

**SPECIAL SECTION:**

Statecraft and Identity:  
Historical Foundations of Armenian Geopolitics

REVIEW OF  
**ARMENIAN STUDIES**

A Biannual Journal of History, Politics, and International Relations

Facts and Comments

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'Real Armenia' or 'Historic Armenia'?

**Jeremy SALT**

The Statehood Process of Armenians, the Factors That Influenced  
Them and the Evaluation of the Current Situation

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They Inhabited and Their Settlement in South Caucasia

**Elnur AĞDAMLI**

Unveiling Metsamor:

Navigating the South Caucasus Amid Nuclear Concerns

**Mohammad Reza PASHAYI**

**BOOK REVIEW**

Contribution to Ottoman-Armenian Historiography:  
Reviewing Kemal Çiçek's "The Armenians of Musa Dagħ,  
1915-1939: A Story of Insurgency and Flight"

**Ahmet Can ÖKTEM**

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# REVIEW OF ARMENIAN STUDIES

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**Ahmet Can ÖKTEM**

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**Jeremy SALT** is a former journalist and a retired academic. He taught courses in modern Middle Eastern history and propaganda in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Bilkent University, Ankara, and in Middle Eastern Politics in the Department of Political Science, University of Melbourne. He wrote three books: *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians 1878-1896* (Frank Cass, London, 1993), *The Unmaking of the Middle East: A History of Western Disorder in Arab Lands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) and *The Last Ottoman Wars: The Human Cost, 1877–1923* (University of Utah Press, 2019). His articles appeared in *Middle East Policy*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Insight Turkey/Arama*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, *Muslim World*, *Current History*, *Journal of Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies*, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *Review of Armenian Studies*.



**Assist. Prof. Dr. Ayşegül GÜLER** was born in Afyonkarahisar. She graduated from Selçuk University, Department of International Relations. She completed her master's thesis titled "The Relationship of Turkey and USA after Cold War: Regional and Global Interactions" and her doctoral thesis titled "The Problem of Political Legitimacy of Humanitarian Interventions in International Relations" at Selçuk University Institute of Social Sciences. She continues to work at Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and International Relations. Her research interests are international politics, Russian studies and cyber security.



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**Dr. Elnur AĞDAMLI** was born in 1980 in the Agdam province of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. He studied for an associate degree in Theology in the Shamakhi province of Azerbaijan between 1997-1999. He completed his undergraduate education at Baku Islamic University between 2008-2013. He completed his MA with a thesis titled “The Shirvanshah State (Derbendi Dynasty) in the XIVth-XVIth Centuries” at Bursa Uludağ University, Department of Islamic History and Arts between 2014-2016 and his PhD with a thesis titled “The Establishment of Armenia in the South Caucasus and the Genocides Against Azerbaijani Turks in the Early XXth Century” at Bursa Uludağ University, Department of Islamic History and Arts between 2016-2024. He has been working as a Religion Teacher at Bursa International Murad Hüdavendigâr Imam Hatip High School since 2022.



**M. Reza PASHAYI** was born in Iranian Azerbaijan in 1978. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Süleyman Demirel University, Department of European Union Studies, and is expected to graduate in 2025. His doctoral thesis, titled “Iran’s Foreign Policy Toward the U.S., 2005–2020”, will be presented in the same year. He has published several scholarly articles and book chapters. His primary areas of research include regional politics, the Middle East, Iran, and the South Caucasus. He is fluent in English, Turkish, and Persian, and possesses an intermediate proficiency in Arabic.





**Ahmet Can ÖKTEM** completed his undergraduate studies in 2013 at Eskişehir Osmangazi University's field of Economics. He completed his Master's degree programme in 2018 at the Middle East Technical University's (METU) field of European Integration. He completed his diploma programme of CIFE (Centre international de formation européenne) in Advanced European Studies and International Relations in 2018.



This 51<sup>st</sup> edition of *Review of Armenian Studies* arrives amid a pivotal juncture for Armenia, marked by Prime Minister Pashinyan's contested constitutional reforms and escalating geopolitical recalibration. Domestic turbulence persists as Pashinyan's government navigates opposition from the Armenian Apostolic Church and diaspora groups over amendments to Article 49, which seeks to redefine statehood by excising references to "historic territories". The administration's focus on "Real Armenia," a pragmatic territorial and identity framework, has deepened societal fractures, with also Karabakh refugees and nationalist factions.

Economically, Armenia grapples with the fallout of its reliance on Russian gold re-exports, which collapsed from \$4.9 billion in 2024 to a 59% decline by January 2025, exacerbating a 12.4% unemployment rate. Demographic pressures compound these challenges, with birth rates dropping 7.8% and deaths rising 5.4%, signaling an unsustainable population trajectory.

On the diplomatic front, Yerevan's dual-track policy of pursuing EU accession while retaining its ties to the Eurasian Economic Union has drawn sharp Russian rebukes. Moscow's warnings against "sitting on two chairs" contrast with Armenia's deepening security cooperation with France, Greece, and India. Simultaneously, Iran's strategic partnership, exemplified by joint border maneuvers and vocal opposition to the Zangezur corridor, overshadows Yerevan's normalization of relations with Azerbaijan and Türkiye.

The Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process remains gridlocked, with Yerevan resisting to Baku's demands of constitutional revisions and abolishing the OSCE Minsk Group. Despite international acclaim for the finalized draft treaty, insistence on Azerbaijan's terms reveal the fragility of regional détente.

Pashinyan's outreach to Türkiye – including unprecedented interviews with Turkish media and infrastructure assessments for the Kars-Gyumri railway – reflects a calculated policy to diversify partnerships. Yet, Ankara's continued alignment with Baku and diaspora backlash over changing of the constitution, highlight the limits of this pragmatism.

These dynamics mirror the special section's exploration of institutional legacies and constructed demographics, illustrating how Soviet-era dependencies and

19<sup>th</sup> century migrations continue to shape Armenia’s agency in a contested Caucasus.

Building on the innovations announced in our landmark 50<sup>th</sup> edition, this 51<sup>st</sup> issue of *Review of Armenian Studies* introduces a **Commentary Section** – a platform designed for scholars to engage with emerging developments in Armenian studies through concise, evidence-driven analyses. This addition reflects RAS’s commitment to bridging rigorous historiography with contemporary geopolitical discourse, while maintaining the methodological precision that has defined our publication since its inception under Ambassador (R.) Ömer Engin Lütem’s stewardship.

The inaugural commentary, (R.) Assoc. Prof. Jeremy Salt’s “**‘Real Armenia’ or ‘Historic Armenia’?**” exemplifies this initiative’s strategic relevance. Salt dissects the precarious Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations, particularly the 17-point settlement framework currently being debated. Through forensic analysis of constitutional amendments proposed by Prime Minister Pashinyan’s government, the commentary reveals how Article 49’s unresolved claim to “historic Armenian territories” perpetuates diplomatic stagnation. Salt contextualizes these legal tensions within broader regional shifts, including Armenia’s fraying alliance with Russia and Western powers’ growing mediation role.

A new special section titled “**Statecraft and Identity: Historical Foundations of Armenian Geopolitics,**” newly added to the 51<sup>st</sup> issue of the *Journal of Armenian Studies*, investigates the interplay between historical trajectories and contemporary political dynamics in Armenian state formation. Centered on institutional legacies, migration patterns, and geopolitical dependencies, the section analyzes how Armenia’s past continues to shape its modern governance challenges and regional positioning.

The first research article by Ayşegül Güler, “**The Statehood Process of Armenians, the Factors That Influenced Them and the Evaluation of the Current Situation**”, traces Armenia’s historical inability to establish sustained sovereignty prior to 1991. The study highlights how Armenian political aspirations during the Ottoman era were often mediated through external powers, particularly Russia, which later influenced post-independence vulnerabilities. Güler argues that Armenia’s reliance on Russian patronage has perpetuated its status as the Caucasus’ “weakest link,” leaving it economically stagnant and geopolitically marginalized. The analysis underscores the paradox of formal independence versus *de facto* dependency.

Assist. Prof. Cem Karakılıç’s article, **“The Adventure of an Armenian School from the Ottoman to the Republic: Sanasarian College 1881–1935”**, examines how educational institutions served dual roles in late Ottoman Erzurum. Through archival analysis of financial records and administrative correspondence, Karakılıç demonstrates that Sanasarian College functioned not only as a cultural hub but also as a coordination center for Armenian separatist activities. The study reveals how the school’s 1890 closure—triggered by fiscal disputes with the Patriarchate—exacerbated communal tensions, illustrating the intersection of education, identity politics, and anti-Ottoman mobilization.

In **“The Origin of the Armenians, the Allegations About the Geographies They Inhabited and Their Settlement in South Caucasia”**, Dr. Elnur Ağdamlı deconstructs the mythos of Armenian indigeneity in the South Caucasus. Drawing on Tsarist Russian migration records and Armenian self-identifiers (*Hayk*), the article documents how 19<sup>th</sup> century mass relocations from Anatolia and Iran facilitated Russia’s creation of a “buffer zone” in today’s Armenia. Ağdamlı’s textual analysis of Russian colonial archives exposes how demographic engineering shaped modern territorial disputes, particularly with Azerbaijan.

Collectively, these studies employ primary-source methodologies to reframe Armenian geopolitics through three lenses: institutional legacies, external patronage networks, and constructed demographics. By situating contemporary challenges within historical processes, the section aligns with RAS’s mission to analyze Caucasus statecraft while maintaining scholarly rigor.

The special section’s focus on historical-political frameworks is complemented by an independent research article included in this edition: Drs. Mohammad Reza Pashayi’s **“Unveiling Metsamor: Navigating the South Caucasus Amid Nuclear Concerns.”** The study provides critical insights into Armenia’s contemporary geopolitical dilemmas. Pashayi analyzes the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant, constructed during the Soviet era, as both a relic of Cold War energy policies and a modern liability. The article documents how seismic risks, radioactive leakage, and the facility’s dual-use potential for weapons-grade material exacerbate regional tensions with Azerbaijan and Türkiye.

The editorial’s examination of Armenia’s historical-political trajectory is further enriched by a critical book review featured in this edition: Independent Researcher Ahmet Can Öktem’s analysis of Kemal Çiçek’s **“The Armenians**

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**of Musa Dagh, 1915–1939: A Story of Insurgency and Flight.”** Öktem evaluates Çiçek’s meticulous deconstruction of Franz Werfel’s seminal novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, which romanticized Armenian resistance during World War I. By cross-referencing Ottoman administrative records, Armenian insurgent diaries, and international diplomatic correspondence, Çiçek challenges the mythologized narrative of the revolt, revealing its logistical coordination with Entente powers and the consequential Ottoman security response.

This review underscores Çiçek’s contribution to disentangling historical fact from literary fiction—a task central to RAS’s mission of rigorous scholarship. The Musa Dagh episode, often cited as symbolic of Armenian-Ottoman antagonism, is reframed through archival evidence showing how local uprisings were enmeshed in broader imperial rivalries. Öktem emphasizes that Çiçek’s work not only corrects populist narratives but also illuminates the complexities of wartime governance, where communal tensions intersected with Great Power machinations.

As we navigate Armenia’s “existential recalibration,” this edition reaffirms the indispensability of archival rigor and interdisciplinary inquiry. By juxtaposing demographic historiography with nuclear security challenges and historiographic revisionism, we bridge past and present, offering insights vital for policymakers and scholars alike.

We extend our gratitude to contributors whose work enriches this edition. As Türkiye and Armenia cautiously rebuild dialogue, and as regional power dynamics shift, RAS remains a steadfast platform for disentangling myth from fact. May this issue inspire continued exploration of the Caucasus’s complex tapestry, fostering pathways toward durable peace and mutual understanding.

## FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

Alev KILIÇ\*

**Abstract:** *This article covers the period of November 2024-June 2025 of the internal developments in Armenia, the foreign dynamics shaping its international relations, the ongoing process of signing the peace agreement with Azerbaijan and the bilateral relations of Türkiye and Armenia in the light of the process of normalization of their relations.*

*The Armenian government has passed through a turbulent period. Internally, the preparations for changing the constitution, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's statement that the international recognition of the "Armenian Genocide" is not a priority for the government as well as the fact that he questioned, even challenged the "genocide" discourse was heavily criticized by the small but vociferous opposition as treason to the country. In fact, the opposition's criticisms reached to such an extent that they denied the legitimacy of the government. The church also got actively involved in the campaign against the government. On the other hand, official words were not put into deeds as no concrete steps were taken to overcome the two major impediments to concluding the planned peace agreement with Azerbaijan: the changing of the constitution and the Zangezur corridor.*

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*The two parties, Armenia and Azerbaijan, announced the conclusion of the final draft text of the peace agreement, meaning the text was ready for signing, which drew international acclaim as a positive development with the expectation that it would be signed and ratified shortly. However, it has been acknowledged that the signing will have to wait until the expressed impediments are overcome.*

*Developments have emerged in foreign policy where prudence and caution were needed for sustaining the policies of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds as well as trying to sit on two chairs faced challenges. The proclamation of a balanced and balancing foreign policy provided the justification of siding with the West, the EU, and the US, leading to the application for membership in the EU and signing of a strategic partnership agreement with the US. However, it soon transpired that relations with Russia should not be underestimated in view of the new US administration's approach to Russia, as well as the surfacing fragility of the EU. Hence, Pashinyan yielded to the necessity of attending the Victory Day parade in Moscow despite the disapproval of the West. Shortly after, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs's welcome in Yerevan revealed the deep ties between the two states.*

*Relations with Türkiye have kept their momentum, leading to an active period in bilateral contacts. The sobriety of the commemoration of 24 April caused pessimism and depression particularly in the Diaspora. Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan attended the Antalya Diplomacy Forum accompanied by officials and held a meeting with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan. The Armenian side underlined the need for opening the Türkiye-Armenia border for land and railroad connections and expressed dissatisfaction with linking the bilateral process of normalization with the normalization of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations.*

*At the Antalya Forum, three participating Foreign Ministers of the South Caucasus countries took part in a trilateral panel discussion, which inspired the initiation of a process of trilateral meetings.*

**Keywords:** *Pashinyan, Mirzoyan, Papikian, Karekin II, Putin, Lavrov, Dashnaksutyun, Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), Diaspora, Erdoğan, Fidan*

**Öz:** *Bu incelemede Kasım 2024-Haziran 2025 tarihleri döneminde Ermenistan'daki iç gelişmeler, dış ilişkiler, Azerbaycan ile barış süreci ile Türkiye-Ermenistan arasındaki ilişkiler ve normalleşme süreci ele alınmaktadır.*

*Ermenistan yönetimi çalkantılı bir dönem geçirmiştir. İç politikada sayıca az fakat sesi gür çıkan muhalefet anayasa değişikliği hazırlığını, Başbakan Nikol Paşinyan'ın "Ermeni Soykırımı" tanıtımının öncelik olmadığı beyanını ve onun soykırım söylemini irdelleyen, hatta sorgulayan ifadelerini vatana ihanet suçlamalarıyla en ağır şekilde eleştirmiştir. Hatta muhalefet, eleştirilerini yönetimin meşruiyetinin bulunmadığı noktasına kadar getirmiştir. Diğer taraftan yönetimin ifadeleri söylemde kalmış, Azerbaycan ile öngörülen barış antlaşmasının önündeki iki temel engel olan anayasa değişikliği ve Zangezur koridoru konularında somut bir gelişme kaydedilmemiştir.*

*Barış antlaşması sürecinde nihai taslak üzerinde mutabakat sağlanmış, metin imzaya hazır hale gelmiş, bu olumlu gelişme uluslararası alanda övgüyle karşılanmış, metnin bir an önce imzalanması ve onaylanması beklentisi ifade edilmiştir. Ancak engeller giderilemedikçe, sürecin sonuçlandırılmasının vakit alacağı anlaşılmıştır.*

*Dış politikada devam eden tavşana kaç, taziye tut politikası ve aynı anda iki sandalyeye oturma gayretini sürdürebilmek zorlaşmış, hassas dengelerin dikkate alınması gereken gelişmeler ortaya çıkmıştır. Dengeli ve dengeleyici dış politika söylemi ile Batı'ya, AB'ye ve ABD'ye yaklaşılmış, AB'ye üyelik başvurusu girişimi başlatılmış, ABD ile stratejik ortaklık anlaşması imzalanmıştır. Ancak ABD yeni yönetiminin Rusya ile ilişkilere yaklaşımı, keza AB'nin ortaya çıkan zaafiyeti karşısında Rusya ile ilişkilerin ihmal edilmemesi gereği ortaya çıkmış, Batı'dan gelen aksine telkinlere rağmen Paşinyan Moskova'da Zafer Günü törenine katılmak zorunluğunu hissetmiştir.*

*Türkiye ile ilişkiler hareketliliğini korumuş, karşılıklı temaslarda aktif bir dönem yaşanmıştır. 24 Nisan anma günü etkinliklerinin sönük geçmesi özellikle Diasporada eziklik hissi ve tepki yaratmıştır. Ermeni Dışişleri Bakanı Ararat Mirzoyan beraberinde bir heyetle Antalya Diplomasi Forumuna katılmış, Türk Dışişleri Bakanı Hakan Fidan ile ikili görüşme yapmıştır. Ermeni tarafı Türkiye-Ermenistan sınırının kara ve demir yolu ulaşımı için açılması üzerinde durmuş, normalleşme sürecinin Azerbaycan-Ermenistan ilişkilerinin normalleşmesine bağlanmasını eleştirmiştir.*



*Antalya Forumunda üç Güney Kafkas ülkesinin dışişleri bakanları da ortak bir panel toplantısı yapmış, bu gelişme aralarında üçlü görüşme süreci başlatılmasına ilham vermiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Paşinyan, Mirzoyan, Papikian, II. Karekin, Putin, Lavrov, Taşnaksutyun, Ermeni Devrimci Federasyonu (EDF), Diaspora, Erdoğan, Fidan

## 1. Domestic Developments In Armenia

Domestic developments in Armenia during the period were marked by the opposition's harsh, violent and excessive attacks and accusations against the government for allegedly jeopardizing the vital interests and existence of the state and nation for the sake of signing a peace treaty. The main issues of objection were the administration's proposal to amend the constitution, its emphasis on the concept of the "State of Armenia" instead of the "Armenian historical mythology" and the softening of the discourse on the 1915 events.

Claiming to be the new face and pioneer of the opposition, Archbishop Galstian promised the demonstrators he gathered near the presidential palace on 25 October that he would continue to fight for regime change in Armenia, but he did not specify a plan for future actions and remained silent during the period. When asked why he had not renounced his Canadian citizenship, he replied, "*I do not aim to become Prime Minister.*" At a year-end press conference on 27 December, Galstian apologized to his supporters for failing to oust Prime Minister Pashinyan<sup>1</sup>

In response to a question during the parliamentary debate on the 2025 budget on 31 October, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan stated "*The Armenian Genocide international recognition process is not our number one priority. Making a number one priority of studying the Armenian Genocide, the holes of tragic history, is certainly not in the agenda of the foreign ministry.*"<sup>2</sup> The opposition immediately accused the Minister of denialism, of internalizing Türkiye's priorities.

Prime Minister Pashinyan's contradictory statements on the constitutional amendment continued during the period. On 13 November, in response to a question in the parliament, Pashinyan again claimed that there is no provision on Karabakh in the Armenian Constitution, that Azerbaijan's claims regarding this issue are inaccurate, and that in fact there are statements in the Azerbaijani Constitution targeting the territorial integrity of Armenia.<sup>3</sup> A day later, on 14 November, he declared that he had read and analyzed the Declaration of Independence in the preamble of the Armenian Constitution several times and

1 Shoghik Galstian, "Armenian Protest Leader Admits 'Mistakes'", *The Mirror Spectator*, January 2, 2025, <https://mirrorspectator.com/2025/01/02/armenian-protest-leader-admits-mistakes/>.

2 "Soykırım da Artık Bir Öncelik Değil", *Ermenistan Kamu Radyosu*, October 31, 2024, [https://tr.arm-radio.am/2024/10/31/soykirim-da-artik-bir-oncelik-degil/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1747218861.8346560001373291015625](https://tr.arm-radio.am/2024/10/31/soykirim-da-artik-bir-oncelik-degil/?doing_wp_cron=1747218861.8346560001373291015625).

3 "Paşinyan, Ermenistan'ın Azerbaycan'dan Anayasa Değişikliği Talep Etmemesinin Nedenini Açıkladı", *ArmenPress*, November 13, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/tr/article/1204830>.

came to the grave conclusion that the Republic of Armenia could not carry on with the content of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>4</sup> This was the exact opposite of his previous statements. The President of the Constitutional Court immediately reacted by stating that only the people can decide this.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, a ruling party MP emphasized that the Declaration was adopted in 1990, before Armenia gained its independence, and that it was not suitable for today's conditions, therefore he supported the Prime Minister's approach.

At the 15 November cabinet meeting, Pashinyan complained about the inefficacy in law enforcement and stated that his patience was running out. On 18 November, Pashinyan announced that he had asked for the resignation of some senior officials on the grounds of necessity. On the same date, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, the Judicial Council President, the Anti-Corruption Committee President and the Chairman of the State Revenue Committee resigned.<sup>6</sup> A. Sargsian was appointed Minister of Internal Affairs and D. Khudatian was appointed Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures.<sup>7</sup>

In an extensive 90-minute interview with Armenian State Television on 22 November, Pashinyan again criticized the 1990 Declaration of Independence, including the call for "international recognition of the genocide of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia". He pointed out that just as Azerbaijan's "Western Azerbaijan" discourse causes discomfort, it should be understood that the "Western Armenia" discourse can also cause discomfort. The opposition was quick to condemn and denounce this comparison and the parallelism. The Ambassador of France joined the chorus, stating that Western Azerbaijan is located in Iran.<sup>8</sup>

During his TV interview, Pashinyan stated that Armenia is now an independent state, that this state is "Real Armenia", that it should not be identified with "Historic Armenia" and that the future should be built on this reality. In this

4 "Pashinyan Calls Armenia's Declaration of Independence 'A Big Problem And Tragedy'", *Arka News Agency*, November 14, 2025, [https://arka.am/en/news/politics/pashinyan\\_calls\\_armenia\\_s\\_declaration\\_of\\_independence\\_a\\_big\\_problem\\_and\\_tragedy/](https://arka.am/en/news/politics/pashinyan_calls_armenia_s_declaration_of_independence_a_big_problem_and_tragedy/).

5 "Constitutional Court Cannot Nullify Declaration of Independence, Says Chief Justice", *ArmenPress*, November 14, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1204946>.

6 "Cabinet Members Resign Following Pashinyan's Criticism", *Mirror Spectator*, November 19, 2024, <https://mirrorspectator.com/2024/11/19/cabinet-members-resign-following-pashinyans-criticism/>.

7 "Pashinyan: Resignations in Armenia are Systemic, not Personal", *Arka News Agency*, November 22, 2024, <https://arka.am/en/news/politics/pashinyan-resignations-in-armenia-are-systemic-not-personal/>.

8 Shoghik Galstian, "Pashinian Under Fire For Another 'Pro-Turkish' Statement", *Azatutyun Radiokanyan*, November 25, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33215221.html>.

context, he reminded that Mount Ararat does not belong to Armenia and that the highest mountain in Armenia is Mount Arakads.<sup>9</sup> These statements caused a reaction in opposition circles and the Diaspora. Pashinyan was accused of shattering the dreams and aspirations of Armenian nationalists. An opposition MP claimed that “*Armenia, the Armenian character, and our national identity were born and formed in Western Armenia, particularly in Van*”.

The Armenian population migrating from Karabakh became a burden and a problem for Armenia during the period. By the end of November, 1,500 Karabakh Armenians had applied for citizenship, while around 90,000 refugees were granted temporary protection status.<sup>10</sup> The administration announced that it would cut down on residency assistance. After former presidents accused him on Karabakh, Pashinyan invited his respondents to an open debate on television and threatened to prove that they were responsible for the current situation with the documents he would disclose. In his speech to the parliament on 26 March, Pashinyan stated that the Karabakh movement must come to an end because it is being used against Armenia’s statehood.<sup>11</sup>

On 29 March, around 10,000 Karabakh Armenians organized a demonstration in Yerevan to defend their rights, claiming that their rights were not being safeguarded and protesting the declining support for them.<sup>12</sup> This caused a reaction and counter-accusations in the administration circles. Passport issuance was also a problem. The fact that passports issued by the Ministry of Interior listed Azerbaijan as the country of birth, as per international rule, was protested and led to the rejection of passports.

S. Galian, who was appointed on 5 November to replace the Minister of Justice who resigned in October, announced in early December that the government panel she chaired would carry out Pashinyan’s instructions to draft a new constitution by the end of 2026. On 14 January, the minister reiterated this announcement, this time in her capacity as chair of the Constitutional Reform

9 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Interview with Public Television”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, January 25, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2025/01/25/Nikol-Pashinyan-Interview-Petros-Ghazaryan/>.

10 Ani Avetisyan, “Armenia to Reduce Housing Aid for Nagorno-Karabakh Refugees”, *Eurasianet*, December 2, 2025, <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-to-reduce-housing-aid-for-nagorno-karabakh-refugees#:~:text=As%20of%20this%20November%2C%20only,secured%20jobs%20or%20started%20businesses>

11 “Karabakh Movement Must Not Continue,” Pashinyan Angrily Asserts”, *Asbarez*, March 26, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/karabakh-movement-must-not-continue-pashinyan-angrily-asserts/>.

12 Gayane Saribekian, “Thousands of Karabakh Armenians Protest in Yerevan”, *Azattyun Radiokayan*, March 30, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33364015.html>.

Council established in 2022.<sup>13</sup> The issue of constitutional change remained on the agenda as a major obstacle to signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan. The administration, led by Pashinyan and Mirzoyan, has attempted to circumvent this issue with various rhetoric and internal contradictions, but without success. Finally, Prime Minister Pashinyan announced publicly for the first time on 16 April that a new constitution was being prepared and that the 1990 Declaration of Independence would not be included in its text.<sup>14</sup>

The administration's friction with the Catholicos, the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, continued during the period. This situation was once again observed by the public on the last day of the year. Traditionally, before midnight on 31 December, the patriarch would broadcast the New Year's message, followed by the message of the president or prime minister. This year Pashinyan wanted to take the lead, but Catholicos Karekin II refused, whereupon the Catholicos, contrary to his usual practice, broadcasted his message on a private TV channel instead of state television.<sup>15</sup> On 6 January, the administration boycotted the traditional Christmas service at Echmiatzin again this year. In his speech, the Catholicos stated that one of the problems facing Armenia was the "*lust for power*".<sup>16</sup> Pashinyan also spoke in Zurich, Switzerland on 24 January. In his meeting with representatives of the Armenian community, he emphasized the necessity of separating the church and state, explained that "*The state should not interfere in church affairs and the church should not interfere in state affairs*" and called for the Church to be more transparent.<sup>17</sup>

Catholicos Karekin II targeted Pashinyan anonymously in his speech at Easter mass on 20 April, condemning "*reprehensible attempts to deny or question the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey*".<sup>18</sup>

13 Gayane Saribekian, "Government Signals Fresh Deadline for Drafting New Constitution", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, January 14, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33275637.html>.

14 "Pashinyan Believes New Constitution Must Not Contain Reference to Declaration of Independence, 'But It's Up To The People to Decide'", *ArmenPress*, April 16, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1217286>.

15 Astghik Bedevian, "Armenian Church Head to Shun State TV for New Year Address", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, December 26, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33253985.html>.

16 "Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin Bemoans Armenia's Ills in Christmas Message", *Mirror Spectator*, January 9, 2025, <https://mirrorspectator.com/2025/01/09/catholicos-of-all-armenians-karekin-bemoans-armenias-ills-in-christmas-message/>.

17 "Highlighting Separation of Church and State, Pashinyan Calls for Transparency", *ArmenPress*, January 25, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1210425>.

18 "Catholicos Karekin II Condemns Armenian Genocide Denial at Easter Mass", *Asbarez*, April 21, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/catholicos-karekin-ii-condemns-armenian-genocide-denial-at-easter-mass/>.

At the 24 January meeting in Zurich, Pashinyan stated that it was time to revisit the Armenian Genocide within a historical framework, in particular, *“We must understand what happened and why it happened, how we perceived it and through whom we perceived. How is it that in 1939 there was no Armenian genocide [recognition] agenda and how is it that in 1950 the Armenian genocide agenda emerged?”*. He emphasized the need to reinterpret historical events to *“define identity”* and to deal with contemporary challenges. These remarks had a striking impact on the Armenian opposition and the Diaspora, and Pashinyan became the target of heavy criticism, being accused of denialism and defending Turkish views.<sup>19</sup> In his statement, Pashinyan explained, *“When you look at your tragedy with your own eyes, when you don’t need a mediator to mourn and face your tragedy, then the empire doesn’t have much to sell you.”* This statement was interpreted to mean that the Soviet Union and Russia were behind the effort to recognize the genocide.

In fact, the spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a statement on 6 February that inadvertently confirmed this interpretation. The spokesperson did not hide her surprise at Pashinyan’s statements and stated that they never expected that a position that had been formed and formulated over the years would undergo a policy change within Armenia, but emphasized that this development did not change anything for them and that they continued to adhere to the *“Armenian Genocide”* resolution adopted by the state parliament, the Duma, in 1995.<sup>20</sup> The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson later made the following statement on 24 April:

*“April 24 marks the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the greatest tragedy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Armenian Genocide, and the Russian Federation has always perceived the grief of the brotherly Armenian nation as its own. In 1915, at the initiative of the head of Russian diplomacy, Sergey Sazonov, the international community actors described what had happened as a crime against humanity. According to historical accounts, in 1915, the Russian Imperial Caucasian Army, at the order of Nicolas II, opened the Russian-Turkish border and saved more than 350,000 Armenians... Russia was one of the first countries to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide. In 2015, President Putin visited Armenia for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide”*.<sup>21</sup>

19 Ruzanna Stepanian, “Pashinian Under Fire After Questioning Armenian Genocide”, *Azattyun Radiokayan*, January 27, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33290488.html>.

20 “Russia ‘Stunned’ By Pashinian’s Armenian Genocide Comments”, *The California Courier*, February 6, 2025, <https://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/russia-stunned-by-pashinians-armenian-genocide-comments/>.

21 “Russia Always Perceived Armenian Genocide as Its Own Grief, Says Moscow”, *ArmenPress*, April 24, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1218063>.

The ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation - Dashnaksutyun), with its known extremism and terrorist links, spearheaded the attacks, issuing a severely accusatory statement on 26 January. The ARF claimed “*We declare that by recklessly cowering to the demands and preconditions of the Turkish-Azerbaijani axis is a hostile policy that directly challenges our national security, jeopardizes the existence of our statehood, and the fundamental interests of Armenians around the world.*”<sup>22</sup> The Lemkin Institute did not fall behind, abandoning its appearance of academic respectability, joining in the harsh accusations and arguing that Pashinyan’s statement served to question the established historical fact of the Armenian genocide.

In the face of continuous pressure, Pashinyan stated at a press conference on 31 January that “*The Armenian genocide is an undeniable and indisputable fact, an integral part of the people’s identity*”.<sup>23</sup>

On 26 December, Sinanyan, the Prime Minister’s Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, said on state radio that there was no break in relations with the Diaspora, on the contrary, there were now much more active contacts, and that the ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation - Dashnaksutyun) was active in the Diaspora against the Armenian state. ARF officials reacted sharply to this and stated that the Pashinyan administration and Sinanyan excluded the Diaspora and did not give it a place in domestic politics. They claimed that they are the representatives of Türkiye and Azerbaijan, while the Dashnaks have stood by the interests of the nation and the state in their 130-year history.<sup>24</sup>

The Armenian administration’s approach, which is based on the perpetuity of the Republic of Armenia and the state, which takes a critical view of historical taboos, and which sees the Diaspora as supporting the state rather than directing it, has sparked a reaction in militant Diaspora organizations. It has been observed during the period that these organizations have put aside their differences and made an effort of solidarity towards a common goal. Representatives of the three traditional Armenian parties in the US; the Social Democratic Hunchak, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation

22 “ARF Supreme Council of Armenia Announcement”, *Asbarez*, January 27, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/arf-supreme-council-of-armenia-announcement-2/>.

23 “Armenian Genocide is Undeniable Fact - Pashinyan”, *ArmenPress*, January 31, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1210874>.

24 “«Զարեհ Սինանյանը Պետք է Պատասխան Տա. Նույնիսկ Բացահայտ Թուրքամետ Օտարազգի Գործիչները Չեն Համարձակվել Այս Լեզվով Խոսել ՀՅԴ-ի Մասին». Նժդեհ Գարագավորյան”, *168.am*, December 26 2025, [https://168.am/2024/12/26/2146729.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawHbGORleHRuA2F1bQIxMOABHREsI85IUqDkVfG4fkyAQmq7Fb2H-fQFhxEveDds-B42qjYdfCv1dAOnouQ\\_aem\\_mblxNvxbk74g8ncUhy3ndg](https://168.am/2024/12/26/2146729.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawHbGORleHRuA2F1bQIxMOABHREsI85IUqDkVfG4fkyAQmq7Fb2H-fQFhxEveDds-B42qjYdfCv1dAOnouQ_aem_mblxNvxbk74g8ncUhy3ndg).

Dashnaktsutyun and the Armenian Democratic Liberal-Ramgavar came together on 16 February at the ARF headquarters in Glendale (California) and issued a joint statement. In the statement, the need for unity in the face of recent developments was expressed and a call was made to organize the 24 April commemoration ceremonies more enthusiastically together.<sup>25</sup>

The 35<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the ARF was held in Yerevan on 26 February-6 March. The issues to be discussed at the congress were outlined as Armenia's security, internal and external threats to the country, problems faced by Armenians in the country and in the Diaspora, and the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights of "Artsakh" (Karabakh) Armenians.<sup>26</sup> The statement issued at the end of the congress included the international recognition of genocide and the issue of reparations among the priority issues. The declaration emphasized the need to change the government in order to realize its strategic goals.<sup>27</sup> In the municipal elections held in Gyumri, Armenia's second largest city, on 30 March, the ruling party received 36.8% of the votes, but since it failed to secure a majority, the mayor was replaced after the three other parties participating in the elections agreed on a common candidate, despite serious political differences among themselves.<sup>28</sup> The opposition presented this result as an indication of the decline in trust in Pashinyan.

However, two parliamentarians who defected from the ruling coalition tried to initiate a non-confidence vote to unseat Prime Minister Pashinyan but did not get the expected support from the opposition, revealing the feud between the two opposition leaders, former presidents, Kocharian and Sarkisian.

On 26 April, Pashinyan attended a ceremony organized by the National Security Service on the occasion of the Border Guard Serviceman's Day and stated in his speech that his policy goal was to gradually increase the presence of Armenian troops on Armenia's borders.<sup>29</sup>

25 "Statement by Three Armenian National Political Parties", *Asbarez*, February 18, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/statement-by-three-armenian-national-political-parties/>.

26 "35th ARF World Congress Convenes in Yerevan", *Asbarez*, February 26, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/35th-arf-world-congress-convenes-in-yerevan/>.

27 "ARF 35<sup>th</sup> World Congress Statement", *Oragark*, March 10, 2025, <https://www.oragark.com/arf-35th-world-congress-statement/>.

28 "No Outright Winner in Gyumri Municipal Election", *Hetq*, March 31, 2025, <https://hetq.am/en/article/173504>.

29 "The Border Guard is a Symbol of Peace and Security, And Our Policy is to Increase The Presence of Border Guards Along The Borders of The Republic of Armenia. Prime Minister", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, April 26, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/04/26/Nikol-Pashinyan/>.



The rift between the Government and the Church reached new highs in early June. During the official visit of Prime Minister Pashinyan to Estonia, the Archbishop of the Armenian church there praised his policies as he welcomed him on 27 April. The Armenian Apostolic Church criticized the Archbishop for praising Pashinyan whose policies are opposed by the Catholicos and the Church. Then on early June Prime Minister Pashinyan lambasted senior clergymen with obscene remarks in the parliament and in social media, accusing them of breaking their vow of celibacy as well as paedophilia, even alleging that the Catholicos had an illegitimate child and should give up his post. Ensuing reactions gave rise to speculations for the core reason of this conflict, bringing to the fore the challenge to the change of the constitution with the suspicion that it could entail the intent to curtail the status of the Church.<sup>30</sup>

On the occasion of the Republic Day on 28 May Pashinyan delivered a speech underlining:

- “our identity is our state, our state is our identity,
- our territory is 29,723 square kilometers,
- do not repeat the history of the last 450 years,
- security guaranteed by external forces is deceptive”<sup>31</sup>

The revision of the composition, lyrics and tempo of the national anthem was discussed and approved by the relevant parliamentary committee in January.<sup>32</sup>

The Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), in a report published on 30 December, noted that a critical decline began in Armenia’s foreign trade and economy in November.<sup>33</sup> The main reason for this expected downturn was the decline in gold exports. It is noted that the gold exported last year under the guise of Armenian production was in fact imported from Russia and exported to the

30 “Pashinyan’s Clash with Armenian Church Escalates,” *Eurasianet*, June 4, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://eurasianet.org/pashinyans-clash-with-armenian-church-escalates>.

31 “Pashinyan Stresses Statehood, Territorial Integrity on Republic Day,” *Azatutyun*, May 28, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32913543.html>.

