5544 and the Council of Ministers Decision dated 9/11/2015 and numbered 2015/8213, it is stated that “Establishing a national qualifications framework that will improve the quality of the education and training system and strengthen the relationship between employment and education is among the priority needs of Turkey”. According to Ata, who underlines the importance of the teacher factor in education, in-service trainings to be provided by the Ministry of National Education for history and social studies teachers will be very useful for the training of teachers.⁷

The Turks and Armenians met for the first time as a result of the expeditions of Çağrı Bey, the ruler of the Great Seljuk Empire, to Eastern Anatolia. After the defeat of the Byzantine Empire at Malazgirt in 1071, Armenians migrated in

4 Official Gazette, 11 March 2022, 31775

5 Mesut Gülmez, Öğretmenlerin Statüsü Tavsiyesi 1966 ILO / Unesco Ortak Belgesi <https://www.ihd.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/OgretmenlerinStatusuTavsiyesi.pdf>, (Eğitim Sen Yayınları 2010)

6 Ali Çağatay Kılınc, Eğitim Yönetiminde Liderlik, Çağdaş Liderlik Yaklaşımları, (Ankara: Pegem, 2022), 75.

7 Bahri Ata, Tarih Pedagojisine Uygun Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İnkılâp Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Dersi Nasıl Olmalıdır?, İlk ve Orta Öğretim Kurumlarında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İnkılâp Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Konularının Öğretimi. (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2005), 85.

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large masses to the Euphrates, Central Anatolia, Çukurova and Syria. During the reign of Sultan Malik Shah, Armenians were allowed to live their beliefs and culture and the Armenian Catholicosate was represented by a single authority. All churches, monasteries and clergy were excluded from taxation. Places where Armenians were found were reconstructed.⁸ Armenians enjoyed all kinds of religious and cultural freedoms during the Anatolian Principalities and the Seljuk State of Turkey.⁹

After the conquest of Istanbul, Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror brought Hovakim, the spiritual head of the Armenians in Bursa, to Istanbul and established the Armenian Patriarchate (1461). He administered the Armenians through this Patriarchate. The religious and social affairs of the Armenians were not interfered from Fatih until the reign of Mahmut II. Patriarchates had their own courts and prisons. They could issue non-religious punishments and exile orders. Ottoman Armenians led a quiet life in Turkey and were engaged in trade and industry. Since they did not do military service, their population increased and their social status improved. Thanks to their fusion with Turks and the friendship they developed, Armenians assumed important positions in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman archival documents show that Armenians were appointed to all kinds of positions as interpreters, tax collectors, architects, craftsmen, treasurers and ministers.¹⁰ In the early periods of the Ottoman Empire, Armenians did not have any problems with state administration. As of the last quarter of the XIXth century, when the state weakened, they started to provoke the Armenian community and use it for their religious, political and economic interests, especially as part of the policies of foreign states against the Ottoman state.¹¹

The ideas of independence and nationalism spread by the French Revolution in the late 18th century also affected the nations living in the Ottoman lands, and Russia, Britain and France intervened in the national independence efforts of the Balkan peoples.¹² In particular, the fact that the Balkan countries gained their independence with the support of Russia brought Armenians closer to Russia and other great powers. Looking at the developments in the Balkans, Armenians realised that they could not gain their independence without rebelling. Missionary activities helped Armenians regain their national

8 Bülent Bakar, *Ermeni Tehciri*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2009), 7.

9 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeni Tehciri*. (İstanbul: Babıali Kültür 2006), 16.

10 Kemal Çiçek, *Ermeni Sorununda Tehcir ve Ötesi*, (Ankara: Astana Yayınları, 2016), 14.

11 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeni Tehciri*, 25.

12 Nejla Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler ve Zeytin İsyanları*, (Kahramanmaraş: Kahramanmaraş Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2021), 162.

consciousness through their mother tongue. Missionaries prepared the curricula of all the schools they opened for this purpose.¹³ From 1880 onwards, news from the British consuls in the eastern provinces showed that there was a stir among the Armenians.¹⁴ The European press was also publishing articles in favour of Armenians¹⁵ Anatolian Armenians under Ottoman rule helped the invading Russian armies in 1827. During the Crimean War, Armenians provided intelligence to the Russians from besieged Kars. Ottoman Armenians guided Russian soldiers during the invasion of 1877. During the First World War, Armenians in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus collaborated with the Russians. The fact that Armenian revolutionaries in Anatolia trusted the Russians was revealed with the Zeytun rebellion in the mid-19th century¹⁶ the first rebellion in Anatolia broke out in 1861-1862 in Zeytun District of Marash under the influence of the nationalism movement. Some of the Armenian clergymen and the church, influenced by Bulgarian nationalism, led Armenian nationalism and endeavoured to establish an independent Armenian state. The Armenian patriarch of the period, Nerses Varyabetyan, stated that the new situation that emerged with the Treaty of Berlin was a great opportunity and asked his community to take up arms.¹⁷ In June 1890, the incidents that erupted as a result of the incitement of the Armenian people by the members of the Fatherland Defenders Society in Erzurum in June and the members of the Hunchak party in Kumkapı, Istanbul in July, brought two communities that had lived in peace for centuries against each other.¹⁸

In order to become independent, Armenians established organisations and committees such as Dashnaksutyun Committee, Hunchak Revolutionary Party, Armenekan Committee. The party programmes of these committees included the activities to be carried out in order to become independent. As a result of the activities of these committees, they carried out rebellion activities in the Ottoman Empire between 1890-1914. The most important of these rebellions were Erzurum Incident (1890), Kumkapı Demonstration (1890), Merzifon Kayseri, Yozgat Incidents (1892), First Sason Rebellion (1890), Bab-ı Ali Demonstration (1895), Zeytun Rebellion (1895), Van Rebellion (1896), attack on the Ottoman Bank (1896), Second Sason Rebellion (1904).¹⁹

13 Nejla Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler ve Zeytun İsyanları*, 277.

14 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1985), 126.

15 Gülnihal Bozkurt, *Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1996), 97.

16 Justin McCarthy, *Ölüm ve Sürgün*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), 29.

17 Nejla Günay, *Türk Ermeni İlişkilerinin Dünü - Bugünü - Yarını*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 2022), 9-13

18 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeni Tehciri*, 34.

19 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1976), 452.

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With the outbreak of the First World War, the Hnchaks and Dashnaks opened recruitment offices in Tbilisi to support the Russian armies and started massacres against Muslims together with the Russian armies. They took to the mountains and revolted in Bitlis and Sason. On 15 April 1915, after the uprising in Van and massacres of the civilian population, the Ottoman Empire closed the Armenian political parties and committees on 24 April 1915 and arrested the Armenian opinion leaders who were active against the state.²⁰ When the First World War started, Dashnaksutyun leaders decided that Armenians would remain loyal to the state in which they lived. However, the fact that some Armenian nationalists saw the possibility of the establishment of an Armenian state in the victory of the Russians caused Armenian youth to voluntarily join the Russian army. Armenian youth joined the Russian army. Armenians deserted from the Ottoman army and carried out guerrilla activities behind the Ottoman lines. In the face of this situation, the Ottoman army started to transfer Armenians from places behind the front lines to other regions.²¹

Deputy Commander-in-Chief Enver Pasha sent a secret letter to Minister of Internal Affairs Talat Bey on 2 May 1915, stating that he was of the opinion that the Armenians in Van were always waiting in a gathered and ready state in order to continue their rebellion and that they should be removed from these areas and their rebellion nests should be dispersed.²² Upon this letter, Talaat Pasha deemed it necessary to take the Armenians out of the war zone. In the instruction he sent to the governors of Erzurum, Bitlis and Van on 9 May 1915, Talat Pasha requested that the Armenians in the south of Erzurum, Van and Bitlis be removed from their places of residence and moved towards the south, which was far from the war zone, in cooperation with the army commanders.²³ In an encrypted telegram sent to the 4th Army Command on 23 May 1915, Talaat Pasha requested that the Armenians removed from Erzurum, Van and Bitlis be relocated to the south of Mosul Province, Zor Sanjak and Urfa Sanjak outside the centre. The Armenians deported from Adana, Aleppo and Marash were to be transferred to the east of Syria and the eastern and south-eastern regions of Aleppo Province.²⁴ The places where Armenians

20 Bülent Bakar, *Ermeni Tehciri*, 68.

21 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019), 142

22 Kemal Çiçek, *Ermenilerin Zorunlu Göçü 1915-1917*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2005), 37-41

23 Hikmet Özdemir, Kemal Çiçek, Ömer Turan, Ramazan Çalık, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2010), 63.

24 Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914-1918 (Cilt I)*, (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basım Evi, 2005), 55.

were to be relocated were not determined because they were desert, arid or desolate places, as some historians claim today. This region has been called the “fertile crescent” throughout history.²⁵ Today, Armenian high school textbooks exaggerate the forced migration of Armenians in 1915.²⁶

On 30 May 1915, the Council of Ministers approved the decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the implementation initiated by it, and it was decided to issue a directive on the identification of the property of the Armenians subjected to deportation, the safe transport of Armenians, and the provision of housing and employment opportunities for Armenians in their destinations. With the instructions issued, the authorities were notified of the arrangements made for the safe conduct of the deportation, the identification of the property left behind by the Armenians subjected to deportation, the provision of food and shelter in the places where the Armenians would go, etc. The deportation decision, which was initially limited to Gregorian Armenians in the war zones, was extended to some Catholic and Protestant Armenians living in Anatolia in the following months due to the creation of a civil war environment in the country as a result of the provocations and incitements of Armenian leaders.²⁷

With the directive dated 10 June 1915, the properties of the deported Armenians were taken under protection. With this 34-article directive, the management of the properties and lands belonging to the deported Armenians was regulated in detail.²⁸ After the end of the First World War, Armenians took part in the French occupation forces in the south. The aim of the Armenians was to realise their goal of establishing an independent Armenian state. Armenian legionaries formed three battalions in the French army. Armenians fought against the Ottoman Empire both in the French and British armies. According to the 1965 memorandum submitted to the US Congress by Hrand Samouelian on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia to the US Congress, 200,000 Armenian volunteers participated in the First World War in the ranks of the Russian army. In addition, there were 5,000 Armenian volunteers fighting with the French and British armies. All these documents and information show that a significant Armenian population, with the influence of the committees, took

25 Kemal Çiçek, *Ermenilerin Zorunlu Göçü*, 37-41.

26 Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş, Ermeni Tarih Ders Kitaplarında 1915 Olayları, *Tesam Akademi Dergisi* 2(1), 2015, 104

27 Hikmet Özdemir, Kemal Çiçek, Ömer Turan, Ramazan Çalık, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç*, 63

28 Sevgi Gül Akyılmaz, Kilikya Ermeni Katalikosluğu Davası Çerçevesinde Emvâl-i Metruke Meselesi-ne Bakış, *Uluslararası Suçlar ve Tarih Dergisi*. 19, 2019, 35.

part and fought on the side of the Entente states against the Turks in the First World War and its aftermath, thus legally becoming a party.²⁹

As of the end of March 1918, the Ottoman Government started to work for the return of those subjected to deportation. In the government declaration read by Ahmet İzzet Pasha at the Parliament, he stated that it had been decided to return the deported citizens to their former regions one by one, and that action had begun, and that the movable and immovable property left behind by these people would be returned to them and the money for the goods sold would be paid. The orders, which were approved and expanded by the Council of Ministers, were sent by the Ministry of Interior to the mutasarrıflıks on 23 October 1918. In these orders, it was stated that those who wanted to return would not be prevented and that they could settle in their own homes. Those living in the houses of non-Muslim Muhajirs would be evicted and the law of Muslim refugees would be respected. The whereabouts and the number of those who want to return will be reported, and it will be investigated whether they will be settled in the places they go, whether there is road safety, and the slightest negligence of those who are engaged in these affairs will be severely punished.³⁰ During the days of the returns, the government, at the expense of neglecting Muslim refugees, rented steamboats for those who would go by sea and bought train tickets for those who would be transported by land through the Muhacirin Directorate. The houses of those whose houses were damaged during the war were repaired and new buildings were constructed for those who did not have houses. The government provided non-Muslim Muhajirs returning to their villages with provisions, seeds, and agricultural tools, and those living in towns and cities were provided with food and monetary aid. Through the doctors assigned by the Directorate of Muhacirin, the Muhacirin were subjected to health checks and vaccinated against dangerous diseases.³¹

Following the Turkish-French Treaty, Armenians in the Çukurova region started to migrate southwards to Istanbul and Bulgaria as of the end of 1921. After the War of Independence was won by the Turks, Armenians in other regions also left Anatolia to a great extent. Article 14 of the 13 October 1921 Treaty of Kars included the issue of migrants.³²

29 Hikmet Özdemir, Kemal Çiçek, Ömer Turan, Ramazan Çalık, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç*, 141-145.

