IDENTITY POLITICS AND THE REGIONAL NORMALIZATION PROCESS IN ARMENIA WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE 'TURKIFICATION' DISCOURSE OF THE DASHNAK ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION

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As we have stated in our previous articles, the parliamentary elections held in Armenia on 7 June 2026 continue to influence not only the country's domestic politics, but also the political balance of the South Caucasus.[1] Following the announcement of the election results, many assessments and statements have been made by various state officials, ruling and opposition parties, civil society organizations, and diaspora organizations. One of the most striking statements among these is the declaration published on 9 July 2026 by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), a Dashnak organization with a known dark history.[2] Beyond harsh criticisms questioning the legitimacy of the elections, ARF's declaration forms a discourse that defines Armenia's internal political developments within the framework of Armenian identity, the future of the state, and the geopolitical transformation in the South Caucasus.

ARF's declaration presents Armenia's internal political developments not only as an assessment of the elections, but also as an existential struggle regarding the country's geopolitical orientation. The most egregious aspect of the statement is the claim that current policies in the country aim at the "Turkification of Armenia". However, this discourse (which is exclusionary to say the least) goes beyond merely criticizing the current Armenian government's policies. It places Türkiye and Turkish identity at the center of contemporary political discourse by defining them through a perception of threat. Therefore, the statement is seriously problematic, both conceptually and diplomatically.

The content and scope of the term Turkification used in the statement are left unclear. Since it is not explained which policies or practices fall under this concept, the expression becomes a political discourse tool that combines different approaches under a single threat category. Furthermore, defining the development of relations with Türkiye as "Turkification" does not align with the nature of the normalization process between the

two sides and the relations that states conduct on the basis of mutual interests. Diplomatic normalization between states, economic integration, and the development of transportation links do not mean compromising sovereignty or national identity. Especially in the context of the South Caucasus, such processes are considered important tools that can contribute to the establishment of regional peace and stability.

The Turkification discourse in the statement can also be seen as part of an attempt to create legitimacy in Armenian domestic politics. Instead of discussing the content of the government's dialogue initiatives with Türkiye or its steps towards regional normalization, they are presented as a direct threat to national identity. Thus, foreign policy choices are detached from the context of realpolitik and turned into an identity-based debate. ARF's policy therefore undermines the healthy functioning of the democratic process by calling into question the legitimacy of actors advocating different policy options.

In conclusion, Armenia, which for many years operated with a foreign policy understanding shaped around unfounded claims, narratives of collective victimhood, and identity-based political discourse, has now entered a period in which regional realities are changing and a more pragmatic foreign policy is gaining importance. In contrast, ARF's statement is a continuation of a traditional approach, using cliché narratives and identity elements as tools for generating political legitimacy. While the recent elections have shown that this approach is no longer as accepted by the Armenian people as it once was, it nevertheless creates a political framework that may make it difficult for Armenia to capitalize on opportunities in areas such as normalization, economic integration, and regional cooperation within the current geopolitical conditions. What is needed in the changing geopolitics of the South Caucasus is not the recreation of identity-based threat narratives, but a realistic, multi-dimensional, and diplomacy-oriented strategic vision based on peace and stability in the region.

[1] Tuğçe Tecimer, The June 7 Elections In Armenia: Political Continuity And Regional Transformation, *AVİM*, June 26, 2026, https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/THE-JUNE-7-ELECTIONS-IN-ARMENIA-POLITICAL-CONTINUITY-AND-REGIONAL-TRANSFORMATION.

[2] ARF Bureau, ARF Bureau Issues Statement on June 7 Parliamentary Elections, *ARF*, July 9, 2026, https://www.arfd.am/eng/news/8574/.

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