32 “Armenian Parliament Committee Endorses Bill to Amend National Anthem”, *MassisPost*, January 10, 2025, <https://massispost.com/2025/01/armenian-parliament-committee-endorses-bill-to-amend-national-anthem/>.

33 “EDB Names Reason Behind Armenia’s Economic Slowdown in November”, *Arka News Agency*, December 30, 2024, <https://arka.am/en/news/economy/edb-reason-for-armenia-s-economic-slowdown-in-november/>.

UAE, reaching \$4.9 billion, or 47% of Armenia's total exports last year. On 27 January, the international credit rating agency Fitch downgraded its growth forecast for 2025 to 4.8% and to 4.5% for 2026.

According to the January data, the total volume of foreign trade amounted to 1,425,500,000 dollars, down 37.9% compared to the same month last year. The breakdown of this amount is as follows: With the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union: 467,201,600 dollars, (53.8% decrease) - Russia's share was 455,498,400 dollars- (54.8% decrease), with the EU countries: 154,560,600 dollars, (9.9% increase) -Germany 26,999,400 dollars- (8.7% decrease), -Italy 24,507,900 dollars- (19.9% decrease), -Belgium 15,986,300 dollars- (14.7% increase), -Netherlands 12,094,100- (63.9% increase), -France 9,399,200 dollars- (46.5% increase), while among other countries -China 199,528,800 dollars- (0.2% increase), -UAE 138,832,800 dollars- (59% decrease), -Iran 48,489,600 dollars- (31.8% increase), -US 30,541,500 dollars- (40.6% decrease), -Iraq 24,535.400- (fivefold increase), -South Korea \$17,093,400- (26.7% increase), -Switzerland \$15,707,400- (13.6% increase), -Georgia \$14,852,900- (24.3% decrease).

Data for February and March indicated that this trend continued. The February foreign trade volume totaled \$1 billion 379.8 million, down 3.2% compared to January and 60.7% compared to a year ago. March, on the other hand, totaled \$1 billion 674.8 million, up 21.4% from February, but down 31.8% from the same month last year.<sup>34</sup> The World Bank and IMF's first quarterly report on economic developments in Europe and Central Asia, published in April, noted that the annual growth of the Armenian economy would fall to 4% and the unemployment rate would increase to 12.4% in 2024.<sup>35</sup>

One of the most important inputs to the Armenian economy are the remittances sent by Armenians living or working outside the country. Between 1995 and 2020, this source accounted for an average of 14% of the GDP. In the period January-September 2024, remittances amounted to approximately 4 billion dollars. About 78% of this amount comes from two countries, Russia and the US. The largest share belongs to Russia. In 2024, more than \$2.57 billion came from Russia. Inflows from the US amounted to around \$500 million.

34 "Armenia's Foreign Trade Turnover Drops in First Quarter of 2025", *ArmenPress*, April 25, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1218203>.

35 Robert Zargarian, IMF, "World Bank Note Slowing Growth in Armenia", *Azattyun Radiokayan*, April 28, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33399140.html>.

The Minister of Economy announced on 13 January that 2,215,000 tourists visited Armenia in 2024, a 7% decrease compared to a year ago.<sup>36</sup> The number of tourists from Russia, which ranked first, decreased, while the number of tourists from India, UAE, Georgia, Iran, France, China and South Korea increased. The target for 2025 is projected at 2.5 million. On 21 February, it was announced that despite all the spending on New Year celebration decorations, tourist arrivals in January dropped to 139,500, with Russia leading the way with 39.5%, Georgia 13% and Iran 9.4%.

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) announced on 22 January that it had allocated \$40 million to Armenia to modernize its energy infrastructure.<sup>37</sup>

Alarm bells are ringing regarding Armenia's demographic data, as the population continues to decline. According to the data for the first eleven months of 2024, compared to the same period last year, births decreased by 7.8% and deaths increased by 5.4%, resulting in a 33.5% decrease in population growth.<sup>38</sup>

## 2. Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Agreement Process

Despite the positive statements and optimistic expectations that all articles of the Peace Agreement would be agreed upon and finally signed during the period, disagreements on several critical issues remained unresolved. Thus, the process of negotiations and talks continued, at times amid mutual accusations and coercion.

On 11 November, Armenia was invited to attend the international UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), which was hosted in Baku, with the hope that not only would international cooperation on climate change be further enhanced, but also the peace process in the South Caucasus would gain new momentum. However, Armenia's refusal to participate in this important international event, which is a source of prestige for Azerbaijan, by putting forward demands that it knew would not be accepted, and its attempts to undermine the conference

36 "About 2 million 215 thousand Tourists Visited Armenia in 2024: Number of Tourists from Russia Decreased", *Ilurer*, January 13, 2025, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2025/01/13/About-2-million-215-thousand-tourists-will-visit-Armenia-in-2024-the-number-of-tourists-from-Russia/1248562>.

37 "IBRD to Provide \$40 Million to Armenia for Energy Infrastructure Modernization", *ArmenPress*, January 22, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1210103>.

38 "Armenia's Birth Rate Drops 7.8% in First 11 Months of 2024", *Arka News Agency*, January 13, 2025, <https://arka.am/en/news/society/armenia-s-birth-rate-drops-7-8-in-first-11-months-of-2024/>.

through its supporters, dealt a severe blow to the peace treaty process at the beginning of the period under review. This cast doubt on Armenia's goodwill and credibility. The alleged reason for non-participation was the non-release of 23 Karabakh Armenians under arrest.<sup>39</sup>

Even before the start of COP29, the World Council of Churches (WCC), centered in Geneva, with the Armenian Catholicos of Antelias Aram I as the head of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, demanded the release of former Karabakh Armenian officials on trial for war crimes in Azerbaijan, and declared Sunday, 10 November, the day before the opening of COP29, as a day of prayer for Armenia and “*Artsakh*” (Karabakh) Armenians in churches around the world.<sup>40</sup> Radical-militant Diaspora organizations, notably the ARF party, declared their support for this. In a press release issued on 11 November, the US-based “Freedom House” accused Azerbaijan of ethnic cleansing.<sup>41</sup> Statements of support were also made in the US Congress and the EU Parliament. The President of the EU Commission also did not attend the meeting, in a move indicating the EU's position. M. Grono, a Czech national appointed by the EU as Special Envoy for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, took office on 1 November.

Catholicos Karekin II said at the Echmiatzin Mass on 10 November that in the churches of Armenia and the Diaspora, all Armenians pray for the protection of the rights of the Armenians of “*Artsakh*” (Karabakh), especially the military and political leaders of the “*Republic of Artsakh*” who were “abducted” by Azerbaijan and unjustly arrested on false charges.<sup>42</sup>

According to Azerbaijani sources, there are three problems with the signing of the agreement: Amendment of the Armenian Constitution, which includes territorial claims, an end to the “international legal war” and withdrawal of lawsuits by the parties, and an end to the EU Observer Mission stationed at

39 Astghik Bedevian, “Official Explains Armenian Boycott of COP29”, *Azatutyun Radikayan*, November 21, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33211122.html>.

40 “His Holiness Catholicos Aram I Presides over the Prayer Service for the Restoration of the Rights of the Indigenous People of Artsakh in Antelias”, *The Middle East Council of Churches*, (Accessed: May 15, 2025), <https://www.mecc.org/news-en/2024/11/12/his-holiness-catholicos-aram-i-presides-over-the-prayer-service-for-the-restoration-of-the-rights-of-the-indigenous-people-of-artsakh-in-antelias>.

41 “New Report: Azerbaijani Regime Ethnically Cleansed Nagorno-Karabakh According to International Fact-Finding Mission”, *Freedom House*, November 11, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/article/new-report-azerbaijani-regime-ethnically-cleansed-nagorno-karabakh-according-international>.

42 “All-Armenian Prayer to Be Held for Armenian Prisoners in Baku on November 10”, *Media Max*, November 7, 2025, <https://mediamax.am/en/news/society/56190/#:~:text=All%2DArmenian%20prayer%20will%20be,the%20Armenian%20and%20Diaspora%20dioceses>.

the common border. The “Zangezur Corridor”, a key issue for Azerbaijan, was not included at this stage. In his speech on 5 December, President of Azerbaijan Aliyev stated that not only the constitutional amendment was not enough, but also the return of around 300,000 Azerbaijani citizens who were forced to migrate from Armenia, where they lived until the 1980s, should be ensured and talks with the “Western Azerbaijani community” should start for this purpose. Aliyev also demanded that Armenia stop arming itself and halt arms purchases.<sup>43</sup> These demands caused a reaction in Armenia and brought to the forefront the allegations in all Armenian circles that Azerbaijan was not in favor of peace, that it was constantly making new demands and demanding concessions in order to undermine the peace treaty. On 25 December, in response to a question regarding criticism of Armenia’s armament, the US State Department spokesperson explained, “*The United States ensures that its security assistance to both Armenia and Azerbaijan is not used for offensive purposes and does not undermine or impede ongoing efforts for a stable and dignified peace process.*”<sup>44</sup>

In a press conference held on 7 January, Aliyev again criticized Armenia’s armament, demanded the end of “fascism” in Armenia, brought the Zangezur Corridor back to the agenda and stated that it should and would be opened.<sup>45</sup> Mirzoyan, on behalf of the administration, repeated Armenia’s known views and discourse, arguing that the “West Azerbaijan” narrative meant a direct territorial demand from Armenia. He reiterated that Armenia is not an obstacle or a wedge between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, as Azerbaijan claims, on the contrary, they want to be a link, but they do not accept the concept of a “corridor”.<sup>46</sup>

Prime Minister Pashinyan, in his speech in the parliament on 13 November, rejected Azerbaijan’s demands for constitutional amendments, claiming that there is no territorial claim in Karabakh in the Constitution.<sup>47</sup> In a TV interview

43 “To the participants of the Second International Conference on “The Right to Return: Advancing Justice for Azerbaijanis Expelled from Armenia”, *President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, November 5, 2024, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/67466>.

44 “State Department Responds to Aliyev’s Claims of U.S. Arming Yerevan”, *Arka News Agency*, December 25, 2025, <https://arka.am/en/news/politics/state-department-responds-to-aliyev-s-claims-of-u-s-arming-yerevan/>.

45 Hoory Minoyan, “Aliyev Calls Armenia a “Fascist State””, *Armenian Weekly*, January 8, 2025, <https://armenianweekly.com/2025/01/08/aliyev-calls-armenia-a-fascist-state/>.

46 “‘Armenia Wishes to be a Link between Azerbaijan and Turkey’: Ararat Mirzoyan”, *Alpha News*, January 8, 2025, <https://alphanews.am/en/armenia-wishes-to-be-a-link-between-azerbaijan-and-turkey-ararat-mirzoyan/>.

47 “Pashinyan Explains Why Armenia Doesn’t Seek Azeri Constitutional Change”, *ArmenPress*, November 13, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1204830>.

on 22 November, he said that Armenia had offered to withdraw EU observers from the section where the border between the two countries was demarcated. An official of the EU Observer Mission explained on 25 November that their mandate would end on 19 February and that no decision had yet been taken to extend their mandate.<sup>48</sup> In the same interview, Pashinyan also drew the West Azerbaijan-West Armenia parallel, which caused a backlash.

In a 22 November TV interview, Pashinyan also emphasized the importance of a peace treaty with Azerbaijan, noting that the establishment of a strategic compromise in which the two countries will coexist peacefully in the long term is equally important.<sup>49</sup>

In a comprehensive interview published in ArmenPress on 19 December, Pashinyan particularly focused on the peace treaty, stating that 15 articles of the 17-article treaty had been agreed upon, that the treaty would be above domestic law, so there would no longer be any concern regarding territorial integrity, that Armenia was not in an arms race with any country, that the purchase of arms was solely for the purpose of protecting Armenia's borders and territorial integrity, that there was no objection to the abolition of the Minsk Group, and that this would essentially be realized with the signing of the treaty.<sup>50</sup>

The Spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated on 25 December that the Minsk Group could be disbanded and that the first step for this to happen would be for Azerbaijan and Armenia to make a joint request in this regard, and that the function of the Minsk Group co-chairs had de facto ended with Armenia's recognition of Karabakh's belonging to Azerbaijan at the Prague Summit in October 2022.<sup>51</sup> The legal aspect of the issue may cause problems, as OSCE resolutions require unanimity.

48 "Armenia Awaits EU Decision on Observer Mission Extension", *Caucasus Watch*, November 20, 2025, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/news/armenia-awaits-eu-decision-on-observer-mission-extension.html>.

49 "Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Interview with Public Television", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, November 22, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2024/11/22/Nikol-Pashinyan-Interview/>.

50 "If Azerbaijan Doesn't Have Intentions to Attack Armenia The Likelihood of Escalation in The Region is Zero – PM Pashinyan Responds to Aliyev", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, December 19, 2024, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2024/12/19/Nikol-Pashinyan-Interview/>.

51 "Baku, Yerevan Can Jointly Initiate Dissolution of OSCE Minsk Group — Diplomat", *TASS*, December 25, 2025, <https://tass.com/politics/1893475>.

According to media reports, at the OSCE Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in Malta on 5 December, the US Secretary of State proposed a new trilateral meeting, which Armenia welcomed and Azerbaijan rejected due to the “biased and unfair policy” of the Biden administration.<sup>52</sup> The US State Department conveyed on 3 January that it was ready to work at any level to ensure progress between the parties.

While relations remain fractured and mutual accusations continue, in a surprise statement on 11 March, Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan stated “*Armenia and Azerbaijan, are very close to the finalization of the draft of the peace agreement between the two countries.*”<sup>53</sup> On 13 March, Azerbaijan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Bayramov confirmed the completion of negotiations on the text of the peace treaty, with Armenia accepting Azerbaijan’s proposals on the last two articles.<sup>54</sup> On the same day, Pashinyan said that foreign forces would not be deployed on the borders after the signing of the peace treaty.

On that day, Aliyev expressed “*The level of trust in Armenia is close to zero. Therefore, we do not trust any of their words. Because these are not people we can trust, including today’s government. Again, whatever they say has no meaning for us. We need documents, we need papers. We need to make sure that there are no territorial claims to Azerbaijan in their constitution. They are still present there. We need the OSCE Minsk Group to be dissolved. This is our message to Armenia.*”. It was understood from this message that there are still obstacles to be overcome in the process of signing the treaty.<sup>55</sup>

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan stated on 14 March that after the agreement on the text of the treaty was reached, they did not accept the preconditions put forward by Azerbaijan, that they had been raised before but they never negotiated them, that they were ready to sign the treaty, and that they had proposed to the other side to hold consultations on the time and place.<sup>56</sup> In his speech to the parliament on the same day, he acknowledged that

52 “Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan Dışişleri Bakanlarının Malta’da Görüşmeme Nedeni Belli Oldu, *Oxu*, December 5, 2025, <https://oxu.az/tr/siyasett/azerbaycan-ve-ermenistan-disisleri-bakanlari-malta-da-gorusecekler-mi>.

53 “Mirzoyan: Armenia and Azerbaijan are Very Close to Finalizing Draft Peace Agreement”, *News.am*, March 11, 2025, <https://news.am/eng/news/871102.html>.

54 “Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan Arasında Barış Anlaşması Metni ‘İmzaya Hazır’”, *BBC News Türkçe*, March 13, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/ckgyklj618yo>.

55 Ruslan Rehimov, “Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Aliyev, Fransa’nın Ermenistan’ı Yeni Savaşa Sürüklediğini Söyledi”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, March 13, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-cumhurbaşkanı-aliyev-fransanın-ermenistani-yeni-savasa-surukledigini-soyledi/3508953>.

56 “Armenia Does Not Accept Azerbaijan’s Preconditions After Agreement of Peace Treaty Text”, *ArmenPress*, March 14, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1214463>.

there were still some issues that needed to be resolved and emphasized that peace was the only way for Armenia to survive.

Mirzoyan also made some statements regarding the content of the treaty, stating that the issue of the return of refugees to Karabakh was not included, that there was no room for a non-sovereign corridor, that there was no provision on the Constitution, and that no peace treaty could immediately bring countries and peoples together.

The news of the agreement on the text of the Peace Treaty was welcomed and praised internationally. Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson announced their readiness to host the signing of the treaty. The US and the EU called for the treaty to be signed as soon as possible. US Secretary of State Rubio said on 14 March "*Now is the time to commit to peace, sign and ratify the treaty, and usher in a new era of prosperity for the people of the South Caucasus*".<sup>57</sup> The executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) stated that Rubio's statement was untimely and that they do not want a false peace in which Armenia's security and sovereignty are surrendered, but a real peace that respects the rights of the Armenian nation and ensures the return of the "Artsakh" (Karabakh) Armenians.<sup>58</sup> Armenia's opposition parties and other radical Diaspora organizations have also expressed concern regarding Armenia's capitulation and warned for caution. The Republican Party, led by Kocharyan, went even further and declared that Pashinyan had no legitimacy to sign such a treaty on behalf of the Armenian people.

In response to a question in parliament on 26 March, Pashinyan explained "*We have proposed to Azerbaijan to start consultations. Of course, public proposals are also accompanied by those made through diplomatic channels, and some work is being done. It is not appropriate to discuss diplomatic efforts. When that work yields results, everyone will see it*".<sup>59</sup> On 2 April, Aliyev reiterated his conditions for the signing of the treaty.<sup>60</sup>

57 "U.S. Secretary Of State: Now is Time for Azerbaijan And Armenia to Sign Peace Treaty", *Apa*, March 14, 2025, <https://en.apa.az/foreign-policy/us-secretary-of-state-now-is-time-for-azerbaijan-and-armenia-to-sign-peace-treaty-462940>.

58 "ANCA Calls For Actual Peace Amid Reports of A One-Sided Azerbaijan "Agreement" Being Forced upon Armenia", *ANCA*, March 14, 2025, <https://anca.org/press-release/anca-calls-for-actual-peace-amid-reports-of-a-one-sided-azerbaijan-agreement-being-forced-upon-armenia/>.

59 "Armenia Proposes Consultations with Azerbaijan on Venue and Timing of Peace Agreement Signing – PM", *ArmenPress*, March 26, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1215525>.

60 Ruzanna Stepanian, "Aliyev Again Rules out Unconditional Peace Deal with Armenia", *Azattyun Radiokayan*, April 2, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33368783.html>.



Azerbaijan and Armenia's Ministers of Foreign Affairs met on the occasion of the 4th Antalya Diplomatic Forum and held a bilateral meeting on 12 April. In a statement to the press, Mirzoyan stated that a "historic and unprecedented" treaty was ready for signing, that there was "no need for this Minsk Group if there is no conflict" and that there was no provision in the Armenian Constitution that Karabakh was part of Armenia. Bayramov, on the other hand, reiterated that the Armenian Constitution contains territorial claims on Azerbaijan and should be amended, and that they also want the Minsk Group to be abolished.<sup>61</sup> In conclusion, the bilateral talks in Antalya which were followed closely and with interest, and the trilateral talks, in which the Georgia's Minister of Foreign Affairs also participated, did not yield any new initiative or discourse at this stage.

The two leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan met for a brief conversation as they attended the European Political Community meeting in Tirana on 16 May. No statement was made on the talks.<sup>62</sup> President Aliyev sent a written message to a West Azerbaijan conference on 21 May where he has made it clear that he prevails with his conditions. In this connection, Speaker of the Armenian Parliament spoke of, as regards the Western Azerbaijan narrative, a link with the activities of the "Nagorna" Karabagh leadership in exile in Armenia.<sup>63</sup>

Switzerland initiated a conference in Bern on 26 May to support a sustainable political solution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and the displaced Armenian population of "Nagorno" Karabagh. Next to organizing Swiss parliamentarians, the conference was attended by Armenian opposition figures, Armenian Apostolic Church dignitaries, Catholicos Karekin II and Aram I, World Council of Churches and Protestant church in Switzerland. This proved to be a very biased, one sided attempt, scratching the wounds of recent past, contravening not only the official stand of the Armenian government but the establishment of peace in the region in general.<sup>64</sup>

61 Ruslan Rehimov, Büşranur Keskinliç, "Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan Dışişleri Bakanları Antalya'da Görüştü" *Anadolu Ajansı*, April 12, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/azerbaycan-ve-ermenistan-disisleri-bakanlari-antalyada-gorustu/3536200>.

62 "Armenia, Azerbaijan Leaders Meet Briefly at European Political Community Summit," *TRT World*, May 16, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.trtworld.com/europe/armenia-azerbaijan-leaders-meet-at-european-political-community-summit-2025>.

63 "Armenian Parliament Speaker Links Western Azerbaijan Narrative to Exiled Karabakh Leadership," *News.am*, May 22, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://news.am/eng/news/827280.html>.

64 "Swiss Conference on Nagorno-Karabakh Draws Criticism for Bias," *Daily Sabah*, May 27, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/swiss-conference-on-nagorno-karabakh-draws-criticism-for-bias>.

### 3. Armenia's Foreign Relations

Armenia's foreign relations have been characterized by its opening to the West, its emphasis on multilateral relations without confronting Russia through a balanced foreign policy discourse, and its efforts to sit on two chairs or ride two horses at the same time, as we have described earlier, have continued with increasing difficulty.

The initiative to hold a referendum on EU membership exceeded the legally required 50,000 signatures and reached 60,000 by the end of October, paving the way for the issue to be added to the parliamentary agenda. On 9 January, Pashinyan officially announced that his government supported Armenia's EU accession process.<sup>65</sup> Russia reacted to this announcement and the Deputy Prime Minister warned that joining the EU could be perceived as the beginning of leaving the Eurasian Economic Union, that Armenia could not be a member of two organizations at the same time, and that this would have a huge economic cost for Armenia.<sup>66</sup> The EU Foreign Affairs Spokesperson stated that they would examine the draft law and discuss it with the Armenian authorities, that they were providing Armenia with 270 million euros in financial support for the period 2024-2027, and that EU-Armenia relations had never been as close as they are now.<sup>67</sup>

In response to Russia's warnings, Armenia's Minister of Economy stated on 13 January that Armenia has no plans to leave the Eurasian Economic Union yet, is not looking for a replacement, and is only in the process of diversifying its cooperation partners. Describing relations with the EU as a "parallel agenda", the minister said that Armenia wants to be a country whose economic stability is linked to the economies of other countries.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, the Minister of Finance noted that the government is assessing the risks of a possible withdrawal from the Eurasian Economic Union.<sup>69</sup> Pashinyan also

65 "Armenia's Government Formally Takes Steps to Launch EU Accession Process", *The New Union Post*, January 9, 2025, <https://newunionpost.eu/2025/01/09/armenia-government-eu-accession-process/>.

66 "In Sign of Move Away from Moscow, Armenian Parliament Votes to Start EU Bid", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 26, 2025, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-russia-us-west-eu/33360738.html>.

67 "EU Announces New €270 Million Resilience and Growth Package for Armenia", *EU NeighboursEast*, April 5, 2025, <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/eu-announces-new-e270-million-resilience-and-growth-package-for-armenia/>.

68 Robert Zargarian, "Yerevan Has 'No Plans Yet' to Quit Russian-Led Trade Bloc", *Azatutyun Radiokanyan*, January 13, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33274100.html>.

69 "Finance Ministry: Armenia may Face Significant Challenges with EAEU Exit", *Report News Agency*, January 13, 2025, <https://report.az/en/region/finance-ministry-armenia-may-face-significant-challenges-with-eaeu-exit/>.

called Putin on 17 January to brief him on the situation. In a statement released by the Kremlin, it was expressed that “*Pashinyan explained the situation with Yerevan’s recent steps in its relations with the European Union. In response, the Russian President offered his comments and assessments*”. The Kremlin statement did not include Putin’s comments.<sup>70</sup> Afterwards, in response to a question, Pashinyan said that Russia has some concerns about Armenia’s EU accession process.<sup>71</sup>

On 26 March, the Armenian Parliament adopted a law endorsing the EU accession process.<sup>72</sup>

On the same day, Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister said, “*The country will have to decide and make this choice because it cannot sit on two chairs simultaneously.*”<sup>73</sup>

Armenia’s President Khachaturian went to Colombia on 29-31 October to attend the COP16 biodiversity meeting and then paid a visit to Peru.

On 7 November, Prime Minister Pashinyan visited Budapest to attend the fifth summit of the European Political Community, where his bilateral meeting with the President of France stood out among his bilateral meetings.<sup>74</sup>

On 15 November, the Parliament ratified for Armenia the free trade agreement signed in 2019 between the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and Iran.<sup>75</sup>

On 18 November, Pashinyan visited the Vatican and met with Pope Francis. There was no official or press statement from the Vatican regarding the meeting. Pashinyan praised Armenia’s “*special*” relationship with the Vatican.<sup>76</sup>

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70 “Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan”, *President of Russia*, January 17, 2025, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/76123>.

71 “Russia Concerned about Armenia EU Move, Says Pashinyan after Putin Call”, *ArmenPress*, January 31, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1210902>.

72 Csongor Körömi, “Armenian Parliament Adopts Law to Launch EU Membership Process”, *Politico*, March 26, 2025, <https://www.politico.eu/article/armenia-adopts-law-launch-european-union-accession-process/>.

73 “Armenians Told To Choose Between EU, Russian-Led Bloc”, *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, March 27, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33361885.html>.

74 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Working Visit to Hungary”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, November 6, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2024/11/06/Nikol-Pashinyan-visiting-Hungary/>.

75 “Armenian Parliament Ratifies Eurasian Economic Union – Iran Free Trade Agreement”, *ArmenPress*, November 15, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1205062>.

76 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Working Visit to the Holy See (Vatican)”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, November 18, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2024/11/18/Nikol-Pashinyan-visiting-Vatican/>.

On his way to Baku for the COP29, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Armenia on 19 November and met with Mirzoyan.<sup>77</sup>

On 25 November, Mirzoyan announced that he would not attend the Collective Security Treaty Organization's (CSTO) Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in Astana. Pashinyan also did not attend the summit that followed on 28 November. In an interview with the press after the summit, the Russian President criticized Armenia's attitude towards the organization due to Karabakh, stressing that Armenia had not been subjected to external aggression and that the organization could take action if its members were subjected to external aggression.<sup>78</sup>

The Polish President paid an official visit to Armenia on 25 November.<sup>79</sup>

On 26 November, media reports, citing the Greek press, stated that Greece would hand its Russian-made S-300 missiles to Armenia and that this decision was taken in response to historical ties, common religion and Türkiye's support for Azerbaijan.<sup>80</sup>

On 28-29 November, Mirzoyan visited Helsinki at the invitation of Finland's Minister of Foreign Affairs. Afterwards, Mirzoyan represented Armenia for the first time at the Summit of States Parties to the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. Russia warned Armenia that its participation in these activities would harm relations between the two countries.<sup>81</sup> Mirzoyan attended the OSCE 31st Ministerial Council in Malta on 4-5 December.

While the year-end summit of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) was supposed to be held in Armenia as the current chair, Pashinyan announced that he would not be able to host the summit. It was subsequently announced that

77 Astghik Bedevian, "German FM Visits Yerevan En Route to Baku", *Azattyun Radiokayan*, November 20, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33209527.html>.

78 "Putin Denies Foreign Aggression against Armenia", *Azattyun Radiokayan*, November 28, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33219461.html>.

79 "President of Poland is on Three-Day Official Visit to Armenia", *ILurer*, November 20, 2025, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2024/11/25/President-of-Poland-is-on-a-three-day-official-visit-to-Armenia/1226389>.

80 "Greece may Hand Over Russian Air Defense Systems to Armenia – Enikos", *Arka News Agency*, November 26, 2025, [https://arka.am/en/news/politics/greece-may-hand-over-russian-air-defense-systems-to-armenia-enikos/?sphrase\\_id=2703928](https://arka.am/en/news/politics/greece-may-hand-over-russian-air-defense-systems-to-armenia-enikos/?sphrase_id=2703928).

81 "Yerevan's Participation in ICC 'Directly Harms Russia-Armenia' Ties, Moscow Warns", *Asbarez*, December 4, 2024, <https://asbarez.com/yerevans-participation-in-icc-directly-harms-russia-armenia-ties-moscow-warns/>.

the summit would be held in St. Petersburg, Russia on 25 December.<sup>82</sup> Press reports stated that the reason was that Pashinyan did not consider all member states as suitable partners for Armenia, and speculated whether Russia or Belarus was meant.

During his visit to the US on 5 December, Minister of Defense Papikyan met with his US counterpart Austin and the Armenian Minister stated that they discussed “strategic partnership”. Austin expressed “*We also discussed our growing strategic partnership through training and exercises, military education, and capacity-building*”. While in Washington, Papikyan also met with his Greek counterpart at the Greek Embassy. Additionally, Papikyan visited France on 16 December and met with his French counterpart and the military advisor to the French President. According to media reports, France would continue to provide defense assistance to Armenia, including air defense. On 6 May, Papikyan also paid an official visit to Greece and held bilateral and delegation talks with his Greek counterpart. During the same visit, Papikyan also met with his counterpart from the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus in Athens. These frequent contacts with Greece in the field of defense were interpreted in the press as being related to the transfer of S-300 and other Russian missiles. Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson reacted to these reports and stated that these missiles could not be transferred without Russia’s authorization and that there was no application to Russia in this direction.

The 64<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) was held in Yerevan on 11 December.<sup>83</sup>

The second India-Iran-Armenia trilateral meeting was held in New Delhi on 14 December. A joint statement issued at the end of the meeting, which discussed the strategic importance of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar Port, stated that the three countries discussed connectivity initiatives, action in multilateral forums and regional developments.<sup>84</sup>

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82 Ruzanna Stepanian, “Pashinian Confirms Refusal to Host Eurasian Union Summit”, *Azattyun Radiokayan*, December 4, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33226874.html>.

83 “64<sup>th</sup> plenary session of PABSEC General Assembly held in Yerevan”, *ArmenPress*, December 13, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1207458>.

84 “India, Iran, Armenia Hold 2nd Trilateral Consultations in New Delhi, Discusses Connectivity, Regional Cooperation”, *The Economic Times*, December 13, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-iran-armenia-hold-2nd-trilateral-consultations-in-new-delhi-discusses-connectivity-regional-cooperation/articleshow/116271744.cms?from=mdr>.

Pashinyan visited Moscow on 13 December to chair the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council.<sup>85</sup> The Kremlin statement indicated that no meeting with Putin was envisaged and that Pashinyan was expected to attend the traditional informal Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit in St. Petersburg. On 16 December, the Russian Ambassador to Armenia stated that Russia has a clear political will to maintain and raise relations with Armenia to a new level.

Pashinyan announced that he had precautionarily decided not to attend the Eurasian Economic Union and Commonwealth of Independent States summits in Russia, despite the fact that he had tested positive for COVID-19 on 23 December and negative on 25 December. He attended the Eurasian Union Summit, of which he is the current chairman, remotely via Zoom.<sup>86</sup> The Armenian opposition claimed that the illness was a pretext and that Pashinyan was humiliating Putin with this move.

On 19 December, Armenia-Greece bilateral and Armenia-Greece-Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC) delegation defense consultations were held in Athens. The parties signed the joint operational plan for 2025 and the Armenia-Greece military cooperation program.<sup>87</sup>

On 30 December, Pashinyan announced the end of Russian military control at the only border crossing between Armenia and Iran and the withdrawal of Russian guards at the crossing.<sup>88</sup>

During the period, warm relations and mutual visits with Iran took place, and raising the level to strategic cooperation was on the agenda. On 8 January, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ahmadian was hosted in Yerevan by Secretary of the Armenian Security Council Grigoryan.<sup>89</sup> Ahmadian, who was also received by Prime Minister Pashinyan, reiterated Iran's support for Armenia's southern road policy and indirectly responded to Azerbaijan's threat to open a corridor by force. Grigorian reciprocated the

85 "Pashinyan to Chair Eurasian Intergovernmental Council Session in Moscow", *ArmenPress*, December 13, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1207357>.

86 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "PM Pashinyan sits out CIS Summit after Testing Positive for COVID-19", *OC Media*, December 25, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/pm-pashinyan-sits-out-cis-summit-after-testing-positive-for-covid-19/>.

87 "Armenia-Greece-Cyprus Trilateral Defense Consultations Held in Athens", *ArmenPress*, December 20, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1207934>.

88 "Russian Border Guards Leave Armenia-Iran Checkpoint", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, December 30, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33258387.html>.

89 "Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Arrives in Armenia", *ArmenPress*, January 8, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1209013>.

visit on 16 May to hold further talks with his Iranian counterpart Ahmadian on the occasion of participating in the Tehran Dialogue Forum 2025. He was also received by the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Iran-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group visited Armenia on 12-15 January, receiving close attention and holding high-level contacts.<sup>90</sup> Armenia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was received by the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs in Tehran on 21 January, emphasized the special importance Armenia attaches to developing and deepening relations with Iran. Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed that the new Presidential administration is committed to expanding bilateral relations with Armenia.<sup>91</sup> In a statement to the press on 6 February, the Iranian Ambassador to Armenia announced that the two countries are working on a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty.<sup>92</sup> On 24 February, the ministers of foreign affairs of the two countries held a meeting on the margins of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The Iranian minister emphasized Iran's support for the security of the South Caucasus region.<sup>93</sup>

Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs paid an official visit to Armenia on 24 March and held a number of high-level contacts. The Iranian minister reiterated Iran's well-known views on transportation routes and the Zangezur Corridor, stated that tensions in the region were escalating, repeated Iran's opposition to any military action to resolve the problems, and emphasized the strategic importance of the South Caucasus region in Iran's foreign policy.<sup>94</sup> On 15 April, Iran's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the two countries have long-standing relations and should now focus on signing a document on strategic relations.<sup>95</sup>

90 Marianna Mkrtchyan, "Delegation of Iran-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group Arrives in Yerevan", *ArmInfo*, January 13, 2024, [https://arminfo.info/full\\_news.php?id=88323&lang=3](https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=88323&lang=3).

91 "FM Araghchi: Iran Determined to Broaden Ties with Armenia", *Islamic Republic News Agency*, January 20, 2025, <https://en.irna.ir/news/85725564/FM-Araghchi-Iran-determined-to-broaden-ties-wit-h-Armenia>.

92 "Ambassador: Iran and Armenia Work on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement", *Arka News Agency*, February 6, 2025, <https://arka.am/en/news/politics/ambassador-iran-and-armenia-a-work-on-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-agreement/>.

93 "Iran, Armenia FMs Meet on Sidelines of UN Conference in Geneva", *Islamic Republic of Iran Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, February 24, 2025, <https://en.mfa.ir/portal/newsview/762012>.

94 "Official Visit of the Foreign Minister of Iran to Armenia", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, March 25, 2025, [https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/03/25/Armenia\\_Iran/13143](https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/03/25/Armenia_Iran/13143)

95 "Iran, Armenia Should Elevate Ties to Strategic Partnership", *Mehr News Agency*, April 15, 2025, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/230588/Iran-Armenia-should-elevate-ties-to-strategic-partnership>.

Armenian and Iranian military units conducted joint military maneuvers along the common border on 9-10 April.<sup>96</sup> The maneuvers, which included heavy weapons and sniper units, were described as a clear message to those attempting to destabilize the region. On 20 May Iran's Defense Minister paid an official visit to Armenia to hold talks with his counterpart Papikyan, a month after a first-ever joint military exercise by the two states. He reiterated that Iran would not tolerate any attempts to strip it of its common border with Armenia. Iranian Ambassador in Yerevan told press on 22 May, "There will be no Zangezur corridor".<sup>97</sup>

The EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia visited Armenia on 10 January.<sup>98</sup> She visited once again in April and met with Mirzoyan on 3 April.<sup>99</sup>

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan visited the United States on 14 January and signed the "Strategic Partnership Agreement" with his counterpart Blinken, which had been rumored to be in the works for some time. In a statement, Blinken explained that the establishment of the US-Armenia Strategic Partnership Commission is an important milestone in the relations between the two countries, and that the Commission provides a framework for expanding bilateral cooperation in several key areas: economic issues, security and defense, democracy, justice, inclusion and people-to-people contacts.

Blinken said that the Commission is working to support Armenia in the area of security and defense, particularly in its efforts to preserve its independence and sovereignty over its territory. Additionally, he stated that next month, in the coming weeks, a team of customs and border guards will go to Armenia to work with their Armenian counterparts on improving border security so that they can protect their borders themselves, strengthening security cooperation, and enhancing Armenia's peacekeeping capabilities through maneuvers such as the bilateral "Eagle Partner" operation as carried out the past two years.

96 "Iran, Armenia Conclude Joint Military Drill Along Border", *Xinhua*, April 11, 2025, <https://english.news.cn/20250411/12baa69485e948199ed6d3f7f4519e43/c.html>

97 "Iranian Defense Minister Visits Armenia for Talks on Military Cooperation," *Tehran Times*, May 20, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/475123/Iranian-Defense-Minister-Visits-Armenia> ; "Iran's Defense Minister Warns Against Border Threats," *Press TV*, May 21, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2025/05/21/iran-armenia-border-threats>.

98 "Meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia with the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, January 10, 2025, [https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/01/10/Mirzoyan\\_EU/13028](https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/01/10/Mirzoyan_EU/13028).

99 "Meeting of the Foreign Minister of Armenia with the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, April 3, 2025, [https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/04/03/Mirzoyan\\_Grono/13165](https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/04/03/Mirzoyan_Grono/13165).