30 İbrahim Ethem Atnur, *Tehcirin Ardından*, (Ankara: Hitabevi, 2019), 41-45.

31 İbrahim Ethem Atnur, *Tehcirin Ardından*, 56-57.

32 İbrahim Ethem Atnur, *Tehcirin Ardından*. 166.

Many of the historical events that took place during the last period of the Ottoman Empire still continue to have an impact today. Among these events, there are issues such as Armenians, Cyprus, Aegean Islands, which are among the issues that occupy the Republic of Turkey in the international arena. Among these issues, especially the allegations concerning Armenians are brought to the agenda every year in the international arena as a means of threat and blackmail for Turkey. On the other hand, issues such as the loss of the Balkans, the Caucasus and Mesopotamia, which could strengthen Turkey's theses, what happened to the Turkish and Muslim people in these regions, and what kind of persecution they suffered are not taught to students as they should³³ However, historical knowledge should teach students about the life of the nation and strengthen the ties that bind them to the nation .³⁴Emphasised that one of the important disciplines of social sciences, history and its teaching aims to understand the past and present.³⁵

In this study, which was initiated by evaluating this information and taking into account the studies on the agenda, the changes in the academic achievement levels of history and social studies teachers as a result of their participation in an in-service training programme were examined.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Is there a significant difference between the academic achievement levels of "Armenian Claims Achievement Test" of secondary school history teachers / basic education social studies teachers to whom in-service training programme was applied and secondary school history / basic education social studies teachers to whom in-service training programme was not applied?

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to reveal whether there is a significant difference between the academic achievement of secondary school history teachers who received in-service training and basic education social studies teachers in the "Armenian Claims Achievement Test" compared to history and social studies teachers who did not receive in-service training

33 Nejla Günay, 2018 Yılında Basılan Ders Kitaplarında Ermeniler Konusunun Ele Alınışı ve Toplumsal Hafıza, *Turkish History Education Journal*, 8(2), 2019, 541.

34 İhsan Sungu, Tarih Öğretimi Hakkında, *Milli Eğitim Dergisi*, 154, 2002, 57-59.

35 İsmail Hakkı Demircioğlu, Tarih Öğretiminin Amaçları. *Tarih Nasıl Öğretilir?* (İstanbul: Yeni İnsan, 2019), 67-68.

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The content of the in-service training programme designed for history and social studies teachers’ provincial group presidents was developed by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, Board of Education. The in-service training programme was implemented in three days for eight hours a day. In the training programme, eight academicians gave lectures in two sessions, one before noon and one in the afternoon.

The session titles that make up the content of the “History and Social Studies Teachers Provincial Summit Presidents Information Seminar” training programme applied to the provincial summit chairs of history and social studies teachers are given in Figure 1.



Figure 1. History and Social Studies Teachers Provincial Summative Presidents Information Seminar Content

1.3. Problem of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to reveal whether there is a significant difference between the academic achievement of secondary school history teachers who received in-service training and basic education social studies teachers in the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test” compared to history and social studies teachers who did not receive in-service training

1.3.1. Sub-problems of the study

In line with the aim of the study, answers to the following sub-research questions were sought:

- 1- Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group history and social studies teachers in which the in-service training programme was applied?
- 2- Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the history and social studies teachers in the control group, in which the in-service training programme was not applied, regarding their academic achievement levels in the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test”?
- 3- Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group history and social studies teachers in which the in-service training programme was applied and the control group history and social studies teachers in which the in-service programme was not applied?
- 4- Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test levels of “Armenian Claims Achievement Test”?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study falls within the scope of the experimental method of a quantitative research approach. In the study, a randomised design with pretest-posttest control group was used as the method. According to Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel, “this design is one of the most frequently used experimental designs in education and psychology.³⁶ Here, firstly, two groups are formed by random assignment from the previously determined subject pool. One of the groups is randomly assigned as the experimental group and the other as the control group. Then, measurements of the subjects in the two groups are taken about the dependent variable before the application. During the application period, the experimental procedure whose effect is tested is given to the experimental group, but not to the control group. Finally, the

36 Şener Büyüköztürk, Ebru Kılıç Çakmak, Özcan Erkan Akgün, Şirin Karadeniz, Funda Demirel, *Eğitimde Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2019), 212.

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measurements of the dependent variable of the subjects in the groups are obtained again using the same tool or equivalent form.”

2.1. Participants

The study was conducted on secondary school history and social studies teachers working as permanent teachers in the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey and social studies teachers working as permanent teachers in basic education institutions. 110 history and social studies teachers participated in the study. The experimental group teachers attended the “History and Social Studies Teachers’ Provincial Council Presidents’ Information Seminar” organised by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, Board of Education and Board of Education in Erzurum between 11-13 November 2022. The researcher was present in this seminar as an observer, not as a practitioner. No seminar programme was applied to the control group history and social studies teachers.

In the study, “Armenian Claims Achievement Test” was applied to the experimental and control groups as pre-test and post-test in order to measure the level of knowledge of history and social studies teachers about Armenian claims. The research was conducted on the data obtained from these tests. The application phase of the research lasted for three days: pre-test 11/11/2022, post-test 13/11/2022. The research questions were sent to the participants via Google Forms via the link <https://forms.gle/cvUmF1bbwhU4LxKH8>. The data obtained in the pre-test and post-test were analysed by applying the necessary statistical procedures.

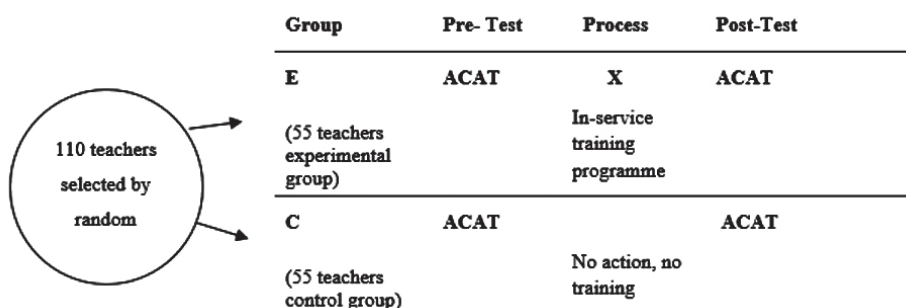


Figure 2. ACAT Pre- Test/ Post-Test randomised design with control group

The experimental group of the study consisted of 55 history and social studies teachers who were randomly selected from among the teachers who participated in the “History and Social Studies Teachers’ Provincial Council Presidents Information Seminar” organised by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, Board of Education and Board of Education in Erzurum between 11-13 November 2022. The control group of the study consisted of 55 history and social studies teachers who were randomly selected by the researcher from among the history and social studies teachers working as permanent staff in the Ministry of National Education and who did not participate in the training programme.

Within the scope of the study, “Armenian Claims Achievement Test” (ACAT) was applied to measure the level of knowledge of history and social studies teachers about Armenian claims. In the study, the test consisting of 21 multiple-choice questions was applied to the experimental and control group history and social studies teachers as pre-test and post-test. The achievement test was previously developed by the researcher in the doctoral thesis phase.³⁷ The content validity and item reliability analyses of the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test” were conducted during the doctoral thesis phase. In order to determine the reliability level, the 40-question test was applied to 110 history teachers as a pilot application in the 2021-2022 academic year, and as a result of the item analysis, 19 items that reduced the reliability were removed and the test was finalised. In this study, secondary school history teachers and basic education social studies teachers who had not previously participated in a doctoral thesis study were studied.

In this study, in order to test whether there is a significant difference between the knowledge levels of Armenian allegations in terms of academic achievement between the history and social studies teachers in the experimental group where the in-service training programme was applied and the control group where the in-service training programme was not applied, t-test used in intergroup and intragroup comparisons was applied. The t-testor independent groups was used to determine whether there was a difference between the scores of the experimental and control groups regarding the dependent variables at 95% confidence interval, and the t-test for dependent groups was used to determine whether there was a difference between the beginning and the end of the research within the groups.

37 Serpil Asar, *Tarih Öğretmenlerinin Tarihsel Bilinç Tipleri ile Ermeni İddiaları Hakkındaki Bilgileri Arasındaki İlişki Düzeyi*, Doktora Tezi, Gazi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Türkçe ve Sosyal Bilimler Ana Bilim Dalı, (2023),108

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The answers given to the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test” were evaluated with SPSS 25 package programme. In the study, t-test analysis for independent groups was applied to ensure the group equivalence of the experimental and control groups in terms of the ACAT variable before the experimental procedure. As a result of the analysis, it was seen that the groups were equivalent in terms of arithmetic mean (Mean), standard deviation (SD), t value and significance level (p).

3. FINDINGS

1. Findings Related to the 1st Sub-Problem

The first sub-problem of the study was expressed as “Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group history and social studies teachers, to whom the in-service training programme was applied, regarding their academic achievement levels in the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test”?”.

In order to test this sub-problem, ACAT was applied to the experimental group as pre-test before in-service training and post-test after in-service training. The data obtained were evaluated with dependent samples t-test to reveal whether there was a difference between pre-test and post-test and the findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Experimental Group Armenian Claims Achievement Test Pre/Post Test Levels Comparison

Experiment	N	Mean.	SS	t	p
Pre-Test	55	15,62	2,88	-4,30	0,001*
Post-Test	55	17,76	2,15		

*p<0,05; t=dependent samples t test

The average number of correct answers of 55 secondary school history and basic education social studies teachers in the experimental group in the pre-test before in-service training was 15,62. The standard deviation of the pre-test was 2,88. The average number of correct answers in the post-test of the same group was found to be 17,76. The standard deviation is 2,15. The t value

of the test was calculated as -4,30 and the p value was 0,001. As a result of the statistics, there is a significant difference between the pre/post test levels of the Armenian claims achievement test in the experimental group ($p < 0,05$). The post-test levels are significantly higher.

2. Findings Related to Sub-Problem

The second sub-problem of the research was expressed as “Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group history and social studies teachers, to whom in-service training programme was not applied, regarding their academic achievement levels in the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test”?” In order to test this sub-problem, the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test” was applied to the control group as pre-test and post-test. The data obtained were evaluated with dependent samples t-test to reveal whether there was a difference between the pre-test and post-test and the findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Control Group Armenian Claims Achievement Test Pre/Post Test Levels Comparison

Control	N	Mean.	SS	t	p
Pre-Test	55	14,69	2,35	0,35	0,73
Post-Test	55	14,64	2,50		

* $p < 0,05$; t=dependent samples t test

The average number of correct answers of 55 secondary school history and basic education social studies teachers in the control group in the pre-test before in-service training was 14,69. The standard deviation of the pre-test was 2,35. The average number of correct answers in the post-test of the same group was 14,64. The standard deviation is 2,50. The t value of the test was calculated as 0,35 and p value as 0,73. As a result of the statistics, there is no significant difference between the pre/post test levels of the Armenian claims achievement test in the control group ($p > 0,05$).

3. Findings Related to Sub-Problem

The third sub-problem of the research was expressed as “Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test of the academic achievement of the experimental group history and social studies teachers, to whom the in-service training programme was applied, and the control group history and social studies teachers, to whom the in-service programme was not applied, on the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test”?” In order to test this sub-problem, ACAT was applied to the experimental and control groups as a pre-test before the experimental procedure and as a post-test afterwards. The data obtained were evaluated by independent samples t test and the findings are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Achievement test comparison of Armenian claims according to groups

	Experiment		Control		t test	
	Mean±SS	Min-Maks	Mean±SS	Min-Maks	t	p
Pre-Test	15,62±2,88	9--21	14,69±2,35	9--20	1,852	0,067
Post-Test	17,76±2,15	13-21	14,64±2,50	9--20	7,024	0,001*

*p<0,05; t=independent samples t test

The number of pre-test correct answers of the experimental group teachers participating in the study was determined as minimum 9 and maximum 21. In the control group, the number of correct answers in the pre-test was at least 9 and at most 20. According to this table, there is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of pre-test results (t=1.852, p=0.067). The number of post-test correct answers of the experimental group teachers who participated in the study was determined as minimum 13 and maximum 21. The number of correct answers in the post-test of the control group was at least 9 and at most 20 as in the pre-test. However, when the post-test results were analysed, it was seen that the experimental group showed a statistically higher performance than the control group (t=7.024, p=0.001). Post-test levels were higher in the experimental group. These results show that the intervention in the experimental group was effective. In the control group, there was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test correct answers.

4. Findings Related to Sub-Problem

The fourth sub-problem of the research was expressed as “Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test levels of the “Armenian Claims Achievement Test”? In order to test this sub-problem, the pre-test and post-test values of ACAT were compared. The data obtained were evaluated with dependent samples t test and the findings are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Armenian Claims in General Achievement Test Pre/Post Test Levels Comparison

	N	Mean.	SS	t	p
Pre-Test	55	15,15	2,66	-3,72	0,001*
Post-Test	55	16,20	2,80		

* $p < 0,05$; t=dependent samples t test

When subjected to a general evaluation, it was determined that the mean of correct answers in the pre-test was 15.15 and the standard deviation was 2.66, while the mean of correct answers in the post-test was 16.20 and the standard deviation was 2.80. The t value of the study was calculated as -3,72. There is a significant difference between the pre/post test levels of the Armenian claims achievement test ($p < 0.05$). The post-test levels are significantly higher.

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is an experimental study to determine the level of knowledge of history and social studies teachers on “Armenian Claims”. The experimental group of the study consisted of 55 volunteer history and social studies teachers who participated in the in-service training programme titled “History and Social Studies Teachers Provincial Council Presidents Information Seminar” organised by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, Board of Education and Board of Education in Erzurum on 11-13 November 2022. The control group of the study consisted of volunteer permanent history and social studies teachers who did not participate in this programme and who were working in official secondary and high schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. In total, 110 history and social studies teachers participated in the study.

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In 2002, 2008 and 2009, the Ministry of National Education conducted in-service training programmes for social studies and history teachers on the Armenian allegations. The last one of these programmes was the “History and Social Studies Teachers Provincial Summative Presidents Information Seminar” for the provincial social studies and history teachers between 11-13 November 2022. However, a study evaluating these in-service training programmes with an experimental study has not been conducted so far. The study is seen as a noteworthy study in terms of closing the gap in this field.

In this study, it was observed that history and social studies teachers who participated in the in-service training programme increased their field-specific academic knowledge levels. This situation is noteworthy in terms of showing the efficiency of in-service training. From this point of view, it can be said that it is necessary to support secondary school social studies and high school history teachers with in-service training on World War I, one of the most important events of our recent history, and the 1915 events that took place during this period. Considering that the repercussions of the events that took place in this period are still continuing today, it is recommended that these trainings should be realised urgently.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The study was prepared in accordance with all ethical and copyright rules. Gazi University Ethics Commission approved the study with the date 24.03.2021 and number E-77082166-302.08.01-59344.

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POST-CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: EVALUATING THE FUTURE OF ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN PEACE EFFORTS

(GÜNEY KAFKASYA'DA ÇATIŞMA SONRASI DİNAMİKLER:
ERMENİSTAN-AZERBAYCAN BARIŞ ÇABALARININ GELECEĞİNİN
DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ)

Dr. Hakan Ömer TUNCA*

Abstract: *This research investigates the articulation, negotiation, and institutional framing of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan during the post-conflict period. The analysis is centered on four primary corpora: speeches from the UN General Assembly (UNGA), mediation documents from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and European Union (OSCE/EU), bilateral and trilateral diplomatic communications, and significant treaties or draft agreements. Employing a systematic Thematic Content Analysis (TCA), the study identifies eight recurring themes; sovereignty, connectivity, peace agenda, security, humanitarian issues, mediation, memory, and reconstruction and explores their evolution across diplomatic contexts over time. The findings indicate that post-conflict discourse in the South Caucasus is characterized by dynamism rather than stable, displaying shifts in emphasis that reflect broader geopolitical transformations. Although sovereignty, territorial*

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integrity, and security continue to be foundational principles, the data reveal a notable increase in themes related to connectivity and treaties between 2023 and 2025, indicating a transition from emergency stabilization towards institutional normalization. In contrast to prevailing scholarly perspectives that highlight identity, trauma, and competing notions of victimhood as primary explanatory factors in the conflict, formal diplomatic texts across all corpora predominantly exclude memory-centric narratives, favoring instead a technocratic, forward-looking discourse focused on borders, infrastructure, and regional cooperation. The study also uncovers significant variances across different diplomatic platforms: UNGA speeches emphasize global legitimacy, OSCE/EU documents highlight mediation frameworks, bilateral discussions concentrate on practical negotiations, and treaties formalize emerging agreements. These results underscore the necessity of conceptualizing peace as a complex, discursive process rather than a singular event, influenced by evolving regional and international dynamics. The study concludes by addressing limitations concerning data scope and proposing future research directions, including the examination of domestic political discourse, public sentiment, and civil-society perspectives to better understand the interplay between elite narratives and societal perceptions of peace.

Keywords: *Post-Conflict Governance, Conflict Transformation, Regional Security Architecture, Diplomatic Negotiations, Thematic Content Analysis.*

Öz: *Bu araştırma, çatışma sonrası dönemde Ermenistan ile Azerbaycan arasındaki barışın nasıl ifade edildiğini, müzakere edildiğini ve kurumsal olarak çerçevlendiğini incelemektedir. Analiz, dört temel metin kümesine dayanmaktadır: Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu'nda yapılan konuşmalar, AGİT ve AB'ye ait arabuluculuk belgeleri, ikili ve üçlü diplomatik yazışmalar ile önemli antlaşmalar veya taslak anlaşmalar. Sistematik bir Tematik İçerik Analizi kullanılarak yürütülen çalışma, egemenlik, bağlantısallık, barış gündemi, güvenlik, insani meseleler, arabuluculuk, hafıza ve yeniden inşa olmak üzere sekiz yinelenen temayı belirlemekte ve bu temaların zaman içinde farklı diplomatik bağlamlarda nasıl geliştiğini incelemektedir. Bulgular, Güney Kafkasya'daki çatışma sonrası söylemin durağanlıktan ziyade bir dinamizm taşıdığını ve bölgesel jeopolitik dönüşümleri yansıtan vurgu değişimleri gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Egemenlik, toprak bütünlüğü ve güvenlik temel ilkeler olmayı sürdürmekle birlikte, veriler 2023–2025 döneminde bağlantısallık ve antlaşma temalarına yönelik dikkate değer bir artış olduğunu göstermekte ve acil istikrarlaştırmadan kurumsal*

normalleşmeye doğru bir geçişe işaret etmektedir. Çatışmayı açıklayan başat unsurlar olarak kimlik, travma ve rekabet eden mağduriyet anlatılarını öne çıkaran yaygın akademik yaklaşımların aksine, incelenen tüm metinlerdeki resmi diplomatik söylem hafıza merkezli anlatıları büyük ölçüde dışlamakta ve bunun yerine sınırlar, altyapı ve bölgesel iş birliği odaklı, teknokratik ve geleceğe dönük bir dil benimsemektedir. Çalışma ayrıca farklı diplomatik platformlar arasında belirgin farklılıklar olduğunu göstermektedir: BM Genel Kurulu konuşmaları küresel meşruiyeti vurgularken, AGİT/AB belgeleri arabuluculuk çerçevelerini öne çıkarmakta, ikili görüşmeler pratik müzakerelere odaklanmakta ve anlaşmalar ortaya çıkan düzenlemeleri resmileştirmektedir. Bu sonuçlar, barışın tekil bir olaydan ziyade bölgesel ve uluslararası dinamiklerin dönüşümünden etkilenen karmaşık ve söylemsel bir süreç olarak kavramsallaştırılması gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, veri kapsamına ilişkin sınırlılıkları ele alarak ve iç siyasi söylem, kamuoyu algısı ve sivil toplum perspektiflerinin incelenmesini içeren gelecekteki araştırma yönelimlerini önererek son bulmaktadır; böylece elit söylem ile toplumun barış algıları arasındaki etkileşimin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkı sağlanabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Çatışma Sonrası Yönetişim, Çatışma Dönüşümü, Bölgesel Güvenlik Mimarisi, Diplomatik Müzakereler, Tematik İçerik Analizi.*

Introduction

The South Caucasus has historically been one of the most geopolitically sensitive areas within Eurasia, influenced by a confluence of imperial legacies, competing national aspirations, and recurring cycles of armed conflict. One of the most significant and enduring disputes within this region is the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding Nagorno-Karabakh. For over twenty-five years, these two nations have been engaging with complex post-conflict dynamics that emerged following the conclusion of the First Karabakh War in 1994.¹ Despite numerous affirmations of dedication to peaceful dialogue, the residual effects of violence encompassing material, psychological, and political dimensions continue to impact bilateral relations and the broader regional security landscape.² The ongoing tension, alongside the risk of renewed hostilities, underscores the urgency and necessity of a systematic evaluation of peace initiatives in the region.

Post-conflict dynamics within this region surpass the simplistic notion of a “frozen conflict”. They are intricately woven into a tapestry of historical legacies, internal political influences, external interferences, and contrasting narratives regarding identity and belonging.³ In the South Caucasus, conflicts seldom unfold in a linear fashion; rather, they function concurrently across ethno-political, territorial, interstate, and geopolitical dimensions. Enduring challenges, including the territorial status of Nagorno-Karabakh, the administration of returned territories, and the prospective development of regional connectivity corridors, intertwine with overarching issues of security, sovereignty, and regional collaboration.⁴

A substantial body of scholarly literature underscores the significance of discourse specifically, the ways in which entities construct narratives surrounding identity, victimization, and claims to territory in either perpetuating or altering the dynamics of conflict. The discourses articulated by Armenian and Azerbaijani parties, often couched in nationalistic rhetoric, tend to reflect and counteract one another. As noted by Stephan Astourian, both factions convey narratives that emphasize historical grievances, perceived existential threats, and victimization, each depicting the opposing side as the principal

1 Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, revised and updated edition (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

2 Laurence Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

3 Michael Galbas, “Post-Conflict Dynamics in the South Caucasus,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 73, no. 5 (2021): 897–920.

4 Neil Melvin, “After the War: Rebuilding the South Caucasus,” *SIPRI Commentary*, December 2021.

agent of injustice.⁵ These discursive constructs are inextricably linked to the interplay between geography and ethnonational identity: for Armenians, Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) is envisioned as an ancestral cultural homeland; conversely, for Azerbaijanis, it constitutes a fundamental element of territory recognized internationally as Azerbaijani.⁶

The emergence of these national discourses is a significant development rather than a coincidental occurrence. Historians such as Altay Göyüşov and Razmik Panossian illustrate that the formation of modern Armenian and Azerbaijani national identities occurred concurrently, influenced by the imperial transformations within the Russian, Soviet, and Ottoman empires.⁷ The construction of Armenian identity was profoundly affected by complex, multilocal diasporic networks as well as by repression under the Ottoman Empire,⁸ whereas Azerbaijani identity developed through engagement with both Persian and Turkic intellectual traditions, often standing in stark contrast to the Armenian narrative.⁹ Furthermore, these parallel identity formations were systematized through the policies of Soviet nationality. Joseph Stalin's notable definition of "nation," which necessitated a unique language, culture, economic structure, and a designated territorial homeland, led to the establishment of Soviet administrative boundaries and the classification of various peoples. This process solidified ethnic and territorial claims in ways that continue to influence regional narratives and expectations in contemporary contexts.¹⁰

Taking into consideration this historical framework, it is evident that peacebuilding efforts in the context of Armenia and Azerbaijan are characterized by significant challenges. Following the ceasefire in 1994, intergovernmental dialogue mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group faced considerable difficulties in reaching sustainable resolutions.¹¹ The prevailing mutual distrust and conflicting narratives regarding legitimacy hindered the potential for compromise. The Second Karabakh War of 2020 notably altered the territorial and political landscape, allowing Azerbaijan to regain control of the seven adjacent districts and portions of Nagorno-Karabakh, whilst simultaneously

5 Stephan H. Astourian, "From Ter-Petrosian to Kocharian: Explaining Continuity in Armenian Foreign Policy, 1991–1998," *Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies* (2000).

6 De Waal, *Black Garden*.

7 Altay Göyüşov, "Nation-Building and Memory Politics in Azerbaijan," *Caucasus Survey* 6, no. 2 (2019): 98–121; Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (London: Hurst, 2006).