Mirzoyan stated that the signing of the Strategic Partnership Agreement formed a strong framework and led to greater enthusiasm for cooperation, expressed his satisfaction that the United States was engaged in promoting lasting and sustainable peace in the South Caucasus region, and announced that they had begun negotiations with the United States on a nuclear cooperation treaty known as the “123 Agreement”.<sup>100</sup>

Russia’s reaction to the agreement was expressed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov, who stated that it is Armenia’s sovereign right to choose partners for cooperation, that Russia has partnership agreements with Western countries that do not include actions against third parties, and that in practice, implementation is more important than the framework.<sup>101</sup> The Kremlin Spokesperson, on the other hand, criticized US involvement in the Caucasus and accused the US of playing a destabilizing role in the South Caucasus.<sup>102</sup>

Armenian press commentaries cautioned against excessive expectations and warned that the agreement did not include security guarantees or military aid commitments to Armenia, but in any case, the treaty was a significant diplomatic success for Armenia.

The ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun), on the other hand, played a different tune, and in a statement issued on 18 January, called for the strengthening of strategic alliance relations with Russia, which has common geopolitical goals and a direct interest in the existence of an Armenian state, as well as the formation of a military-political alliance with Iran.<sup>103</sup>

On 15 January, Prime Minister Pashinyan stated that Armenia’s balanced and counterbalancing foreign policy is achieving its main objective with the following data:

*“Our relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran are more substantive than ever before. These relations are based on natural interests, which is the most reliable basis for cooperation and guarantee for stability.”*

100 “U.S., Armenia Sign Strategic Partnership Agreement”, *Radio Free Europe*, January 15, 2025, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-partnership-agreement-blinken-mirzoyan-russia/33276117.html>.

101 Arshaluis Mgdesyan, “Moscow Comments on Armenia’s Strategic Partnership with the U.S. and Plans to Join the EU”, *Business Media*, January 14, 2025, <https://bm.ge/en/news/moscow-comments-on-armenias-strategic-partnership-with-the-us-and-plans-to-join-the-eu>.

102 Aghakazim Guliyev, “Peskov: US Actions Undermine Stability in South Caucasus”, *Caliber*, January 14, 2025, <https://caliber.az/en/post/peskov-us-actions-undermine-stability-in-south-caucasus>.

103 “ARF: Azerbaijan and Turkey Impose Destructive Concessions on Armenia”, *PanArmenian*, January 18, 2025, [https://panarmenian.net/m/eng/news/318446?utm\\_](https://panarmenian.net/m/eng/news/318446?utm_).

*Our relations with Georgia are in the orbit of strategic partnership, opening new prospects and potential for development.*

*A visible basis for mutual understanding has been formed with Türkiye.*

*The Republic of Armenia has proposed constructive solutions to all existing issues in relations with Azerbaijan. Armenia has not merely introduced proposals, but solutions. In this context, all efforts to provoke escalations in the region lack legitimacy and basis, which means that attempts to escalate the region will not succeed.*

*Our relations with the Russian Federation are more pragmatic than ever before, focusing on concrete issues without emotional packaging. We are determined to develop these relations based on mutually beneficial cooperation and sovereignty.*

*Our friendship with France has strengthened and evolved.*

*Our relations with the European Union are closer than ever before, which is recorded also in Brussels.*

*A strategic partnership has been launched with the United States of America.*

*Our relations with India have gained new weight and meaning.*

*Our relations with China are evolving and deepening.*

*New opportunities for partnership have been created in the Middle East.*<sup>104</sup>

On 15-17 January, the Chief of General Staff of Armenian Army went to Brussels to attend the NATO Military Committee's meeting of the Chiefs of Staff with the participation of partner countries.<sup>105</sup> As part of the Kansas-Armenia cooperation program, a US military delegation led by a major general visited Armenia on 21-23 January and was received by the Armenian

104 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "Armenia's Balanced Foreign Policy Reaching Its Primary Milestone – PM", *Public Radio of Armenia*, January 15, 2025, <https://en.armradio.am/2025/01/15/armenias-balanced-foreign-policy-reaching-its-primary-milestone-pm/>.

105 "Chief of General Staff of Armenian Army Participates in NATO Meeting", *Report*, January 16, 2025, <https://report.az/en/region/chief-of-general-staff-of-armenian-army-participates-in-nato-meeting/>.

Chief of General Staff.<sup>106</sup> On 19 March, a delegation led by the Deputy Chief of General Staff of Armenian Army met with US military officials at the headquarters of the US European Command in Stuttgart.<sup>107</sup> This meeting was the second in a process initiated last year. On 20 March, a spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that Armenia had responded to Russia's request for clarification on media reports that 151 units of US military equipment were to be shipped from Germany to Armenia via Georgia that Armenia had not requested the transfer of military equipment from the United States.<sup>108</sup> On 28 April, it was reported that Armenia participated as an observer in the ten-day NATO military maneuvers that started in Georgia, in which Azerbaijan also took part.<sup>109</sup> In a press conference held on 6 May, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson said, "*NATO continues its course of drawing the South Caucasus republics into its sphere of influence,*" and described this as the expansion of the organization.<sup>110</sup>

Upon the invitation of the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mirzoyan visited Moscow on 21 January. In this first face-to-face meeting in more than a year, Lavrov stressed that 2024 was not an easy year for bilateral relations, that Russia is willing to honestly discuss all issues on the agenda, that Armenia is Russia's natural strategic partner, that they are trying to develop good neighborly ties, and that Russia is ready to support the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization. Mirzoyan stated that Armenia has always tried to take Russia's interests into account in international platforms and that they expect the same approach from Russia. Mirzoyan added that Russian border guards had temporarily guarded the border with Iran at Armenia's request, that this period had ended and that it was time to thank Russia for the service they had provided.<sup>111</sup> As of the beginning of January, the Russian guards at

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106 "Kansas Military Delegation Visits Armenia: Cooperation Directions Discussed at the Ministry of Defense", *MassisPost*, January 23, 2025, <https://massispost.com/2025/01/kansas-military-delegation-visits-armenia-cooperation-directions-discussed-at-the-ministry-of-defense/>.

107 "Armenian, U.S. Military Officials Hold Talks in Germany", *ArmenPress*, March 19, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1214805>.

108 "Yerevan Responded to Moscow's Request for the Pentagon to Transfer Equipment to Armenia", *Eurasia Daily*, March 20, 2025, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2025/03/20/yerevan-responded-to-moscows-request-for-the-pentagon-to-transfer-equipment-to-armenia>

109 "Armenia Joins NATO Drills in Georgia", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, April 28, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33399249.html>.

110 "Moscow Warns of Growing NATO Influence in Caucasus", *Asbarez*, May 6, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/moscow-warns-of-growing-nato-influence-in-caucasus/>.

111 "Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Statement and Answers to Media Questions Following Talks with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan", *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, January 21, 2025, [https://mid.ru/en/press\\_service/photos/meropriyatiya\\_s\\_uchastiem\\_ministra/1992316/](https://mid.ru/en/press_service/photos/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/1992316/).

the Armenian-Iranian border crossing had left and the duty was completely transferred to the Armenian border service.<sup>112</sup>

The delegations of the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Parliaments of Nordic-Baltic Eight regional cooperation format countries visited Armenia on 22 January.<sup>113</sup>

Pashinyan attended the Davos World Economic Forum and in his speech on 25 January, he explained the balanced and stabilizing foreign policy they are implementing. He also met with the NATO Secretary General on the margins of the meeting and stated that NATO recognizes Armenia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and peace efforts.<sup>114</sup>

The President of Belarus, known for his verbal clashes and tense relations with Pashinyan, warned Armenia on 26 January about the dangers of flirting with the West and moving closer to the EU.<sup>115</sup>

The Georgian Prime Minister met with Pashinyan in Yerevan on 30 January, after which the two prime ministers chaired the 14<sup>th</sup> session of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation between Armenia and Georgia. At the joint press conference, Pashinyan said that they would reactivate the process of demarcation of the common border. The two countries' ministers of foreign affairs also met on this occasion and later held a joint press conference.<sup>116</sup>

The European Council decided to extend the European Union Mission in Armenia for two years until 19 February 2027, in accordance with the proposal of the Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs. 44 million euros were allocated for this purpose.<sup>117</sup> Russia and Azerbaijan continue to object to this

112 "Russian Border Guards Leave Armenia-Iran Checkpoint", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, December 30, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33258387.html>.

113 "Delegations of Presidents and Vice Presidents of Nordic-Baltic Eight Parliaments Arrive in Armenia", *ArmenPress*, January 22, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1210180>.

114 "We Have Decided to Adopt a Balanced and Balancing Foreign Policy, Which Means That We Will Try to Balance Relations with the EU, Russia and Regional Powers, Prime Minister", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, January 23, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/01/23/Nikol-Pashinyan-Panel-discussion/>.

115 "Lukashenko Warns Armenia Against Flirting with the West", *Belta*, January 26, 2025, <https://eng.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-warns-armenia-against-flirting-with-the-west-164953-2025/>.

116 "The 14th Session of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation Between Armenia and Georgia Took Place", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, January 30, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/01/30/Nikol-Pashinyan/>.

117 "Armenia: Council Extends the Mandate of the EU Civilian Mission for Two Years", *European Council*, January 30, 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/01/30/armenia-council-extends-the-mandate-of-the-eu-civilian-mission-for-two-years/>.

mission. On 17 April, a spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that EU countries see the South Caucasus as a new front in the global hybrid war, that European observers do not bring stability to the region, but on the contrary create new dividing lines, new centers of tension and new problems, and asked whether the interests of the Armenian people or NATO are the goal of France and the EU. Iran, which opposes foreign powers in the region, remained silent, and the Iranian Ambassador to Armenia even expressed their understanding of the presence of the EU mission.<sup>118</sup>

The Armenian press published an extensive interview with the head of the mission, who responded to the question “*Are there any plans to make any changes in the size and structure of the EU mission in Armenia in the near future?*” with the following answer: “*No, the second mandate will have the same tasks as the first mandate. This means, first, patrolling and reporting alongside the border and the line of confrontation. The second task is our so-called human security patrols to increase the feeling of safety and security for the local population in the conflict-affected areas. And the third is taking steps that contribute to building confidence.*”

Pashinyan went to Washington on 3-7 February to attend the National Prayer Breakfast as part of the International Religious Freedom Summit. On 3 February, he met with representatives of the Armenian community at the Armenian Embassy and made a speech at the Atlantic Council.<sup>119</sup> It is clear that Pashinyan’s main purpose in going to the US was to establish contact with the new administration. However, this was not realized, and no meeting was held with the new administration officials. Moreover, since the summit he attended was organized by representatives of radical Diaspora organizations, the Apostolic Church and opposition circles, he was criticized and even protested for his policies and discourses.

On 13 February, Armenian Minister of Defense Papikyan attended a military exhibition in India and met with his Indian counterpart. The two sides wished to further deepen the relations that have developed in recent years.<sup>120</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan went to India on 9-11 March to give a conference,

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118 “EU Sees South Caucasus as Another Front of Hybrid Warfare — Russian MFA”, *TASS*, April 17, 2025, <https://tass.com/politics/1945299>.

119 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Working Visit to the USA”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, Accessed: May 15, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2025/02/03/Nikol-Pashinyan-visiting-Vashington/?ref=oc-media.org>.

120 4 “Armenia, India To Deepen Military Ties”, *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, February 13, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33313601.html>.

followed by bilateral and delegation talks with his Indian counterpart.<sup>121</sup>

Prime Minister Pashinyan attended the Munich Security Conference on 13-16 February and spoke at a roundtable discussion. On this occasion, Pashinyan held a number of bilateral meetings, including with the German Chancellor and the President of the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government. At the invitation of Minister of Defense Papikyan and the Chief of the General Staff of Germany, Chief of the General Staff Asryan also attended the Munich Security Conference.<sup>122</sup> The Armenian press commented on the participation in the Munich Conference that Armenia was seen as an independent country no longer under the influence of Russia, but as a country approaching France, the United States and India.

Chief of the General Staff Asryan visited Athens on 27 February upon the invitation of his Greek counterpart, and the bilateral and delegation talks focused on defense cooperation. The two sides also discussed cooperation within the trilateral Armenia-Greece-Cyprus format.<sup>123</sup> On 6 May, Minister of Defense Papikyan went to Greece on a working visit to hold talks with his Greek counterpart. It is reported that the two focused specifically on enhanced cooperation in the field of military education.<sup>124</sup>

Speaker of the parliament of the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC) visited Armenia from 18 to 21 May on the occasion of mutually opening resident embassies. On 22 May Armenian Chief of General Staff paid an official visit to GASC where the two sides addressed cooperation within the Armenia-Greece-GASC trilateral format.<sup>125</sup>

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands visited Armenia on 12 March and a Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership was signed after

121 "Visit of H.E. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia to India, *Ministry of External Affairs Government of India*, March 10, 2025, <https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/39146>.

122 "Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Working Visit to the Munich", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, Accessed: May 15, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2025/02/13/Nikol-Pashinyan-visiting-Munich/>.

123 7 "The Delegation Led by Edward Asryan is on an Official Visit to the Hellenic Republic", *Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia*, February 27, 2025, <https://www.mil.am/en/news/12639>.

124 Hurriyet Daily News, "GASC Speaker's Visit to Armenia Marks New Diplomatic Chapter," May 20, 2025, Accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/gasc-speaker-visit-armenia-2025>.

125 Daily Sabah, "Armenia-Greece-GASC Trilateral Cooperation Discussed During Official Visit," May 24, 2025, Accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/armenia-greece-gasc-cooperation-2025>.

the talks.<sup>126</sup>

Mirzoyan paid an official visit to Brazil on 19-20 March.<sup>127</sup>

The Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia held the first trilateral meeting of the three South Caucasus states in Tbilisi on 17 April.<sup>128</sup>

The Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Armenia on 16 April.<sup>129</sup>

Pashinyan paid an official visit to Estonia on 28 April.<sup>130</sup>

The new Georgian president paid an official visit to Armenia on 28 April and held a joint press conference with Khachaturyan after bilateral and delegation talks.<sup>131</sup>

Pashinyan participated in the Victory Day celebrated in Russia on 9 May with a traditional ceremony and high-level international participation, and in a comprehensive statement issued on this occasion, he said, *“Today we also have the opportunity to make our contribution to the peaceful and prosperous future of our region. The draft Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been agreed upon and is awaiting signing, and we will follow that path. Our region has earned the right to live in peace and prosperity, and so it should be. Despite all internal and external provocations, there will be no war between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, there will be peace.”*<sup>132</sup>

126 8 “Signing of the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership Between the Republic of Armenia and the Netherlands”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, March 12, 2025, [https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/03/12/Armenia\\_Netherlands/13109](https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/03/12/Armenia_Netherlands/13109).

127 Siranush Ghazanchyan, “Armenian FM to Pay Official Visit to Brazil”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, March 19, 2025, <https://en.armradio.am/2025/03/19/armenian-fm-to-pay-official-visit-to-brazil/>.

128 “Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia Hold First-Ever Trilateral Talks”, *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, April 17, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33388513.html>.

129 “Slovenian Foreign Minister to Pay Official Visit to Armenia”, *Arka News Agency*, April 15, 2025, <https://arka.am/en/news/politics/slovenian-foreign-minister-to-pay-official-visit-to-armenia/>.

130 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Official Visit to the Republic of Estonia”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, Accessed: May 15, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2025/04/27/Nikol-Pashinyan-visiting-Estonia/>.

131 “President Vahagn Khachaturyan met with President of Georgia Mikheil Kavelashvili, who is on an Official Visit to Armenia”, *The President of the Republic of Armenia*, April 29, 2025, <https://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2025/04/29/President-Vahagn-Khachaturyan-met-with-the-President-of-Georgia/>.

132 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Message on the Occasion of May 9”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, May 9, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2025/05/09/Nikol-Pashinyan-Congratulations/>.

As is known, Pashinyan did not attend last year's Victory Day ceremony, despite being invited. Likewise, he did not attend the Commonwealth of Independent States summit held in Russia in December 2024, citing his illness as an excuse.<sup>133</sup> Although the EU boycotted the Victory Day ceremonies in Moscow and indirectly urged Pashinyan not to go, this time Pashinyan kept his promise to Putin. Pashinyan, who was also questioned in the parliament after confirming that he would go to Moscow, based his response on a balanced and stabilizing foreign policy discourse, emphasizing that being closer to the West does not mean being against Russia and that good relations with Russia will continue to be maintained.<sup>134</sup> In an environment where the US approach towards Russia remains uncertain and the EU's weakness has been revealed and it is understood that its assurances cannot be relied upon, Pashinyan's need to be more careful and sensitive towards relations with Russia has been an understandable development.

A corroborating event was the official visit of the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov's two day stay in Yerevan on 20-21 May, following up Mirzoyan's visit to Moscow on 21 January. He also held talks with the President and the Prime Minister. In a rare PR exercise, Lavrov addressed the Russian-Armenian University faculty and students with an extensive Q&A session. The two ministers attended a joint press conference following their talks. On this occasion, Lavrov underlined Russia's unwavering commitment to strengthening bilateral relations with Armenia, criticized Western-led security arrangements, assessed Russian military presence in Armenia as fundamental, expressed his support for the regional 3+3 platform, in short, indicated Russia's inclination to increase efforts to undermine Western influence and to strengthen its cultural and military presence. Mirzoyan on the other hand, confirmed that Armenia would maintain its delicate balancing diplomacy, seek economic benefits from the EU and the West without compromising its security relationship with Russia.<sup>135</sup>

Minister Mirzoyan participated in the 134<sup>th</sup> ministerial session of the Council of Europe held in Luxembourg on 14 May.<sup>136</sup>

133 Oleh Pavliuk, "Armenian PM Decides not to Participate in Another Summit with Putin", *Pravda*, December 25, 2024, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2024/12/25/7490648/>.

134 Shoghik Galstian, "Pashinian Defends Trip To Moscow", *Azattyun Radiokayan*, May 7, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33407443.html>.

135 "Armenia Seeks Economic Ties with EU, Keeps Security Alliance with Russia," *EurActiv*, May 11, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/armenia-seeks-economic-ties-with-eu-keeps-security-alliance-with-russia/>

136 "Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan Participates in the 134<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Luxembourg," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia*, May 14, 2025, accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/05/14/coem/13231>.



Prime Minister Pashinyan and Foreign Minister Mirzoyan attended the 6<sup>th</sup> summit of the European Political Community held in Tirana on 19 May.<sup>137</sup>

The Yerevan dialogue conference, an international event, the second in a row, was held on 26 May, with an opening address by Prime Minister Pashinyan and keynote speech by Mirzoyan. It was attended by Slovakian Prime Minister, Hungarian, Montenegrin and French foreign ministers among others.<sup>138</sup>

#### 4. Relations with Türkiye

The ongoing normalization process started to yield concrete results with increased activities and contacts during the period. On 25 October, Special Representative Rubinyan stated that Armenia was ready to open the border and establish diplomatic relations “right away” and that the officials of the two countries would soon meet to discuss the Kars-Gyumri railway connection.<sup>139</sup>

Speaking in Parliament on 31 October during the budget talks for 2025, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan said, in response to a question, “*The Armenian Genocide international recognition process is not our number one priority. Making a number one priority of studying the Armenian Genocide, the holes of tragic history, is certainly not in the agenda of the foreign ministry.*”<sup>140</sup>

Likewise, in the same speech, in response to another question on “Artsakh”, without using this title, he said “*We are still working, and the title of our work is the organization of relations with Azerbaijan*”. The opposition announced this with the headlines that the government does not recognize the existence of the “Artsakh” issue and that the government repeats the opinion of the Turkish authorities and denies the genocide, as an understanding that we should forget the genocide and live in peace.

In the same speech, Mirzoyan gave the following information about the relations with Türkiye: “*We have dynamic dialogue with Türkiye, positive dialogue. Let me remind that the ministries of both countries worked around assessing the condition of the infrastructures on the border. Now this work*

137 “Armenian PM and FM Attend European Political Community Summit in Tirana,” *Armenpress*, May 19, 2025, Accessed: June 16, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1134260/>

138 “Yerevan Dialogue International Conference Kicks Off with Participation of European Leaders,” *News.am*, May 26, 2025, Accessed: June 16, 2025, <https://news.am/eng/news/827212.html>

139 “Yerevan and Ankara to Discuss Relaunch of Gyumri-Kars Railway”, *Arka News Agency*, October 25, 2024, [https://arka.am/en/news/politics/yerevan\\_and\\_ankara\\_to\\_discuss\\_relaunch\\_of\\_gyumri\\_kars\\_railway\\_](https://arka.am/en/news/politics/yerevan_and_ankara_to_discuss_relaunch_of_gyumri_kars_railway_)

140 “Armenian Genocide International Recognition Process not Foreign Ministry’s Top Priority, says FM Mirzoyan”, *ArmenPress*, October 31, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1203681>.

*is done and will be done in the direction of assessing the condition of the Kars-Gyumri railway. Our dialogue is first of all about the issues that the two countries must establish diplomatic relations, open the borders, have transportation and other connections and overall normalize their relations. It's no secret that to some extent Türkiye links its relations with Armenia with the normalization of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations. In our assessment this is not a very constructive approach, and we have our dialogue with Türkiye without preconditions, we have concrete agreements, to open the border for citizens of third countries and diplomatic passport holders in the beginning. There are joint projects of smaller scale, for example pertaining to the cultural heritage of Ani. I'd like to say that there is dynamic dialogue here too. I'd like to again express optimism that we will have progress in the near future.”<sup>141</sup>*

On 6 November, the Armenian press reported that Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs H. Fidan had stated that Türkiye's relations with Armenia could improve only after the signing of a peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia, thus signaling a change in Türkiye's previously accepted commitment to talks without preconditions.<sup>142</sup> In this context, attention was also drawn to President Erdoğan's statement<sup>143</sup> at the 11<sup>th</sup> summit of the Organization of Turkic States on the need to take into account Azerbaijan's historical achievement in the peace treaty.

News reports on 5-7 November stated that “Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople” S. Mashalian participated and chaired a session of the Supreme Spiritual Council<sup>144</sup> which convened under the chairmanship of Catholicos Karekin II. In addition to religious issues, the Council also discussed the extradition of prisoners held “illegally” in Azerbaijan, the protection of the rights of “Artsakh” Armenians, condemnation of Azerbaijan's “genocidal” actions and keeping the issue on the international agenda.

Kostanyan, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, said on 7 November to the press that Armenia hoped to achieve full normalization with

141 “Debate of State Budget 2025 Continues at Joint Sitting of NA Committees: Foreign Minister Presents Ongoing Work on Peace Treaty”, *Aravot*, October 31, 2024, <https://en.aravot.am/2024/10/31/354461>.

142 “Turkey Again Says Normalization with Armenia Depends on Yerevan-Baku Peace Process”, *ArmenPress*, November 6, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1204157>.

143 “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı Devlet Başkanları Konseyi 11. Zirvesi'nde Konuştu”, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı*, November 6, 2024, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turk-devletleri-teskilati-devlet-baskanlari-konseyi-11-zirvesinde-konustu>.

144 “Armenian Apostolic Church Supreme Spiritual Council Meeting Starts at Holy Etchmiadzin”, *News.am*, November 5, 2024, <https://news.am/eng/news/850946.html>

Türkiye, including the opening of the land border.<sup>145</sup> Speaking at the Manama Dialogue 2024 international forum, Kostanyan said on 7 December, “*We are sincerely interested to normalize relations with Türkiye. And we believe that the normalization of relations with Ankara can positively affect the normalization processes between Armenian and Azerbaijan as well. But also bearing in mind that Armenia is getting closer with our Western partners, here probably I should come back with a question to a distinguished colleague. Where does Türkiye see its foreign policy? Both in the region, but also with the European Union and with the West. It is clear that Armenia wants to get closer with the European Union, the people of Armenia have European aspirations. And with the opening of the border, Türkiye, which is also a member of the Customs Union, can become a bridge between Armenia and the EU.*”<sup>146</sup>

In an interview broadcast on state television on 22 November, Pashinyan again criticized the Declaration of Independence in the Constitution and drew a parallelism between the term “Western Armenia” in the Declaration and the discourse of “Western Azerbaijan”. Pashinyan called for stronger ties with Türkiye and emphasized that improving relations with neighbours was essential for Armenia’s stability, independence and economic development.<sup>147</sup> Pashinyan’s statements inflamed the opposition once again, and he became the target of accusations of pro-Turkish rhetoric, falling in line with Ankara and Baku, and undermining Armenia’s interests and dignity.

It was reported in the press that a study conducted in Germany in 2021 on the impact of the opening of the Türkiye-Armenia border on the Armenian economy was presented to the parliament. According to the study, if the border was opened in 2021, Armenia’s trade with Türkiye would increase from 1% to 12%. The opening of the border will affect not only trade with Türkiye, but also Armenia’s foreign trade structure. Trade with the EU would come first (20%), Russia would fall to second place (14%) and Türkiye would take third place (12%). Whereas the current situation is Russia (32%), EU (18%) and China (15%).<sup>148</sup>

145 “Armenia Hopes for Full Normalization with Turkey, says Deputy FM”, *ArmenPress*, November 7, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1204314>.

146 “Participation of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia in the Panel Discussion at the “Manama Dialogue”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, December 7, 2024, <https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/12/07/participation-of-the-deputy-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-armenia-in-the-panel-discussion-at-the-%E2%80%9C12993>.

147 Hoory Minoyan, “Pashinyan Compares Western Armenia to “Western Azerbaijan”, *Armenian Weekly*, November 26, 2024, <https://armenianweekly.com/2024/11/26/pashinyan-compares-western-armenia-to-western-azerbaijan>.

148 “Opening of Armenia-Turkey Border: Trade Impact”, *German Economic Team*, Accessed: May 15, 2025, <https://www.german-economic-team.com/en/newsletter/opening-of-armenia-turkey-border-trade-impact/>.

Special Representative Rubinyan told the press that officials from the two countries met in November to discuss the technical needs for the operation of the Kars-Gyumri railway and the infrastructure needs of the Akhurik/Akiyaka railway border crossing. On 19 December, speaking at the 49th Meeting of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organization's Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan stated that the two countries had agreed to jointly assess the technical requirements for the operation of the Kars-Gyumri railway.<sup>149</sup>

During the period, it was observed that the Armenian press showed an increasing interest in “Kurdistan” and the Kurdish issue, especially the statements and activities of the Armenian elements operating in the north of Syria. In this context, the “Armenian Social Council”, which is said to represent Armenian elements in the region, issued a call for Kurdish political parties and movements to work towards Kurdish unity by resolving their differences. On 17 December, the commitment of the “Armenian Martyr Nubar Ozanyan Brigade” to defend Kurdish-led North and East Syria against attacks was reaffirmed, and solidarity was expressed.<sup>150</sup> The same brigade issued a statement on 24 April condemning the genocide and vowing that Armenian fighters in the autonomous northeast of Syria would continue to resist oppression and protect all peoples from genocide, occupation and imperialism. On 1 April, the Consulate General of the Republic of Armenia in Erbil told local media that Armenia is developing relations with the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government in key areas. On 3 April, the auxiliary bishop, representing the Armenian Archbishop of Aleppo, visited Mazloun Abdi, “Commander-in-Chief” of the YPG, and thanked him for his efforts to ensure security and stability in the region.

Armenian media reported that the two countries' Ministers of Foreign Affairs held a telephone conversation on 31 December and discussed bilateral and international issues of common interest, as well as the New Year greetings.<sup>151</sup> Mirzoyan informed the press on 8 January about the content of the meeting and said, “*We and the Turkish side have always expressed readiness on*

149 “Armenia Agrees with Turkey on Assessment of Requirements for Crossing the Border on Gyumri-Kars railway – Mirzoyan”, *Arka News Agency*, December 20, 2024, [https://arka.am/en/news/politics/armenia-agrees-with-turkey-on-assessment-of-requirements-for-crossing-the-border-on-gyumri-kars-rail/?sphrase\\_id=4250454](https://arka.am/en/news/politics/armenia-agrees-with-turkey-on-assessment-of-requirements-for-crossing-the-border-on-gyumri-kars-rail/?sphrase_id=4250454).

150 “Syrian Armenian Brigade Pledges to Defend Rojava Against Attacks”, *The California Courier*, December 19, 2024, <https://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/syrian-armenian-brigade-pledges-to-defend-rojava-against-attacks/>.

151 “Armenian Foreign Minister Holds Phone Call with Turkish Counterpart”, *ArmenPress*, December 31, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1208694>.

*establishing diplomatic relations and opening the border between Armenia and Türkiye. Regrettably, the Turkish side continues to link the Armenia-Türkiye normalization with the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization, and this is a public fact. In my opinion, starting from the other side, meaning the normalization of relations between Armenia and Türkiye, would have had positive impact on the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization, and would have made it a lot easier. But there is no such perception in Türkiye yet. We must continue dialogue on the level of ministers and special envoys, and if possible, on the level of the leaders of both countries,*<sup>152</sup>

On 10 January, the Armenian press reported the following statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs Fidan at a press conference on the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace talks: *“We attach importance that Prime Minister Pashinyan has been sending positive messages in this direction. We take note that his stance in favor of peace contributes to the positive progress of the process. We continue to support the bilateral negotiations without mediators. The establishment of peace will bring unprecedented new opportunities for the development of our region. Türkiye is moving forward shoulder to shoulder with Azerbaijan in this process. The South Caucasus is a region of extreme importance for Türkiye. Just as the Balkans are our doors to Europe, the Caucasus is our door to Central Asia.”*<sup>153</sup>

On 20 January, the Armenian press reported that the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed Armenia’s cooperation in its statement on the arrest and extradition by Armenia of two people wanted by Türkiye with an Interpol red notice.

In a message posted on social media on 21 January, Pashinyan said, *“The tragedy at the ski resort in Bolu is shocking. My condolences to the victims’ families. I wish a speedy recovery for the injured.”*<sup>154</sup> Armenia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs also posted a message on social media saying, *“Deeply saddened by the tragic fire in Bolu that claimed dozens of lives. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families. Wishing speedy recovery for the injured.”*<sup>155</sup>

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152 “Armenia’s Mirzoyan Reveals Details of New Year’s Phone Conversation with Turkey FM”, *News.am*, January 8, 2025, <https://news.am/eng/news/860557.html>.

153 “FM: Turkey Hopes Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Agreement Will Be Signed in 2025”, *News.am*, January 10, 2025, <https://news.am/eng/news/860914.html>

154 Siranush Ghazanchyan, “Armenian PM Offers Condolences to Families of Turkey Ski Resort Fire Victims”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, January 22, 2025, <https://en.armradio.am/2025/01/22/armenian-pm-offers-condolences-to-families-of-turkey-ski-resort-fire-victims/>.

155 “Armenian Foreign Ministry Extends Condolences Over Tragic Fire in Bolu, Turkey”, *ArmenPress*, January 21, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1210076>.

On 5 February during his visit to the US, Pashinyan said, “*I think that Armenia and Türkiye have never had such an active dialogue as they do now. In fact, there are no obstacles to communication with Türkiye and we are in constant contact. Our foreign ministers meet and communicate regularly and our representatives stay in constant touch. We are working very actively, and there is a shared understanding of what needs to be done. Of course, there are some nuances, and final steps are needed to achieve a real result. We hope that the outcome will be visible very soon.*”<sup>156</sup>

In his statement to the press on 27 February, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia stated that the work on their side of the Margara-Alican border crossing had been completed and was ready for opening, and that Prime Minister Pashinyan had also visited the crossing and inspected it, but that there was no “clarification” as to when the border would be opened.<sup>157</sup> Pashinyan made a statement on 28 February and announced that the duties of the Russian border guards at the Margara border crossing have ended, and the control of the crossing is now under the responsibility of the Armenian border guards. Pashinyan thanked the Russian border guards for their service on this section of the Armenian-Turkish border and emphasized that as of 1 March 2025, only Armenian border guards will control the people entering and leaving the border crossing.<sup>158</sup> As is known, according to a treaty signed in 1992, Russia undertook the protection of Armenia’s borders with Türkiye and Iran. On 1 August 2024, the first exception was the transfer of the security of Yerevan International Airport from the Russians to the Armenian guards. A similar practice took place at the border crossing with Iran in January 2025. The third modification took place at the Margara-Alican border crossing. The answer to the question regarding the extension of this practice to the borders with Türkiye and Iran is that it is not yet on the agenda.

In an interview with the press on 4 March, Armenian Speaker of Parliament Simonyan claimed that Azerbaijan was obstructing Armenian-Turkish normalization: “*We have been working with Türkiye and will continue to do so. I regret that Azerbaijan has taken hostage the Armenia-Türkiye relations,*

156 “Türkiye-Armenia Dialogue Has Never Been So Active: Pashinyan”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, February 5, 2025, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkiye-armenia-dialogue-has-never-been-so-active-pashinyan-205472>.

157 “Armenia Completed Work on Margara Checkpoint on Turkey Border, Condition Ready for Opening, Minister Says”, *News.am*, February 27, 2025, <https://news.am/eng/news/869030.html>.

158 “From March 1, Solely Armenian Border Guard Troops to Control All Entry and Exit Points of Armenia, Announces Pashinyan”, *ArmenPress*, February 28, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1213259>.

*the Armenian-Turkish border issue, the Armenian-Turkish normalization, and is attempting to have influence. This is very bad, and I think the respective Turkish officials also understand this”*.<sup>159</sup>

Patriarch Mashalian, the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, travelled to Armenia on 8 March to take part in the meeting of the Supreme Spiritual Council.<sup>160</sup>

Upon the invitation of the Armenian government, a group of ten journalists representing the Turkish press went to Armenia on 11-13 March to hold meetings and interviews with senior officials. The journalists met with Prime Minister Pashinyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan, Special Representative Rubinyan and other officials and were given first-hand information on Armenia’s foreign policy, relations with Türkiye and expectations in a comprehensive framework. These interviews, particularly the interview with Pashinyan, were also widely published in the media outlets to which the journalists belonged. Pashinyan described his meeting with the Turkish press as “an unprecedented event”. It is possible to say that this initiative provided a successful PR activity for Armenia in terms of promoting Armenia’s views and perspective.<sup>161</sup>

In his speech to the parliament on 14 March, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan reiterated that the normalization process with Türkiye remains in progress and pointed to the vital importance of the Kars-Gyumri railway, saying: “*In addition to establishing diplomatic relations, the opening of borders and relaunching transport infrastructures between us is crucial*”.

In order to enable Armenia to send humanitarian aid to Syria, the Margara-Alican border crossing was exceptionally opened for trucks during 21-31 March. The first application for such purpose was provided on 6 February 2023 for transportation of aid to the earthquake disaster.<sup>162</sup>

159 “Azerbaijan Hijacks Armenian-Turkish Normalization, Warns Speaker”, *ArmenPress*, March 4, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1213490>.

160 “Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Visits Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin”, *Armenian Apostolic Holy Church Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin*, March 8, 2025, <https://www.armenianchurch.org/en/news/armenian-patriarch-of-constantinople-visits-mother-see-of-holy-etchmiadzin/11771>.

161 “Journalists Arriving in Armenia from Turkey Visited Armenian-Turkish Border”, *ILurer*, March 12, 2025, <https://www.1lurer.am/en/2025/03/12/Journalists-arriving-in-Armenia-from-Turkey-visited-Armenian-Turkish-border/1278364>.

162 Xandie (Alexandra) Kuenning, “Armenia Turkey Checkpoint to Temporarily Open for Humanitarian Aid to Syria”, *OC Media*, March 20, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/armenia-turkey-checkpoint-to-temporarily-open-for-humanitarian-aid-to-syria/>.

In an extensive interview published in the local press on 20 March during his visit to Brazil, Mirzoyan, in response to the question “*Is there any prospect of normalizing relations between Armenia and Türkiye?*”, replied: “*We have a very constructive dialogue with Türkiye. Within this dialogue, there have been no preconditions set by either the Armenian or Turkish side. We have publicly stated that the goal of establishing diplomatic relations is the opening of the border between Türkiye and Armenia. The border was closed by the Turkish side 34 years ago. We have made some tangible progress, such as lifting the ban on air cargo transport. We also established direct flights, among other confidence-building measures. We agreed that, in a first stage, the border could be opened for citizens of third countries and Armenian and Turkish citizens holding diplomatic passports. This agreement has not yet been implemented. What we hear from our Turkish colleagues is that they are restrained from fully opening Armenia’s border until the final normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Although there is no formal precondition, we have seen that they link Türkiye-Armenia relations to Armenia-Azerbaijan relations. We believe that if we opened the border between Armenia and Türkiye first, it could have a very positive impact on our relations with Azerbaijan. Among the tangible measures achieved with Türkiye, we have started, bilaterally, border infrastructure work. Armenian and Turkish experts have begun examining the situation of the railway linking Gyumri to Kars.*”<sup>163</sup>

Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul Archbishop Mashalian was also invited to the iftar ceremony organized by Turkish President Erdoğan on 28 March.<sup>164</sup>

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan, accompanied by a delegation, attended the Antalya Diplomacy Forum on 11-13 April and had a bilateral meeting with Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Fidan on 12 April. In his briefing to the press about his meeting with Fidan, Mirzoyan reiterated the views and assessments he had previously expressed to the press and said: “*We both have the understanding that the final goal, the aim is to fully normalize relations, including the establishment of diplomatic relations and including opening the whole border. Our dialogue is not only about merely establishment of diplomatic relations and formally opening the border. It’s about the huge trade that can take place between two countries. We (also) have discussed some*

163 “Speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan at Rio Branco Institute in Brazil”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, March 20, 2025, [https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2025/03/20/Mirzoyan\\_RioBranco/13131](https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2025/03/20/Mirzoyan_RioBranco/13131).

164 “Armenian Patriarch Sahag II Participates in Iftar Ceremony Hosted by Erdogan”, *ArmenPress*, March 28, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1215674>.



*joint energy projects and transit opportunities.*”<sup>165</sup> Mirzoyan also gave an in-depth interview to the Turkish NTV channel in Antalya.<sup>166</sup>

In an interview with an Armenian outlet, Mirzoyan noted that the most important of the contact opportunities created by the participation in the Antalya Forum were meetings with Turkish colleagues and representatives. He said, “*With Fidan, we specifically discussed the current state of the Armenia–Türkiye dialogue, the steps that have been taken, and the steps that can be taken*” and emphasized that such forums should not be missed. In response to the question of what has been achieved so far, he expressed that the ban on direct flights has been lifted, inspections of the Margara-Alican border infrastructure have been carried out, the Gyumri-Kars railway and other transport links have been assessed, and meetings between experts from various agencies have been held to discuss the restoration of the historic Ani Bridge.<sup>167</sup>

On the margins of the Forum, the Turkish and Armenian Special Envoys, S. Kılıç and R. Rubinyan also held bilateral meetings.<sup>168</sup> Likewise, Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs B. Ekinci and V. Kostanyan held bilateral meetings at the Forum.<sup>169</sup> Kostanyan announced on his social media account that the two countries discussed the normalization of relations and possible new directions of cooperation.

In response to a question at a press conference in Yerevan on 16 April following a meeting with the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mirzoyan described his meetings with his Turkish and Azerbaijani counterparts at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum as generally positive and added, “*We can’t say that we have final solutions or agreements as a result of the meetings, contacts and conversations with the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Türkiye in Antalya, but we also can’t deny that nevertheless the meetings, discussions*

165 Elen Muradyan, “Armenian Foreign Minister Sees Broad Potential for Normalization with Turkey”, April 13, 2025, <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/944691/armenian-foreign-minister-sees-broad-potential-for-normalization-with-turkey/>.

166 “Ermenistan Dışişleri Bakanı NTV’ye konuştu: Azerbaycan ile Barış Yakın mı?”, *NTV*, April 13, 2025, [https://www.ntv.com.tr/video/turkiye/ermenistan-disisleri-bakani-ntvye-konustu-azerbaycan-ile-baris-yakin-mi-Ev7MWGOOM0C6quQqnBU\\_8w](https://www.ntv.com.tr/video/turkiye/ermenistan-disisleri-bakani-ntvye-konustu-azerbaycan-ile-baris-yakin-mi-Ev7MWGOOM0C6quQqnBU_8w).

167 “There’s a Chance to Open New Era in Caucasus’ - Armenian Foreign Minister at Antalya Forum”, *JAM News*, April 14, 2025, <https://jam-news.net/armenian-fm-on-antalya-diplomacy-forum/>.

168 “Armenia and Turkey’s Special Envoys Rubinyan and Kılıç Meet in Antalya”, *MassisPost*, April 11, 2025, <https://massispost.com/2025/04/armenia-and-turkeys-special-envoys-rubinyan-and-kilic-meet-in-antalya/>.

169 “Dışişleri Bakan Yardımcısı Ekinci, ADF 2025 Marjında Görüşmeler Gerçekleştirdi”, *Hibya*, April 13, 2025, <https://hibya.com/disisleri-bakan-yardimcisi-ekinci-adf-2025-marjinda-gorusmeler-gerceklestirdi-574064>.

*and conversations make the parties more understandable for each other; topics, subtopics or new topics can be discussed from meetings to meetings, which are certainly effective in terms of the overall process.”<sup>170</sup>*

According to Armenian media reports, on 18 April, Special Representative Rubinyan briefed Russia’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Galuzin on his meeting with his Turkish counterpart Kılıç in Antalya and the latest developments in the field of Türkiye-Armenia normalization. According to the report, Rubinyan told his interlocutor that no new progress had been made, that Türkiye had tied the process to Armenia making further concessions to Azerbaijan, and that Türkiye was dragging its feet in implementing the July 2022 agreement on the opening of the border to third parties. The Russian side reaffirmed its readiness to continue facilitating the search for common ground between the two countries, as Turkish-Armenian relations are an important element of stability and sustainable development in the South Caucasus.<sup>171</sup>

The 24th of April, which Armenians have declared as a Remembrance Day in relation to the Law on Relocation and Resettlement of the year 1915, was also commemorated this year with various events in Armenia and the Diaspora. But the provocative power of the “genocide” characterization was weakened compared to last year due to the Armenian government’s statement that publicity would not be prioritized, Pashinyan’s questioning of historical events with a new perspective, the US, where the Diaspora is the strongest and most active, also abandoning this rhetoric in its official statement. This situation caused visible disappointment in the Armenian opposition and radical organizations of the Diaspora and pessimism in terms of their provocative ambitions. However, some third states, which continue to support the Armenian allegations for political reasons, reiterated their well-known rhetoric. In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the following statement:

*“We categorically reject the statements on the events of 1915, made in violation of historical facts and international law. Such attempts which clearly aim to exploit the pains of the past for political motives are totally null and void.*

170 “Armenian FM Says Meetings with Turkish, Azeri Counterparts Were Positive”, *ArmenPress*, April 16, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1217330>.

171 “Deputy Speaker Rubinyan Informs Russian Deputy FM of Recent Developments in Armenia-Turkey Normalization”, *ArmenPress*, April 18, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1217559>.

*Türkiye has always advocated the promotion of peace, dialogue, mutual understanding and common prosperity at the global level and in its region. With this understanding, Türkiye has opened its archives, and proposed the establishment of a Joint Historical Commission for a just and scholarly examination of the events of 1915.*

*We stress that the efforts of radical circles to draw animosity from history should not be encouraged and reiterate our call to support the ongoing normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia.”<sup>172</sup>*

On 24 April, Turkish President Erdoğan sent the following message to Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul Archbishop Mashalian:

*“Reverend Sahak Maşalyan, Armenian Patriarch of Türkiye,*

*Distinguished Members of the Armenian Community,*

*My Dear Citizens,*

*I salute you wholeheartedly with affection.*

*This year once again I remember with respect the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives under the harsh circumstances of World War I, and extend my most sincere condolences to their descendants.*

*We still feel in our hearts the pain of the souls we have lost due to the rebellions, escalated gang violence, acts of subversion perpetrated by armed groups and epidemics, during the wartime that coincided with the final period of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, while believing that the present and the future should not be held captive by sad memories of the past, we are also aware that we, as 86 million people, altogether should build our own future.*

*Those, who tried to disrupt the deep-rooted and strong bonds between us by drawing animosity from history, have not been able to achieve their ambitions to this day.*

*Having lived together in this homeland for centuries, today, we continue*

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172 “No: 91, 24 April 2025, Regarding the Statements by Authorities of Some Countries on the Events of 1915”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, April 24, 2025, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_91\\_-bazi-ulkelerin-yetkililerince-1915-olaylarina-iliskin-yapilan-beyanlar-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_91_-bazi-ulkelerin-yetkililerince-1915-olaylarina-iliskin-yapilan-beyanlar-hk.en.mfa).

*to share our joys and grief, as we have done in the past.*

*We did not allow even a single citizen of ours to be discriminated, alienated or marginalized for any reason whatsoever, and will never allow that either.*

*Like all our other citizens, tranquility, safety, and well-being of our Armenian citizens, who have made remarkable contributions to the cultural, artistic, political, economic, educational and social life of our country, will continue to be our priority.*

*Just as we have brought Türkiye to these days, once again altogether and shoulder to shoulder we will build the Century of Türkiye as well.*

*Under the tranquil and secure shadow of the crimson flag with crescent and star, we will live freely as honorable citizens of the Republic of Türkiye forever.*

*With these in mind, I reiterate that I sincerely share the sorrow of Armenian community's sufferings in the past, and once again commemorate with respect all Ottoman citizens who have lost their lives.*

*Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN*

*President of Türkiye*<sup>173</sup>

Patriarch Mashalyan read and broadcast the President's message to the congregation at the service in Feriköy Church.

In his keynote speech at the regional gathering of the EU ambassadors to the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Mirzoyan said on 20 May the following regarding relations with Türkiye: "Armenia's commitment to peace and stability in the region is further demonstrated by the steps our country has taken in the normalization process with Türkiye. High-level dialogue continues, including meetings between the Prime Minister of Armenia and the Turkish President, as well as my discussions with the country's Foreign Minister. We firmly believe that full normalization -establishing diplomatic

173 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Türkiye Ermenileri Patriği Maşalyan'a Mesaj Gönderdi", *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı*, April 24, 2025, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turkiye-ermenileri-patrigi-masalyana-mesaj-gonderdi-24-04-25>.

relations and opening borders- would unlock significant opportunities for both our countries and the wider region”.<sup>174</sup>

Speaking at the Yerevan Dialogue forum on 26 May, Mirzoyan was asked whether a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan could serve as a stepping stone for improving Armenia-Türkiye relations. “If I were to answer briefly-yes” he said. “We have launched a dialogue with Turkey, with both sides publicly stating that the process should proceed without preconditions. I would like to note that we are pleased to see that the dialogue between Armenia and Turkey has not been as problematic as some might have expected” the Minister added. He concluded his answer saying that the only remaining obstacle to establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey, reopening the border and resolving connectivity issues is the unresolved status of negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>175</sup>

Armenian press, referring to the Turkish media, carried provocative headlines on 29 May: “Turkey’s Erdogan again calls for Azeri corridor through Armenia” quoting : “The Zangezur corridor is not only a land connection with Nakhichevan for Azerbaijan, but also a new integration line extending to the Turkic world from Turkey”. Nevertheless, news reporting included also “Türkiye is attaching great importance to the establishment of stability, peace and prosperity in the South Caucases, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said, urging the signing of a permanent peace deal between Azerbaijan and Armenia at the earliest time”.<sup>176</sup>

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174 “Keynote Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Regional Seminar of the European Union Ambassadors to the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia*, May 20, 2025, Accessed: June 16, 2025, [https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2025/05/20/Armenia\\_EU/13235](https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2025/05/20/Armenia_EU/13235)

175 “Yerevan Dialogue 2025: Armenia Unveils Roadmap for Peace and Global Cooperation,” *Caucasus Watch*, May 27, 2025, Accessed: June 16, 2025, <https://www.caucasuswatch.de/en/news/yerevan-dialogue-2025-armenia-unveils-roadmap-for-peace-and-global-cooperation.html>

176 “Türkiye wants opening of Zangezur corridor ‘as soon as possible’: Erdogan,” *TRT World*, September 26, 2023, Accessed: June 16, 2025, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkiye/turkiye-wants-opening-of-zangezur-corridor-as-soon-as-possible-erdogan-15141613>

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## 'REAL ARMENIA' OR 'HISTORIC ARMENIA'?

('GERÇEK ERMENİSTAN' MI, 'TARİHİ ERMENİSTAN' MI?)

Jeremy SALT\*

**Abstract:** *The protracted Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, rooted in historical grievances since the First World War and the Soviet collapse, is now at a critical juncture with the negotiation of a 17-point peace settlement. Despite significant progress, unresolved issues—including Armenian constitutional claims to Karabakh, third-party monitoring, and the Zangezur corridor—pose obstacles. Domestic and diaspora opposition complicates Armenia's political calculus, with Prime Minister Pashinyan facing declining popularity and pressure to amend the constitution. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan leverages its military gains and demands for territorial integrity. The evolving regional landscape, including Armenia's strained ties with Russia and potential Western alignment, underscores the high stakes and complexities of achieving lasting peace*

**Keyword:** *Armenia , Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Peace settlement*

**Öz:** *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından bu yana tarihi şikayetlere dayanan Ermenistan-Azerbaycan çatışması, 17 maddelik barış anlaşmasının müzakereleriyle kritik bir dönemde bulunmaktadır.*

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*Önemli ilerlemelere rağmen, Ermenistan'ın Karabağ üzerindeki anayasal hak talepleri, üçüncü taraf gözetimi ve Zangezur koridoru gibi çözülmemiş sorunlar engel teşkil etmektedir. Yurtiçi ve diasporadaki muhalefet, Ermenistan'ın siyasi hesaplarını karmaşıklaştırırken, Başbakan Paşinyan popülaritesinin düşmesi ve anayasayı değiştirme baskısıyla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Bu arada Azerbaycan, askeri kazanımlarını ve toprak bütünlüğü taleplerini kullanmaktadır. Ermenistan'ın Rusya ile gergin ilişkileri ve Batı ile olası ittifakı da dahil olmak üzere değişen bölgesel manzara, kalıcı barışın sağlanmasının ne kadar önemli ve karmaşık olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ermenistan, Azerbaycan, Türkiye, Barış anlaşması*

An Armenia-Azerbaijan peace settlement is on the table. The two governments have basically agreed on a 17-point peace settlement, 'basically' because there are still outstanding points to be settled. Given the hostility between them since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and much further back to the aftermath of the First World War, will the settlement actually make it to the finishing line of a treaty?

The agreement, disclosed by the Azerbaijani government on March 13 and confirmed soon afterwards by Armenia, immediately met with strong party and parliamentary opposition in Baku, on the basis that the government had made too many concessions without getting anything in return.

The two final sticking points were resolved with an agreement to withdraw all legal claims in international courts and end any deployment of third-party forces on the border between the two states.

However, Azerbaijani objections have arisen outside the 17 points. One refers to Article One of the Armenian Constitution, which takes as its basis "the fundamental principles of Armenian statehood and the nationwide objectives established in the Declaration of Independence, Armenia having fulfilled the sacred behest of its freedom-loving ancestors for the restoration of the sovereign state."

The Declaration of Independence (August 23, 1990) was issued in the name of the Supreme Council of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, from that point onwards known as the Republic of Armenia. It states that the declaration is based on the December 1, 1989, joint decision of the Armenian SSR Supreme Council and the Artsakh (the Armenian name for Karabakh) National Council on the reunification of the Armenian SSR "and the mountainous region of Karabakh."

Thus, tracing the line forward to the Armenian Constitution, the way is left open for the territorial claim to Karabakh to be revived one day, even though Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who said in 2019 that "Artsakh is Armenia – period!", has conceded in the negotiations that Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is insisting that Armenian Constitution must be amended "to eliminate the claims against the government and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan" before the peace accord can be signed.

Azerbaijan is also insisting on the abolition of “the obsolete and dysfunctional Minsk Group and related structures of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *before* a peace agreement can be signed but Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan says the future of the group can only be considered *after* the agreement is signed.

The future of EUMA (European Union Mission in Armenia), which operates six forward bases along the border for monitoring purposes, is another issue Azerbaijan wants settled before the signing of a treaty.

Azerbaijan says bilateral dialogue will continue to resolve these and other issues, including the ‘Zangezur corridor,’ the road Azerbaijan wants built through southern Armenia to connect the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, an Azerbaijani enclave bordered by Armenia and Iran, to the rest of the home country.

Baku wants the road placed under Azerbaijan’s control. This is strongly opposed in Armenia, as is the government’s agreement to hand back to Azerbaijan five border villages occupied by Armenia since the 1990s (Pashinyan says there are only “two and a half” because of partial control already by Azerbaijan).

A profound lack of trust marks the relations between the two countries. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev says trust in Armenia is “close to zero,” accuses it of preparing for a new war and regards EUMA as an “EU intelligence mission.” Again, Pashinyan says “mutually beneficial agreements” with the EU over EUMA can be discussed only *after* the signing and ratification of a peace agreement.

Meeting Azerbaijani’s demand for a constitutional amendment could only be done through a referendum. Having insisted a year ago that he would not amend the constitution, Pashinyan has now announced that a new one will be prepared in which the contentious article is expected to be listed for removal.

Parliamentary elections in Armenia are due in June 2026. Writing in the *Armenian Weekly*, Haret Sassounian, President of the Armenia Artsakh Fund, says holding the referendum at the same time would be a “golden opportunity” to get rid of Pashinyan. Public opinion polls held over the past year show a continuing slide in support for Pashinyan and his Civil Contract party, as well as a high level of apathy among voters.

A January 2025 poll indicated that only 11.3 percent of voters would cast their vote for Civil Contract at the next elections. Dissatisfaction with Pashinyan was running at 65 percent, with 44 percent of those polled believing early elections were necessary. What protects Civil Contract, despite its low polling, is the fragmented nature of the parliament, with small parties incapable of joining forces to create a credible opposition.

While the Armenian Justice Minister Srubhi Galyan has said the new constitution would be ready before the next elections, the constitutional committee has been given until the end of 2027 to complete it.

Pashinyan has referred only to an "opinion" that elections and the referendum could be held simultaneously. He says, "I'm ready to put my signature under the agreed draft." Foreign Minister Mirzoyan believes that with the peace treaty, "Armenia will emerge from a large and deep swamp from which, if we do not emerge, we will sink and be buried."

Along with the Armenian domestic opposition, however, sections of the influential US Armenian diaspora have damned the provisional settlement. Aram Hamparian, executive director of ANCA (the Armenian National Committee of America), described it as a surrender of Armenia's security that was "forced on Yerevan at the point of a gun."

An April 21, 2025, article in *Providence*, the journal of the (right-wing Christian) Institute of Religion and Democracy, headed 'Appeasing Azerbaijan Is a Sure Way to Start a New War,' compares the draft treaty to the Munich agreement handing Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland to Germany in 1938. Four of the six authors are Armenian, their views undoubtedly representative of a broad section of US Armenian communities.

The provisional agreement was quickly welcomed by the EU and the United States. Russia brokered an end to the 2023 war following the successful Azerbaijani military operation that ended in the collapse of the 'Republic of Nagorno Karabakh' (Artsakh) and said it was ready to host further negotiations.

However, the relationship with Armenia has been severely strained in recent years. Armenia is a member of CSTO (Collective Security Organization), comprising Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan).

Article 4 of the CSTO pact is like Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which binds all members to come to the defence of



one member if attacked. In 2022, Armenia tried to invoke Article 4 but failed, following which the Secretary of the Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, said there was “no more hope” for CSTO.

In 2023 Russia refused to take sides, which included the withholding of arms supplies to Armenia. It was “unable to deliver,” Pashinyan said, adding that it was a strategic mistake to rely on Russia.

In February 2024 Armenia froze active participation in CSTO, said its membership was “under review” and even described CSTO as “a threat to national security.”

In June 2024 Pashinyan said Armenia would withdraw from the organization (as Georgia had done in 1993 and Azerbaijan in 1999). “We will leave,” Pashinyan said. “We will decide when to exit. Don’t worry. We won’t return .... We already consider ourselves outside CSTO ... I believe we have reached the point of no return.”

The feeling of being betrayed by CSTO strengthened pro-US and pro-NATO membership opinion in Armenia, which already has a strong ‘partnership relationship’ with the organization. Having gone to war to prevent Ukraine joining NATO, Russia now faces the possibility, however remote at this stage, that two south Caucasus states, Armenia and Georgia, may follow the same path.

In 2003 the ‘Rose Revolution’ in Georgia, influenced by US support for the opposition, brought down the pro-Soviet/Russian government. In 2008 Russia intervened in support of two separatist Georgian regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The war ended in a ceasefire, but with Russia recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states.

Georgia is already on the path to EU accession and has been accepted as a future member of NATO. In 2024 the electoral success of the pro-Russian Georgian Dream party led to the suspension of the membership process by the EU and the suspension of strategic relations by the US.

Türkiye has watched these developments in the South Caucasus carefully and has said little. Reconciliation with Azerbaijan could precede reconciliation with Türkiye, if Armenia can be persuaded to remove the constitutional barrier to relations with governments that do not accept the Armenian claim of genocide in 1914-18.

An open border would benefit Armenia economically, as well as linking it to the trade, transport routes and oil pipeline routes linking Europe to Central Asia and China and the North-South Corridor. This vast region is the rapidly developing economic powerhouse of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and Armenia has the opportunity to be part of it.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union Azerbaijan has maintained equidistance between Russia and the US but is now signalling that it will be 'pivoting' towards Central Asia. Another drawcard is the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) project linking Europe to Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Central Asia and India.

Türkiye and Azerbaijan are members of OTS (Organization of Turkic States) and already have a relationship described by Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as "one nation – two states." For Armenia, the practical benefits of signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan and opening diplomatic relations with Turkey are many but in the case of the latter, Armenia would first have to decide between what Prime Minister Pashinyan has called 'real Armenia' and 'historic Armenia'. According to Pashinyan "the real Armenia is the one that has an internationally recognized territory and internationally recognized borders and, realizing this fact, has the self-awareness of a full and respectable member of the international community," he further remarked that adherence to "historic Armenia" poses challenges "this adherence to "historic Armenia" poses challenges when the Republic of Armenia seeks to normalize relations with its neighbors."<sup>1</sup>

The damage done in history is not to be underestimated, even more than a century later. The wounds are deep. This is as true of Turkish-Armenian relations as it is of those between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The collapse of Tsarist Russia in 1917 brought on a series of tectonic changes. The scramble for territory and new borders after 1918 threw Armenians and Azerbaijanis against each other in the wider context of the 'war of intervention' fought by allied forces against Germany and the Bolsheviks.

Baku, abutting the rich oil reserves of the Caspian Sea, was the main centre of this conflict. In late March-early April 1918, Bolshevik and Dashnak forces slaughtered thousands of Azerbaijani Muslims in Baku. After the collapse

1 Hetq online newspaper published in Yerevan. Hrant Gadarigian. 10 Apr 2024. <https://hetq.am/en/article/165645>

of the Bolshevik-dominated Baku Soviet in July, the arrival of the Ottoman-Azerbaijani ‘Islamic Army of the Caucasus’ precipitated panic amongst Armenians in Baku. Thousands fled or were massacred in revenge attacks for the killings of the ‘March days.’

The triumph of the Soviets and the establishment of autonomous Armenian and Azerbaijani socialist republics restored an order which lasted until the next tectonic shock, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Open conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabakh had already broken out in 1988. Described as ‘Nagorno-Karabakh’ by Armenia, Western governments and the media, the ‘enclave’ was in fact internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan’s sovereign territory.

This first war (1988-1994) ended in a victory for Armenia, which took full control of Karabakh, as well as surrounding Azerbaijani territory. The ‘Republic of Artsakh’ was established in 1991 and its independence declared in 1992. In the years of fighting an estimated 700,000 Azerbaijanis, including 500,000 from Karabakh and 186,000 from Armenia, headed towards Baku or fled to other regions where public buildings, schools and hostels were turned into refugee centers.

About 300,000 Armenians also fled, mostly from Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan. While there were massacres by both sides, the worst in terms of numbers was in the Karabakh town of Khojaly in 1992, where Armenian forces massacred 600-1000 Azerbaijani civilians.

Largely sympathetic to Armenians since the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire, Western media generally paid little attention to Azerbaijani suffering and the atrocities committed against Azerbaijanis by Armenians.

The second war in 2020 lasted for 44 days. Azerbaijan regained control of much of the lost territory and, on September 20, 2023, launched a military offensive that ended in a Russian-brokered ceasefire 24 hours later and the dissolution of ‘Artsakh’ on September 28.

The victory puts Azerbaijan in the box seat. It can afford to wait. The ball is now in Armenia’s court and the Pashinyan government has to decide how to return it. Pashinyan can see the political and economic benefits, but opposition is strong both domestically and in the Armenian diaspora.

Then there is Türkiye, which is never going to agree to the Armenian claim of genocide. These two poles will decide Armenia's future direction. Will 'real Armenia' be strong enough to overcome 'historic Armenia' for the sake of a peace treaty with Azerbaijan, and, perhaps further down the road, diplomatic relations with Türkiye, leaving the events of 1914-18 to be battled over by historians?

Or will 'historic Armenia,' strongly backed by Armenians who do not actually live in Armenia, pull 'real Armenia' back into the "large and deep swamp" as warned by Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan?

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<https://hetq.am/en/article/165645>



## THE STATEHOOD PROCESS OF ARMENIANS, THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THEM AND THE EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

(ERMENİLERİN DEVLETLEŞME SÜRECİ, ETKİLENDİKLERİ UNSURLAR VE  
MEVCUT DURUMUN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ)

Ayşegül GÜLER\*

**Abstract:** *Armenians, among the Caucasian tribes, accepted the sovereignty of the states established in the region and could not show a political presence. During the Eastern Roman period, Armenians were emigrated to the west for security reasons. Under the Seljuks period, they were freed from oppression and lived freely. Armenians, who developed their beliefs, culture and language without restrictions under Turkish rule, were appointed to various positions within the Ottoman state organization after the Mora revolt. After seeing that Russia would not be allowed to open up to the world's seas from the Balkans, Armenians became the main actors in policies towards the Ottoman Empire. Armenians, believing in the promises of independence, caused many innocent people to lose their lives*

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*with their activities. In the study, the issue of whether Armenians gained the ability to become a state was investigated. The reasons why the independence gained in 1991 existed formally but could not progress were emphasized. The study focused on the consequences of the country being the weakest link in the Caucasus politically, economically and militarily. The reasons and effects of the country's position as the arena where power struggles are staged and the policies needed to be more effective are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *Armenia, Independence, Foreign Policy, Power, Türkiye.*

**Öz:** *Kafkas kavimleri arasında yer alan Ermeniler bölgede kurulan devletlerin hakimiyetini kabul etmiş ve dönem boyunca siyasi bir varlık gösterememiştir. Doğu Roma'nın güvenlik gerekçesiyle batıya göç ettirdiği Ermeniler, Selçuklularla birlikte baskıdan kurtulmuş ve hür vatandaş statüsü kazanmıştır. Türklerin hakimiyetinde inançlarını, kültürlerini, dillerini sınırlama olmadan geliştiren Ermeniler, Mora isyanından sonra Osmanlı devlet teşkilatı içinde çeşitli görevlere getirilmiştir. Rusya'nın Balkanlardan dünya denizlerine açılmasına müsaade edilmeyeceğini gördükten sonra Ermeniler, Osmanlı Devleti'ne yönelik politikaların baş aktörü olmuştur. Bağımsızlık vaatlerine inanan Ermeniler, faaliyetleriyle birçok masumun hayatını kaybetmesine neden olmuştur. Çalışmada Ermenilerin devlet olma becerisini kazanıp kazanamadıkları konusu araştırılmıştır. 1991'de kazanılan bağımsızlığın şeklen var olması ancak ileri gidemeyişinin nedenleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Çalışmada ülkenin Kafkasların siyasi, ekonomik ve askeri açıdan en zayıf halkası olmasının sonuçları, güç mücadelelerinin sahnelendiği alan olmasının nedenleri, etkileri ve mücadele alanında daha etkin olabilmek için gereken politikaların neler olduğu tartışılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ermenistan, Bağımsızlık, Dış Politika, Güç, Türkiye.*

## INTRODUCTION

Armenians have lived under the rule of different states throughout history without having political existence. In the Eastern Roman-Iranian conflict, the geography they lived in turned into a battlefield and they faced both human and economic losses. For this reason, many Armenians were sent to the west to ensure security on the Eastern Roman-Iranian border. The Armenians, who were subjected to political, military, religious and economic oppression under Eastern Roman rule, were accepted as one of the essential components of the state with the Seljuks and developed themselves in every aspect. Armenians were influenced by the nationalist movements that started to develop after the French Revolution later than the Ottoman Christian citizens in the west.

The Russians realized that they would not be allowed to pass through the Turkish Straits and the Balkans to the Mediterranean by the western powers. For this reason, they saw the Eastern Anatolia region, where Armenians predominantly lived within the Ottoman borders, as a new route hope to reach to the seas of the world. Aiming to reach the Gulf of Iskenderun through the territory of independent Armenia to be established under their control, the Russians encouraged the Armenians to revolt politically, economically and militarily. Although Armenians gained independence for a short time after World War I, they could not avoid being a part of the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War period opened the doors for Armenians to establish an independent state. The Armenians, who declared their independence in 1991, pursued impossible goals without taking into account the features of their geography, population structure and their additional resources. The Armenians' territorial claims towards its neighbors prevented the country from opening up to the outside world and caused it to move away from its claim of being an independent state. The South Caucasus, which the Russian Federation sees as its sphere of influence, has become a new area of international competition.

This study seeks to answer to the question of whether Armenia's capabilities and ambitions coincided. In this context, the impacts on Armenia's statehood process, political structure, economic structure, population concerns, military capacity and social-cultural structure are analyzed. It has been observed that the imperial claims that Armenia has put forward by relying on the diaspora and its supporters have caused instability and poverty to its people. It is concluded that Armenia, whose statehood process continues with difficulties, should shift away from its rhetoric that does not match its capabilities and



accept that living in peace is the only option for Armenia in accordance with the actual reality.

### Armenians' Encounter with Turks and the Process of Statehood

There are different views regarding the historical background of Armenians.<sup>1</sup> Armenia is the name of the geographical region inhabited by different tribes in the past, and it is not a region belonging only to Armenians.<sup>2</sup> It is accepted in many sources that the community, which is predominantly called Armenian, came to the Armenian region through Anatolia in the 6th century BC, and that they were called Armenians in reference to the name of the region.<sup>3</sup> Esat Uras emphasizes the ties of Armenians with Iranians. Uras explains these ties as follows:

“Armenians lived together with the Iranians, especially the Medians and Parthians for a long time. They undoubtedly understood each other’s languages. Therefore, it is understood that the Armenian language is of the same origin as the Pahlavi language and that there are religious, cultural and traditional ties.”<sup>4</sup>

Although the relations between Turks and Armenians are said to have started as early as the Scythians<sup>5</sup>, it is accepted that they began with the expeditions of Turkish commanders serving in the Abbasid army to Anatolia in the early 9th century. The active period in Turkish-Armenian relations began with the military incursions carried out by Çağrı Bey in Anatolia from 1018.<sup>6</sup> Before the Seljuk rule, the people living in Armenia, which was seen as a buffer zone in the Iran-Roman and Byzantine-Arab conflicts, were living in constant distress. In order to increase security on its eastern borders, Byzantium transported Armenians from their homeland to the interior and even to Thrace, replacing them with people brought from other regions and prisoners

1 Şenol Kantarcı, “Tarih Boyunca Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Ermeni Sorunu’nun Ortaya Çıkışı”, ed. Mehmet Metin Hülagü... [ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014a), 191-192.

2 Bayram Kodaman, “Türk-Ermeni İhtilâfının Başlangıcı (1878-1897)”, ed. Mehmet Metin Hülagü... [ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 240.

3 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2010), 4.

4 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1950), 109.

5 Şenol Kantarcı, “Tarih Boyunca Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Ermeni Sorunu’nun Ortaya Çıkışı”, 191.

6 Kemal Çiçek, *Ermeni Sorununda Tehcir ve Ötesi*, (Ankara: Astana Yayınları, 2016), 11.

of war.<sup>7</sup> Armenians, who were subjected to Byzantine pressure to convert to the Orthodox sect, preferred to come under Turkish rule as soon as they saw the tolerant stance of the Seljuk State.<sup>8</sup> In order to rid themselves of their troubles, they did not show any resistance when Çağrı Bey came to the Lake Van region.<sup>9</sup>

The first relations of the Ottomans with Armenians began when Orhan Bey moved the Armenians and their religious leaders from Kütahya to Bursa. The conquest of Istanbul marked a new era for Armenians who were freed from the religious, political, economic and cultural oppression of Byzantium.<sup>10</sup> Armenians lived their beliefs and traditions in peace under Ottoman rule. While there is no nation in the world that lived under the control of Western states and did not lose its ethnic structure, language and religion, Armenians preserved their identity in every aspect.<sup>11</sup>

In the 17th century, the Karabakh cleric Israel Ori tried to make a crusade by appealing to the Russian Tsar Peter to make an independent Armenia. In the following period, Armenians took advantage of every opportunity to strive for independence or autonomy and always pinned their hopes on Russia.<sup>12</sup> However, Armenians would eventually realize that the aim of their northern neighbors was not to gain independence for Armenians. This is because Russian Tsar Nicholas II, in his statement dated March 21, 1828, announced the annexation of new territories called "Armenian Provinces" to the empire and added the title of "King of Armenia" to the imperial title.<sup>13</sup> The Armenians, to which no one paid attention to until the 19th century, suddenly became the center of attention of the great powers in this century<sup>14</sup> and the movement for the establishment of a national state among Armenians began to find supporters in the last quarter of the 19th century with the influence of the states that supported them for imperial purposes.

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7 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları VII. Dizi, 1983), 20-22.

8 Osman Turan, *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkuresi Tarihi*, Cilt 1, 2.Baskı, (İstanbul: Nakışlar Yayınevi, 1978), 294.

9 Ali Sevim, *Genel Çizgileriyle Selçuklu-Ermeni İlişkileri*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1983), 7-11.

10 Şenol Kantarcı, "Tarih Boyunca Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Ermeni Sorunu'nun Ortaya Çıkışı", 199.

11 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, 11-19.

12 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, 761-777.

13 Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 24.

14 Bayram Kodaman, "Türk-Ermeni İhtilâfının Başlangıcı (1878-1897)", 248.

In fact, the Ottoman Empire characterized Armenians as “millet-i sadıkâ” (loyal nation) after the Greeks gained their independence.<sup>15</sup> Armenians became preferred partners in the administration of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>16</sup> They were appointed to all kinds of positions without prejudice, such as translators, tax officials, architects, craftsmen and ministers.<sup>17</sup> They took part in the administration of the country as 5 ministers, 22 generals, 33 deputies, 7 ambassadors, 11 consuls, 12 teachers, 8 doctor generals, 42 high-ranking officials<sup>18</sup> and had the opportunity to have more economic opportunities than many Turks. After the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, Armenians, like other Christian components in the Ottoman Empire, intensified their attempts to establish an independent state.<sup>19</sup> The priests, who always had great influence over Armenians, were at the forefront of the Armenian revolts against the state due to Russian provocations. For example, in Echmiadzin, a catagogue named Hagop Chugayesi “put forward the idea of appealing to the Pope for help to save Armenia”, and before that, “two other catagogues named Istepans and Mikael” supported similar views.<sup>20</sup>

After the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul went to the Russian Tsar in Yeşilköy and demanded the annexation of Eastern Anatolia by the Russians and the granting of autonomy to Armenians. In line with the Patriarch’s demands<sup>21</sup>, the Ottoman Empire accepted the existence of a country called Armenia with the use of the term “Armenia” in Article 16 of the Yeşilköy Treaty.<sup>22</sup> In the Berlin negotiations, the “Armenian issue” was brought to the international arena and settled in international politics.<sup>23</sup> Armenians, aiming to establish closer ties with Russia and seek its protection, wanted to leave Ottoman rule.

15 Şenol Kantarcı, “Katolik Ermenilerin Anadolu’daki Faaliyetleri”, ed. Mehmet Metin Hülagü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014b), 68-78.

16 Paul B. Henze, “Ulusal İç Muhalefetin Görünümü ve Yarattığı Sorunlar, Tarihsel ve İşlevsel Karşılaştırmalar”, p. 29-77, *Stratejik Açıda Sovyet Müslümanları ve Diğer Azınlıklar*, translation: Yuluğ Tekin Kurat, (Ankara: Forum Yayınları No:5, 1988), 29-77.

17 Kemal Çiçek, *Ermeni Sorununda Tehcir ve Ötesi*, 14.

18 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, 12.

19 Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya XVIII. Yüzyıl Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına Kadar Türk-Rus İlişkileri (1798-1919)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2011), 113.

20 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, 751.

21 Cemalettin Taşkıran, C., “1915 Yılı Ermeni Tehciri”, (ed) Soyalp Tamçelik, *Ermenistan Tarih, Hukuk, Dış Politika ve Toplum*, (Ankara: Gazi Kitabevi, 2015), 7.

22 Recep Karacakaya, “İstanbul Ermeni Patrikleri ve Siyasi Faaliyetleri (1878-1923)”, (ed.) Mehmet Metin Hülagü... [ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 83.

23 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 113.

## The Statehood Process of Armenians, the Factors That Influenced Them and The Evaluation of the Current Situation

In order to spread the idea of nationalism, especially among young Armenians<sup>24</sup>, Armenians initiated terrorist activities in order to keep the Armenian issue on the agenda by establishing relations with anti-Turkish organizations and states, most of which were located abroad.

At a time when the Armenian rebellions were becoming increasingly widespread, Sultan Abdülhamid II banned Armenians from working as goldsmith and state contractors in the Ottoman Empire in order to dry up the economic source of terrorism. Despite diplomatic pressure from Armenian-supporting states, the bans were not lifted. In a period of increasing international tensions, Armenians attempted to assassinate Abdülhamid II, who prevented them from achieving their goals in the Ottoman country, in front of the Hamidiye Mosque in Yıldız on July 21, 1905, but they failed.<sup>25</sup> After the assassination attempt, there were other events that would influence world history. On November 12, 1912, Russia issued an ultimatum to the Ottoman Empire, claiming that “Armenians wanted to unite with Russia” and demanded that the promised reforms in the regions where Armenians lived be started immediately. “Russophilia” among Armenians reached its highest level and Armenians in Eastern Anatolia under Russian control started to take up arms to fight against the Turks.<sup>26</sup> Since the Armenians were no more than a consistent tool for Russia, their aspirations for independence or autonomy remained a dream until the end of World War I. During World War I, Armenians, who considered being a province of Russia, a Christian state, as a success, were consumed with the idea of remaking an independent Armenia.<sup>27</sup> Russia’s withdrawal from the war during the Bolshevik Revolution and the end of its support to Armenians ruined all the plans of Armenians.<sup>28</sup> After the dissolution of the Mavera-yı Caucasus Republic, which was jointly established by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenians after the fall of Tsardom, on April 26, 1918 due to the failure to resolve the conflicts, the Armenian State, which was established on May 26, 1918<sup>29</sup>, was destroyed by the occupation of the Red Army in November 1920 and the Armenian Soviet Republic was declared.<sup>30</sup> According to the general

24 BOA, Dâhiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti Belgeleri (DH.EUM): 2.şube, dosya no.20, vesika no.44.