8 Panossian, *The Armenians*.

9 Göyüşov, "Nation-Building and Memory Politics in Azerbaijan."

10 Joseph Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," 1913.

11 Sergey Markedonov, "The OSCE Minsk Group at a Crossroads," *Carnegie Moscow Center* (2016).

reshaping regional alliances.¹² Additionally, the rapid military offensive in September 2023 further altered the dynamics, culminating in the dissolution of the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and precipitating the large-scale displacement of its Armenian inhabitants.¹³ As of 2025, the emergence of new realities such as border delimitation efforts, competing transportation corridor initiatives, and redefined regional connections has generated both potential opportunities and significant risks for the establishment of enduring peace.¹⁴

In the realm of conflict studies, it is inadequate to assess the situation exclusively through the prism of military achievements or control over territories. The process of peacebuilding necessitates a critical examination of the narratives surrounding the conflict, the conceptualization of peace, and the mechanisms employed by political elites who leverage historical narratives, security dilemmas, and geopolitical alliances to substantiate their viewpoints.¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite a considerable body of literature that addresses historical and geopolitical contexts, notable gaps persist. Much of the existing research tends to focus on discrete events such as warfare, ceasefire agreements, or diplomatic negotiations without conducting a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of political discourse among various stakeholders and contexts.¹⁶ Furthermore, investigations into reconciliation, societal securitization, and identity conflicts often address these issues in a fragmented manner, neglecting the intricate and interrelated ways in which official addresses, mediation documents, bilateral communications, and treaties collectively influence the trajectories of post-conflict scenarios.¹⁷

To remedy these deficiencies, the present study investigates the dynamic post-conflict context by scrutinizing the political dialogue surrounding peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan through four significant corpora: speeches delivered at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) (2021–2025), documents from Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and European Union (OSCE/EU) mediation efforts (2021–2025), records of bilateral meetings and official communications, and pivotal treaties or draft agreements (2021–2025). Employing a Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) framework, this article delineates eight predominant themes: sovereignty, connectivity, peace agenda,

12 International Crisis Group, *After the Azerbaijani Victory in Nagorno-Karabakh*, Report No. 264, 2021.

13 “Nagorno-Karabakh: Mass Exodus of Armenians,” *BBC News*, September 2023.

14 Laurence Broers, “New Realities After 2020,” *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, 2024.

15 Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

16 *Ibid.*

17 Broers, *Anatomy of a Rivalry*.

security, humanitarian issues, mediation, memory, and reconstruction that frame the manner in which peace is conceptualized and negotiated.¹⁸

The central research questions guiding this inquiry are: “What are the dominant themes in political discourse and media narratives regarding post-conflict peace efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan?” and “How do official speeches, treaties, and diplomatic statements frame the future of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan?”.

This study employs a comparative, cross-corpus analysis to illustrate that the concept of peace is not merely the result of declarations or negotiations; rather, it is a complex construct that is articulated, represented, and organized within various diplomatic contexts. By examining trends in elite discourse, it can achieve a more nuanced understanding of the political, diplomatic, and socio-economic factors that influence regional stability in the South Caucasus. This methodology ultimately sheds light on both the persistent challenges and the potential opportunities for achieving sustainable peace in a region where the legacies of conflict are deeply rooted, yet where evolving geopolitical dynamics may present unique prospects for collaborative efforts.

1. Historical Overview of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is underpinned by profound historical, imperial, and geopolitical foundations, influenced by evolving borders, rival national narratives, and intricate demographic changes. An analysis of the present post-conflict landscape necessitates contextualizing the disagreement within a broader trajectory of political transformation that commenced in the late nineteenth century. This section aims to deliver a succinct, yet analytically robust historical summary, leveraging both established scholarly work and contemporary historiographical discussions. Each subsection is complemented by a map that illustrates the territorial and administrative contexts pertinent to its respective timeframe.

1.1. Imperial Legacies and the Formation of Territorial Identities (1881–1921)

The latter part of the nineteenth century marked a significant era of intensified imperial competition between the Russian Empire in the Caucasus and

¹⁸ Anna Ohanyan, *Networked Governance and Peacebuilding* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

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The Russian Revolution of 1917 significantly disrupted the existing imperial governance, resulting in a political void throughout the Caucasus region. Local entities, including Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Georgians, were compelled to operate within the disintegrating frameworks of authority amidst widespread violence and famine.²² As civil war unfolded in the area, the Ottoman Empire reestablished its military presence in various regions of eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, moving towards territories characterized by diverse demographics. The tumultuous circumstances of 1917 and 1918 exacerbated intercommunal violence, heightened ethnic divisions, and expedited the politicization of territorial disputes, as illustrated in Figure 2. Within this tumultuous context, Armenian militias and Azerbaijani self-defense groups emerged, both communities striving to secure pivotal settlements and transportation routes.²³ The evolving distribution of power during this time presaged subsequent administrative structures that would be implemented under Soviet governance.

Figure 2. October 1917-May 1918: The beginning of Civil War and Foreign Interventions (*Source*)²⁴



22 Institute of Armenian Studies, “Chronology of Events.”

23 Ibid.

24 Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Caucasus*.

In the aftermath of the dissolution of the Transcaucasian Federation in May 1918, three sovereign states emerged: as illustrated in Figure 3, these are the First Republic of Armenia, the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Democratic Republic of Georgia.²⁵ Territorial conflicts arose promptly, particularly concerning the regions of Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and Zangezur, which are notable for their ethnically diverse populations and strategic significance.

Figure 3. May–November 1918: Emergence of Independent States in Transcaucasia (Source)²⁶



Ongoing historiographical discussions persist concerning the administrative and demographic evolution of Zangezur/Syunik, as researchers highlight the manner in which conflicting Armenian and Azerbaijani narratives have historically contextualized the region’s past to bolster contemporary assertions.²⁷ The precariousness of these nascent republics, coupled with their intersecting territorial ambitions, has engendered the fundamental disputes that continue to influence the geopolitical dynamics of the region.

25 De Waal, Black Garden, 2003.

26 Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Caucasus*.

27 Velihanly, “Historiographical Problems of Zangezur’s History.”

Post-Conflict Dynamics in the South Caucasus: Evaluating the Future of Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Efforts

By the year 1921, the Bolsheviks had successfully consolidated their authority in the Caucasus region, leading to the establishment of the Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian Soviet Socialist Republics. In alignment with the Soviet policy regarding nationalities, Moscow introduced new administrative demarcations as depicted in Figure 4, which included the establishment of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic.²⁸ This decision formalized a territorial compromise, whereby the predominantly Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh was placed under the administrative jurisdiction of Baku. Historical records indicate that this choice was influenced by intricate geopolitical factors, such as the necessity of preserving relations with Türkiye and the goal of ensuring stability in the South Caucasus within the context of Soviet governance.²⁹ Moreover, the Soviet Union's approach to territorial organization, coupled with Stalin's significant doctrine asserting that "nations" necessitate a defined territory, language, and historical narrative, exacerbated the emergence of conflicting ethnonational identities.³⁰

Figure 4. 1921: early Administrative Divisions in the Soviet Caucasus
(Source)³¹



28 De Waal, Black Garden, 2003.

29 Ibid.; Panossian, *The Armenians*, 2006.

30 Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," 1913.

31 Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Caucasus*.

1.2. Late Soviet Era Tensions and the Road to War (1988–1991)

The final years of the Soviet Union (1988–1991) marked a significant increase in nationalist activities. The policy of glasnost facilitated a relaxation of political constraints, prompting the Armenian inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh to advocate for their integration with Armenia. This movement led to widespread demonstrations and reactions of counter-mobilization within Azerbaijan.³² Notably, violent incidents such as the pogroms in Sumgait (1988) and Baku (1990), coupled with forcible displacements, intensified the polarization of both communities. The timeline provided by the United States (US) Congress underscores how the disintegration of Soviet repressive structures fostered a climate conducive to unchecked nationalist tensions.³³ By 1991, amidst the disintegration of the Soviet Union, both Armenia and Azerbaijan, with borders as illustrated in Figure 5, proclaimed their sovereignty, thereby creating a favorable context for an overt conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Figure 5. 1989-1991: Overview of the Ethnopolitical Rivalries at the Conclusion of Soviet Era (*Source*)³⁴



32 De Waal, *Black Garden*, 2003.

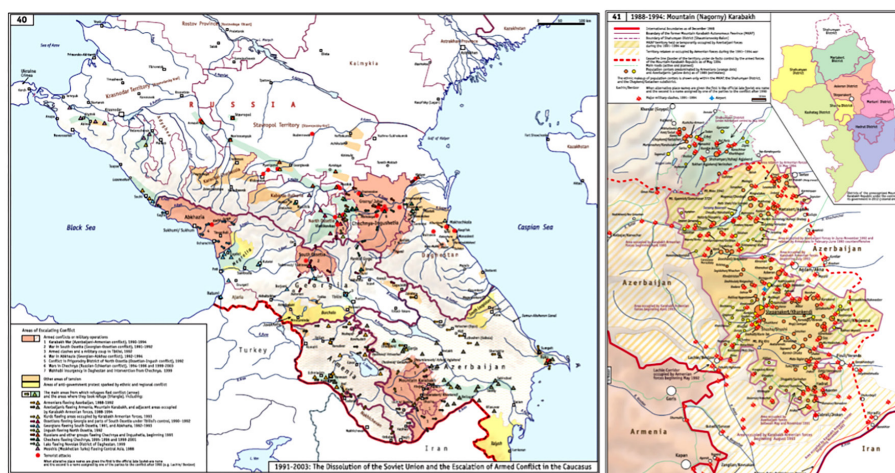
33 Institute of Armenian Studies, "Chronology of Events."

34 Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Caucasus*.

1.3. The First Nagorno-Karabakh War and the 1994 Ceasefire (1988–1994) and Geopolitical Shifts (1991–2003)

The First Nagorno-Karabakh War, occurring from 1988 to 1994, led to extensive population displacement, considerable fatalities, and the establishment of Armenian military dominance over the Nagorno-Karabakh region along with seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan, as illustrated in Figures 6a and 6b.³⁵ By the time the Bishkek Ceasefire Agreement was reached in May 1994, Armenian military forces had secured a continuous land corridor that linked Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh through the Lachin/Berdzor route.

Figures 6a and 6b. 1991-2003: The Dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Escalation of Armed Conflict in the Caucasus and 1988-1994: Mountain (Nagorny) Karabakh (*Source*)³⁶



International mediation efforts, predominantly conducted through the OSCE Minsk Group, have proven inadequate in transforming military developments into a sustainable political resolution. Scholarly critiques from the 2000s and 2010s have underscored the Minsk Group’s constrained influence and its vulnerability to the geopolitical rivalries among its co-chair nations.³⁷ These inherent structural deficiencies have facilitated the establishment of a “frozen conflict,” intermittently disrupted by skirmishes along the frontlines.

35 Walter Landgraf and Nareg Seferian, “A ‘Frozen Conflict’ Boils Over: Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023 and Future Implications,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, January 2024, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/01/a-frozen-conflict-boils-over-nagorno-karabakh-in-2023-and-future-implications/>

36 Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Caucasus*.

37 Cansu Güleç. *The Nagorno-Karabakh Dispute: Why an Intractable Conflict for Armenia and Azerbaijan?* Working paper. Buenos Aires: Centro Argentino de Estudios Internacionales, 2015.

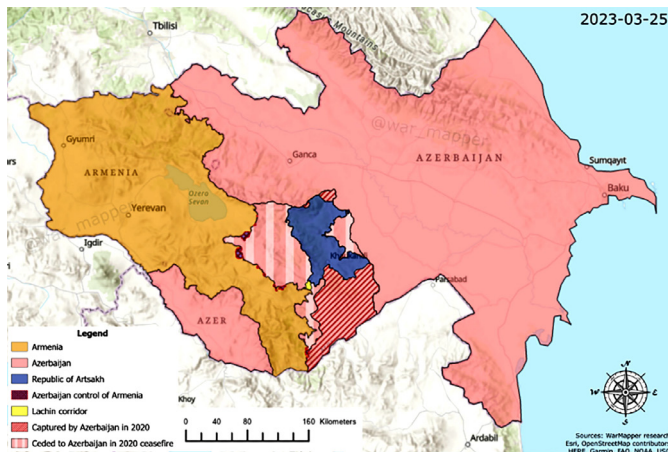
During the late 1990s and early 2000s, Armenia consolidated political institutions while Azerbaijan underwent significant economic transformation through energy development under Heydar Aliyev. However, stability remained fragile. Clashes persisted along the line of contact, and nationalist rhetoric in both countries entrenched narratives of historical grievance.³⁸

Regional stakeholders, notably Russia, Türkiye, and Iran, have significantly influenced the diplomatic environment. The territorial arrangements established during the Soviet era, alongside the enduring impacts of Cold War dynamics, persist in shaping strategic alliances and affecting processes of peace negotiations.³⁹

1.4. The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020)

In September-November 2020, Azerbaijan launched a large-scale military operation that decisively altered territorial control like in Figure 7. Backed by advanced drone capabilities and strategic support from Türkiye, Azerbaijan retook the seven districts and captured the city of Shusha/Shushi, a symbolic and strategic stronghold.⁴⁰

Figure 7. November 2020: Territorial Control (Source)⁴¹



38 Paul, Amanda, and Dennis Sammut. *Nagorno-Karabakh and the Arc of Crises on Europe's Borders*. European Policy Centre Policy Brief, 3 February 2016. Brussels: European Policy Centre.

39 Bradley Reynolds, *CSCE/OSCE Mediation in Nagorno-Karabakh: Implications for Institutional Evolution and Ideas of European Security* (master's thesis, University of Helsinki, 2018).

40 Landgraf and Seferian, "A 'Frozen Conflict' Boils Over."

41 <https://www.warmapper.org/updates/nagorno-karabakh-ceasfire-violation>

The trilateral statement issued on November 10, 2020, instituted a revised status quo, characterized by the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Furthermore, the Lachin corridor, which is restricted in width, persisted as the exclusive conduit connecting Armenia to the Armenian populace in Karabakh. As a result, Azerbaijan acquired considerable influence in directing the negotiations that ensued following the conflict.

1.5. Azerbaijan’s September 2023 Offensive and the End of Artsakh

On September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan initiated a swift “anti-terror operation,” which led to the surrender of the de facto authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh within a span of 24 hours.⁴² The Armenian populace, estimated to exceed 100,000 individuals, largely evacuated to Armenia within a week, signifying the dissolution of the self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (Artsakh), as illustrated in Figure 8. This occurrence significantly altered the dynamics of the conflict: for the first time since 1988, there emerged no territory within Azerbaijan administered by Armenians.

Figure 8. Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan (*Source*)⁴³



42 Ibid.

43 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nagorno-Karabakh#/media/1/401669/181331>

1.6. The Post-2023 Landscape and 2025 Outlook

By the year 2025, discussions regarding border delimitation and connectivity initiatives most notably the Zangezur Corridor are expected to remain pivotal in the realm of regional diplomacy. Azerbaijan harbors aspirations for establishing a direct transit route through Armenia’s Syunik/Zangezur region to facilitate a connection with Nakhchivan. In contrast, scholarly perspectives from Armenia underscore the intricate historical evolution of Zangezur’s demographics and contest its characterization as an “ancestral Azerbaijani corridor” as illustrated in Figure 9.⁴⁴ Concurrently, Armenia and Azerbaijan are in the process of negotiations centered on border demarcation, regional trade, and the potential normalization of relations. The dissolution of Artsakh, along with a realignment of Russian influence and the transformation of regional alliances, has engendered a novel geopolitical landscape. Within this context, the attainment of sustainable peace is contingent upon the reconciliation of issues related to sovereignty, security, and regional connectivity.

Figure 9. Zangezur Corridor (Source: Eldem, *Russia’s war on Ukraine and the rise of the middle corridor as a third vector of Eurasian connectivity*)⁴⁵



44 Velihanly, “Historiographical Problems of Zangezur’s History.”

45 Tuba Eldem. “Russia’s war on Ukraine and the rise of the middle corridor as a third vector of Eurasian connectivity”, SWP Comment, 2022/C 64, 28 October. doi: 10.18449/2022C64

2. Literature Review

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has prompted a considerable and varied body of academic literature encompassing fields such as international relations, conflict resolution, studies of nationalism, critical geography, and post-Soviet political dynamics. This review aims to synthesize pivotal elements of this scholarship to frame the current study's emphasis on TCA. Three principal areas of research emerge as particularly pertinent: (1) inquiries into conflict transformation and the processes involved in post-conflict peacebuilding, (2) analyses of geopolitical dynamics in the South Caucasus along with the historical development of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and (3) examinations of discourse, narrative formation, and identity construction within protracted territorial conflicts. Collectively, these scholarly contributions provide insights into the conceptualization, articulation, and contestation of peace in the region, while also highlighting enduring gaps that substantiate the necessity for the current research.

2.1. Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

The foundational literature in the field of conflict resolution underscores that transitions from conflict to peace are seldom straightforward processes. Researchers like John Paul Lederach contend that achieving enduring peace necessitates a profound transformation of social dynamics rather than simply an end to violent confrontations.⁴⁶ In a parallel vein, Roland Paris draws attention to the inherent conflicts between international peacebuilding initiatives and the prevailing political conditions within affected regions, suggesting that hasty movements towards democratization or institutional development may exacerbate instability in already vulnerable situations.⁴⁷ These theoretical perspectives hold significant pertinence to the Armenia-Azerbaijan situation, where recurring cycles of violence continue in spite of numerous ceasefires and mediation efforts.

In the context of the South Caucasus, numerous scholars assert that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict exhibited numerous features characteristic of a "protracted social conflict," which encompasses identity insecurity, competing territorial claims, and historical trauma.³ Criticism has been directed at international mediation efforts, particularly those conducted by the OSCE Minsk Group,

46 John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: USIP, 1997).

47 Roland Paris, *At War's End*.

for failing to adequately address the fundamental causes of the conflict. Laurence Broers posits that the frameworks employed by the Minsk Group tend to prioritize territorial considerations while neglecting more profound relational dynamics, thereby leaving essential identity concerns unresolved.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, Güleç observes that the Minsk Group's perceived bias and vulnerability to geopolitical influences have resulted in diminished trust levels between the conflicting parties.⁴⁹

The prevailing body of literature indicates that negotiations conducted after 1994 predominantly centered on state-level diplomacy, frequently neglecting the societal aspects of peace. Numerous studies have underscored that negotiations dominated by elite actors inhibited constructive dialogue among diverse communities, thereby perpetuating entrenched narratives rather than facilitating their transformation.⁵⁰ This focus on diplomacy among elites is the central concern of the current study, which investigates the discursive patterns found within speeches, agreements, and diplomatic statements across various significant contexts.

2.2. Historical and Geopolitical Scholarship on the South Caucasus

A significant body of literature focuses on the South Caucasus as a contentious geopolitical region, influenced by the ramifications of imperial legacies and strategic conflicts. Thomas de Waal's influential work, *Black Garden*, serves as a crucial resource for comprehending the historical foundations of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, elucidating the impacts of Soviet administrative policies on territorial disputes.⁵¹ Similarly, Ronald Suny's research on the formation of national identities in the Caucasus highlights the ways in which contemporary Armenian and Azerbaijani identities developed in the context of imperial governance and revolutionary upheavals.⁵²

Contemporary academic discourse has increasingly emphasized the influence of external actors in determining the course of conflicts. Research conducted by scholars such as Svante Cornell and Fiona Hill illustrates the competitive dynamics between Russia, Türkiye, and Iran as they vie for regional dominance, frequently representing their interventions in the context of stability, ethnic

48 Broers, *Anatomy of a Rivalry*.

49 Cansu Güleç, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Dispute*.

50 Broers, *Anatomy of a Rivalry*.

51 Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden*.

52 Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

affiliations, or energy route considerations.⁵³ Following the year 2020, subsequent investigations have shed light on Türkiye's expanded involvement in Azerbaijan's military strategy, the ongoing peacekeeping operations led by Russia, and the evolving nature of Western participation in the region.⁵⁴

Historiographical discussions have emerged as a crucial facet of scholarly discourse, particularly in relation to contentious territories such as Zangezur/Syunik, Nakhchivan, and Karabakh. The article titled "Some of the Historiographical Problems of Zangezur's History" elucidates how historians from Armenia and Azerbaijan have formulated opposing narratives concerning the demographic composition, political historical accounts, and cultural heritage of this region.⁵⁵ These ongoing debates underscore not only the divergence in factual interpretation but also highlight conflicting epistemological frameworks that are rooted in processes of nation-building and the validation of territorial claims.

The timeline of the USC and the analysis of the "Frozen Conflict" similarly delineate the ways in which Soviet policies, the fragmentation of elites during the perestroika period, and the power vacuums evident from 1988 to 1991 contributed to the onset of violence. These sources substantiate the assertion that the conflict transcends mere territorial disputes; instead, it arises from complex processes involving the disintegration of imperial structures, demographic shifts, and the interplay of divergent modernities.

2.3. Discourse, Narratives, and Identity Construction

A significant body of academic literature examines discourses, identity narratives, and symbolic politics within the context of ethnonational conflicts. Scholars including Cynthia Enloe and Rogers Brubaker emphasize the role of states in demarcating identity boundaries through the use of political rhetoric, cultural symbols, and institutional structures.⁵⁶ In the case of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the discursive tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis have been extensively documented. For instance, Stephan Astourian's seminal article delineates how both groups have constructed parallel narratives of victimization and historical justification, narratives that

53 Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (London: Routledge, 2001).

54 Fiona Hill and Kemal Kirisci, *Conflict Resolution and Regional Cooperation in the Caucasus* (Brookings, 2021).

55 Velihanly, "Historiographical Problems of Zangezur's History."

56 Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

became more entrenched during the late tsarist and Soviet eras.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Altay Göyüşov and Razmik Panossian illustrate that the national identities of Armenians and Azerbaijanis did not develop in isolation but emerged through a process of dialogue with one another and in relation to broader imperial ideologies.⁵⁸

Scholarly literature indicates that political oratory, state-sponsored propaganda, and public memorial events convey symbolic meanings that significantly influence public perceptions of conflict and peace. Intractable conflicts frequently depend on a process referred to as “narrative closure,” whereby historical events are viewed solely through prevailing nationalist frameworks, rendering compromise an expensive political endeavor.⁵⁹ Research concerning protracted conflicts suggests that discourse is instrumental in perpetuating conflict, even amidst relatively stable conditions.

Despite the extensive literature on the subject, a notable deficiency persists: there is a scarcity of systematic comparisons of discourses across various diplomatic contexts over time. While current research often focuses on the examination of individual leaders’ speeches or particular negotiation sessions, a thorough thematic mapping that encompasses multiple corpora including UNGA speeches, *OSCE/EU* documents, bilateral communications, and treaty drafts has yet to be undertaken. This study aims to directly fill this void by utilizing a structured TCA on a multi-corpus dataset that covers the period from 2021 to 2025.

2.4. TCA in Post-Conflict Studies

TCA serves as a methodological connection between interpretive and systematic methodologies in the examination of political texts. Emerging from qualitative research paradigms, TDA seeks to uncover recurring themes, constructs, or narrative frameworks within intricate textual data. Researchers, including Braun and Clarke, emphasize that TDA enables scholars to grasp both the frequency of themes and the interpretive subtleties, thereby avoiding the simplification of texts to solely quantitative measures.⁶⁰

57 Stephan H. Astourian, “Modern Nationalism and Historical Revisionism in Armenia,” 2000.

58 Göyüşov, “Nation-Building and Memory Politics in Azerbaijan.”

59 Daniel Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

60 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

In the field of conflict studies, TCA has been utilized in examining peace accords, transitional justice initiatives, and media narratives, aiming to elucidate how various actors characterize violence, accountability, and reconciliation.⁶¹ Nonetheless, the application of TDA within the context of Armenia and Azerbaijan is notably restricted. Most of the existing scholarships predominantly employ narrative analysis, critical discourse analysis, or historical contextualization, rather than engaging in rigorous systematic thematic coding. This research addresses methodological deficiency by constructing an eight-theme framework, which encompasses sovereignty, connectivity, peace agenda, security, humanitarian issues, mediation, memory, and reconstruction, applying it uniformly across all datasets. This methodological approach facilitates the longitudinal comparison of patterns across various institutional contexts, thereby providing valuable insights into the construction of peace following 2020. In its pursuit, the study engages with several interrelated gaps identified in the existing literature: a predominant focus on territorial and geopolitical considerations that neglects the importance of discursive framing; a fragmented analysis of speech and rhetoric that lacks a comparative, multi-contextual perspective; insufficient incorporation of developments post-2020, such as the 2020 war and the 2023 “lightning” offensive, within longitudinal examinations; and the lack of comprehensive thematic frequency mapping that could effectively connect elite diplomatic narratives, institutional mediation initiatives, and treaty language within a cohesive analytical framework.

3. Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative research framework based on TCA to investigate the discursive constructions of peace, conflict, sovereignty, and regional integration within the political communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan from 2021 to 2025. Considering the swift geopolitical changes that emerged following the conflicts in 2020 and 2023, public discourse across diplomatic, intergovernmental, and bilateral contexts has increasingly served as a fundamental mechanism through which political entities articulate their interests and propose visions for regional order. Consequently, the methodological approach adopted in this study systematically and rigorously captures this complex communicative landscape, integrating interpretive depth with clear coding methodologies.