25 Houssine Alloul, Edhem Eldem, Henk de Smaele, ed, to *Kill a Sultan. A Transnational History of the attempt on Abdülhamid II (1905)*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1-9.

26 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, 52-58.

27 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 79-250.

28 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, 105.

29 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, ۲۳۶.

30 Abdullah Demir, *Tarihten Günümüze Rus Yayılmacılığı ve Yeni Kurulan Cumhuriyetler*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 1999), 128.

opinion, since the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne resolved the rivalry between Russia and Türkiye, the Armenian question fell off the international political agenda.<sup>31</sup> As a result, Armenia became part of the Trans-Caucasian Federative Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922. In 1936, it became a member of the USSR and was renamed the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>32</sup>

On January 27, 1973, Gurgen Migirdich Yanikian, an Armenian komitadji active in Eastern Anatolia during World War II, assassinated Türkiye's Consul General in Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and Consul Bahadır Demir. This assassination started a chain of assassinations of Turkish foreign missions by Armenian terrorists.<sup>33</sup> In 1975, terrorist organizations called ASALA and JCAG was established. As a result of the assassinations initiated by ASALA, more than 30 Turkish diplomats were martyred.<sup>34</sup> The statehood process of Armenians occurred in 1991. This was because Armenia, which was part of the Soviet Union until 1991, declared its independence as a result of the referendum held in September 1991. Armenia, whose capital is Yerevan, is the smallest of the Caucasian republics. It borders Azerbaijan to the east, Georgia to the north, Iran to the south and Türkiye to the west.

### The Political Structure Of Armenia

After 1990, Armenia was also influenced by the Western policy of promoting democracy in the post-Soviet space. Armenia found itself in the process of democratization in order to take part in the new order and overcome domestic political problems. As a state system, it presents itself as a democratic system that works for the protection of human rights and freedom. However, political developments in post-independence Armenia were far from meeting expectations, and efforts to protect human rights and freedoms were fruitless.<sup>35</sup> The regulations made in the laws could not be applied in practice and legal regulations could not be implemented. Karabakh-based politicians who

31 Khatchik DerGhougassian, Genocide and Identity (Geo) Politics: Bridging State Reasoning and Diaspora Activism, *Genocide Studies International* 8, (2 Fall 2014), pp.193-207, p. 199. doi:10.3138/gsi.8.2.05.

32 US Department Of State, (ty). Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/countries/armenia>, date of access: 09.10.2023

33 Anadolu Ajansı, (2019). <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turkiyeden-ermeni-teroriste-siki-ta-kip/1545798>, date of access: 03.04.2022,

34 TRT Haber, (2021). <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/suikastlara-kurban-giden-turk-diplomatlar-564152.html>, date of access: 03.04.2022

35 M. Vedat Gürbüz, *Kafkasya'da Siyaset Çatışma Ortamı ve Taraf Güçler*, (Ankara: Kadim Yayınları, 2012), 171-192.

dominate Armenia's political life have always kept the policy of annexing the Karabakh region, which they occupied with the military and political support of Russia, on the agenda of the country. The utopia of annexing Karabakh has constantly dragged Armenia down. Since its independence, Armenia has taken initiatives in the field of law to achieve a democratic system in line with European standards.<sup>36</sup> The 1996 Treaty of Association and Cooperation between Armenia and the European Union (EU) agreed to consolidate the rule of law, democratic principles, market economy and respect for human rights, which paved the way for the development of relations with EU member states.<sup>37</sup> In 2001, Armenia became a member of the Council of Europe, reaffirming its commitment to the values of democracy and human rights as well as European integration.<sup>38</sup> However, local opposition and civic groups believe that EU pressure on Armenian authorities to bring about democratic change was weak.<sup>39</sup> As a consequence of Armenia's accession to the Council of Europe, the 1995 Constitution was revised in a 2005 referendum and a 117-article constitution was adopted.<sup>40</sup> Despite the change in the constitution, the mentality has not changed, so the changes have been implemented in a formal way, but these changes are not reflected on the people and daily life at the desired level.

Especially in recent years, the issue that has been politically challenging for Armenia is the possible constitutional amendment. This is because the declaration of independence in the Constitution of Armenia includes the unification of the Karabakh region with Armenia. While Azerbaijan has demanded the amendment of this article, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has signalled that he is willing to respond positively to Azerbaijan's request and that a referendum will be held. It is clear that Azerbaijan-Armenia normalization is not possible if the Karabakh claim continues to be enshrined in the Armenian Constitution.<sup>41</sup> Grigor Minasian, Armenia's Minister of

36 Grigor Mouradian, Independence of the Judiciary in Armenia, *Judicial Independence in Transition*, Judicial Independence in Transition içinde (pp.1197-1253). *Strengthening the Rule of Law in the OSCE Region*, (eds) A. Siebert Fohr, (London: Springer. 2012).

37 Soner Karagül, "Ermenistan"ın Bağımsızlık Sonrası Avrupa ile İlişkileri, OAKA cilt 1, sayı 2, (2006), 128-148.

38 Nelli Babayan, European Neighbourhood Policy in Armenia: On the Road to Failure or Success, *CEU Political Science Journal*, 4(3), (2009), 374.

39 Emil Danielyan (2010). EU likely to stay cautious on political reform in Armenia, <https://www.azatut-yun.am/a/2049408>, date of access: 05.08. 2022.

40 Constitute Project, Ermenistan Anayasası 2005, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Armenia\\_2005.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Armenia_2005.pdf), date of access: 23.04.2022.

41 Joshua Kucera (2024). A Constitutional Amendment That Could Lead To Peace Between Armenia And Azerbaijan, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-constitution-azerbaijan-nagorno-karabakh/33068045.html>, Accessed: 07.08.2024.

Justice, has stated that a possible referendum on the demanded new Armenian constitution will take place in 2027.<sup>42</sup> However, Armenian opposition leaders argue that Azerbaijan does not intend to make peace without more extensive concessions from Armenia.<sup>43</sup>

## The Economic Structure of Armenia

Armenia is a country located between Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran, with insufficient resources, geographical disadvantages, incomplete economic development,<sup>44</sup> and 27% of its population living below the poverty line.<sup>45</sup> Armenia has the highest unemployment rate and the lowest national income in the South Caucasus.<sup>46</sup> Regarding energy resources, the country is dependent on external sources, especially from Russia.

As a former Soviet state, Armenia is faced with the problem of poverty.<sup>47</sup> The most important obstacle to the development of Armenia's economy stems from the country's geopolitical location and economic isolation. External economic and political support provided by the Armenian diaspora is not enough for Armenia to recover.<sup>48</sup> Armenia's economy is heavily dependent on Russian aid. Increasing foreign debt has made the country's economic structure even more fragile. Armenia has been excluded from energy projects in the region due to its political isolation.<sup>49</sup> As a result of these events, Armenia has become more dependent on Russia's support. Thus, the opportunity was presented for the Russians to re-establish their influence in the former Soviet space.<sup>50</sup> According

42 Azatutyun (2024). Armenian Constitutional Referendum 'Planned For 2027', <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33098341.html>, Accessed: 29.09.2024.

43 Galstian, Shoghik (2024). Armenia's Top Court Downplays Constitutional Clause Resented By Baku, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33142396.html>, Accessed: 01.10.2024.

44 Erhan Büyükakıncı, "Ermenistan Dış Politikasından Uluslararası Sistem Değişkenlerine Bakış", (Der.) Okan Yesilot, Değişen Dünya Düzeninde Kafkasya, (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2005), 124-125.

45 The World Bank (2023). [https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext\\_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global\\_POVEQ\\_ARM.pdf](https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_ARM.pdf), Accessed:19.08.2024.

46 Anadolu Ajansı, (2022). 2021'de Ermenistan: Savaş ve Barış Arasında <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/2021de-ermenistan-savas-ve-baris-arasinda/2475853>, Accessed: 12.05.2022.

47 Arman Vardanyan and Lilit Abrahamyan, PRSP Participatory Process in Armenia: Lessoned Learned, *Transit Stud Rev*, 15:737-745, (2009), 737-738.

48 Abdullah Demir, *Tarihten Günümüze Rus Yayılmacılığı ve Yeni Kurulan Cumhuriyetler*, 130.

49 Gaidz Minassian, Armenia, a Russian Outpost in the Caucasus?, *ifri Russia/NIS Center*, (2008).

50 George Friedman (2008). The Russo-Georgian War and the Balance of Power, Geopolitical Intelligence Report, August 12, [http://druckversion.studien-von-zeitfragen.net/The\\_Russo\\_Georgian\\_War.pdf](http://druckversion.studien-von-zeitfragen.net/The_Russo_Georgian_War.pdf), Accessed:25.05.2022.

to Russia, Russia is an indispensable country for Armenia. This is because Russia is Armenia's biggest trade partner. Almost half of the investments made towards Armenia are made by Russia.<sup>51</sup> Since the Armenian economy, which does not have sufficient resources and opportunities, continues to depend on Russia, this dependence manifests itself in every field.

### **Armenia's Population Concern and Its Impact on Military Capacity**

Despite the incentives Armenia has put forward, it has not been able to reach the expected population rate. Within the framework of the project of Armenians returning to their homeland, which was initiated worldwide during the Soviet era, about one hundred thousand Armenians migrated to Armenia from foreign countries in 1946-48.<sup>52</sup> This practice, which continues today, does not receive the expected level of interest. The Armenians who emigrated to Armenia hoped for better living conditions, but they found themselves isolated from the world and with a lower standard of living. Almost all of the Armenians who migrated to Armenia do not want to acquire Armenian citizenship despite the incentives.<sup>53</sup> So much so that even those who do come go back to their places of origin after some time. Approximately one million people left Armenia after independence due to police and civil servant misconduct, economic crisis, and restrictions on trade.<sup>54</sup> Introducing viable health insurance mechanisms and improving employment conditions may be effective in reversing the population's intention to migrate. Policies that improve access to education and technology may make it appealing to migrate to the post-Soviet country, in other words, to return to the region they consider their homeland.<sup>55</sup>

Adopted in 2007, the dual citizenship law declared that Armenia is the homeland of all Armenians.<sup>56</sup> By making the concept of "homeland" for Armenians, Armenians hope that the diaspora will embrace Armenia more.<sup>57</sup>

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51 RT International, (2013). "Armenia Chooses Russian Trade Deal Over EU", 4 Sep. 2013, <https://www.rt.com/business/russia-armenia-customs-eu-391/>, Accessed: 08.02.2022.

52 Emin Arif (Şihaliyev), *Kafkasya Jeopolitiğinde Rusya, İran, Türkiye Rekabetleri ve Ermeni Faktörü*, (Ankara: Naturel Kitap Yayın, 2004), 170-171.

53 M. Vedat Gürbüz, *Kafkasya'da Siyaset Çatışma Ortamı ve Taraf Güçler*, 192.

54 Abdullah Demir, *Tarihten Günümüze Rus Yayılmacılığı ve Yeni Kurulan Cumhuriyetler*, 131.

55 Aleksandr Grigoryan and Knar Khachatryan, Remittances and Emigration Intentions: Evidence From Armenia, *CERGE-EI Working Paper Series* 626, (ISSN 1211-3298), (2018), 29.

56 Anahit Mkrtchyan, The Problem of Adaptation of the Diaspora Armenians in Transition Armenia, *Transit Stud Rev*, (2009), 15:709.

57 Emin Arif (Şihaliyev), *Kafkasya Jeopolitiğinde Rusya, İran, Türkiye Rekabetleri ve Ermeni Faktörü*, 264.



As if they had discovered each other recently, Armenians scattered all over the world have attempted major affairs by ignoring the differences between them. However, the Armenian diaspora, which believes that it is very powerful, has not been able to integrate with the people of Armenia and has not been able to set a goal beyond the psychology of “we can do it too”.<sup>58</sup> Since diaspora activities have failed to make policies to bring young people to Armenia, the country is in need of an integration policy.<sup>59</sup> According to 2022 data, the country’s population is 2,976,765.<sup>60</sup> However, the Armenian population living outside Armenia, which has reached a certain level, also influences the country’s politics. The largest Armenian population in the diaspora lives in Russia with 2.3 million citizens, followed by the US with 1.5 million, France with 400 thousand, and Lebanon with 230 thousand. In addition, varying numbers of Armenians live in Ukraine, Syria, Argentina, Poland, Türkiye, Iran and Canada.<sup>61</sup> Russia, the country with the largest Armenian diaspora, is important in this regard. This is because Armenians living in Russia obtained the right to vote and be elected, which led to an increase in Russia’s influence on Armenian politics.

Armenia is not at the desired level in terms of military capacity and defense budget. According to “Firepower”’s data on countries’ defense budgets for 2024, Armenia ranks 81st with a budget of \$1,380,000,000.<sup>62</sup> The Armenian army consists of land and air forces. The inventory of the army, which has approximately 45 thousand active soldiers, mostly includes Soviet-era equipment.<sup>63</sup> The country, which does not have a navy, wants to improve its military capacity.

According to the document signed between Armenia, the US and the EU in Brussels on April 5, 2024, it was decided to upgrade the Armenian Armed Forces with new generation US-made weapons.<sup>64</sup> In fact, this situation would

58 M. Vedat Gürbüz, *Kafkasya’da Siyaset Çatışma Ortamı ve Taraf Güçler*, 187-193.

59 Anahit Mkrtchyan (2009). The Problem of Adaptation of the Diaspora Armenians in Transition Armenia, 712.

60 CIA, (2024). The World Factbook Armenia, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/armenia/#military-and-security>, Accessed: 15.08.2024.

61 Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2015). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armenias-diaspora-its-role-and-influence#full-publication-update-history>, Accessed: 16.01.2023.

62 Global Firepower, <https://www.globalfirepower.com/defense-spending-budget.php>, Accessed: 10.10.2024.

63 CIA, (2024). The World Factbook Armenia, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/armenia/#military-and-security>, Accessed: 15.08.2024.

64 Nargiz Mammadli (2024). US Supplies Military Equipment, Personnel to Armenia: Report, <https://www.caspiannews.com/news-detail/us-supplies-military-equipment-personnel-to-armenia-report-2024-8-7-8/>, Accessed: 08.08.2024.

have been unthinkable in the past. This is because Russia was Armenia's long-term strategic partner. However, Armenia, which suffered a defeat in Nagorno-Karabakh, started to move away from Russia politically and economically as it felt that Russia was not fulfilling its security commitments. The EU and the US, seen as alternatives, responded positively to Armenia's initiatives for closer security and economic ties. Thus, the US expanded and deepened its contacts with Armenia.<sup>65</sup> Despite these partnership initiatives, it is not possible for Russia to remain completely out of the issue. Especially considering the fact that Armenia's economy is dependent on Russia, the scope of these activities will remain limited. Even if Armenia develops closer relations with the West for military cooperation, it will be unlikely to take military initiatives against Russia.

### **Social-Cultural Structure of Armenia**

Armenians practiced pagan beliefs before they converted to Christianity. Even after they accepted Christianity, they could not give up the influence of some traditions from the Zoroastrianism and idolatry period.<sup>66</sup> Although Armenians claim that they converted to Christianity before other nations in the 4th century,<sup>67</sup> their claims have not been proven.<sup>68</sup> It is possible to state that the first serious break that differentiated Armenians from other Christians was the beginning of the Armenian Church's separation from the Byzantine Church and its emergence as an independent national church.<sup>69</sup> The Armenian national church became the main aspect of Armenian national unity in the following period.<sup>70</sup> The use of the Armenian Church as an instrument of international politics by Russia, Britain, France and the US led to important opportunities for Armenians.<sup>71</sup> This was because the Armenian Church utilized the role

65 Ani Avetisyan (2024). US to help Armenia modernize its military, <https://eurasianet.org/us-to-help-armenia-modernize-its-military>. Accessed:18.08.2024.

66 Şenol Kantarcı, "Katolik Ermenilerin Anadolu'daki Faaliyetleri", ١٣.

67 Ali Arslan, "Ermeni Kilisesi'nin Ermenilerin Hayat ve İdeallerindeki Yeri ve Büyük Güçlerin Ermeni Kilisesine Nüfuzu", ed. Mehmet Metin Hülagü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 13.

68 Şenol Kantarcı, "Katolik Ermenilerin Anadolu'daki Faaliyetleri", ١٣.

69 Hamza Yavuz, "Konstrüktivist Yaklaşım Çerçevesinde Ermeni Kimliğinin İnşası ve Ermenistan Dış Politikasına Yansımaları", (ed) Soyalp Tamçelik, *Ermenistan Tarih, Hukuk, Dış Politika ve Toplum*, (Ankara: Gazi Kitabevi, 2015), 213.

70 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 25.

71 Ali Arslan, "Ermeni Kilisesi'nin Ermenilerin Hayat ve İdeallerindeki Yeri ve Büyük Güçlerin Ermeni Kilisesine Nüfuzu", 33.

played by the religion factor to the fullest and became a tool for the policies against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>72</sup>

The alphabet used by Armenians and their preservation of it is also important. It is observed that the Armenians, who established their own printing press in Venice in 1512, developed considerably in the field of literature by using the Armenian alphabet consisting of 39 letters and expanded their publishing activities from 1567 onwards.<sup>73</sup> For this reason, the press became the most important means of communication for Armenians. Armenians made it one of their basic policies to protect and use their own alphabet regardless of the state they were under. During the USSR period, while the alphabets of Turks and Muslims were changed on the grounds that they caused difficulties in education, the Armenian alphabet was left untouched. Armenians preserved their national identity during the USSR period through their alphabet. In addition, the Armenian alphabet fulfilled an important function in maintaining ties with Armenians in different parts of the world.<sup>74</sup> Armenians, nevertheless, know Turkish. Most of the Armenians who have lived under the rule of Turks since the Seljuks arrived in Anatolia have adopted Turkish as their mother tongue as a result of living together for more than eight hundred years.<sup>75</sup> Armenians also took full advantage of the extensive opportunities provided to them by the Ottoman Empire in the field of education and opened many schools.<sup>76</sup> They preserved their culture with the broad religious privileges, cultural and legal rights they were given.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

The Armenians, who lived under the rule of different states until 1918, tried to make the conditions for establishing an independent state in a part of the South Caucasus that has always been an area of conflict from a strategic point of view. However, during the period they lived under the rule of Turkic states,

72 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 39-40.

73 Gürsoy Şahin, "Ermeni Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri Hakkında", ed. Mehmet Metin Hülâgü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 117-118.

74 Ali Arslan, "Ermeni Kilisesi'nin Ermenilerin Hayat ve İdeallerindeki Yeri ve Büyük Güçlerin Ermeni Kilisesine Nüfuzu", 34.

75 Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya XVIII. Yüzyıl Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına Kadar Türk-Rus İlişkileri (1798-1919)*, 111.

76 Ersin Müezzinoğlu, "Ermeni Azınlık Okullarının Ermeni Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşundaki Rolü", (ed.) Mehmet Metin Hülâgü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 144.

77 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 36-37.

they had opportunities to develop themselves in every aspect. Since the 19th century, they have acted in line with the wishes of states with imperialist aims in the region. Although Armenians conveyed their demands to their supporters at every opportunity to gain independence, they could not achieve their goal until the collapse of the Russian Tsardom. While the Armenians had a short-lived experience of independence after the collapse of Tsarism and the end of the World War I, their state was forced to be a part of the Soviet Union.

Armenia, which gained its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, turned into an arena between Russia and Western powers due to its geopolitical position in the region. Armenia's inadequacies prevented it from acting as an independent state. The country has staked its future on the aid it receives from the diaspora and Europe. Militarily, it is under the control of Russia and is far from forming a realistic policy with its neighbouring countries. Armenia seeks to solve its problems by exerting external pressure on the states it is dealing with. However, it should be recognized that this stance will not fulfil expectations and will have to solve more important problems. Armenia's economy is unable to achieve sufficient growth and development and unable to prevent people from leaving the country. The country is trying to solve these concerns with different formulas and has failed to get the desired result from the dual citizenship policy. Armenia's defeat in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War demonstrated the inadequacy of its economic, political and military capacity. Armenia should objectively analyze the impact of its inability to improve economic conditions on its population's movements. It needs to consider in more detail the impact of the population in meeting Armenia's labour force and trained military personnel requirements. Armenia, which is unable to prevent the internal population from emigrating from the country, needs to address its problems in more detail. Peaceful relations with its neighbours will improve the country's development policies. An Armenia that has resolved its conflicts will not be excluded from the economic projects in the region. It would be mutually beneficial for Armenia to pursue realistic and constructive policies instead of expansionist ones. The idea that Armenia can solve its own problems with its neighbours through public pressure by relying on foreign support is unrealistic. After all, inter-state relations are based on mutual interests. Armenia needs to realize without further delay that it has almost no chance to compete with Azerbaijan, one of the main sources of Europe's energy needs, and Türkiye, a regional power. It should be recognized that more constructive and positive policies in foreign policy will promote development and mutual benefits.

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## THE ADVENTURE OF AN ARMENIAN SCHOOL FROM THE OTTOMAN TO THE REPUBLIC: SANASARIAN COLLEGE 1881-1935

(OSMANLI'DAN CUMHURİYET'E BİR ERMENİ OKULUNUN SERENCAMI:  
SANASARYAN KOLEJİ 1881-1935)

Cem KARAKILIÇ\*

**Abstract:** *Sanasarian College was founded in Erzurum in 1881 by Armenian businessman Mgrdich Sanasarian. The college was one of three secondary schools established by Ottoman Armenians outside Istanbul. The goal of the school was to raise Armenian children in accordance with the spirit and rules of the Armenian Apostolic Church and to educate them in general and vocational subjects.*

*Although Sanasarian College was an educational institution, it was also a strategic station where Armenian separatist movements were coordinated. In fact, one of the most important catalysts of the 1890 Erzurum rebellion was Sanasarian College. The college continued its education and training activities until 1912. In 1913, when the patriarchate seized the funds of the Sanasarian foundation, the school's income sources were cut off and after*

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*a while it was closed due to lack of allocations. The Patriarchate's efforts to revive the school in 1927 were unsuccessful, getting stuck in the judiciary.*

*The aim of this study is to resolve the uncertainties about Sanasarian College, to answer the debates about the school's assets with archival sources, and to eliminate the information pollution regarding the closure of the school. In the article, which consists of an introduction and 4 subheadings, a panoramic framework is drawn about the establishment, operation, administrative and academic situation, teaching programs, student statistics, physical, sanitary and financial situation and socio-cultural activities of Sanasarian College, and the last part focuses on the closure of the school. The method used in our study is qualitative analysis techniques based on textual analysis and text-interpretation.*

**Keywords:** *Armenian Question, Erzurum Armenians, Mgrdich Sanasarian, Sanasarian College.*

**Özet:** *Sanasaryan Koleji 1881 yılında Ermeni işadami Mıgırdiç Sanasaryan tarafından Erzurum'da kuruldu. Kolej Osmanlı Ermenilerinin İstanbul dışında kurduğu ortaokul seviyesindeki dört okuldan biriydi. Okulun hedefi Ermeni çocuklarını Ermeni Apostolik Kilisesinin ruhuna ve kurallarına uygun olarak yetiştirmek ve onları genel ve mesleki konularda eğitmektir.*

*Sanasaryan Koleji bir eğitim kurumu olmakla birlikte aynı zamanda Ermeni ayrılıkçı hareketlerinin koordine edildiği doktriner bir merkezdi. Hatta 1890 Erzurum isyanının en önemli katalizörlerinden biri Sanasaryan Kolejiydi. Kolej 1912 yılına kadar eğitim ve öğretim faaliyetlerine devam etti. 1913 yılında patrikhanenin Sanasaryan vakfının gallsine el koymasıyla birlikte okulun gelir kaynakları kesildi ve bir süre sonra tahsisatsızlık yüzünden kapatıldı. Patrikhanenin 1927 yılında okulu yeniden ihya etme çabaları ise yargıya takıldı.*

*Bu çalışmanın amacı Sanasaryan Koleji ve Sanasaryan Vakfı hakkındaki bilgi kirliliğini gidermek, Ermenice ve Türkçe kaynakları kullanarak okulun kapatılmasıyla ilgili iddiaları nakz etmek ve Kolejin cumhuriyet dönemindeki durumu hakkında genel bir çerçeve çizmektir. Bir giriş ve 6 başlıktan oluşan makalede Sanasaryan kolejinin kuruluşu, işleyişi, idari ve akademik durumu, ders müfredatları, öğrencilerin sayısal özellikleri, okulun fiziki, sıhhi ve mali nitelikleri ile sosyo-kültürel faaliyetleri hakkında panoramik bir*

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*çerçeve çizilmiş, son bölümde ise okulun kapatılması üzerinde durulmuştur. Çalışmamızda metne bağlı analiz yöntemleri (textual analysis ve text-interperatation) kullanılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ermeni Meselesi, Erzurum Ermenileri, Mıgırdıç Sanasaryan, Sanasaryan Koleji.*

## Introduction

Until the 19th century, the education of Armenian children in Erzurum was limited to the activities within monasteries. The first secularistic education of the Armenians in Erzurum informally began in 1820-1825, with women teaching their children to read and write in their homes.<sup>1</sup> Formal education developed during the 1850s in line with the constitutional developments.<sup>2</sup> From 1878 onwards, a modern era began in which modern sciences were also taught in Armenian schools instead of religious teachings. On the other hand, during the second half of the 19th century, Catholic and Protestant missionaries opening new schools for Christians within Ottoman borders with the financial support they received from Europe and America lead to a significant increase in the literacy rate of the Armenians. In fact, according to Lynch, most of the Christian children in the two most elite schools opened by missionaries in Erzurum in the late 19th century belonged to the Gregorian Armenian community.<sup>3</sup> However, the missionaries' aim was not to educate Armenian children, but to influence the Armenian community through education. Thus, from the second half of the 19th century onwards, Gregorian Armenians opened dozens of Armenian schools in Erzurum, as they did throughout Türkiye, through charities such as Arzumaniyan, Arsharuni, Inkerutyun, and Barzir Hayots. For example, Azarian College was founded in 1860 with the efforts of Der-Azarian. In 1866, Armenian businessman Hagop Misirian demolished the Ana (Mother) College, which had been operating since 1811, and built a new 8-room school on the same site. In 1889, Misirian College was opened by Misirian. The Misirian College, which accepted both fee-paying and scholarship students, operated until 1912. However, all of these were elementary schools where only boys attended. Beginning in 1870, Erzurum Armenians also opened *inas* (girls) schools for girls. For example, the public interest in one of these, the Hripsime Girls' College, was so great that 291 students enrolled in the 1870-1871 academic year and nearly 400 in 1882. There were also local schools in the city with approximately 100 students.<sup>4</sup>

1 Ղազար Չարրզ, Հուշամատեն Բարձր Հայքի: Կարինապատում (Բեյրութ: Նախաձեռնություն Հիսապային Ամերիկայի եւ Լիբանանի Կարնոյ Հայրենակցական Միություններուն, 1957), 161.

2 Ա.Վ. Պողոսյան, “Կարինի վարժարանների Պատմությունից-1850-1900 թթ.” Լրաբեր հասարակական գիտությունների, 1(1992): 66-74.

3 Հ.Ֆ.Պ. Լինչ, Հայաստան: Ուղեորություններ եւ ուսումնասիրություններ (Կ. Պոլիս: Տպագրություն Յ. Ասատուրեան եւ որդիք, 1914), 245.

4 Հովհաննես Տեր Պետրոսեան, Կրթական Շարժումը Թրքահայոց Մեջ 1900-1600, (Գահիրե: 1983), 250; Քրիստինե Նաջարյան, “Կարինի Սանասարյան Վարժարանի Գործունեությունը 1919-1881 թթ.” Հաղորդումներ, 2(2017): 94-103; Պողոսյան, “Կարինի վարժարանների”, 67-68.

Thus, by the end of the 19th century, there were dozens of Armenian schools in Erzurum, such as Arzumanian, Hripsime, Misirian, Azarian, and Aghabalian, founded with the patronage of Armenian businessmen, In contrast to the missionary schools founded by foreigners.<sup>5</sup>

However, despite all of this, even in the late 19th century, there was no qualified secondary school for Armenian children in Anatolia. Although the Armenian businessman Mgrdich Sanasarian<sup>6</sup>, a member of the Russian Community, initially wanted to open a secondary school in Van, the birthplace of his mother, he abandoned this idea with the advice of Garabed Natania.

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5 Յուսուժաական Խորհրդոյ Ազգային Կեդրոնական Վարչութեան, Վիճակացոյց Գաւառական Ազգային Վարժարանաց Թուրքիոյ (Կ. Պոլիս: Մատթէոսեան, 1901), 34; Յուսուժաական Խորհրդոյ Ազգային Կեդրոնական Վարչութեան, Վիճակացոյց Գաւառական Ազգային Վարժարանաց Թուրքիոյ (Կ. Պոլիս: Մատթէոսեան, 1903), 24.

6 Mgrdich Sanasarian was born in Tbilisi in 1818. His father, Kevork Aga Heyranian, was a great merchant who became rich in 1818, first from settling in Tbilisi from Van and then settling to Paris. Since there was no school in Tbilisi, Sanasarian learned to read and write from Pastor Abamelik during his childhood. In 1824, he became one of the first students of Nersesian College. In 1835, he went to Venice to study at the university, but upon the death of his father, he returned to Tbilisi. In 1835 he enlisted in the Russian Army. In 1845, he was wounded and left the army. He was granted an honorary pension by the Russian government for his useful services in the army. Mgrdich Sanasarian settled in Petersburg in 1849. Here he became a shareholder of the Caucasian and Mercury steamship companies and after a while became their director. The ships of Sanasarian's company connected the Volga River and Caspian Sea with Russia, the Caucasus and Iran. For these achievements, he was awarded the medal of Shir u Khurshid (شیر و خورشید) by the Shah. Sanasarian founded the Erzurum Sanasarian College in 1881. In 1885, he visited Erzurum and examined the activities of the school. Sanasarian spent a large part of his personal fortune to educate poor students. He also financed many Armenian schools, particularly the Echmiadzin Keorkian Jamaran. In 1889, he fell ill and moved first to Nice and then to Paris. He died on May 19th, 1890 in Paris. Sanasarian left his entire fortune to Armenian schools and his library, albums, painting collection and printing materials to the Sanasarian College. Sanasarian's will was fulfilled by Garabed Yezian, Kevork Yevangulyants and Levon Tigranyants, a relative of Sanasarian's. The charter prepared by Yezian for Sanasarian was approved by the Patriarchate on July 16th, 1892 and entered into force. Accordingly, 10% of the inheritance was to be used to train teachers for the Sanasarian College. In addition, a reserve fund was to be established with the remainder of the money spent on the school's expenses. On the other hand, the interest of 10,925 rubles in Mariam Martiros Kazachkiyants' time deposit account at the Russian State Bank was to be transferred to the Sanasarian College. See Հովհաննէս Այվազյան, Ով Ով է Հայեր: Կենսագրական հանրագիտարան 1-2 (Երևան: Հայկական հանրագիտարան հրատարակչություն, 2005), 395-396; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր Սանասարեան Վարժարանի 1901-1881 (Կ Պոլիս: Ներսէս Արամեան, 1903), 8-9, 19-23; Երվանդ Շահազիզ, “Կարապետ Եզյան, Սկրտիչ Սանասարյան, Լևոն Տիգրանյան”, Էջմիածին: Պաշտօնական ամսագիր Ամենայն Հայոց Կաթողիկոսութեան Մայր Աթոռոյ Սրբոյ Էջմիածնի, Գ-11-12(1946): 43-44; Անուշ Թրվանց, “Սկրտիչ Սանասարեան... Մեծ Հայր”, Արևելք, 18.01.2014; Ընդարձակ Օրացոյց Ազգային Հիվանդանոցի (Կոստանդնուպոլիս: Տպագրութիին Տեր Մատթէոսեան, 1903), 263; “Սկրտիչ Սանասարեան”, Հանդէս ամսօրեայ: Բարոյական, ուսումնական, արուեստագիտական, Դ-7(1890), 163.

In 1881, in consultation with the Russian agent Yezian<sup>7</sup> and Erzurum Bishop Maghakya Ormanian, he headed to Erzurum.<sup>8</sup> The Sanasarian College was opened in Erzurum on October 1st, 1881 with the financial support of Mgrdich Sanasarian and the feasibility studies of Delpian and Madatian. The college was one of four secondary schools established by Ottoman Armenians outside Istanbul (Istanbul Berberian, Galata Gentronakan, Armash Tıbrevank). The Kurkchubashian-Makarian mansion on Kadınlar Yolu Street was chosen as the school building. The goal of the college was to educate Armenian children in the spirit and rules of the Armenian Apostolic Church and to train them in general and vocational subjects. Among the first students of the college were 19 students recruited by the founding principal Madatian from Erzurum, Van, Moush, Hınıs and Kiği.<sup>9</sup> Since Sanasarian sent successful Armenian students to Europe after graduation to work in Armenian schools, a distinguished academic staff was already in place before the school opened.<sup>10</sup>

However, the school was unable to continue its educational activities as envisioned. About a month after the opening, Delpian died of cerebral palsy, further worsening the already insufficient number of teachers. Thus, education and training activities at the school could not be carried out as planned until former students Kevork Apoulian and Sarkis Soghigian arrived in Erzurum in March 1882.<sup>11</sup>

7 Garabed Yezian: Armenian, teacher, linguist and activist. He was born in Moscow in 1834. In 1852, he graduated from the Moscow Lazarian Cemarar with a certificate of merit. Two years later, he received a master's degree from the Faculty of Oriental Languages at the University of St. Petersburg. His father was a small merchant in Moscow. In 1854, Yezian started working in the St. Petersburg provincial administration. In 1857, after graduating from the Petersburg pedagogical institute, he worked as a teacher in Tbilisi for about two years. After a while he was appointed to the department of religious affairs and sects of the interior ministry. In 1888 he was transferred to the ministry of education. Thanks to Yezian's work, many Armenian schools were opened in Tbilisi and Nakhchivan. In 1881, he persuaded one of his close friends, Mgrdich Sanasarian, and founded the Sanasarian College in Erzurum. He was instrumental in determining the school's first cadre of students, teachers and administrators. Yezian died in Petersburg on May 31st, 1905. See Սանդրո Բեհբուդյան, «Կարապետ Եզյանց (1835-1905)», Էջմիածին: Պաշտօնական ամսագիր Ամենայն Հայոց Կաթողիկոսութեան Մայր Աթոռոյ Սրբոյ Էջմիածնի, ԽԴ-Դ(1987):52-57; Պետրոս Հովհաննիսյան, «Կարապետ Եզյան և Նիկողայոս Առոնց», Էջմիածին-Պաշտօնական ամսագիր Ամենայն Հայոց Կաթողիկոսութեան Մայր Աթոռոյ Սրբոյ Էջմիածնի, ԿԸ(1829): 53-69. Այվազյան, Ով Ով է, 360.

8 Արինե Պետրոսյան, «Կարինի Սանասարյան վարժարանի պատմությունից», Karinepetrosyan Wordpress, Accessed: 05.10.2024, <https://karinepetrosyan.wordpress.com/2018/04/25/կարինի-սանասարյան-վարժարանի-պատմութ/>.

9 Պողոսյան, «Կարինի վարժարանների», 3: Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 4: Լինչ, Հայաստան, 241.

10 Չարլզ, Հուշամատեն Բարձր Հայքի, 200.

11 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 5.

On the other hand, the building used by the Sanasarian College was not suitable for the school. In addition, shortly after the opening of the school, the number of students increased and it was realized that the capacity of the building was insufficient. Therefore, in the fall of 1882, it was decided to move the school to the diocese of Erzurum. However, when the same problem re-occurred a year later, Sanasarian went to Erzurum in 1883 to purchase a new plot of land large enough to meet the needs of the school and began construction. But, the military authorities of the time did not allow the construction near the fortress for security reasons. Consequently, it was decided to move the college to the Hripsimya Girls' College in exchange for 100 Ottoman gold coins per year.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1884-1885 academic year, when it became clear that the girls' college was also inadequate for the school, it was decided to build a new building with the support of Mgrdich Sanasarian. The building would have a kitchen and classrooms on the ground floor and principal's offices, student dormitories and an infirmary on the upper floor. In the meantime, as of the December 1887-1888 academic year, an agreement was reached between Mgrdich Sanasarian and the church council, whereby the school would be moved to the church building in exchange for 100 thousand Ottoman liras per year. After Sanasarian's death, an attempt was made to terminate the agreement on the grounds that the rent paid for the building was insufficient, but the problems were solved with the intervention of the Patriarchate. In the period 1893-1894, some changes were made to the school building by the board of trustees. For example, the dormitories and classrooms in the old building were enlarged by combining them with the adjacent rooms. The dormitories in the new building were divided by walls and turned into a museum, infirmary, pharmacy, classrooms and administrative rooms. In addition, a new workshop was built in the courtyard of the school in 1886-1887. In 1896-1897, a woodshed, paint shop and bakery oven were built in the same place.<sup>13</sup> A new kitchen and storage room were added to all these in 1901. Thus, a large area previously used as a kitchen was converted into a storage room. However, when the school building was damaged in the 1901 earthquake, a new building was built in the same place.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Պողոսյան, «Կարինի վարժարանների», 70; Պետրոսյան, «Կարինի Սանասարյան վարժարանի».

13 Քսանանեայ Տեղեկագիր, 33-35.

14 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր Սանասարեան Վարժարանի 1906-1901 (Կ Պօլիս: Տեր Ներսեսեան, 1908), 23.



Damage to the college in the earthquake of October 26th, 1901, brought the relocation of the school to Kharpert to the agenda.<sup>15</sup> Although the local trustees had enough money in their coffers, they complained that they could not find a suitable area in the city and opposed the relocation of the college outside the fortress, fearing that it would isolate the school and hinder transportation. Actually, the Sanasarian College being in Erzurum was not favoured by the Armenians of Erzurum either. According to Murc, wealthy Armenian families sending their children to study at the Sanasarian College was jeopardizing the sources of income of the local schools. On the other hand, Kharpert was in a more advantageous location compared to Erzurum with its clean air, cultivatable land and vast territory. Erzurum also lacked a scientific setting in which students could compete. If the school was moved to Kharpert, the students would have a productive environment and would be able to compete with the modern schools opened by the Americans and Catholic missionaries.<sup>16</sup>

Based on Article 9 of its will, the school administration wanted to move the college to another city because they could not find a suitable building in Erzurum.<sup>17</sup> In response, Apoulian, the school principal, was sent to Istanbul in 1902 to carry out the relocation work. While Apoulian was in Kharpert, the local trustees reached an agreement with the Armenian community of Erzurum and halted the school's relocation.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Sanasarian College continued its education and training activities in Erzurum until 1913. However, over time, the school turned into a regional base for coordinating Armenian insurrectionist movements.

The aim of this study is to eliminate the information pollution about the Sanasarian College and the Sanasarian Foundation and to refute the claims regarding the closure of the school by using Armenian and Turkish sources. The article, which consists of an introduction and 6 chapters, draws a panoramic framework regarding the establishment, functioning, administrative and academic status, course curricula, numerical qualities of the students, physical, sanitary and financial features of the school, and socio-cultural activities of the Sanasarian College, and the last chapter focuses on the closure of the school. In this study, textual analysis and text-interperation methods were used.

15 *Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi*, MV, 49-48, H. 14.04.1307. The Presidential Ottoman Archive will be referred to as COA from here on.

16 “Բիւզանդիոն՝ի № 1626-ում Տպուած է Հետեւեալը Սանասարեան Դպրոցի Տեղափոխման Մասին”. Մուրճ, 2(1902):235-236.

17 “Սանասարեան վարժարանի փոխադրութիւնը Խարբերդ”, Լուսայ Գրական Հանդես, 2(1902):257.

18 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 24-26.

### The Administrative and Academic State of the Sanasarian College

From 1881 to 1890, the Sanasarian College was under the direct supervision of Mgrdich Sanasarian. During this period, Sanasarian's advisor Yezian, as an experienced educator, played a decisive role in the school's administrative and financial affairs, as well as in the organization of educational and training activities.<sup>19</sup> In 1882, the administration of the school was assigned to a special council consisting of Maghakya Ormanian, Kevork Apoulian, Hovsep Madatian and Sarkis Soghigian. Apoulian was responsible for the bureaucratic affairs of the school. He shaped the relations between the board of trustees and the school, handled the paperwork, and managed the expenses. Soghigian was in charge of the school's internal affairs. He was also responsible for communication between the school and the parents. The third principal, Madatian, was in charge of external affairs, the workshop and the museum.<sup>20</sup>

After the death of Mgrdich Sanasarian, all the authority of the school was assigned to Yezian. Yezian transformed the school administration into a quadruple mechanism with the statute he prepared in 1892. Accordingly, the administration of the Sanasarian College was left to the Istanbul trusteeship headed by Patriarch Ormanian. Gabriel Noradungian was appointed vice-president of the trusteeship and Gulbenkian was appointed accountancy. The Istanbul trusteeship was in charge of managing the school's assets and finding new resources. After the Istanbul trusteeship, the most authorized body of the school was the local trusteeship in Erzurum. The chairman of the local trusteeship was Zaven Der Yeghiayan, the representative of Erzurum, the vice-chairman was Daniel Harachian, and the treasurer was Garabed Azarian. At the bottom of this hierarchy were the school administration and the board of teachers.<sup>21</sup>

In 1908 - after the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era - Yeghishe Turian was appointed head of the Istanbul trusteeship. However, following Turian's resignation, Izmirlian was elected as the head. When Izmirlian resigned in 1909, he was replaced first by Hovhannes Arsharuni, and then again by Turian. In the same period, the board of trustees of Erzurum was restructured due to the death, resignation or incapacity of some of its members. Meanwhile, during the 1907-1908 academic year, some members had to

19 Նաջարյան, «Կարինի Սանասարյան Վարժարանի», 100.

20 Քսանասեայ Տեղեկագիր, 6, 13.

21 Նաջարյան, «Կարինի Սանասարյան Վարժարանի», 101; Քսանասեայ Տեղեկագիր, 11-12; Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 3.

resign due to conflicts between the local trustees and the board of teachers. In the same year, elections were held again, and for the first time in the form of a referendum. Between 1906 and 1910, the local trusteeship held 134 sessions to find solutions to hundreds of problems. It provided a modern framework to the school's programs and regulations. However, in 1906, a radical change was made in the school administration and the tripartite administration was abandoned. The management of the school was then handed over to Krikor Zakarian. However, upon Zakarian's death in 1907, Apoulian was reappointed as the school principal.<sup>22</sup> All these changes continued uninterrupted until the school was closed.

The school had 73 teachers, although the number of teachers varied from time to time. We have already mentioned that Apoulian, Madatian and Soghigian were in charge of the school's administration. The principals also taught classes related to their specialties. For example, Apoulian taught history, geography, German, gymnastics, violin; Madatian taught history of nature, German, physics, chemistry, geometry, technical drawing, health and gymnastics; Soghigian taught religion, church history, French, German, music, piano, calligraphy and Armenian. Krikor Zakarian, who directed the college for the last 4 semesters, taught Ottoman law and political economy; Nishan Kalfaian taught agriculture, French, French-Turkish translation, Ottoman Turkish and natural history; Asdvadzadur Hachaderian taught Armenian, church history and Armenian speaking.<sup>23</sup>

Amongst the head teachers, T. H. Froyian taught religious and church history; G. Umigian taught mathematics, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, accounting; Harutyun Kasbarian taught natural history, health, drawing, physics and geography; K. Mgrdichian taught history and Armenian; Dr. Suren Uzunian taught health and natural history; I. Istria taught French; M. Hortumdjan taught Ottoman Turkish and French; Aram Hagobian, J. Krestey, Edmon Kiyarmo, A. Laperpis, Jan Talizm, R. Vikureo, J. Rino, J. Bons taught French; N. Madatian taught physics and chemistry; H. Baghdasarian taught Armenian and church history; Hosrov Babaian taught natural history, Ottoman Turkish, Ottoman calligraphy, Turkish dialogue; N. Totvayian taught Ottoman Turkish, Armenian and French; H. Gurgen taught Armenian; Krikor Goyinyan taught

22 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր Սանսարեան Վարժարան 1910-1906 (Ղալաթիա: Շանթ, 1911), 3, 7-12.

23 Սանսարեան Վարժարան Ուսումնական Տեղեկագիր 1892-1891 Եւ 1893-1892 Տարիներու Եւ Տնտեսական Տեղեկագիր 1893-1892 (Կ Պօլիս: Ներսէս Արամեան, 1894), 8; Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 25.

music, violin, choir, calligraphy and geography; Vahan Kuyumdjian taught Modern Armenian, national and general history; Serovbe Noradungian taught history, Ottoman Turkish and Ottoman calligraphy; L. Basbanian taught French and French calligraphy; Antranig Esayan taught science, geology, calligraphy and technical drawing; Manvel Dedeian taught Armenian; Garabed Der-Rapayelian taught Ottoman Turkish and translation; G. Djerdjian taught natural history, science, physics, chemistry, geography and French; Yeghishe Babaian taught chemistry; Sarkis Manugian taught Classical Armenian; and S. Aghabalian taught mathematics, physics, chemistry, gymnastics, natural history, German, geography, handicrafts and technical drawing.<sup>24</sup>

There were also Turks in the academic staff of the school. For example, Hafiz Ali Efendi taught Ottoman Turkish, Mustafa Niyazi Efendi taught Ottoman Turkish and Ottoman calligraphy, Mehmet Şükrü Efendi taught Ottoman history, Ömer Efendi taught Ottoman calligraphy, and İsmail Efendi taught Ottoman Turkish, law and Ottoman history. The school's marching band was also led by Captain Ahmet Efendi.<sup>25</sup>

Among the academic staff of the school, there were also assistant teachers who attended classes as trainees. These were prospective teachers who were appointed as assistant teachers for a period of 2 years after passing a series of exams conducted by the Education Council. Assistant teachers could only be appointed as permanent teachers if they passed a new exam after 2 years of internship.<sup>26</sup> Most of these teachers were students who had graduated from the Sanasarian College. Among the assistant teachers, Tigran Burutian taught Ottoman Turkish and math; Aram Mousheghian taught math, gymnastics, drawing; Levon Karakashian taught modern Armenian, geography, national and general history, calligraphy, natural history; Mgrdich Barsamian taught drawing; Vahan Srvandzdyants taught national history.<sup>27</sup>

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24 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 37-38; Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 27-28; “Սանասարեան վարժարան”, Մուրճ; Քաղաքական, հասարակական, գրական ամսագիր, 3(1902):207; “Սանասարեան վարժարան”, Լուսնայ գրական հանդես, 4(1904):243.

25 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 18-19; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 37-38.

26 Ընդարձակ Օրացոյց Ազգային Հիվանդանոցի (Կոստանդնուպոլիս: Տպագրութիին Տեր Միննասեան, 1900), 204

27 Սանասարեան Վարժարան Ուսումնական Տեղեկագիր, 9-10; Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 27-28; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 38; Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 26.

### The School's Regulations, Program and Working Order Regulations

The Sanasarian College was governed in accordance with the bylaws dated 1892. According to the bylaws, which consisted of 3 main headings and 60 articles, the Sanasarian College was established to educate Armenian children in accordance with the spirit and rules of the Apostolic Armenian Church and to develop them professionally-technically (Article 2). The school offered two types of curricula: general and vocational education. The general education classes taught national and religious values, while the vocational classes trained craftsmen and apprentices for the domestic market (Article 4).<sup>28</sup> All expenses of the school were cleared with Mgrdich Sanasarian's inheritance (Article 5). The school's bonds were held in European state banks, while the estate deeds and receipts for the immovables were kept in the trusteeship's safe (Article 6). The school's financial resources included interest income, student fees, donations and income from the sale of art products (Article 8). According to the bylaws, 10% of Sanasarian's legacy was used to send successful students to European universities for expertise, as deemed appropriate by the school administration (Article 10). Sanasarian scholarship recipients were required to be fatherless and motherless orphans. Moreover, after graduation, these students were obliged to work at Sanasarian or any other Armenian school determined by the school administration (Article 11). The Sanasarian College admitted both *leyli* (boarding hostel) and *nehari* (daytime) students. Although the college was fee-paying, scholarships were also offered to poor students, provided that they were a part of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Article 12). The language of instruction was Armenian (Article 13). Depending on the state of the school's budget, the Sanasarian College could open new schools in Armenian-populated areas or invest in the development of Armenian schools (Article 14). According to the will, the assets of the school were under the control of the trustees (Article 16).<sup>29</sup> In addition, the trustees were authorized to dispose of the school's real estate and assets. According to Sanasarian's will, the final decision-maker regarding the school was Garabed Yezian (Article 18).<sup>30</sup>

The administrative bodies of the school were regulated in paragraph b of the bylaw. Accordingly, the Sanasarian College was administered by a quadripartite mechanism consisting of the Istanbul trusteeship, the local trusteeship, the

28 Կանոնադրութիւն Սանասարեան Վարժարանի (Կ. Պոլիս: Ներսես Արամեան, 1892), 1.

29 Կանոնադրութիւն, 2.

30 Կանոնադրութիւն, 3; Գ. Շահլամեան, «Քանի մը Թելադրութիւններ», Ազատամարտ, 26 August-8 September 1911.

school principal and the board of teachers. The Istanbul trusteeship was in charge of the school. The head of the six-member trusteeship was the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul.<sup>31</sup> When the Patriarch's office was vacant, the Patriarch's deputy presided over the committee, and in his absence, the meetings were held by the chairman elected by the trusteeship (Article 20). The duties of the trusteeship were to protect and manage the school's assets, to seek new resources to improve the school's financial means, to supervise the local trusteeship, to examine annual reports, to advocate the school's interests before the law<sup>32</sup>, to audit accounts, to find solutions to contentious problems, and to prepare detailed reports on the school's income and expenditure items and the educational and health status of the students (Article 22). The Istanbul trusteeship also had the authority to appoint the school principal. However, in the appointment of the principal, students who graduated from Sanasarian and were sent to Europe and teachers working at the school were preferred. The Istanbul trusteeship could dismiss the principal with the approval of at least five members (Article 23).<sup>33</sup>

The local trusteeship was chaired by the local bishop and consisted of the school principal, two members elected by the board of teachers, members elected by the citizens of the Armenian Church of the city, and one member elected from among the graduates of the school. In addition, school administrators Kevork Apoulian, Hovsep Madatian, Sarkis Soghigian, teachers who had served for 25 years at Sanasarian, and philanthropists who donated at least one thousand liras to the school were accepted as regular members of the school for as long as they lived.<sup>34</sup> The duties of the local trusteeship were to increase the school's revenues, manage the immovable properties, calculate revenues and expenses, determine tuition fees, determine teachers' salaries, discuss the situation of students who did not pay fees, determine the students to be sent on scholarships or to Europe, procure school vehicles, prepare instructions to be implemented in the school, and determine the principles regarding the protection and use of the school budget. According to the bylaw, the local trusteeship had to meet at least once a month at the invitation of the chairman (Article 33).<sup>35</sup>

After the local trusteeship, the most authorized body of the school was the school principal. The school principal was responsible for the proper execution

31 Հիմնական Կանոնադրություն Սանասարեան Վարժարանի (Կ. Պոլիս: Օննիկ Բարսեղեան եւ Ռրդի, 1910), 3-4.

32 Կանոնադրություն, 4.

33 Կանոնադրություն, 4-5.

34 Հիմնական Կանոնադրություն, 6-7.

35 Կանոնադրություն, 7-8.

of school rules, the evaluation of teaching and learning activities and the work of teachers and students, the maintaining of discipline and the development of material and spiritual aspects (Articles 44-45). As the natural chairman of the teachers' council, the principal could convene the teachers' council or, in extraordinary circumstances, convene extraordinary sessions upon the written request of three members (Article 46). The selection of teachers was also among the duties of the principal (Article 47) (Կանոնադրութիւն, 1892, p. 8). Preparation of curricula, arranging student and teacher leaves, conducting practices and procedures related to the admission of students to the school, and preparing annual reports were under the responsibility of the school principal (Articles 49-53).<sup>36</sup>

The teachers' council was chaired by the school principal and consisted of members selected from the language and general culture teachers of the senior classes (Articles 54-55). The teachers' council had to gather at least three times a year. However, the number of meetings could be arranged to three times a month at the discretion of the school principal (Article 56). Decisions of the board were taken by majority vote, and in the case of equal votes, the principal's vote was decisive (Article 57). The board of teachers had to determine educational materials and textbooks, prepare curricula<sup>37</sup>, carry out student admission and transfer procedures, regulate the details of school fees, determine the conditions of use of the school library and museum, prepare reports on the success of students, prepare diplomas, and determine students to be sent to Europe to be proposed to the board of trustees (Articles 55-56).<sup>38</sup>

## Program

The Sanasarian College was founded in the 1881-1882 academic year as a 9-year high school. Students who enrolled in the college would receive a high school diploma after three years of primary school education, followed by six more years of schooling.<sup>39</sup> However, this practice was changed in 1891 and students who enrolled in the school were required to be primary school graduates or at least have basic skills such as reading and writing. Thus, education, which was initially 9 years long, was limited to 7 years. Students

36 Հիմնական Կանոնադրութիւն, 11-12.

37 Կանոնադրութիւն, 11.

38 Կանոնադրութիւն, 12.

39 Մանուէլ Միրախորեան, Նկարագրական Ուղեվորոյթիւն Ի Հայաբնակ Գավառս Արեւելեան Տաճկաստանի Ի. (Կ. Պօլիս: Սարըեան, 1884), 148; Չարըզ, Հուշամատեն Բարձր Հայրի, 201.

who graduated from the school could directly enroll in the universities of their choice without taking any exams.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1899-1900 academic year, with the approval of the Directorate of Education in Erzurum, the Sanasarian College was granted the status of a junior highschool and a secondary school.<sup>41</sup>

The curriculum of the school was modeled after German secondary schools (*Realschule*). The Sanasarian College, which was initially a basic high school, was later transformed into a multi-program high school with the establishment of furniture, iron and bookbinding workshops. The aim of the school was not only to provide students with vocational training, but also to turn them into citizens who were responsive to social issues. For this reason, the school offered a wide range of programs ranging from foreign languages to sciences, from mathematics to piano, violin and handicrafts.<sup>42</sup> In the basic education department, students were taught twenty different subjects: Religion (history of religions, Christian doctrine and history, history of the Armenian Church), history, geography (political, economic and physical geography), science (biology, botany, mineralogy, geology, physics and chemistry)<sup>43</sup>, Armenian (classical and modern Armenian), Ottoman Turkish, French, English, German, mathematics (arithmetic, geometry, trigonometry, accounting), calligraphy, technical drawing, painting, music, piano, violin, gymnastics and ice skating. The basic education courses were re-organized in 1906 by the inspector Krikor Zakarian with some additions and removals. Thus, subjects such as health, science and economics, which had previously been taught as passages within other subjects, were now made separate subjects in their own right.<sup>44</sup>

Approximately two years after the official opening of the school in 1883, a small workshop was established to teach students carpentry skills such as bookbinding, chiseling, woodworking and smoothing. Initially conducted as a hobby for basic education students, the workshops were transformed into professional vocational courses in 1886. In 1886, Hagop Boghosian set up the ironworking department. In the same year, the bookbinding department<sup>45</sup>, and in 1887, the furniture department was opened. By 1901-1902, there were 4 different branches in the vocational department: furniture, ironworking,

40 Պողոսյան, «Կարինի վարժարանների», 12-13.

41 Նաջարյան, «Կարինի Սանասարյան վարժարանի», 97; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 6.

42 Նաջարյան, «Կարինի Սանասարյան վարժարանի», 98.

43 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 29.

44 Ընդարձակ Օրացոյց 1900, 214; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 31; Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 22.

45 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 47.



bookbinding and chemistry.<sup>46</sup> In these years, students were either directly enrolled in vocational courses or they followed vocational courses at the same time while continuing their basic education. In 1895, when it became clear that vocational courses were not enough, a new program was prepared. Accordingly, it was decided that talented students would devote most of their time to vocational courses after studying a limited number of subjects in basic education classes. However, when the desired results could not be obtained from the limited workshops attended voluntarily by the students, the programs of the vocational department were revised in 1900.<sup>47</sup> With the new program, each of the vocational branches were changed into separate departments. The education period was reduced to 4 years. In addition, who can benefit from the workshops was re-arranged. Accordingly, students were divided into three groups: day scholarship students who worked in the atelier, basic education students who voluntarily attended vocational classes for one hour a day to learn art, and students who attended one class of basic education and devoted all their time to vocational studies. On the other hand, the number of weekly vocational courses was increased and general culture courses were limited to religion, church history, classical and modern Armenian, Ottoman Turkish, mathematics, science, technical drawing, calligraphy and music.<sup>48</sup>

In 1899, the arrival of Simon Aghabalian and Kevork Djerdjian in Erzurum gave a new impetus to vocational education. Upon his return from Europe, Aghabalian was appointed assistant director in charge of the workshops.<sup>49</sup> In 1901, the academic staff of the department seemed almost complete. According to the records, Kevork Karnagarian, Hagop Boghosian, Hagop Stepanian, Hagop Semerjian taught in the blacksmithing department, while Arshak Harahanian, Sukias Seylanian, Aram Vahanian and Aram Mousheghian taught in the furniture department.<sup>50</sup>

In 1903, the admission requirements for vocational departments were revised. Accordingly, students who wished to enroll in vocational departments had to be between the ages of 14-18 and complete primary school.<sup>51</sup> After 1906, students admitted to the vocational department were expected to be healthy, moral and committed to the church. In the same year, the department's fee

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46 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 38.

47 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 16.

48 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 49.

49 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 52.

50 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 39; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 51.

51 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 50.

schedule was also changed. According to the 1906 fee schedule, boarding students who wished to enroll in the vocational department were charged 3 Ottoman gold coins, while daytime students were charged 12 Ottoman gold coins.<sup>52</sup>

In the school's furniture department, all kinds of household items could be produced, and in the ironwork workshops, everything from printing press machines to candlesticks could be manufactured. For example, in the 1887-1888 academic year, a coach was produced in the school workshops with the cooperation of teachers and students. In the 1888-1891 period, a special car was produced and presented to the service of Erzurum Governor Sami Pasha. Soap and candles were also produced in the school's chemistry workshop.<sup>53</sup>

The number of students in the ironworking department decreased over time due to parents' concerns for the future, and it was finally closed in 1902-1903. This was due to the fact that local production was too expensive to compete with European products. In addition, none of the students with money preferred the vocational department.<sup>54</sup> The chemistry department, which was established afterwards, was shut down due to the lack of branch teachers.<sup>55</sup>

According to the records, a total of 16 students graduated from the vocational department of the school between 1886-1901. 10 of the graduates were carpenters and 2 were blacksmiths. The remaining 4 students attended basic education classes along with vocational courses and graduated from two departments at the same time.<sup>56</sup>

Although the workshops were closed for a short time in 1906-1907 upon the decision of the school administration, they were re-opened the same year upon the application of Simon Aghabalian. During this period, radical adjustments were made to the workshop programs. For example, one of these was the transfer of the workshop to the furniture craftsmen in exchange for a guarantee and the transfer of the workshop revenues to the craftsmen instructors.<sup>57</sup>

On November 2nd, 1909, the School Administration established a pedagogy department to meet the need for teachers in connection with the increase of

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52 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 57.

53 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 40; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 53.

54 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 52.

55 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 38-39.

56 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 53.

57 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 56.

Armenian schools and appointed Soghigian as its director. Thus, the school administration began to use its own resources to meet the need for teachers.<sup>58</sup>

The pedagogy department offered two hours each week of basic pedagogy, psychology, methodology, and one hour each of history of pedagogy, moral philosophy, political economy, debate, and school health.<sup>59</sup> Methodology and general pedagogy were taught by Khachadurian, history of pedagogy by Apoulian, and psychology by Soghigian. Minassian taught basic pedagogy, Babaian taught political economy, Uzunian taught debate and school health, and Manugian taught moral philosophy.<sup>60</sup>

According to the bylaw, students enrolling in the pedagogy department had to be at least 18 years old, graduated from junior high school, and prove with a doctor's report that they did not have any health problems. Applicant students were required to submit a diploma, birth and baptismal certificates, and, if applicable, a certificate of good conduct from the institution where they had previously worked. Candidates who did not graduate from the junior high school were required to pass the school's exam in order to enroll. Pedagogy students could also attend classes to practice with the approval of the education council. Students accepted to the department were not charged any fee. In pedagogy exams, students were given at least three different exams: written, oral and practical.<sup>61</sup>

As of 1909-1910, there were a total of 71 students in the Pedagogy Department. Of these, 26 were enrolled and the others were attending classes externally.<sup>62</sup> Similarly to other departments, successful students of the pedagogy department were given Sanasarian scholarships for specialization. In 1906, Aram Vahanian, Hagob Melkonian, Kevork Djerdjian, Simon Aghabalian and Levon Basbanian from the pedagogy department were sent to Europe for specialization. Hosrov Babaian was sent to Istanbul to specialize in Turkish lessons, and after graduating from the literature department of *Darü'l-fünun* (Ottoman University), he returned to Erzurum on September 12th, 1909 to teach Turkish. In 1906, Aram Hagobian was sent to Paris and graduated first from Ecole Normale Primaire and then from St. Cloud Ecole Normale Superieure. Sargis Manugian studied literature at the universities of Petersburg, Berlin and Leipzig before returning to the Sanasarian College to teach Classical

58 Չարրզ, Հուշամատենան Բարձր Հայրի, 204-205, 207.

59 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 50.

60 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 53.

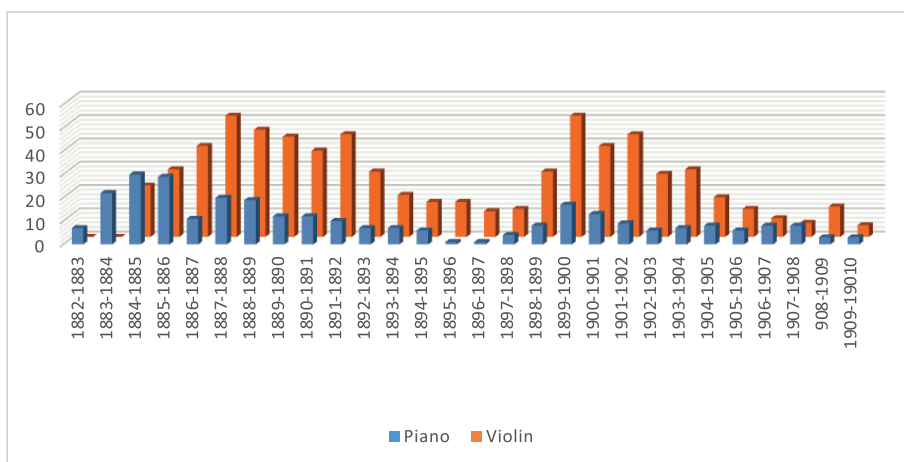
61 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 52.

62 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 54.

## The Adventure of an Armenian School From the Ottoman to the Republic: Sanasarian College 1881-1935

Armenian. Manvel Dedeian from Yozgat, like Manugian, graduated from the University of Vienna and began teaching Armenian at the Sanasarian College. The school administration sent Sarkis Hachaderian, Sanasar Soghigian, Vahan Habeshian, Hagob Culhagian and Sarkis Shishmanian to Italy for the same purpose.<sup>63</sup>

As of the 1882-1883 academic year, piano lessons were also being taught at the Sanasarian College. Violin lessons were later added to these.<sup>64</sup> Also, from 1890 onwards, student choirs were organized by the singer Armenak Shahmuratian.<sup>65</sup> In 1902-1903, the school band was established under the direction of Captain Ahmet Efendi.<sup>66</sup>



Students Taking Piano and Violin Lessons

On the other hand, according to Armenologist Henry Blosse Lynch, most of the college's textbooks were in German.<sup>67</sup> However, teachers could also make use of books published in other languages depending on the course's subject matter. German textbooks were translated into Armenian and used by the teachers.

<sup>63</sup> Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 55.

<sup>64</sup> Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 31.

<sup>65</sup> Ս.Ս. Ծոցիկեան, Արեւմտահայ Աշխարհ. (Նիւ Եորք: Ա. Յ. Լեյլեկեան, 1947), 299; Պողոսյան, “Կարինի վարժարանների”, 73.

<sup>66</sup> Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 22.

<sup>67</sup> Լինչ, Հայաստան, 243.

Within a few years, the Sanasarian College had achieved an unprecedented reputation among Armenian schools. This was even reflected in the reports of Mr. Mehmet Tevfik, the director of education in Erzurum. According to the director of education, the students of the school were as successful as the senior students of the *Mekteb-i Sultani* in arithmetic classes. The students had learned Turkish to the point of being able to spell it, and they had made remarkable progress (*fevkalade terakki*) in music. The school's iron workshops were very good, *and the general education of the students was at the level of noble morality (pertev-edeb)* (Emphases made by me)<sup>68</sup>. In fact, according to him, there was no other institution in Erzurum worthy of the title of high school (*idadi*) except Sanasarian.<sup>69</sup>

However, Armenologist Lynch disagreed with the director of education and criticized the college, admitting that it had many shortcomings. For example, according to Lynch, students were not utilizing their talents properly. They could not even do a simple task like  $x+y$  X  $x-y$ , which Lynch asked them to do. Moreover, although the school principals had studied at universities in Germany, they were not sufficiently specialized in their fields. On the other hand, it was inconceivable that students changed classes based on time instead of merit. Lynch also felt that gymnastics classes were not taken seriously enough.<sup>70</sup>

### Working Order

The Sanasarian College was a full boarding school that started at 05:00 in the morning and continued until 21:30 in the evening. Accordingly, students would wake up at 05:00 in the summer and 6:00 in the winter, and within half an hour, wash themselves, comb their hair, get dressed and would go to morning prayer. Immediately after the prayer, spiritual education classes were held. After having breakfast consisting of bread, cheese, butter and tea, the students would rest for a while and then go to class.<sup>71</sup>

Classes at the Sanasarian College started at 07:00 in the summer and lasted until 11:00, and from 08:00 to 12:00 in the winter. A class was 45 minutes long and breaks were 15 minutes. Students had lunch at 11:00 in summer and 12:00

68 COA, MF.MKT, 130-12, H. 09.01.1309.

69 COA, DH.MUİ, 3-7, H. 19.10.1327; MF.MKT. 130-55, H. 20.01.1309.

70 Լինչ, Հայաստան, 244-245.

71 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 44; Ելմտական Եւ Ուսումնական Տեղեկագիրք Սանասարեան Վարժարանի Կարնոյ 1894-1893 Տարիոյ (Կ Պօլիա: Սահակ Նիկողոսեան, 1895), 25.

in winter. Lunches were usually meat dishes and fruit, soup and baked goods were served once a week. Bread was baked in the school's own bakery, and on holidays a special menu was prepared. Afternoon classes were held between 13:00-15:00 in summer and 14:00-16:00 in winter. But the afternoon classes were devoted entirely to spiritual lessons. Oratory classes were held every weekday afternoon from 16:00 to 17:00. As soon as the students had dinner at 17:00, they would attend the spiritual classes again. The younger students had to go to bed at 20:30 in winter and 19:30 in summer, and the older students had to go to sleep at 20:30 in summer and 21:30 in winter. Students were also taken to church on Sundays and holidays.<sup>72</sup> This program - with some exceptions - remained unchanged for 30 years.

## **Education and Training Activities of the School**

### **Student Profile of the College**

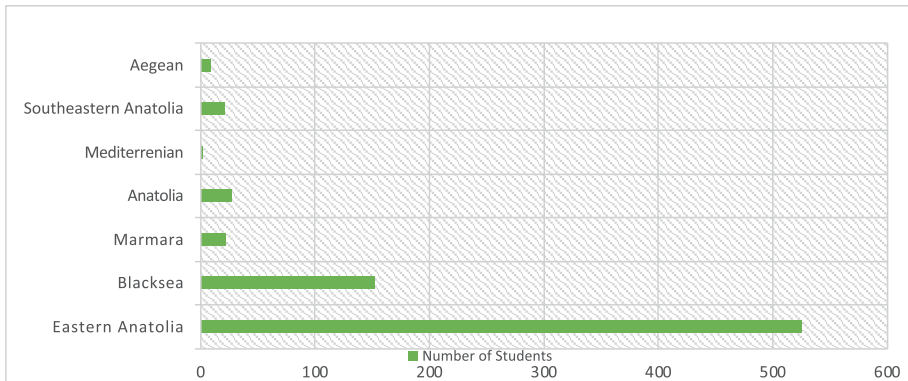
We have already mentioned that the Sanasarian College started education and training in 1881 with 19 students recruited by the founding principal Madatian from Erzurum, Van, Moush, Hınıs and Kiğı. All of these were poor students with nocturnal/scholarship status. Two years later, from the 1883-1884 academic year onwards, the school also began to accept fee-paying students. Thus, the number of students gradually increased from an average of 20 in its founding years to 187 in the 1900-1901 academic year. According to the data, the number of students enrolled in the school between 1881-1910 was 3,616.<sup>73</sup>

Although the Sanasarian College was a co-educational school, the number of female students was almost negligible. In fact, among the hundreds of students who graduated from the school, there was only one female student.

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72 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 57-58; Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 42.

73 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 34; Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 32; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 43.



Distribution of students by region of origin

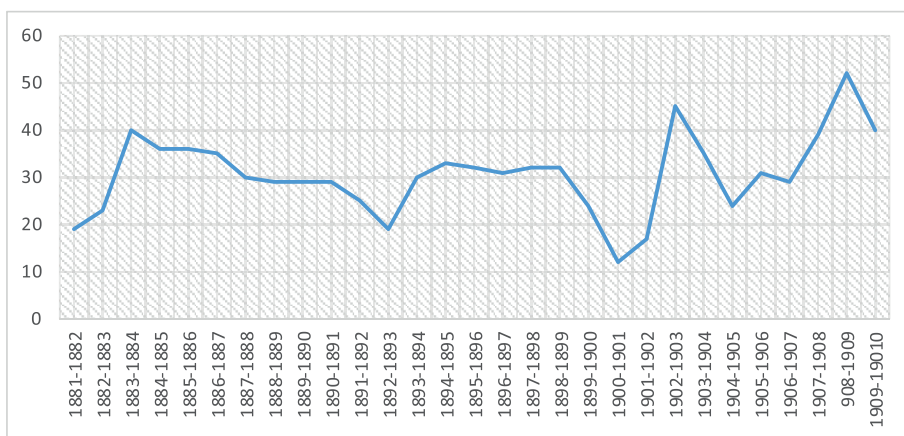
According to the data, 69% of the students came from Eastern Anatolia, 20% from the Black Sea region and 4% from Central Anatolia regions. A similar distribution was also observed on a city basis. 31% of the students were from Erzurum, 9% from Malatya, 7% from Trabzon, 4% from Sivas and Erzincan. As the graph shows, the Sanasarian College had become a centre of attraction for Eastern Anatolian Armenians. Among the students were also those from Armenia, Georgia and Iran.

As stated in the bylaw, 30% of the students were educated as free boarders, while 70% of the students could choose one of the *leyli* (nocturnal/day) or *nehari* (boarding) classes depending on their preference in return for an annual fee. As of the 1899-1900 academic year, there were 8 types of students (scholarship boarding-*leyli*, protected boarding, half-scholarship boarding, paid boarding, scholarship day-*nehari*, protected day, paid day, and non-paid day). Paid boarding students were one of the most important sources of income for the school. The number of paid boarding students reached a record-breaking high in the 1886-1887 and 1887-1888 academic years and then declined rapidly. Meanwhile, the cholera epidemic of 1892-1893 further reduced the number of students. As the number of paying boarding students dropped below 25 in the 1895-1896 period, it was decided that some students would be educated by foster families.<sup>74</sup> Thus, students in need were educated, and the school was provided with hot money.<sup>75</sup>

74 The benefactors of the sheltered students were Markar Papovian, Arakel Zaturian, Boghos Gukasian, Yeghishe Nabatian, Baklar Duluhanian, Hovhannes Adamian, Harutyun Adamian, Krikor Arakilian, M. Mirzabekian, Balabeg Lalaian, Sarkis Canimian, Isahak Jamharian, H. Tumayan, Z. Melikian, Gayzag Arabian, Hachig Aslanian, and Abraham Yakubian. See here. Քսանասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 45; Հնգամսայ Տեղեկագիր, 35; Քառասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 33)

75 Հնգամսայ Տեղեկագիր, 35, 42; Քառասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 33, 59; Քսանասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 14, 45, 56.

## The Adventure of an Armenian School From the Ottoman to the Republic: Sanasarian College 1881-1935



Distribution of Full Scholarship Students by Year

According to sources, the Sanasarian College gave scholarships to a total of 888 students in 30 years. In other words, an average of 30 students benefited from Sanasarian scholarships every year. 29% of the scholarship students were born in Erzurum, 8% in Erzincan, 7% in Malatya and 6% in Van.