61 Paul Gready and Simon Robins, *Transitional Justice and the Politics of Peacebuilding* (London: Routledge, 2014).

3.1. Research Design and Rationale

TCA is particularly effective for the examination of intricate political texts, as it allows researchers to uncover recurring themes, conceptual groupings, and narrative frameworks within extensive qualitative datasets.⁶² In contrast to critical discourse analysis, which primarily centers on ideological critique, and narrative analysis, which prioritizes the structure of narratives, TCA provides a systematic methodology for investigating thematic elements across temporal and institutional dimensions. This methodological approach is notably pertinent to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict for three primary reasons. First, the nature of the conflict is profoundly discursive. Public declarations regarding peace initiatives, ceasefire proposals, accusations of provocation, and appeals to international law originate from leaders, foreign ministries, and multilateral organizations. These rhetorical expressions significantly influence interpretations of the conflict's legitimacy and either facilitate or hinder diplomatic compromise. Second, following the Second Karabakh War in 2020 and the "lightning offensive" in 2023, there have been considerable transformations in the diplomatic context. A decrease in Russian influence coincided with heightened mediation efforts from the EU and strategic recalibrations by the US and various Middle Eastern countries. These shifts are most prominent in political discourse, underscoring the necessity of discourse analysis in comprehending post-war developments. Third, current scholarly research typically focuses on individual speeches or discrete negotiation phases, rather than the comprehensive ecosystem of political communication.⁶³ Consequently, this study enhances the existing body of literature by exploring the simultaneous construction of peace across four distinct arenas: the UN General Assembly, OSCE/EU mediation frameworks, bilateral diplomatic dialogues, and formal treaty engagements.⁶⁴

3.2. Data Sources and Corpus Construction

The study analyzes a carefully curated corpus of four distinct document groups, covering the period January 2021 to March 2025.

62 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

63 Laurence Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

64 See, for example: Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden* (New York: NYU Press, 2013); Edward Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict* (London: Dartmouth, 1990); Stephan Astourian, "Modern Nationalism and Historical Revisionism in Armenia," 2000.

3.2.1. UNGA Speeches (2021-2024)

Official statements delivered by the leaders or foreign ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia, Türkiye, and the US during the UN General Debate. These speeches were selected because they: articulate national positions in a multilateral setting, reveal how leadership frames regional security and sovereignty, and often include direct or implicit references to South Caucasus affairs.

3.2.2. OSCE/EU Mediation and Institutional Documents (2021-2025)

OSCE Minsk Group statements, European Council/EEAS documents, Charles Michel trilateral readouts and EU mediation announcements reflect institutional narratives of peace, capturing how mediators conceptualize the conflict and propose solutions.

3.2.3. Bilateral Meetings and Readouts (2021-2025)

Official transcripts or summaries of meetings between Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders, Armenia-Russia and Azerbaijan-Russia, Armenia-Türkiye and Azerbaijan-Türkiye, Armenia-Iran and Azerbaijan-Iran, US-Armenia-Azerbaijan engagements reveal how states negotiate peace outside multilateral structures.

3.2.4. Treaties and Agreements (2024-2025)

The 2025 peace agreement draft and Armenia's 2025 accession to the Ashgabat Agreement texts provide the clearest formalization of states' intentions and obligations. All documents are in English or translated into English to maintain consistency across the corpus.

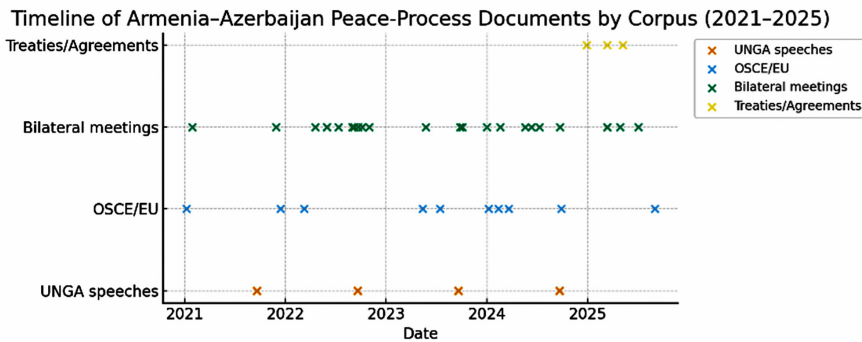
The empirical corpus for the present study comprises a total of 64 documents. This collection includes 24 speeches and statements delivered at the UN General Assembly (2021–2024) by the head of States or representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia, Türkiye, and the US; 22 transcripts and official summaries from bilateral meetings; 16 documents from the OSCE/EU that pertain to mediation efforts, regional security, and normalization processes (2021-2025); as well as 2 significant treaties or agreements that were either

adopted or initialed in the post-2020 timeframe. Collectively, these 64 texts form a coherent and comparable dataset, which is instrumental for analyzing the discursive constructions of peace, sovereignty, and regional order within the context of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

3.3. Corpus Timeline and Document Distribution

To ensure chronological coherence, each document was dated and categorized using metadata. The resulting dataset visually demonstrates the temporal distribution of peace-related political communication, represented in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Timeline of Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace-Process Documents by Corpus (2021–2025)

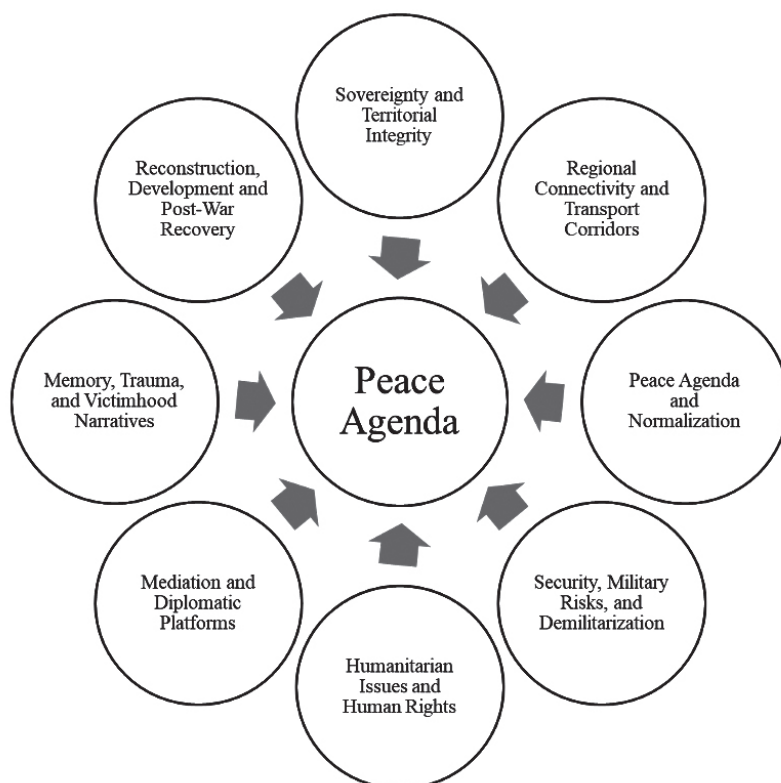


The timeline supports a process-tracing logic, showing how discourse evolves in relation to military, diplomatic, and political developments.

3.4. Thematic Framework Development

A preliminary open reading of the entire corpus revealed eight recurring conceptual categories, each repeatedly invoked across documents. These categories were consolidated into the study's eight-theme analytical framework, visualized in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Dominant Themes in Armenia-Azerbaijan Post-Conflict Discourse
(Core Analytical Framework)



3.5. Coding Procedure

The analysis proceeded through several steps. Step 1 (Close Reading): Each document was read thoroughly to capture tone, narrative structure, and explicit policy priorities; Step 2 (Initial Coding): Key sentences, phrases, and paragraphs were coded under one or more of the eight themes and coding accounted for explicit and implicit references (e.g., “unblocking communication” coded under connectivity); Step 3 (Frequency Counting): The number of coded segments per theme was calculated for each corpus, producing the quantitative summaries presented in Table 1 Raw Frequencies by Corpus and Table 2 Relative Intensity Across the Four Arenas and these tables provide a comparative overview of which themes dominate in which contexts; Step 4 (Cross-Corpus Comparison): Themes were examined across corpora to identify convergences and divergences. For example: UNGA speeches emphasize sovereignty and geopolitics. OSCE/EU documents

emphasize mediation and connectivity. Bilaterals emphasize security and peace agenda. Treaties emphasize reconstruction and border delimitation; Step 5 (Longitudinal Analysis): Themes were then traced over time (2021–2025) to identify shifts in discursive priorities, visualized in Figure 12 (Evolution of Core Theme Clusters (2021-2025)): This evolutionary analysis reveals, for example, the rise of connectivity discourse post-2020 and the dominance of peace agenda and delimitation rhetoric after 2023.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section elucidates the empirical findings derived from the four corpora examined in this research: UNGA speeches, documents from the OSCE/EU, records of Bilateral and Trilateral Meetings, and significant Treaties and Agreements. Employing the eight-theme analytical framework established in the methodology, this section integrates the raw frequency counts, relative intensity scores, and temporal trends in thematic focus from 2021 to 2025. The objective is to analyze the ways in which peace is articulated, conceptualized, negotiated, and institutionalized within various diplomatic contexts.

The findings presented in this section synthesize patterns emerging from four key corpora that collectively shape the architecture of post-conflict discourse between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The comparison of these arenas reveals how different diplomatic spaces construct, prioritize, and legitimize competing visions of peace.

4.1 Raw Thematic Frequencies Across Corpora

Each corpus represents a distinct diplomatic arena: the UNGA as a platform of global messaging, OSCE/EU as mediation frameworks, bilateral meetings as negotiation channels, and treaties as mechanisms of legal codification. Table 1 and 2 provides the quantitative foundation and heatmap of the analysis by showing the raw number of coded references to each theme.

**Post-Conflict Dynamics in the South Caucasus:
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Table 1. Raw Frequencies by Corpus

Theme / Corpus	UNGA Speeches	OSCE/EU texts	Bilateral Meetings	Key Treaties/ Agreements
1. Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, Borders	71	42	53	18
2. Regional Connectivity & Corridors	33	58	47	21
3. Peace Agenda & Normalization	96	71	82	25
4. Security, Demilitarization, Border Stability	93	45	56	16
5. Humanitarian & Human Rights	64	22	19	5
6. Mediation & Peace Platforms	701	119	91	7
7. Memory, Trauma, Victimhood	1	3	3	0
8. Economic Reconstruction & Development	102	18	41	11

Table 2. Heatmap by Corpus

Theme / Corpus	UNGA Speeches	OSCE/EU texts	Bilateral meetings	Key Treaties/ Agreements
1. Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, Borders	● high	● high	● high	● high
2. Regional Connectivity & Corridors	● medium	● high	● very high	● very high
3. Peace Agenda & Normalization	● high	● very high	● very high	● very high
4. Security, Demilitarization, Border Stability	● high	● high	● high	● medium
5. Humanitarian & Human Rights	● high	● medium	● low	● low-medium
6. Mediation & Peace Platforms	● very high	● very high	● high	● very low
7. Memory, Trauma, Victimhood	● marginal	● marginal	● marginal	● almost absent
8. Economic Reconstruction & Development	● high	● medium	● high	● low

Three prominent patterns emerge from the analysis: Mediation is notably prevalent, particularly in speeches delivered at the UNGA, with a total of 701 references. This underscores the tendency of global diplomatic discourse to emphasize the process of peace over its substantive elements. Additionally, Connectivity and the Peace Agenda are predominant in bilateral meetings

and treaties, highlighting their function as platforms for problem-solving. Conversely, narratives concerning memory, trauma, and victimhood are largely absent from formal diplomatic discussions, revealing a significant structural silence regarding historical grievances.

The coded intensities reveal that the more formal the document (contractual treaties), the narrower the thematic scope. Treaties prioritize sovereignty, connectivity, and peace agenda clauses while completely avoiding memory discourse. Across all four arenas, Memory & Victimhood remains the single least mentioned theme, which is consistent with diplomatic incentives to avoid destabilizing historical grievances.

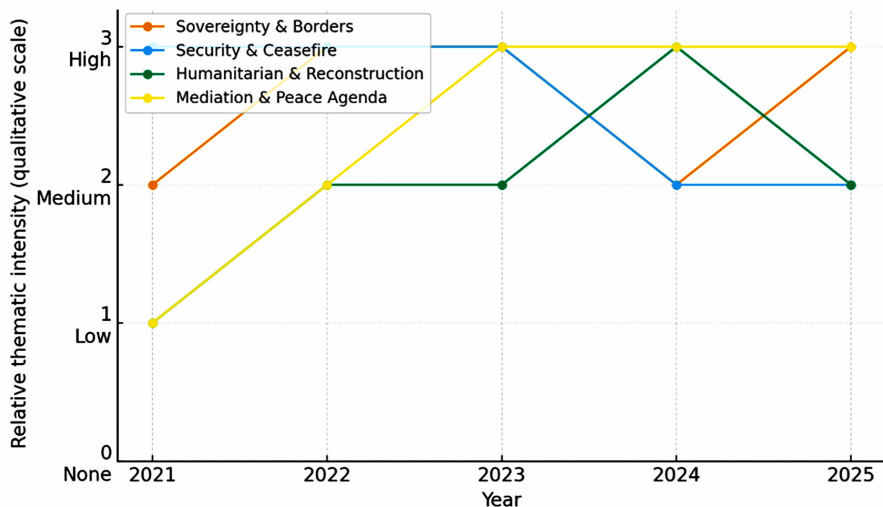
4.2. Evolution of Themes over Time (2021-2025)

Temporal analysis reveals a notable evolution in the emphasis on thematic clusters over the years. This progression is represented visually in Figure 12. The longitudinal examination highlights four principal clusters: Cluster 1 (Sovereignty & Borders): From 2021 to 2023, there is a rapid escalation in emphasis, followed by a slight decline in 2024, and a resurgence in 2025. This trajectory reflects Armenia's constitutional discussions, Azerbaijan's efforts in border demarcation, and Western requests for mutual recognition. Cluster 2 (Security & Ceasefire): This theme remains consistently stable at a medium to high level, with a minor decrease in 2024 attributed to a renewed focus on humanitarian issues. This stability mirrors the diminished frequency of large-scale confrontations following the 2020 conflict, albeit with ongoing references to border incidents. Cluster 3 (Humanitarian & Reconstruction): This cluster maintains a steady medium emphasis, peaking in 2024 amidst the exodus from Karabakh and the displacement of refugees, and subsequently declining in 2025 as discussions pivot towards long-term developmental strategies. Cluster 4 (Mediation & Peace Agenda): This cluster experiences a significant increase from 2021 to 2023, stabilizing at a peak level in 2024–2025. This trend is indicative of the intensified diplomatic efforts from the EU, the US, and Russia, each striving to influence the peace settlement process. Overall, the timeline suggests an increasing convergence around three primary priorities by 2025: recognition of borders, establishment of connectivity corridors, and the formulation of a treaty-based peace agreement.

Across the period of 2021-2025, thematic emphasis follows a clear crescendo pattern. Early years emphasize sovereignty and ceasefire stabilization, mid-

period texts center on mediation and normalization, while the later period shifts toward treaties, border delimitation, and connectivity as long-term infrastructure of peace.

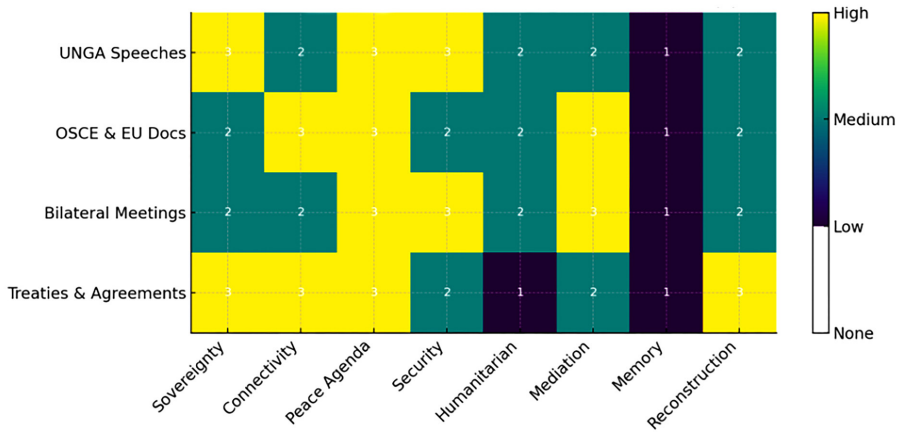
Figure 12. Evolution of Core Theme Clusters in Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Discourse (2021-2025)



4.3. Relative Intensity Across the Four Arenas

Figure 13 converts the raw frequencies into four ordinal categories: very high, high, medium, low, absent. The analysis reveals that elevated concentrations are found in the domains of Connectivity (OSCE/EU, Bilaterals, Treaties), Peace Agenda (across all corpora), and Mediation (specific to UNGA and OSCE/EU). Moderate concentrations are observed in the area of Security (focused on Treaties) and Humanitarian issues (related to OSCE/EU), whereas low or negligible concentrations pertain to Memory/Trauma (across all corpora) and Humanitarian aspects (associated with Treaties). The coding intensities indicate that as documents become more formalized (such as contractual treaties), their thematic focus tends to become increasingly restricted. Treaties are inclined to emphasize clauses pertaining to sovereignty, connectivity, and the peace agenda while entirely excluding discourse related to memory.

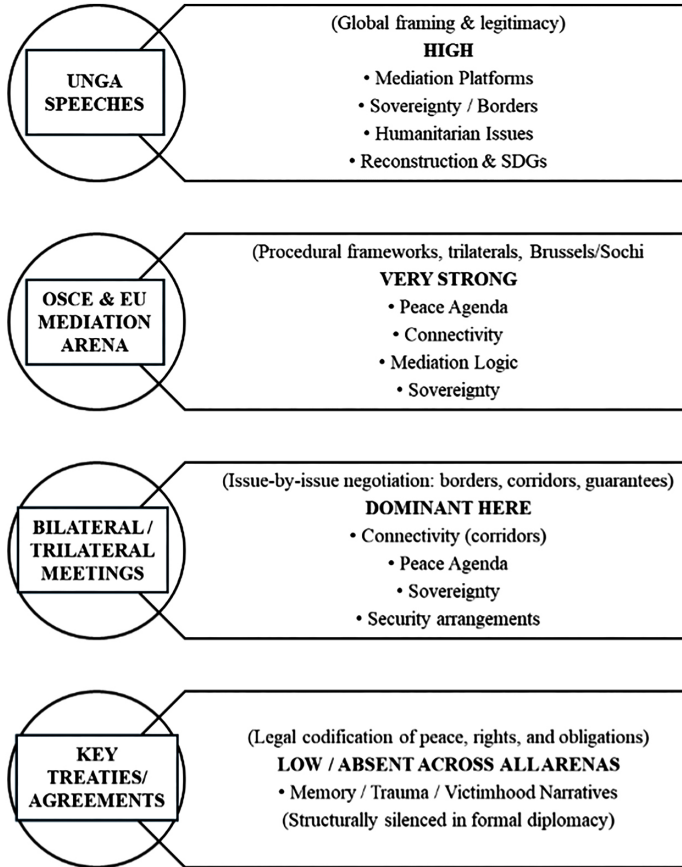
Figure 13. Relative Intensity Across Corpora



4.4. Architecture of the Post-Conflict Discourse

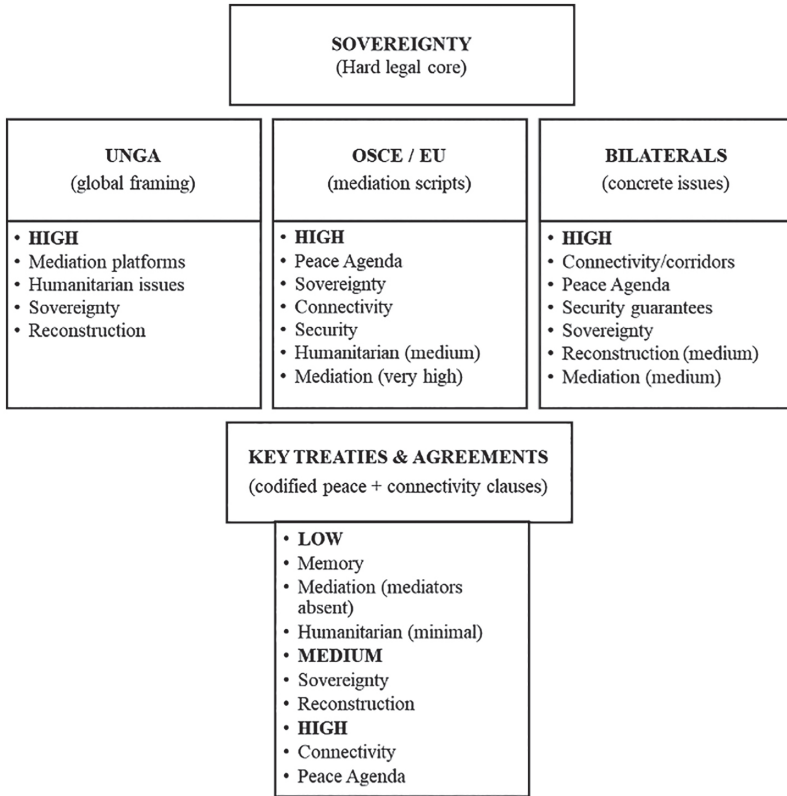
The multi-tiered architecture of peace discourse is encapsulated in two conceptual diagrams found in Figure 14 and 15. First illustration highlights that the UNGA serves as a source of global legitimacy and narrative framing, the OSCE/EU embodies the logic of mediation and procedural design, bilateral meetings facilitate the practical negotiation of borders, corridors, guarantees, and treaties, which culminate in the legal codification of peace and connectivity. These four layers function within a vertical hierarchy, where each stratum compensates for the deficiencies of the others: UNGA contributes discourse legitimacy; OSCE/EU provides mediation scripts; bilateral meetings ensure practical implementation; and treaties offer legal finalization. This hierarchical structure elucidates the capacity for peace processes to persist, even amidst geopolitical tensions.

Figure 14. Architecture of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Post-Conflict Discourse (2021–2025)



Second illustration elucidates that Sovereignty serves as the fundamental legal basis underpinning all corpora, while Connectivity and the Peace Agenda emerge as the most prominent shared priorities, exhibiting significant strength across various frameworks such as OSCE/EU, Bilateral agreements, and Treaties. Humanitarian topics, though prominently featured in the UNGA, exhibit a notable decline in prevalence within treaties. Furthermore, themes of Memory and trauma are systematically marginalized in all diplomatic contexts. This thematic arrangement implies that the discourse surrounding post-conflict situations is oriented towards a forward-thinking and technocratic approach, rather than a focus on historical analysis.

Figure 15. The Eight Dominant Themes Across the Four Arenas



4.5. TCA (Synthesis of All Findings)

4.5.1. Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, and Borders

The data show that sovereignty is constant across all corpora. This theme intensifies as the peace process shifts toward drafting concrete legal texts in 2024-2025. Sovereignty discourse revolves around Border demarcation, Territorial integrity, Non-interference and Recognition of borders. UNGA emphasizes sovereignty for legitimacy; OSCE/EU use it as a procedural anchor; bilaterals negotiate borders; treaties codify them. This confirms that Theme 1 (Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, and Borders) is not just present, but the core legal grammar of the entire post-conflict discourse. Everything else is layered on top of this.

4.5.2. Regional Connectivity & Corridors

Connectivity remains one of the most prominent themes characterized by high intensity. The focus on corridors (such as Zangezur and Lachin), transportation, economic pathways, and energy flow is conceptualized as a collective interest among stakeholders. It functions as a tool for negotiation in bilateral discussions, a mechanism for building trust within the framework of the OSCE/EU, and an obligation enshrined in the draft agreements for 2025. This aligns seamlessly with Theme 2 (Regional Connectivity and Transport Corridors), as it is presented in the political context of the UN General Assembly as a vision and an opportunity; within the OSCE/EU, it is regarded as a regional public good; and in bilateral agreements and treaties, it is recognized as enforceable logistical arrangements.

4.5.3. Peace Agenda & Normalization

This theme represents the most equitable aspect across various domains. UNGA employs the term “peace agenda” in a symbolic manner, while the OSCE/EU highlights it through procedural means. In contrast, bilateral meetings approach this theme in a substantive fashion. Critical subcomponents include mutual recognition, the cessation of claims, the formulation of draft treaties, and measures to build confidence. Theme 3, which pertains to the Peace Agenda and Normalization, clearly serves as the definitive focal point of the overall discourse. The points of contention primarily revolve around the conditions and the sequence of implementation, rather than the existence of a peace framework itself.

4.5.4. Security, Demilitarization & Stability

The term “security” presents itself with notable frequency, being utilized 93 times within the context of the UNGA and 56 times during bilateral discussions. This prevalence indicates a continuous state of instability, notwithstanding existing ceasefire agreements. The security-related issues encompass border incidents, the withdrawal of Russian forces, the role of international observers, the procurement of arms, and the framing of anti-terrorism initiatives. Such observations substantiate the identification of Theme 4 (Security, Demilitarization, and Border Stability) as a secondary thematic layer; it remains a constant consideration, albeit frequently overshadowed by discussions centered on sovereignty and peace initiatives.