As we mentioned above, Sanasarian did not only provide scholarships to high school students but also sent some successful students abroad for specialized studies. According to the reports, dozens of students, including Aram Vahanian, Hagob Melkonian, Hagob Semerjian, Armenak Hayirian, Barvir Balasarian, Kevork Djerdjian, Simon Aghabalian, Levon Basbanian, Aram Hagobian, Sargis Manugian, Manvel Dedeian, Sarkis Hachadirian, Sanasar Soghigian, Vahan Habeshian, Hagob Culhagian, Sarkis Shishmanian, Hrachian Lusbaronian, Davit Umikian, and Koryun Mgrdichian were educated abroad with Sanasarian scholarships.<sup>76</sup>

### Graduation Exams and Graduation Statistics

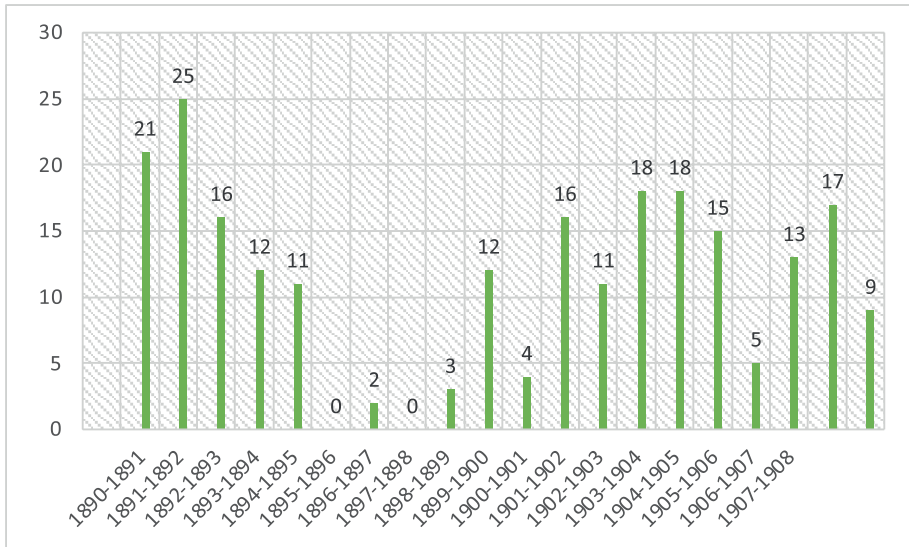
Starting from the 1882-1883 academic year (excluding 1885-1886, 1886-1887 and 1889-1900 academic years), the end-of-year exams of Sanasarian College were held as open public exams. The exams were eagerly followed by military and civil officials, embassy staff and students' families. The 1884-1885

<sup>76</sup> COA, AՅՄԿՏ.ՄԻՄ, 533-24, Կ. 27.04.1312; ԺԻ.ՏՄԻԿ.Մ, 103-55, Կ. 19.01.1319; ԺԻ.ՏՄԻԿ.Մ, 112-19, Կ. 09.07.1319; ԺԻ.ՏՄԻԿ.Մ, 112-12, Կ. 17.06.1319; ԺԻ.ՏՄԻԿ.Մ, 150-21, Կ. 10.05.1321; ԻՐ.ԻԺ, 40-32, Կ. 28.10.1894; Չարրգ, Հուշամատենն Բարձր Հայքի, 208; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 88-89; Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 71-72; Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 55.



graduation exams were held with the participation of Mgrdich Sanasarian, and the 1888-1889 exams were held with the participation of Sami Pasha, the Governor of Erzurum at the time.<sup>77</sup>

Final exams were usually oral, and senior students had both written and oral exams. But there were some exceptions. For example, in 1906, under the supervision of the inspector Krikor Zakarian, the final exams were conducted entirely in written form, and the exam papers were sent to Istanbul for evaluation after being read by the teachers.<sup>78</sup> However, this practice was cancelled by the decision of the teachers' board as of the 1907-1908 academic year.<sup>79</sup>



Graduates by Year

The Sanasarian College graduated its first students in the 1890-1891 academic year. As the graph shows, 21 students graduated from the school in 1891 and by 1901, a total of 106 students had graduated. Of these, 94 graduated from the basic education department, 12 from the vocational department and 4 from both departments at the same time.<sup>80</sup>

77 Քսանաճնայ Տեղեկագիր, 62.

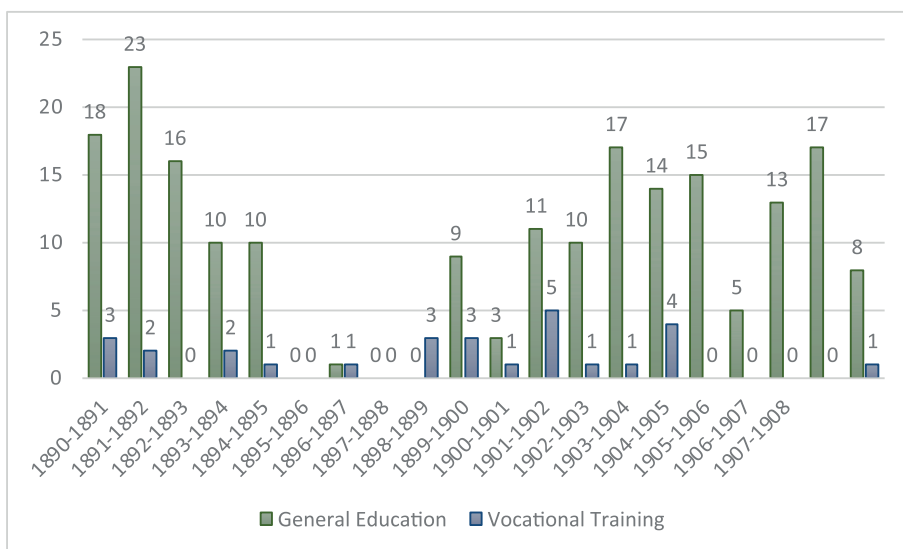
78 Հնգաճնայ Տեղեկագիր, 49.

79 Քառաճնայ Տեղեկագիր, 49.

80 Քսանաճնայ Տեղեկագիր, 62.

## The Adventure of an Armenian School From the Ottoman to the Republic: Sanasarian College 1881-1935

Of the 78 students who graduated between 1902-1906, 67 had completed basic education, 6 had completed both basic and vocational education, and 5 had completed only vocational education.<sup>81</sup> Between 1906 and 1910, there were 44 graduates. Thus, a total of 228 people graduated from the college in 30 years.<sup>82</sup>



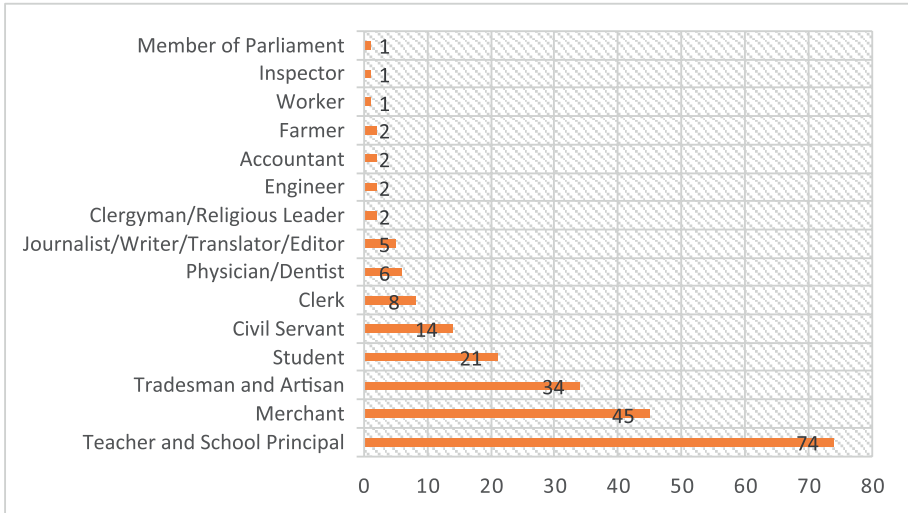
Graduates by Department

On the other hand, 34% of the graduates started working as teachers and administrators in Armenian schools in Elazığ, Erzincan and the Black Sea Region immediately after graduation. 10% were sent to Europe to study at university, 21% became merchants, 16% chose to become tradesmen or craftsmen, and 6% were appointed as civil servants in public institutions.<sup>83</sup> Among the graduates of the Sanasarian College were famous names such as Karekin Pastermadjian (Armen Garo).

81 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 49-50.

82 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 49.

83 Չարրզ, Հուշամատենան Բարձր Հայրի, 219-221.



Graduates by Field of Study

### Social and Cultural Activities of the School

The Sanasarian College not only carried out educational activities but also organized sporting and cultural activities to increase the passion and excitement of the students.<sup>84</sup> The school administration also organized hiking trips on days when the weather was good. Sanasarian’s campsite was located in Dumludağ, 25 kilometers from Erzurum. In 1882, 1906 and 1907, the students traveled with their teachers to the Red Monastery (Karmiravank), and in 1883 they camped in Kırkdeğirmen, the Red Monastery and Iğdasor. In 1885 they stayed again in Iğdasor. In addition, almost every summer from 1885-1886 until 1906, students traveled to Sırdasor and camped in tents.<sup>85</sup> At times, the school administration also organized historical and touristic trips, such as during the 1907-1908 school year.<sup>86</sup>

In addition, the school administration organized commemorative or celebratory programs with the participation of military and administrative officials on the occasions of the Ottoman sultans’ *veladet-i hümayun* (birth of heirs), holidays, festivals, or other extraordinary events.<sup>87</sup> For example, the reinstatement of

84 Չարլզ, Հուշամատենն Բարձր Հայքի, 211.

85 Հ. Աճառեան, Պօլսէն Կարին (Եր-Նախիջևան: Ս. Ավագեանի, 1909), 27; Քսանամայ Տեղեկագիր, 61.

86 Քսանամայ Տեղեկագիր, 45.

87 Հնգամայ Տեղեկագիր, 51

the constitution was met with such enthusiasm at the school that a large group of teachers and students travelled to Haçkavank to hold a funeral in absentia for the martyrs of freedom who had lost their lives during the events, and even visited the mosque next to the monastery to offer condolences to the imam. On other important occasions, such as on January 8th, 1887, the school choir gave concerts for invited guests. In the 1891-1892 period, the students staged Molier's "The Imaginary Invalid" and in 1892-1893 "The Doctor in Spite of Himself". In 1910, with the support of the students' union, the school's theatre group staged the plays "Towards Freedom" and "The Russian-Turkish War".<sup>88</sup> Sanasarian also hosted theatre groups from abroad from time to time. For example, the theatre group of the Baku Armenian Cultural Union came to Erzurum in the fall of 1908 and performed in the hall of the college.<sup>89</sup>

One of the most important events of the Sanasarian College was the graduation ceremonies. On July 15th, 1891, a magnificent graduation ceremony was held for the school's first graduates with the participation of the governor of Erzurum, Hasan Hayri Pasha, the provincial letter carrier, the director of education and high-ranking government officials. The 1901 graduates received their diplomas in person from Mr. Mehmet, the director of education in Erzurum.<sup>90</sup>

The school also published a school newspaper called *Sird* (heart).<sup>91</sup> This newspaper, which covered topics related to education, art and politics, was followed with interest not only by the students but also by the Armenian community of Erzurum. Under the moderatorship of the Armenian language teacher A. Hachadirian, the school's senior students held debates every weekday afternoon on topics determined by the school administration.<sup>92</sup> The debates, which were initially held in Armenian, were later (starting in 1909-1910) held in Turkish.<sup>93</sup>

The Sanasarian College was visited by dozens of bureaucrats, ambassadors and scientists, including Mgrdich Sanasarian and Yezian. Between 1906 and 1910, Bishop Nerses Harahyan of Muş, Tahir Pasha, the former governor of Erzurum, Karekin Pastermadjian, a member of parliament from Erzurum, Vartkes Serengülian, Naci Bey, the party inspector of the Committee of Union

88 Ելմտական Եւ Ուսումնական Տեղեկագիրք, 38-39; Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 64-65; Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 46.

89 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 47-48.

90 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 66-67.

91 Պողոսյան, "Կարիքնի վարժարանների", 74.

92 Չարլզ, Հուշամատենան Բարձր Հայքի, 218; Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 46.

93 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 44.

and Progress, and Kevork Medzadurian, the prosecutor of Erzurum, were hosted in the guesthouse of Sanasarian College. The students sometimes paid return visits to high-ranking government officials in Erzurum.<sup>94</sup>

## **The Physical, Sanitary and Financial Situation of the School**

### **The Physical Condition of the School**

#### **The School Library**

The Sanasarian College had a rich collection of printed and handwritten books in different languages. S. Soghigian, K. Shehlemian, H. Tutundjian, G. Djerdjian, G. Ğoyinian, M. Fetvacian and A. Hachatirian were the heads of the school library from 1892 to 1900, G. Djerdjian from 1900-1901, Manvel Dedeyan and Hosrov Chitchian from 1903-1905 and Aghabalian from 1906. The last head of the library was Serovbe Noradungian. The first labeling of the school library was initiated during Djerdjian's tenure as head. The books in the library were procured both through purchases and donations. F. Vartanian and S. Mandinian, two of the first students at the college, donated 487 volumes of books to the library. As of 1903, there were 4,806 volumes of books in the school library, worth an average of 20 thousand piastres. In order to keep Yezian's memory alive, on August 31st, 1910, the school administration established a new collection in the library named after him. In the 1908-1909 semester, the school students established a new library under the name "students' union library".<sup>95</sup>

As of August 31st, 1910, the school library contained a total of 6,024 volumes, including 1450 volumes in Armenian, 1,002 volumes in French, 2,900 volumes in German, 398 volumes in Turkish, 119 volumes in English and 55 volumes in Russian. In addition, the library inventory included 942 notes, both with and without bindings. The number of books in the student union library was close to 400 volumes.<sup>96</sup>

#### **The Museum**

The Sanasarian College had a rare museum available to students. Cabinets in the museum displayed human organs, skulls, embalmed taxidermic objects,

94 Քսանաւնայ Տեղեկագիր, 61; Քառամնայ Տեղեկագիր, 45-47.

95 Քսանաւնայ Տեղեկագիր, 68; Հնգամնայ Տեղեկագիր, 55; Քառամնայ Տեղեկագիր, 34.

96 Քառամնայ Տեղեկագիր, 37.

shellfish, animal fossils, precious stones and antique coins. The museum's inventory also included works by world-renowned painters such as Orlov, Lami, Rubens and Aivazovsky.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, a small zoo was built inside the museum.<sup>98</sup>

The school's garden was as colourful as its museum. In the 1884-1885 semester, Madatian created a green area in the school garden by planting trees and flowers sent by Sanasarian, and after a while he started to grow vegetables in the garden with the students. In the 1907-1908 academic year, the fields around the school were rented and agriculture began. In fact, the first crops grown here were presented to Erzurum Governor Mustafa Pasha and officials.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to all this, the Sanasarian College had a museum collection of 66 manuscript books. The oldest of them was written in 986 and included religious and literary texts of Armenian culture as well as rare manuscripts on Christianity.<sup>100</sup>

### **The Sanitary Condition of the School**

The school administration took a close interest in the health status of the students, and weak students were either not admitted to the school at all or were sent to their families for treatment as soon as they became ill. In addition, the school was periodically inspected by Dr. Krosman, the Erzurum sanitary inspector, and Şerif Bey, the municipal physician.<sup>101</sup>

According to the documents, the health status of the students -in the first ten years- was exceptionally good. The school administration survived the cholera epidemic that broke out in Erzurum in 1892 thanks to the measures taken by the quarantine director Dr. Guti. During the epidemic, a doctor was assigned to the school, rooms were regularly disinfected, and vegetable dishes and fruits were added to the menu to prevent students from getting sick. On the other hand, students were regularly taken to the Turkish bath during the year and their clothes were periodically cleaned. During the pandemic, the school administration cancelled traditional visits to minimize the school's contact with the outside world and even built a kiln in the garden to stop people from entering and leaving the school. In addition, Madatian's

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97 Չարլզ, Հուշամատենան Բարձր Հայքի, 215; Քսանասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 68-71.

98 Քառամնայ Տեղեկագիր, 37.

99 Քսանասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 68-71.

100 Քսանասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 72-75; Քառամնայ Տեղեկագիր, 38.

101 Սանասարեան Վարժարան Ուսումնական Տեղեկագիր, 22-23; Քսանասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 59.

agricultural classes and sporting activities such as gymnastics, swimming and ice skating improved the health of the students noticeably. However, despite these extraordinary measures, 11 of the 771 students enrolled in the school between 1881 and 1911 fell ill and died.<sup>102</sup>

The administration paid as much attention to the morals and behaviour of the students as to their health. Students who did not abide by the school rules were subjected to disciplinary punishment and expelled from the school. The school administration suspended 25 students between 1881-1900, 19 students between 1901-1906, and 43 students between 1906-1910 for laziness and bad behaviour.<sup>103</sup>

## The Financial Situation of the School

### The School's Assets

The Sanasarian College owned 32 pieces of real estate in different villages and neighbourhoods in Erzurum and Istanbul. The most important piece of real estate in Erzurum was the 9 pieces of land purchased by Sanasarian to build a school. In 1883, the land cost 87,138 piastres and had an average annual income of 1,500 piastres. In the same year, Sanasarian had purchased a large farm in the village of Ağvıran (Ağören) in Erzurum in order to generate income for the school. The farm, which included 60 pieces of fields, 7 pieces of pasture, 1 house, 1 haystack, 1 waste storage and 1 residential land, cost approximately 85 thousand piastres in 1883. The college, which operated the farm with its own means, earned an annual income of 150 liras.<sup>104</sup> In 1887, a house with a garden in the same village and 2 pieces of land in Kez Village were purchased with the farm's income. One of the most important sources of income for the college was the famous Sanasarian Inn in Istanbul. The Sanasarian Inn was purchased by the school's board of trustees from İhsan

102 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 46-47; Քսանասեայ Տեղեկագիր, 60; Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 44.

103 Քսանասեայ Տեղեկագիր, 60; Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 47; Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 45.

104 The farm in Ağvıran (Ağören), which was the property of Hacı Mehmet Agha, a supply contractor for the 4th Army of the Ottoman Empire, had been sold to Der Azarian Karabet, acting on behalf of Sanasarian, by a court decision upon the bankruptcy of the contractor during the '93 War. However, after the Dersaadet Court of Appeal overturned the bankruptcy decision, a dispute arose between the school administration and the heirs of Hacı Mehmet Agha. Thereupon, in order to protect the heirs of Hacı Mehmet Agha, who had gone bankrupt due to his sacrifice for the provision of the Ottoman army, and to remedy the injustice caused by the school administration's inability to use the land it had purchased, the Council of State decided that the sale price of 1,000 liras would be paid to those concerned from the unexpended funds of the Ministry of Finance and the farm would be returned to its former owners. For details, see. COA, DH.H., 6-15, H. 14.09.1332; ŞD., 2830-5, H. 12.10.1332; BEO., 3693-276952, H. 14.01.1328; BEO., 3709-278108, H. 12.02.1328; BEO., 4203-315179, H. 02.09.1331.

Bey and a Circassian Ismail Pashazade, for 19 thousand Ottoman liras. The annual income of the inn was 2,730 Ottoman liras as of 1906.<sup>105</sup> In 1906, the Istanbul trusteeship built a new building behind the Sanasarian Inn and rented it to the Ottoman Bank for 15 years.<sup>106</sup> Real estate was not the only asset of the school. The interest on the 1,200,000 Francs in Sanasarian's time deposit account at the Petrograd State Bank was also used for school expenses.

### **Income and Expense Items of the College**

Sanasarian College's sources of income consisted of foreign currency interest, rents, student fees, workshop income and music lessons. Sanasarian allocated 123,600 piastres, which was worth approximately 1,200 Ottoman gold coins, from the interest income he earned from his deposit account at the Russian State Bank to the school's annual expenses. After Sanasarian's death, the school's expenses continued to be covered through his estate. Thus, an average of 3,500,000 Ottoman liras was transferred to the school by Sanasarian in the first twenty years. However, Sanasarian was not the only beneficiary of the school. Yezian's aunt Mariam Kaghachikyants also donated a large sum to the school. In addition, tuition fees collected from the students were also among the sources of income of the college. For example, in the period 1882-1883, an average of 20 Ottoman gold coins per person was collected from boarding fee-paying students and 10 Ottoman gold coins from daytime fee-paying students. Over time, tuition fees collected from students became one of the most important sources of income for the school. The amount collected from tuition fees increased to 21,571 piastres in 1901-1902 and 62,727 piastres in 1905-1906. On the other hand, as of the 1899-1900 semester, the school began to admit students with half scholarships for the first time. These students were charged 12 gold coins per person per year on the condition that they would cover their own expenses for books and clothes. Thus, in the first twenty years, the school fees collected from students reached an average of 2,950 thousand piastres. In addition, starting from the 1883-1884 academic year, piano lessons generated an annual income of 2 gold coins. Violin lessons also generated an annual income of 3 Ottoman gold coins.<sup>107</sup>

The school's workshops were also an important source of income. For example, the bookbinding workshop broke a record by earning 1,546 piastres

105 Քսանասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 84-87; Քառասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 63; COA, DH.H., 6-15, H. 14.09.1332.

106 Հնգամնայ Տեղեկագիր, 70.

107 Քսանասնայ Տեղեկագիր, 76-78; Հնգամնայ Տեղեկագիր, 62-63; Ընդարձակ Օրացոյց Ազգային Հիվանդանոցի 1901, 419.



in 1899-1900 thanks to the orders it received from abroad. The school's other workshops generated 166,663 piastres in twenty years.<sup>108</sup>

In addition to all these, the school also had extraordinary revenues from financial and in-kind donations. For example, the Istanbul branch of Allianz France donated 22 liras to the school in 1901-1902, 40 liras in 1902-1905 and 25 liras in 1906.<sup>109</sup> The Luys company donated ten crates of coal to the school in the 1907-1908 and 1908-1909 academic years. On the other hand, hundreds of books, newspapers and magazines were donated to the school library from many parts of Europe, especially France.<sup>110</sup>

The school administration collected 3 Ottoman liras from boarding students who enrolled in the school and deposited it into a deposit account, with the condition that it would be returned afterwards. In some cases, 10,5 Ottoman lira was charged per student for the individual use of school equipment.

The school's expenses consisted of 21 items. For example, the school building was rented for an average of 10 thousand piastres per year. Other expense items were maintenance of dormitories, repair of classrooms and gymnasiums, supply of kitchen equipment, ceremonial and celebration expenses, postal and telegraph expenses, teachers' salaries, food and beverages, fuel and cleaning expenses, lighting and workshop expenses, and taxes paid on real estate.<sup>111</sup>

One of the most important expenses of the school was the salaries of teachers and workers. In the 1892-1893 academic year, the school principal Madatian was paid an annual salary of 22,248, Soghigian and Apoulian were paid 19,776, the head teachers were paid approximately 12,500, and the assistant teachers were paid an average of 2,500 piastres. In addition, the school janitor and the lightman were paid 618 piastres each, and the night watchman, secretary and cook were paid 1,236 piastres each.<sup>112</sup>

### **The Last Years of the College and the Debates in the Republican Era**

Soon after its establishment, the Sanasarian College became an ideological and logistical center for the Armenian separatist movements in Eastern Anatolia.

108 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 79.

109 Հնգամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 64, 73.

110 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 74-75.

111 Քսանամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 79-83.

112 Ելմտական Եւ Ուսումական Տեղեկագիրք, 14.

According to the report of Major Mehmet Şevki, One of the aides-de-camp to His Majesty the Sultan, the Sanasarian College was a place in which: “... although the program of the provincial school announces that the sciences are taught in accordance with the program of the provincial education, their main education is to train teachers and craftsmen for the rapid production of small and large military equipment in the small and large continent after acquiring industrial tools such as knives, blades and daggers, as well as large and small carriages and carriage sets and bows, and the art of carpentry. Every year, from the tenth day of July until the fifteenth of August, the teachers of the school together with their students go to the Armenian town of Iğdasor, which is located 4 hours away from the city of Erzurum, on the pretext of a change of weather, and spend 35 days of their daily expenses on transportation to the said town, and in order to prevent the discovery of their actions in the town and the creek in its vicinity, and in case they are discovered, they will keep a member of the gendarmerie of the province of Erzurum or an Armenian officer with them as a guard. Every day or every other day, the Armenian teachers and students who had retreated to the aforementioned Iğdasor town with the aforementioned precautions and other measures would go to the pits in the creek to the south and west of the town and practice firing cartridges with the various types of weapons they had in their possession, and they would also screen their weapons, and in this way, they would learn the firing and firing methods, the Armenian instructors also keep a set of hunting rifles with them, so that the travellers who pass through and from the aforementioned town, which is the place of the endeavour, and from afar, do not suspect and, if necessary, answer in a way that is acceptable to reason and mind, and to be covered up, and from time to time, they would go to neighbouring towns in order to make rifles and learn how to use weapons under the treacherous veil of these kinds of deceptions and mischiefs, as well as to test their weapons, which they had in their possession...”<sup>113</sup>

In 1890, a denunciation letter written under the signature of Informer Sadık and left at the residence of Erzurum Central Commander Rahmi Pasha reported that weapons were being secretly made and stored in the Sanasarian College and in the forges in the church. It was decided to search the school, but during the searches carried out on June 18th, 1890, no traces of weapons were found. The next day, the people of Sanasarian, who had heard that Mgrdich Sanasarian had died in Paris, went to the bazaar and tried to force the shopkeepers to close their shutters, but they were prevented by the intervention of the gendarmerie.

113 COA, Y.PRK.ASK, 180-63, H. 00.00.1319.

On June 20th, during clashes between rioting students and the gendarmerie, shots were fired at the soldiers from churches, the diocesan office and houses.<sup>114</sup> In addition, according to Zotsikian, 750 people, who had taken refuge in the college with weapons they had received from the consuls during the events, clashed with the gendarmerie under the leadership of the bishop of Erzurum.<sup>115</sup>

According to the 4th Army's report, as a result of the confrontation, 2 Muslims were killed and 45 wounded. There were 8 dead and 74 wounded from the Armenian community. In addition, one of the soldiers who wanted to suppress the rebellion was killed and 4 people, including Captain Mehmet Efendi, were wounded.<sup>116</sup>

After the events of 1890, the overseas connections of the school's teachers and students, as well as the school's transportation and communication channels, came under the radar of Ottoman intelligence. For example, in a memorandum sent to the Governorate of Erzurum in 1891, the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that the son of the French Consul General, who taught French at the Sanasarian College, was collaborating with the insurrectionists and asked the security forces to be careful.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, when it was realized that Avedis Kirkor, one of the employees of Sanasarian, had travelled to Russia via Iran with the passport he had obtained in Erzurum and had been involved in incidents, the issuance of passports to Armenians who wanted to go to Iran was stopped.<sup>118</sup> The suspicions against the school were so great that even the laboratory equipment for chemistry and a telegraph machine sent to the school from Petersburg were deemed incompatible with the school's program due to the suspicion that they would be used in terrorist acts and were asked to be returned to the address they came from.<sup>119</sup>

In addition, the Sanasarian College had temporarily suspended its education and training activities from 1907 onwards, citing certain political developments. For example, classes were suspended on December 4-6th,

114 COA, Y.PRK.AZN, 4-49, H. 10.01.1308; Y.PRK.AZN, 4-37, H. 15.12.1307; Y.PRK.ASK, 62-103, H. 06.11.1307; Y.PRK.TKM, 18-20, H. 27.11.1307; Y.PRK.ASK., 62-100, H. 29.10.1307; Y.PRK.ASK, 134-97, H. 03.07.1315.

115 Քանի մը Խոսք-Սանասարեանի Տեղափոխութեան Առթիւ (Կարին: Հառաջ, 1912), 7; Պողոսյան, «Կարինի վարժարանների», 72; Պետրոսյան, «Կարինի Սանասարյան վարժարանի»; Աճառեան, Պօլսէն Կարին, 27.

116 COA, Y.PRK.ASK, 62-103, H. 06.11.1307.

117 COA, DH.MKT, 1848-32, H. 01.12.1308; DH.MKT, 1802-75, H. 13.06.1308; HR. TH, 109-71, M. 27.05.1891.

118 DH.TMIK.M., 205-11, H. 03.07.1323.

119 DH.TMIK.M, 4-7, H. 29.11.1313; BEO, 722-54146, H. 12.07.1313; BEO, 1175-88061, H. 23.03.1316; DH.TMIK.M, 19-22, H. 08.05.1314.

1908 due to the opening of the Ottoman parliament. On April 8-11th, 1909, the school administration had to postpone classes due to the actions of anti-constitutionalists in Erzurum. On April 15th, 1909, classes were interrupted again due to the accession of Sultan Reşat to the throne. In the 1909-1910 academic year, the school's academic calendar was rearranged, and the school's work schedule was reorganized.<sup>120</sup>

On the other hand, since 1907, Madatian and Soghigian did not attend classes regularly, which caused discontent among the students. Upon reporting the situation to Istanbul, Krikor Zakarian was sent to Erzurum by the Istanbul trusteeship committee to investigate. As a result of the investigation, Madatian and Soghigian were dismissed from the principalship and replaced by Zakarian. Upon Zakarian's death, the post of principal was assigned to Apoulian. As of the 1909-1910 academic year, A. Hachatirian was appointed as the school principal. However, when Hachatirian resigned after one year, Apoulian was reappointed as principal. According to Gazar Çarık, all this was due to the rivalry between the trustees.

Meanwhile, the assets left to the school by Sanasarian were turned into a foundation in 1901 under the name Sanasarian Foundation by the British citizen Gümüşgerdan. Accordingly, the revenues of the Sanasarian Inn and all the real estate in Istanbul, which were purchased with Sanasarian's estate, were converted into a foundation to be transferred to the Sanasarian College.<sup>121</sup>

On the other hand, in 1912, the idea of moving the school to Kharpert began to be discussed again. According to those who wanted the college to be moved, the school building had become unusable after the 1901 earthquake. The dormitories for boarding students were inadequate, cots were cramped, and the cleanliness was extremely poor. In addition, the rent for the building was quite high. Although the school had enough money in its coffers, no new land for a school had been found in Erzurum for years. Even worse, there were no favorable conditions in and around Erzurum for the students to compete. The fact that wealthy Armenians from Erzurum were sending their children to study at Sanasarian had disrupted the other schools' sources of income.<sup>122</sup> Those who wanted the college to remain in Erzurum objected to moving, citing Sanasarian's will, and believed that such a decision would be disrespectful to Sanasarian's memory. While they acknowledged that the physical conditions

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120 Քառամեայ Տեղեկագիր, 42.

121 *General Directorate of Foundations Archive*, D.N. 574, 37-14; D.N. 574, 38/39-15.

122 “Սանասարեան վարժարանի փոխադրութիւնը Խարբերդ”, 204-205.

of the school were unhealthy and inadequate, they could not see any justified and reasonable reasons to move the school.<sup>123</sup>

However, despite all these objections, the Istanbul trusteeship decided to move the school to Sivas in 1912. After the Armenian community of Erzurum protested and refused the decision, it was decided to move the school to Sivas on the condition that the daytime section of the school would remain in Erzurum.<sup>124</sup> Thus, according to Miroğlu's claim, part of the school was transferred to the courtyard of the Sivas Nishan Monastery on September 24th, 1912.<sup>125</sup> The old school in Erzurum continued to operate under a different name, "New Sanasarian", within the same campus.

According to Armenian historians, the New Sanasarian College continued its activities for about 34 years until it was closed down by the government during the 1915 Events. However, a review of the letters sent to Vratsian by the school principal Rostom Zorian shows that the school was closed long before the 1915 events due to the patriarchate's indifference. The Istanbul trusteeship did not pay teachers' salaries despite Sanasarian's legacy and forced the school to close by spending the school's sources of income in other areas - presumably financing insurrectionist activities. Zorian's letters, in which he hopes for an extraordinary issue of Hayrenik Newspaper to help the school, is clear evidence of the extent to which the Istanbul trusteeship respected the provisions of Sanasarian's endowment.<sup>126</sup>

The situation of the Sanasarian College was even reflected in the publications of the Armenian community of Erzurum. For example, in the report titled *A Few Words* published by the Armenians of Erzurum, it was stated that the college had lost its status as a school and that the patriarchate was trying to move the school instead of turning it into a center of science.<sup>127</sup>

The Sanasarian College remained closed until 1920 due to the war. The school campus was temporarily used as a hospital. In 1919, the Erzurum Congress even convened in the historic building of the Sanasarian College. The building, which was later converted into a school, was transferred to the Governorship

123 Քանի մը Խոսք, 1-7.

124 Քանի մը Խոսք, 1-7; Չարըզ, Հուշամատեն Բարձր Հայքի, 222-225.

125 Արմաւենի Միթողլու, "Վ. Պոլսոյ Սանասարեան Խաիը", Հանդէս ամսօրեայ, 551-560.

126 "Հին թողթեր- Ռոստոմի նամակները". Վեմ-Հանդէս մշակոյթի եւ պատմութեան, Գ-3(1935): 91-96, 101, 104, 111; Հայրենիք Բացառիկ Թիւ 2 կարինի Նոր Սանասարեանի Համար (Պօսթըն: Հայրենիք, 1914).

127 Քանի մը Խոսք, 5-6.

of Istanbul in 1928 as it did not belong to the Sanasarian Foundation - there is no statement or clause about the building in the foundation certificate. The Sanasarian Inn, which was among the immovable properties of the school, was expropriated by the state and placed under the command of the Istanbul Police Headquarters since the foundation no longer had any allocation. When the Patriarchate applied to the Police Headquarters a year after the Entente entered Istanbul and asked for the accumulated rent, the Police Headquarters was forced to evict the inn on the grounds that it did not have sufficient budget.<sup>128</sup> At the end of 1919, during the reign of Patriarch Zaven, the Istanbul trusteeship rented the inn once again. In order to regain the revenues of the foundation, the Patriarchate attempted to restart the school by adding the name Sanasarian to Getronakan College during the 1927-1928 academic year. During this period, Getronakan's building was transformed into an enormous structure with the addition of laboratories, libraries, dining halls, gymnasiums and workshops at a cost of 10 thousand gold coins. Bedros Adruni was the principal of the school, and by 1927 there were 200 students in total.<sup>129</sup>

The new name of the school was approved by the Directorate of Education as of 1931-32. However, the directorate later banned the use of the name Sanasarian, citing the ongoing court process. On the other hand, in 1928, the government deemed the Sanasarian Inn an abandoned property and placed it under the control of the Istanbul Governorate. It also prohibited the testator Patriarch Mesrob Naroian from receiving rent. Upon the Patriarchate's objection to the decision, the case was brought to court on October 23rd, 1928. On April 20th, 1929, the court dismissed the case, ruling that Naroian did not have the authority to sue, and that the patriarchate did not legally exist anyway. The Patriarchate appealed the local court's decision to the Supreme Court and sought to overturn it. In 1932, the supreme judiciary conducted an investigation into the Sanasarian College in Erzurum to determine whether the provisions of the will had been fulfilled. Thus, in 1935, the court ruled that the Sanasarian Inn be transferred back to the Governorship of Istanbul.<sup>130</sup> The building in Erzurum was used as a school for a while and then turned into a museum.

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128 COA, DH.İ.U.M., 7-1, H. 19.06.1338, 1-20; DH.HMŞ., 6-11, H-02-06-1338; DH.HMŞ., 31-51, H-18-07-1338; DH. KMS, 52-22, H. 30.11.1337.

129 Ընդարձակ Օրացոյց Ազգային Հիվանդանոցի (Կոստանդնուպոլիս: Սեթեան, 1928), 392-399; Ընդարձակ Օրացոյց Ազգային Հիվանդանոցի (Կոստանդնուպոլիս: Սեթեան, 1929), 312-322.

130 Արմաւենի Միրօղլու, “Պոլսահայ կրթական կեանքը Թուրքիոյ Հանրապետութեան -30-20ական թուականներուն (մամուլի գնահատմամբ)”. Լրաբեր հասարակական գիտությունների, 3-3(2007): 140-157; Միրօղլու, “Կ. Պոլսոյ Սանասարեան Խահը”, 551-560.

## Conclusion

The Sanasarian College was founded in Erzurum in 1881 by Armenian businessman Mgrdich Sanasarian. The idea behind the college was agent Garabed Yezian, an advisor to the Russian Ministry of Education. The college was one of four secondary schools established by Ottoman Armenians outside Istanbul. The aim of the school was to educate Armenian children in the spirit and rules of the Armenian Apostolic Church and to train them in general and vocational subjects. In the 1881-1882 academic year, the Sanasarian College had the status of a 9-year high school. Students enrolled in the college could receive a high school diploma after three years of elementary school education, followed by six more years of high school. In addition, the school's curriculum was modelled after German secondary schools (Realschule). Initially a basic high school, the Sanasarian College was transformed into a multi-program high school with the establishment of furniture, iron and bookbinding workshops.

From 1881 to 1890, the Sanasarian College was directly managed by Mgrdich Sanasarian. During this period, Sanasarian's advisor Yezian, an experienced educator, personally handled all administrative and academic affairs of the school. In 1882, the administration of the school was transferred to a special commission consisting of Maghakya Ormanian, Kevork Apoulian, Hovsep Madatian and Sarkis Soghigian. After Sanasarian's death, all the authority of the school passed to Yezian. In 1892, Yezian drafted a bylaw that delegated the administration of the school to the Istanbul trusteeship, the local trusteeship, the school administration and the teachers' board. In 1901, all of Sanasarian's real estate in Istanbul was turned into a foundation to be transferred to the college.

The Sanasarian College was not only an educational institution but also a indoctrination center where Armenian separatist movements were coordinated. In fact, the college was one of the most important catalysts of the 1890 Erzurum rebellion. During the rebellion, 750 people who had taken refuge in the college with weapons they had received from the consuls clashed with the gendarmerie under the leadership of the bishop of Erzurum. After the earthquake in Erzurum in 1901, there was an intention to move the Sanasarian College to Harput. In addition, the rent for the school building was very high and although the school had enough money in its coffers, for years no new land for a school had been found in Erzurum. In 1912, despite the objections of the Armenian community of Erzurum, the Istanbul authorities decided to

move the daytime section of the school to Sivas. The old school in Erzurum continued its activities in the same campus under the name “New Sanasarian”.

The Sanasarian College went through hard times after 1912 due to lack of funding. As Zorian notes, the school administration was even unable to pay the salaries of the teachers. Contrary to the claims of many Armenian historians, the school was closed in 1913, not because of the events of 1915, but because the Patriarchate did not transfer the foundation income to the school as stated in the foundation deed.