4.5.5. Humanitarian Issues

The frequency of humanitarian references is expected to reach its apex in the years 2023 to 2024, driven by issues such as refugee displacement, human rights concerns, mine clearance, and the establishment of humanitarian aid corridors. Notably, references to humanitarian themes are significantly more prevalent in speeches delivered at the UNGA, totaling 64 instances, compared to a mere five mentions in treaties. This observation aligns with the parameters of Theme 5 (Humanitarian & Human Rights), which demonstrates heightened visibility in international discourse, particularly in communications directed towards global audiences (such as at the UNGA and with the EU), while remaining considerably less significant in the context of drafting technical agreements.

4.5.6. Mediation & Diplomatic Platforms

The predominant theme, evidenced by 701 references in the UNGA, underscores a significant hyper-competitiveness among various mediators including the EU represented by Brussels, Russia symbolized by Sochi, and the US based in Washington, each emphasizing distinct narratives concerning procedural legitimacy, security legacy, and political assurances, respectively. Additionally, Iran and Türkiye contribute to the discourse through their regional stabilization narratives. This competitive landscape elucidates the proliferation and fragmentation of mediation dialogue. The emphasis placed on Theme 6 (Geopolitical Mediation & Competing Peace Platforms) is thoroughly substantiated, as the contention among differing mediation frameworks—Brussels, Sochi, Washington, and the 3+3 format emerges as a salient meta-narrative throughout the entire post-conflict era.

4.5.7. Memory, Trauma, Victimhood

The absence of this discussion across all analyzed corpora suggests a strategic effort to minimize references to historical grievances, thereby mitigating the risk of negotiations deteriorating. However, both Armenian and Azerbaijani domestic media, as well as public addresses directed at national audiences and cultural discussions, are replete with themes of memory and trauma. This observation constitutes a significant analytical insight. Theme 7, which revolves around Memory, Trauma, and Victimhood, plays a crucial structural

role in domestic and societal discourse; nonetheless, it is intentionally subdued or reframed in formal diplomatic texts through a legalistic lens. This deliberate silence represents a political choice, as it ensures that formal negotiations remain within a “legalistic/technocratic” framework, while the discourse surrounding memory politics persists in parallel contexts.

4.5.8. Reconstruction and Development

The significance of reconstruction is prominently emphasized in the UNGA, as evidenced by 102 references, indicating an endeavor to conceptualize peace in terms of economic modernization. Treaties integrate reconstruction within their connectivity provisions. Theme 8 (Economic Reconstruction and Development) effectively operates as a narrative of a “peace dividend,” being extensively employed in speeches and bilateral diplomatic efforts to justify the normalization process, albeit with minimal legal formalization.

4.6. Big Picture: How 4 Corpora “Fit Together”

In synthesizing the various elements, four distinct layers constitute a cohesive framework for understanding the post-conflict discourse between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Firstly, the UNGA speeches serve as a platform for international discourse, emphasizing themes of mediation, sovereignty, humanitarian considerations, and reconstruction. These speeches aim to foster international legitimacy and articulate the legal and moral dimensions of the conflict, thereby establishing a narrative of “who is right.” Secondly, documents from the OSCE/EU occupy a mediation space that emphasizes peace agenda, sovereignty, connectivity, and procedural language. Their function is to delineate the procedural guidelines governing negotiations, including formats, principles, and sequences. Thirdly, bilateral and trilateral meetings create a negotiation space that also prioritizes a peace agenda while focusing on connectivity and sovereignty, translating broad principles into specific discussions concerning borders, corridors, and security guarantees. Lastly, key treaties and agreements represent a process of legal codification that maintains a focus on peace, connectivity, and sovereignty, while displaying a lower emotional intensity and reduced emphasis on mediation. Their primary role is to enshrine specific outcomes into binding commitments, accompanied by minimal rhetorical embellishment.

The eight identified themes extend beyond mere description; they function as an analytical framework elucidating the dynamics of the post-2020 order. Specifically, themes 1 through 4 represent the fundamental aspects of interstate negotiations, while themes 5 and 8 provide normative and developmental rationales, particularly observable in UNGA dialogues and bilateral engagements. Theme 6 illustrates the broader contestation over the framing of peace, and theme 7, though less overt in formal documents, remains a significant undercurrent in domestic political discourse, capturing the tension between formal silences and the vibrant societal dialogues that persist.

4.7. The Role of External Powers

Between the years 2021 and 2025, external actors significantly influenced the peace discourse between Armenia and Azerbaijan, albeit in an uneven manner. Following the events of 2020, Russia emerged as the principal security guarantor, a position reinforced by the trilateral ceasefire agreement. Moscow exerted its influence through a series of Sochi summits held in 2021, 2022, and 2023, where it underscored themes of sovereignty, border stability, and its pivotal role as the principal mediator. Nonetheless, the onset of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 led to a notable diminishment in Russian diplomatic engagement, as observed in the reduced frequency and assertiveness of Russian mediation references during the UNGA sessions of 2023 and 2024, as well as in the outcomes of bilateral discussions.

As Russian influence waned, the EU broadened its mediation efforts through the Brussels format from 2021 to 2023, under the leadership of Charles Michel, which increasingly reframed peacebuilding initiatives in terms of connectivity, border delineation, and legal normalization. This procedural prominence is clearly articulated in the documents produced by the OSCE/EU from 2022 to 2024, coupled with the deployment of a civilian EU monitoring mission in 2023. The US escalated its engagement from 2022 onward, orchestrating foreign ministerial meetings in Washington during key months specifically July and November 2022, along with July 2024. The US approach was grounded in principles of democratic legitimacy, humanitarian protection, and a rule-based peace agreement, concepts that are consistently reflected in UNGA statements delivered by President Biden between 2021 and 2024.

Throughout this timeframe, Türkiye maintained its strategic coordination with Azerbaijan, bolstering Baku's sovereignty and connectivity initiatives,

most notably through the Shusha Declaration of 2021 and subsequent bilateral interactions from 2022 to 2024, wherein the Zangezur Corridor was promoted as a significant regional integration endeavor. Türkiye's involvement in trilateral dialogues with Armenia and Azerbaijan during 2022 suggested an increasing readiness to facilitate the normalization process, albeit within the confines of its strategic partnership with Baku. Conversely, Iran adopted a defensive posture regarding regional borders and vocally opposed any alterations to the Armenia-Iran border, delivering strong denunciations in 2021, 2022, and 2023 against extraterritorial mediation efforts and delineating clear boundaries concerning the Zangezur Corridor. Iran's bilateral engagements with Armenia and Azerbaijan from 2022 to 2024 prioritized concerns of territorial integrity and regional mechanisms, and its speech at the 2024 UNGA reiterated a preference for stability arrangements that are regionally based.

Collectively, these developments indicate a gradual transition from Russian hegemony in 2020 and 2021 towards a competitive multipolar mediation framework emerging by 2023 and 2025. In this evolving landscape, the EU and US increasingly shape the procedural and normative dimensions of negotiations, while Türkiye contributes to discussions concerning regional connectivity and balance, and Iran imposes defensive considerations regarding geopolitical reconfiguration. This intricate dynamic is mirrored in the overarching themes concentrating on sovereignty, connectivity, mediation, and humanitarian discourse across all relevant textual corpora.

The empirical evidence presented herein both corroborates and challenges the scholarly discourse delineated in the literature review. The thematic patterns identified across the four corpora substantially reinforce previous assertions that Armenian and Azerbaijani political discourse is rooted in narratives of sovereignty, territory, and identity shaped by historical factors, thus resonating with the works of Astourian, Panossian, Göyüşov, among others, who accentuate the interdependent nature of the two national constructions. Furthermore, the recurring themes of mediation, normalization, and connectivity within diplomatic contexts correspond with prevailing academic perspectives that highlight the significance of external actors and institutional frameworks such as the OSCE/EU, Russia, Türkiye, and the US in influencing post-conflict developments. Nonetheless, the findings diverge from much of the extant literature in two notable ways. Firstly, while prior studies have typically emphasized historical grievances, trauma, and competing narratives of victimization as predominant factors in the conflict, the coded discourse from 2021 to 2025 indicates that such memory-centric

narratives are notably absent from official diplomatic discussions, suggesting a deliberate strategic silence that contradicts the anticipated prominence of these narratives. Secondly, while scholarly interpretations often depict the peace process as stagnant or structurally “frozen,” the observed thematic evolution—transitioning from sovereignty and security concerns to issues of connectivity and legally codified agreements—suggests a more dynamic and adaptable discursive landscape than previously understood. In this context, the empirical results not only confirm but also broaden existing research: they validate the endurance of identity-centric frameworks while illuminating that, in formal diplomatic settings, the peace architecture is increasingly framed by forward-looking, technocratic, and institutionally mediated themes rather than the historical or emotive narratives that have been prevalent in much of the academic discourse.

5. Conclusion

This research aims to explore the construction, articulation, and negotiation of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the post-2020 context by examining political discourse across four primary corpora: speeches from the UNGA, institutional documents from the OSCE/EU, records of bilateral meetings, and key treaties and agreements spanning from 2021 to 2025. The study is guided by the research questions established in the introduction, specifically regarding the identification of prevalent themes in political and diplomatic narratives and the manner in which official texts frame the prospects for peace. Employing a systematic TCA, this investigation seeks to reveal patterns, priorities, and omissions within the evolving landscape following the conflict. The results indicate that the discourse surrounding peace is neither fixed nor homogenous; rather, it consists of dynamic and multi-faceted narratives influenced concurrently by historical legacies, geopolitical shifts, and changes in mediation frameworks.

In addressing the foundational research questions, this study identifies sovereignty, connectivity, peace agenda, security, humanitarian issues, mediation, memory, and reconstruction as the dominant themes shaping post-conflict diplomatic discourse (RQ1). Furthermore, official texts frame the future of peace not as a static settlement, but as a dynamic transition from emergency stabilization toward institutional normalization (RQ2). Ultimately, this framing suggests that long-term stability in the South Caucasus relies increasingly on regional connectivity and formalized treaty negotiations rather than merely securing immediate borders.

The analysis asserts that the key elements of sovereignty, territorial integrity, connectivity, security, and normalization form the foundational structures of diplomatic communication in the post-2020 period. These themes resonate with existing scholarly work that emphasizes the significance of borders, law, and power within the South Caucasus region. Additionally, the empirical data unveil notable deviations from prior academic assumptions: specifically, the remarkable absence of narratives related to memory, trauma, and victimhood within formal diplomatic exchanges challenges a considerable body of literature that primarily interprets the conflict through the lens of identity politics and historical grievances. Instead, the prevailing diplomatic discourse adopts a technocratic and future-oriented perspective, emphasizing connectivity, border delineation, and procedural normalization over historical rectification.

This study also enhances academic understanding by illustrating the evolving thematic emphases across different temporal and diplomatic contexts. While speeches at the UNGA prioritize issues of sovereignty and global legitimacy, OSCE/EU documents underscore mediation frameworks and connectivity, bilateral meetings concentrate on practical negotiations regarding borders and corridors, and treaties encapsulate these objectives into legally binding agreements. The transition from a high-intensity security discourse in the 2021-2022 period to a focus on connectivity and treaty-based frameworks in 2023-2025 indicates that the post-conflict order is more adaptable than the established “frozen conflict” paradigm might suggest. The peace process is influenced not only by the immediate aftermath of the war but also by broader geopolitical shifts, including the diminishing of Russia’s mediation monopoly and the emergence of EU, Türkiye and US-led mediation formats.

Several limitations must be acknowledged within this study. The analysis is based on publicly accessible diplomatic texts and does not encompass confidential negotiations or domestic political discourse, where themes of memory and trauma may be more prominent. Although the coding framework employed is systematic, it remains interpretative and is primarily focused on institutional language, which may downplay symbolic or emotional aspects. Moreover, as the corpus concludes in 2025, it is not yet possible to fully evaluate the long-term sustainability of the identified shifts in discourse and the practical implementation of agreements.

Future research could further enhance these findings by incorporating multilingual corpora, expanding the scope to include civil society, diaspora

organizations, and local political actors, employing computational text analysis to more accurately track sentiment and framing trends.

In summary, this study reveals that the discourse following the conflict in the South Caucasus is experiencing significant transformation. While issues of sovereignty, security, and geopolitical competition continue to dominate diplomatic communication, the growing importance of connectivity, normalization, and legal codification points to a shift towards a more structured, multi-dimensional peace framework. Whether these discursive changes will yield lasting stability remains uncertain; however, the evidence indicates that Armenia and Azerbaijan are navigating within an emerging regional context whereby peace is viewed not merely as the cessation of hostilities, but as the formation of a new political, economic, and infrastructural reality one in which the interplay between historical grievances and future-oriented regional integration will shape the prospects for a lasting resolution.

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