The Sanasarian College remained closed between 1915 and 1920 due to the war. The school campus was used as a hospital for a while. In 1919, the Erzurum Congress even convened in the historic building of the Sanasarian College. The Sanasarian Inn, one of the immovable properties of the school, was expropriated by the state after the closure of the college and transferred to the Istanbul Police Department.



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# THE ORIGIN OF THE ARMENIANS, THE ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE GEOGRAPHIES THEY INHABITED AND THEIR SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH CAUCASIA\*

(ERMENİLERİN KÖKENİ, YAŞADIKLARI COĞRAFYALARLA İLGİLİ  
İDDİALAR ve GÜNEY KAFKASYA'DA İSKÂN ETTİRİLMELERİ)

Elnur AĞDAMLI\*\*

**Abstract:** *This article provides information about the origins of the Armenians and the geography they lived in, their migration to the South Caucasus, and the establishment of today's Armenia. When sources regarding the emergence of Armenians on the historical stage are examined, different information is encountered. Interestingly, Armenians never called themselves Armenians, on the contrary, they called themselves “Hayk” and their country “Hayastan”. In addition, the historical roots of the Armenian people hold an important place in terms of their interaction with the Islamic world in both the early and middle ages. Research shows that the migration of Armenians from the West to the East, that is, from Europe*

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*to Asia, lasted for centuries and that this migration process extended from the Balkans to Asia Minor (Anatolia) and from there to the Caucasus. Namely, in the early XIX. century, Tsarist Russia mass-migrated Armenians from Anatolia and Iran to the South Caucasus, that is, to the geography of today's Armenia, in order to create a buffer zone between itself and the Ottoman and Qajar states. During this period, the Tsarist State used Armenians as a tool for its own interests in its invasive policies against the Ottoman and Qajar states. While discussing the issues, an attempt was made to benefit from the information provided by important Armenian and Russian sources.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic History, Armenians, South Caucasus, Azerbaijani Turks, Ottoman, Tsarist Russia.*

**Öz:** *Bu makalede Ermenilerin kökeni ve yaşadıkları coğrafya, Güney Kafkasya'ya göçleri ve günümüz Ermenistan'ın kuruluşu hakkında bilgi verilmektedir. Ermenilerin tarih sahnesine çıkışıyla ilgili kaynaklar incelendiğinde farklı bilgilerle karşılaşmaktadır. İlginçtir ki Ermeniler kendilerine hiçbir zaman Ermeni dememişler, aksine kendilerine "Hayk", ülkelerine ise "Hayastan" demişlerdir. Ayrıca Ermeni halkının tarihi kökleri hem erken hem de Orta Çağ'da İslam dünyasıyla etkileşimleri açısından önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Araştırmalar Ermenilerin Batı'dan Doğu'ya, yani Avrupa'dan Asya'ya göçünün yüzyıllarca sürdüğünü ve bu göç sürecinin Balkanlar'dan Küçük Asya'ya (Anadolu) ve oradan da Kafkasya'ya kadar uzandığını göstermektedir. Şöyle ki 19. yüzyılın başlarına gelindiğinde Çarlık Rusya'sı, Osmanlı ve Kaçar devletleriyle arasında bir tampon bölge oluşturmak amacıyla Ermenileri Anadolu ve İran coğrafyasından Güney Kafkasya'ya, yani günümüz Ermenistan coğrafyasına kitlesel olarak göç ettirmiştir. Bu dönemde Çarlık Devleti, Osmanlı ve Kaçar devletlerine karşı istilacı politikalarında Ermenileri kendi çıkarları için bir araç olarak kullanmıştır. Konular ele alınırken önemli Ermeni ve Rus kaynaklarının sağladığı bilgilerden faydalanılmaya çalışılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *İslam Tarihi, Ermeniler, Güney Kafkasya, Azerbaycan Türkleri, Osmanlı, Çarlık Rusya'sı.*

## **Introduction**

Christian historical literature contains various discussions and writings about the origin and rise of Muslim peoples. However, these writings often portray Muslims and Islam in a negative light, as they are often written from a Christian perspective. Some early period Christian writers often tried to explain the origins of Islam and Muslims as a movement influenced by other religions in the Arabian peninsula (especially Judaism and Christianity) and treated the development of Islam as a kind of “deviation”. For example, John of Damascus<sup>1</sup>, an 8th century Byzantine Christian theologian, characterized Islam as a “deviation” and argued that the principles of Islam were stolen from Christian beliefs. His criticism was influential in shaping the negative attitude towards Islam in the Middle Ages.

There are numerous theological, historical and philosophical works by Christian writers in the Middle Ages that unfairly criticize Islam and Muslims. In this regard, we can cite the work of the Reverend Henry Martyn, *Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Mohammedanism (Islam)*.<sup>2</sup> The work contains many criticisms of the Prophet Muhammad’s (Pbuh) message. These criticisms may be related to Martyn’s misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of Islam.

In the modern period, Christian historians and scholars have not only continued the same path, but have also conducted a number of objective and scientific studies on the origins of Islam and Muslims. In this context, the number of studies aimed at understanding the historical origins of Islam, the culture of Muslim peoples, and the social, economic and religious structures at the time has increased. In this regard, we can mention the name of the Scottish priest William Montgomery Watt. Watt has done important work on the history of Islam and especially on the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). In his book *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*<sup>3</sup>, he examines the personality and leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) from a scholarly perspective. Bernard Lewis, another American historian, is also worth mentioning. Lewis is one of the most renowned Middle East experts of the 20th century. He has

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1 Saint John of Damascus, *The Fathers of The Church*, Volume 37, translated by Frederic H. Chase Jr. (Nyu York: 1958), 153-160; Şevket Yıldız, *Oryantalizm ve İslam Tarihine Oryantalist Yaklaşımlar*, (Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2023), 25-28; Muhammed Fethullah ez-Ziyadi, *El-İstişrak: Ehdafıhu ve Vesailuhu*, (Dimeşk: 1998), 25-26; Necip el-Akiki, *el-Müsteşrikün* (Mısır: Dâru'l-Maârif, 1964) 120.

2 Henry Martyn, *Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Mohammedanism*, (Cambridge: Printed by J. Smith, Printer to the University, 1824).

3 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).



written a number of valuable works on the history of the Arabs, the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world in particular. His works provide important insights into how Islam is perceived in the West and the historical development of the Arabs. As an example, we can cite Lewis's *The Arabs in History*<sup>4</sup>. This is a classic work that examines the historical development of the Arabs. Another important work of Lewis is *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2000 Years*<sup>5</sup>. This work is a survey of the last two millennia of the Middle East. Lewis examines a wide range of historical periods from the late Roman Empire through Byzantium, the Arab Islamic Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the modern Middle East. It would be accurate to say that the author has left an important academic legacy with his writings. Among late oryantalists H. A. R. Gibb, M. Rodinson, Albert Hourani, F. Rosenthal, J. Schacht, W. Fischel, L. Gardet, S. D. Goitein can be mentioned.

Muslim writers have also studied the history, origin, beliefs, and relations of Christian peoples with Christianity and Judaism and included these topics in their works. For example, we can mention *Al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*<sup>6</sup>, *Muqaddimah*<sup>7</sup> and *Islam at the Crossroads*.<sup>8</sup>

In the last century, Armenians' numerous works on Greater Armenia (from the Black Sea to the Caspian), the so-called Armenian Genocide, and territorial claims against Türkiye and Azerbaijan have made it necessary for Turkish academics to conduct studies on these issues. In the course of the researches, we have found that the studies are mostly aimed at refuting the so-called Armenian Genocide argument. In addition, we realized that there are few studies on the origin and migration adventure of Armenians. In this context, we believe that this study, which we have conducted based on the information from Armenian and Russian sources, will contribute to the research to be conducted on the aforementioned issues.

Armenians had some interactions with Muslims in the early periods of Islam. In order to understand these interactions, it is very important to look into the relations of Armenians with the Islamic world. This study on the origins of Armenians can contribute to understanding the place of both ethnic and religious diversity in Islamic history by examining their relations with the

4 Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, (London: Printed in Great Britain by The Ancor Press Ltd, 1954).

5 Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years*, (New York: Scribner, 1995).

6 İmam Ebü'l-Feth eş-Şehristâni, *El-Milel ve'n-Nihal*, translated by Prof. Ali Muhsin Siddiki, (Karaçi Üniversitesi: 2003), 306-334.

7 İbn Haldun, *Mukaddime*, c. 1, Haz. Süleyman Uludağ, (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2013), 477-482.

8 Muhammad Asad, *Islam at The Crossroads*, (Punjab: Arafat Publications, 1947), 32-82.

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Islamic world in depth. It can also offer a new perspective on interfaith relations, social structures and cultural transfers. Moreover, it can also help to develop a broader understanding of the dynamics of identity, belonging and integration between different nations and communities in Islamic history. Furthermore, assuming that Muslims were denied the right to live in Europe for centuries after the fall of Andalusia<sup>9</sup>, the fact that Armenians lived in peace and prosperity under the rule of Muslim states in Anatolia and Iran for centuries can offer an important perspective on how different ethnic and religious groups lived together in Islamic lands.<sup>10</sup>

### Claims Regarding the Origin of Armenians and the Geographies They Inhabit

There are some countries named after the nations living in them. There are also some countries whose names were given due to a geographical or governmental division. The original names of the communities living there have been forgotten and they are known by the name of the region they live in. For example, today Türkiye, Germany and France are countries named after the nations living in them. On the other hand, Italy, America (USA) and Canada are geographical names, not national names. The nations living on them have left their original names aside and adopted the name of the region they live in. In Anatolian lands in ancient times, there are geographical region names that have nothing to do with any nation in this way. Those who lived in those regions were known by the name of the region. For example, we can mention names such as Paflogonia, Pamflia, Cilicia, Cappadocia. There are no nations recognized by these names. But for those who lived in those lands, those names were used as attributes. Just like Istanbulites, Ankaraites, etc.<sup>11</sup>

The name Armenia also refers to a region. Although Armenians call themselves “Hayk” and their country “Hayastan”, there is no documented record on why the land they live in is called Armenia. Although some Armenian historians consider Armenians to be Urartians and claim that the name Armenia comes from the Urartian King Aramu, these claims are still unproven. The name Armenia, which is used as a geographical region, may have been used as a

9 Şevket Yıldız, *Endülüs'ün Göz Bebeği Kurtuba*, (Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2023), 107-108; Fray Antonio Agapida, *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada*, translated to Arabic by Hani Yahya Nasri, (London/Beyrut: İntişarü'l-Arabî, 2000), 405-413.

10 Şevket Yıldız, “Endülüs Medeniyetinin Kökleri ve Bir Arada Yaşama Tecrübesi”, *Uluslararası İnsan ve Sanat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8, no. 3, (2022), 294-300.

11 Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1985), 10.

geographical term after Aramu, forgetting its origin in time, and the people living there after that date may have been called Armenian. However, this name has no connection with the people we call Armenians today.<sup>12</sup>

There are many claims regarding the lack of actual information on the emergence of Armenians on the stage of history. Prof. Devid Leng, an English Caucasus expert and one of the Western advocates of Armenians, has stated that “*the origins and racial characteristics of Armenians are still a mystery*”.<sup>13</sup>

Based on their own legends, Armenian historians claim that their ancestors were “Hayk”. Based on the name Hayk, they call themselves “Hay” and the geography they live in is called “Hayastan”, meaning “home of the Hay”.<sup>14</sup>

Armenian historian Artak Movsisyan, inspired by his own legends, writes the following:

*“Before Christianity, our ancestors believed that we were descended from the legendary hero Hayk Nahaped. The first gods were gigantic and terrifying. Thanks to them, kindness and abundance came into the world. The human race flourished. People descended from giants. One of them was Hayk. According to cuneiform inscriptions found in ancient southern Mesopotamia (Sumer-Akadian), Hayk was the ruling God of Aratta, the most ancient Armenian state (XXVIII-XXVII century BC). The God Hayk is the son of the God Hay, the creator of wisdom and the waters of the earth. God Hay created the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In 301, after Christianity was forcibly adopted as the religion of the Armenians, everything pre-Christian was banned or reconstructed in accordance with the Christian faith. Under these circumstances, the pre-Christian ‘Armenian Creation Legend’ was shaped according to biblical references and a new legend was created. According to the new legend, Hayk was a descendant of Noah’s son Habet (Yafes) and was the son of Torgom. For this reason, in the Armenian medieval written sources, Armenians were called the people born from Habet (Habetatsin), born from Torgom (Torgomatsin) and the Torgomian nation”.*<sup>15</sup>

12 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 10; Rauf Guseyinzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, (Baku: Apostroff Yayınevi, 2014), 180.

13 Devid Leng, *Armyane. Narod-Sozidatel*, (Moskva: Tsentrpoligraf. 2021), 12; Rauf Guseyinzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 84.

14 Artak Movsisyan, *Ermenistan Tarihi*, translated ms. Marta Minasyan, (Yerevan: Yerevan Devlet Üniversitesi Yay. 2017), 6; Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 10.

15 Movsisyan, *Ermenistan Tarihi*, 8; Rauf Guseyinzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 180.

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The ancient Armenian historians Moises Khorenli and Torna Ardzrouni also claimed that the Armenian race descended from the Prophet Noah and that Noah's ark was anchored on Mount Ararat. Based on these claims, contemporary Armenian historians believe that Armenians have always lived in this region and write their history in this way. According to Kamuran Gürün, although there is no need to dwell on such legendary views, it is worth mentioning a point that these authors have forgotten. In such a case, it could be argued that the entire human race descended from the children of the Prophet Noah, and that the Turkish race likewise has the right to claim the land where it was born and derived.<sup>16</sup>

Armenians state that their next hero was Aram. Artak Movsisyan writes the following on the subject: *“According to the Armenian Legend of Creation, based on Hayk, our people were called Hay (Armenian) and our country Hayk or Hayastan (Armenia). Armenia began to be called Armenia after Hayk's grandson Aram, and Armenians began to be called Armen.”*<sup>17</sup>

The Armenian linguist Manuk Abegyan supports the observations of the British Prof. Devid Leng and makes some claims about the ambiguity of the issue: *“What is the origin of the Armenian people? How and where did they get the name Armenian? Where and by what means did they come to the territory of present-day Armenia? Which peoples influenced them before and after their arrival in Armenia? Which peoples and how did they influence their language and ethnic structure? We do not have precise and detailed information about all this. However, certain conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the reports of Greek authors, cuneiforms, monuments and ancient legends preserved by Armenians, as well as linguistic studies”*.<sup>18</sup>

Another Armenian writer Louise Nalbandyan said: *“The origins of the Armenian people and the beginning of their history remain unclear to this day. However, some traces of early history are found in ancient writings, and recent linguistic and archaeological discoveries have shed light on the Armenian past”*.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyast*, 11-12.

17 Movsisyan, *Ermenistan Tarihi*, 8; Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyast*, 10, 13.

18 Manuk Abegyan, *İstoriya Drevnearmyanskoy Literaturi*, (Erevan: 1948), 7.

19 Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 3.

Manouk Abegyan also provides interesting information about the historical origin of Armenians based on Herodotus. According to Abegyan, Armenians lived in Europe with the Greeks and Phrygians long before Christ, but later migrated to Asia Minor (Anatolia) and lived as neighbors of the Phrygians for a period. The Armenians then moved eastward and landed in Cappadocia, west of the Euphrates and south of the Kızılırmak River\*. Here the ancestors of the Armenians came into contact with the Cimmerians, and through the Cimmerians they migrated further east.<sup>20</sup>

According to Nalbandian: “In the VIII and VII centuries BC, another nation invaded Urartu. According to Herodotus, the nation that put an end to Urartu was the Phrygian Colonists known as Armenians. As time passed, the Armenians and Phrygians imposed their Indo-European languages on the Urartians, and the melding of these two nations eventually led to the emergence of the Armenian nation”.<sup>21</sup>

According to Kamuran Gürün, Herodotus did not make such a claim as Nalbandian suggests. Moreover, Nalbandian’s original idea is that Armenians emerged as a result of the melding of some Phrygian tribes coming to this region with local peoples. In other words, there was no Armenian nation in the geography where the Urartu State existed in ancient times.<sup>22</sup>

It is known that Armenians were not the indigenous people of Anatolia. As we have mentioned above, even Armenian writers have stated that they are not a local people of Anatolia and that the Armenian race came to Eastern Anatolia from the Balkans. Even classical Armenian sources have supported this view.<sup>23</sup> It is also known that many peoples lived in Eastern Anatolia before the Armenians.

In order to contribute to the subject, it is useful to mention the following ideas of Ekrem Memiş:

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\* Once known as the Halys River

20 Abegyan, *İstoriya Drevnearmyanskoy Literaturi*, 8-9. See also İ. Şopen, *Noviya Zаметki, na Drevniya İstorii Kavkaza i Evo Obitateley*, (St. Petersburg: 1866), 26; Valeriy Bryusov, *Letopis İstoriçeskikh Sudeb Armyanskogo Naroda*, (Erevan: Armfana Yayınevi, 1940), 17-18; Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 13-14; Leng, *Armyane. Narod-Sozidatel*, 12, 13.

21 Nalbandian, *The Armenian*, 4.

22 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 14. See also Leng, *Armyane. Narod-Sozidatel*, 13.

23 *Narodi Kavkaza*, c. 2, (Moskova: 1962), 443; Bryusov, *Letopis İstoriçeskikh Sudeb Armyanskogo Naroda*, 17-18; Abegyan, *İstoriya Drevnearmyanskoy Literaturi*, 8-9; *Armeniya: Ensiklopediya Puteştevnik*, (Erevan: 1990), 29.

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*“The name Armenian is first found in the inscriptions of the Persian King Darius in the 6th century BC. The name Armenian is a name given by the Persian King in reference to the name of the region. As it is understood from the cuneiform sources, the Eastern Anatolia Region was called Armanu or Armenia since the 3rd millennium BC. In other words, approximately 1600 years before the arrival of Armenians, the Eastern Anatolia Region was called Armenia. The King of Persia had named the Armenians under his rule, who were probably immigrants from the west, Armenians, meaning those who lived in the region of Armenia. It should be clarified that Armenians try to show the Urartians (9th-6th centuries B.C.), who lived on these lands before them, as their ancestors and thus try to prove that they are the real owners of the region. However, philological studies conducted by the Armenians themselves have clearly demonstrated that the language used by the Armenians is of Indo-European origin. On the other hand, the language of the Urartians is related to the language of the Huri tribe, who inhabited almost all of Eastern Anatolia and part of Southeastern Anatolia in the 3rd millennium B.C., and who are claimed by scholars to be Proto-Turks, and is of Asian origin. Therefore, such a claim by Armenians is completely unwarranted and false. Because from a philological point of view, there is no way such a view can be correct. If there are those looking for a relative to the Urartians, from a Philological point of view, we can say that the Turks are the most worthy of this kinship”.*<sup>24</sup>

Armenians probably came to Anatolia as a result of the Thracian migrations in the VIII century BC and lived in various parts of Anatolia for about two centuries. In time, taking advantage of the collapse of the Urartu State, they settled in the lands around Lake Van in the early VI century B.C. on the condition of accepting the hegemony of the Persian Kings and paying taxes to them. Therefore, the history of Armenians in Anatolia does not go back further than the VI century BC. However, according to cuneiform documents, Turks had been present in Anatolia since the end of the III millennium BC and played an important role in the fate of this region. Eventually, Armenians lived under the rule of Persian kings, Alexander the Great, then Seleucids, Romans, Byzantines, Seljuks and Ottomans for centuries.<sup>25</sup>

24 Ekrem Memiş, “Ermenilerin Kökeni ve Geçmişten Günümüze Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri”, *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 7, no. 1, (2005), 4; See also Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 13.

25 Memiş, “Ermenilerin Kökeni” 5; Nalbandian, *The Armenian*, 12-13, 14-15; Rauf Guseynzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 92-94.

Although Armenians claim to have an independent Armenian state in Anatolia, it is known that they have not been able to establish a long-lasting independent state or states that left their mark on Anatolia. It is also an undeniable fact that they did not have a complete population majority in Anatolia. Although Armenian sources are available to illuminate the last thousand years of Anatolian history, it is not possible to say that the Armenian language is the only influential language in Anatolia, that is, a language used by other peoples besides themselves. On the other hand, apart from a few church architectures in Anatolia, there are no permanent material and cultural values belonging to Armenians that have left their mark on the region. Moreover, considering the civilization and cultural levels of the Hittite, Persian, Urartian and Roman states in Anatolia, it is not possible to compare Armenians with the peoples living in these states. Although some Armenians claim that their roots are linked to Urartu, when their linguistic structure is compared, it is obvious that this claim is not true either. Therefore, under these circumstances, the claim that Anatolia is the “historical Armenian homeland” is weak.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, if we take a general overview of the phases of the migration of Armenians from Europe to Asia, starting with the emergence of Armenians in the Phrygian region and in the west of Asia Minor together with the Cimmerians, we can say the following: First: The first homeland of Armenians was the Thracian region in the Balkans. Second: Asia Minor, where they settled from Phrygia in the west to Lake Van in the east. Third: In the course of the historical process, Armenians found a new homeland in the Caucasus. The Caucasus, where Armenians found a new home, was the regions of Revan, Nakhchivan and Karabakh. Armenians were settled in the Caucasus with the military support of Tsarist Russia since the beginning of the XIX century and established the State of Armenia in 1918.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Forced Migration of Armenians to the South Caucasus by Tsarist Russia**

Before we discuss the historical facts about the mass migration of Armenians by Tsarist Russia to the South Caucasus, i.e. the geography of present-day Armenia, it would be useful to draw attention to the history of the geography in question.

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26 Seyit Sertçelik, *Rus ve Ermeni Kaynakları Işığında Ermeni Sorunu, Ortaya Çıkış Süreci 1678-1914*, (Ankara: SRT Yay. 2018), 4.

27 Rauf Guseynzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 93, 95.

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Although some historians claim that the presence of Turks in the Caucasus began with the Seljuks' domination of Azerbaijan from the XI century onwards and that Turkish tribes became the settled people of the region during this period, an examination of the sources reveals that the presence of Turks in the Caucasus dates back to long before Christ. Many chronicles and ancient stone tombs prove this. For example, the Sakas came from east to west in the VII-VI centuries BC and established the Saka State in the Caucasus under the leadership of Alp Ertunga (Efrâsiyab). The Persian emperor Cyrus II fought the Sakas under the command of Tomris Hatun on the banks of the Ceyhun (Amuderya) river and was defeated in this war. After the Sakas, Turkish tribes migrated from Central Asia to the west under different names, and some of them settled in the Caucasus on the passage route. The Huns, Bulgars, Sabirs and Ogurs settled in the region in the first centuries of AD. There are different records of the migration dates of these tribes. For example, Şöhret Mustafayev, based on the 11th century Georgian historian Leonti Mroveli, states that the Bulgarians lived in the Caucasus in the IV century BC and that they were called Bunturks or Turanians.<sup>28</sup>

The following information is also mentioned in early Islamic sources: One day before Mu'awiya sent an army to Azerbaijan, he asked his advisor Ubayd Ibn Shariyah what Azerbaijan was. Ubayd said: "*It has been the land of the Turks since time immemorial*".<sup>29</sup>

However, it is a historical fact that in the last two centuries some Armenian and Soviet historians have tried to prove the existence of an imaginary Armenian state in the South Caucasus, the ancient Azerbaijani lands, and have attempted to distort historical facts. However, until the last two centuries, there was no Armenian state in the South Caucasus.<sup>30</sup>

The first arrival of Armenians in the Caucasus began in 1441, when, with the permission of the Karakoyunlu ruler Jahan Shah, the Armenian Church moved from Sis in Cilicia to Üçkilise (Echmiadzin), which was the territory of the Karakoyunlu State. Since 1443, the village of Üçkilise and its environs were taken from the Muslim Turks by the Armenian Gregorian Church on

28 Şöhret Mustafayev, "XVIII-XX. Yüzyıllarda Tarihi Azerbaycan Toprağı-İrevan Hanlığının Arazisine Ermenilerin Göç Ettirilme Politikası", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 31, no. 91, (2015), 71.

29 Neşvân b. Sa'îd el-Himyârî, *Mülûkü Himyer ve Akyâli'l-Yemen ve Hulâsatü's-Sireti'l-Câmi'a li-'A-câibi Ahbâri'l-Mülûki'l-Tebâbi'a*, (Beyrut: Dâru'l-avde, 1978), 114-115; See also Süleyman Aliyarlı, *Azerbaycan Tarihi Üzre Kaynaklar*, (Bakü: Çıraq Neşriyatı, 2007), 57.

30 Yagub Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, (Bakü: Azerbaycan Milli İlimler Akademisi Yayınları, 2019), 12, 193.



various occasions, and over time the Armenian population increased in this geography. According to historian Yagub Mahmudov, in a document dated 1687 and kept in Matenadaran\*, it is written as follows: “We Armenians either buy the lands belonging to Azerbaijani Turks, take them as a gift or seize them by force”. After the XVIII century, Üçkilise was included within the borders of the Revan Khanate. This is how the land ownership of the Armenian Church and feudal Armenian lords was formed in the XVth and XVIIIth centuries.<sup>31</sup>

In the following historical process, Tsarist Russia systematically moved Armenian families from Iran and Anatolia to the South Caucasus region, resulting in a permanent population shift in favor of Armenians. This process will be discussed under the following three subheadings:

#### a. Transformation of the Revan Khanate into an Armenian province

The name of the city of Revan, which is now called Yerevan, is mentioned as Irevan or Irivan in medieval written sources and archival documents.<sup>32</sup> There is information in historical sources that the city of Revan was a geography inhabited by Turks starting from the VIII-VII. centuries BC. In the travelogues written by the travelers who visited the region, it is seen that the city of Revan is a part of Azerbaijan and that the population of the region consists of Muslim Turks. For example, Evliya Çelebi, who was in Revan in 1647, wrote:

*“In 1509, the Safavid Shah Ismail ordered his loyal vizier Revan Gulu Khan to build a fortress on the eastern bank of the Zengi River. Revan Gulu Khan fulfilled Shah Ismail’s order and built this castle in 7 years and named it Revan. This castle is made of brick and is a strong castle. There are about 2600 houses and many mosques belonging to Muslim Turks in the city of Revan”*.<sup>33</sup>

\* The Mashtots Matenadaran Institute or simply Matenadaran. It is an archive of ancient Armenian manuscripts in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. It contains approximately 17,000 handwritings and roughly 300,000 archival documents. Since 1962, it has been named after St. Mesrop Mashtots, the creator of the Armenian alphabet. Since 1997, it has been on the list of UNESCO’s Memory of the World Program.

31 Mahmudov, İrevan Hanlığı, 40; İrade Memmedova, “İrevan Hanlığı’nın Nüfusu”, *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi*, 4, no. 11, (2017), 28; Şöhret Mustafayev, “Ermenilerin Göç Ettirilme Politikası”, 72-73.

32 Nazim Mustafa, *İrevan Şehri (Türk İslam Varlığı Nasıl Yok Edildi)*, (Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2015), 6.

33 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname (Azerbaycan Tarihine Ait Seçmeler)*, (Bakü: Azerbaycan Devlet Neşriyatı, 1997), 50, 54-55.

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The French traveler Jan Sharden, who was in the region in 1673, wrote in his work that there were about 800 houses belonging to Muslim Turks, a mosque named Div Sultan, numerous baths and caravanserais in Revan, and that only the Turkish population, who were Safavid subjects, lived in the city.<sup>34</sup>

Historical sources mention about 15 mosques and only two Armenian churches (Pogos-Petros and Katogke churches) in Revan.<sup>35</sup> According to historian Nazim Mustafa, quoted by Armenian writer Yervand Shahaziz in his work “Ancient Yerevan”, Shahaziz, confirming the information given by Jan Sharden, writes as follows: “*Armenians had only shops there. They shopped during the day and in the evening they closed their shops and went home*”.<sup>36</sup>

This proves that the majority of Revan’s population at that time consisted of Muslim Turks.

According to the Russian source titled “Collection of Documents”, Israel Ori arrived at the palace of Peter I on July 25, 1701 and presented a report to the Tsar Peter I on ways to capture the Revan fortress. According to the report, the Armenians were in possession of gunpowder and other military ammunition stores in the city. Israel Ori stated that there were more than 300 Armenians living in the city and that if they cooperated with the Armenians, they would open the gate of the fortress to the soldiers and thus capture the city with a sudden attack.<sup>37</sup>

Until the XIXth century, local Muslim Turks always played the leading role in this geography, both as sovereigns and subjects. However, from the beginning of the XIXth century, in parallel with the invasion attempts of Tsarist Russia, Armenians began to arrive in the said geography and forcibly expel Muslim Turks from their homeland. There is no historical evidence that the Turkish population in present-day Armenia expelled Armenians from their villages and occupied their homeland. However, there is ample evidence of the Armenian population living in many villages with Turkish names. This fact is more than enough evidence to determine who is indigenous and who came later. Based

34 Jan Şarden, *Paristen İsfahana Seyahet*, translated by Vagif Aslanov, (Bakü: Elim Neşriyyatı, 1994), 17.

35 Nazim Mustafa, *İrevan Şehri*, 15.

36 Nazim Mustafa, *İrevan Şehri*, 23: Also see Memmedova, “İrevan Hanlığı’nın Nüfusu”, 29-31.

37 *Armyano-Russkiye Otnoşeniya v Pervoy Treti XVIII veka (Sbornik Dokumentov)*, Tom II, (Erevan: Ermenistan SSCB Bilimler Akademisi Yay, 1964), 213.

on archival and historical sources from 1590, researchers estimate that 51,831 (67.5%) Muslim Turks lived in the city of Revan.<sup>38</sup>

The Safavid State officially consisted of thirteen provinces called Beylerbeyliks. One of these provinces was the Chukursed Principality, centered in the city of Revan. The Chukursed principality was ruled by the chiefs of the Turkish tribes (Ustajlu, Rumlu and Qajar) appointed by the Safavids. The first ruler of the Chukursed Principality was Badr Khan Ustajlu from 1538, followed by Shah Kulu Sultan Ustajlu and Muhammad Khan Tokmak Ustajlu. The city of Revan's owners constantly changed during the wars between the Ottomans and the Safavids and Revan remained in the hands of the Safavids with the Treaty of Kasr-ı Shirin signed in 1639. During the long years of peace as a result of the treaty, the city of Revan developed considerably and turned into an appealing region thanks to its fertile lands.<sup>39</sup>

During this period, there was an increase in the number of Armenians coming to Revan from neighboring countries. Even before the Treaty of Kasr-i Shirin, Emir Gune Khan Qajar, who ruled the Chukursed Principality during the reign of the Safavid Shah, Shah Abbas I (1571-1629), was known for his just rule without discriminating between the Christian and Muslim populations. Emir Gune Khan did not restrict the activities of the Armenian clergy, who had arrived in Revan from Cilicia in 1441 and sought refuge in the monastery of Echmiadzin (Üçkilise). Since then, the Echmiadzin has remained the religious capital of all Armenians.<sup>40</sup>

After the Ottoman Empire conquered the region, it conducted a census in 1728 and created a detailed population register (mufassal defter). According to the census, 43,878 (61.73%) of the 71,077 people living in the region were Muslim Turks and 27,199 (38.26%) were Armenians. In the city of Revan alone, the total population was 3,385. Of this population, 2,156 (63.69%) were Turks and 1,229 (36.31%) were Armenians.<sup>41</sup>

38 Fuad Aliyev and Urfan Hasanov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, (Bakü: Şark-Garb Yayınevi, 2007), 6, 11; Şöhret Mustafayev, "Ermenilerin Göç Ettirilme Politikası", 72-73; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, (1905-1920) The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15.

39 Fuad Aliyev and Urfan Hasanov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 38; Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 19; Nazim Mustafa, *İrevan Şehri*, 33.

40 Fuad Aliyev and Urfan Hasanov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 37; Şöhret Mustafayev, "Ermenilerin Göç Ettirilme Politikası", 72; Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 18, 20; Nazim Mustafa, *İrevan Şehri*, 39-40, 41.

41 Raif İvecan, "Revan Livası Yerleşim ve Nüfus Yapısı (1724-1730)", *Tarih Dergisi*, 50, (2012), 133-134, 137-138. Also see Ziya Bünyadov-Hüsameddin Memmedov, *İrevan Eyaletinin İcmal Defteri*, (Bakü: Elm, 1996). 14.

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After the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, the Revan Khanate became one of about 20 khanates formed in the territory of North Azerbaijan.<sup>42</sup> Thus, with the establishment of the independent Revan Khanate within the borders of the Chukursed Principality, new pages were opened in the history of the region.

The Tsarist armies were not successful in their attacks on the Revan fortress in 1804 and 1808. However, in 1827, General Paskevich prepared a third attack and captured the fortress thanks to the secret support of the Armenians living in the city, burned more than 420 villages in the region and massacred tens of thousands of Turkish population.<sup>43</sup> On February 10, 1828, as a result of the Turkmenchay Treaty with the Qajar Empire, the Chukursed Principality, including the Revan fortress, was annexed by Tsarist Russia.<sup>44</sup>

As a result of the two Russo-Qajar (Russo-Persian) wars in the early 19th century, Tsarist Russia occupied 11 Azerbaijani khanates in the region and turned them into its own states.<sup>45</sup> On 21 March 1828, according to the edict No. 1888 signed by Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855), the khanates of Revan and Nakhchivan were abolished, and the Armenian province (Armianskaia Oblast) was established, and this situation continued until 1918.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, for the first time in the Caucasus, the physical-geographical definition of Armenia was legally established. It is quite significant that the region in question was called the Armenian Province, not Armenia. Of the 1,111 villages included in the newly created Armenian province, only 62 were inhabited by Armenians. These were Armenians who had moved to the region until 1828. As a result, the foundations of a Christian Armenian State, which acted as a buffer on the border line between Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire, were laid. At the same time, a new source of tension was created in the South Caucasus. In a short time, upon the request of Tsarist bureaucrats and Armenians, hundreds of thousands of Armenian families from Persia and Anatolia were resettled in the region in order to Armenianize the newly established Armenian province.<sup>47</sup>

42 Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 27.

43 Kemal Beydilli, "1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşında Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler", *Belgeler*, 13, no. 17, (1993), 369.

44 *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiyskoy Imperii*, c. 3, (St. Petersburg, 1830), 126.

45 Rauf Guseynzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 279-280.

46 *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov*, c. 3, 272-273; (See., Beydilli, "Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler", 366.)

47 Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 11-12, 235, 255, 366; Nazim Mustafa, *İrevan Şehri*, 71-72; Atahan Paşayev, *XIX-XX. Asırlarda Ermenilerin Azerbaycan Halkına Karşı Arazi İddiaları, Soykırımları ve Deportasyonları (Arşiv Sened ve Materialları Esasında)*, (Bakü: Çarşıoğlu 2011), 38.

Before the invasion of Tsarist Russia, the general population of the region was 107,224 people. Of this population, 76.24% were Muslim Turks and 23.45% were Armenians. After the Russo-Qajar (Russo-Persian) War of 1826-1828 and the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-1829, the mass resettlement of Armenians from Iran and Anatolia rapidly changed the ethnic structure of the region. According to the census conducted in Revan between 1829-1832, 1,715 people (366 families) from Iran and 9,748 people (2,437 families) from Anatolia were settled in the city. As a result, the number of Armenians in Revan increased and reached 11,463 people. This policy implemented by Tsarist Russia continued rapidly in the following years.<sup>48</sup>

The Tsarist Government abolished the Armenian Province with a law issued on 10 April 1840 and created the Revan and Nakhchivan districts.<sup>49</sup> On 9 June 1849, with the decrees of Tsar Nicholas I numbered 23303, 23304 and 23305, the Yerevan Guberniia\* was established within the borders of the former Armenian Province and Alexandropol (Gyumri) province.<sup>50</sup>

Despite all these wars, the Turkish population in Yerevan Guberniia managed to maintain its presence in the region, even though it decreased. According to the census conducted in 1917, despite more than 100 years of genocide and forced deportations, the Turkish population was 373,582 (33.35%). The Armenian population reached 669,871 (59.8%).<sup>51</sup>

### **b. The Resettlement of Armenians Displaced from Iranian Geography**

After the Tsarist armies occupied the provinces of Pambak on the northern border of the Revan Khanate in 1801 and Shuregel in 1804, the process of mass migration of Azerbaijani Turks from the region and the settlement of Armenians in the region began. After the Russo-Qajar wars of 1804-1813, 1826-1828 and the Russo-Ottoman wars of 1828-1829, the rise of Tsarist Russia in the region and the mass resettlement of Armenians in the regions of Revan and Karabakh as well as the entire South Caucasus continued to increase with each passing year.<sup>52</sup>

48 Fuad Aliyev and Urfan Hasanov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 15-16.

49 Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 12, 271; Fuad Aliyev and Urfan Hasanov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 17; Rauf Guseynzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 280.

\* The administrative department that existed in Russia between 1708 and 1929. The guberniia system was first introduced by Peter I.

50 *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Possiyskoy İmperii*, c. 24, (St. Petersburg, 1830), 311-312.

51 Fuad Aliyev ve Urfan Hasanov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 17.

52 Nazim Mustafa, *İrevan Şehri*, 25; Fuad Aliyev ve Urfan Hasanov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 15.

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The Russian author N. Shavrov comments on Tsarist Russia's resettlement of Armenians in the region as follows:

*“We began our activity in the Caucasus by settling foreign peoples, not the Russian population. From 1828 to 1830, two years after the end of the 1826-1828 war, we settled 126,000 Armenian families in the South Caucasus, 40,000 from Persia and 84,000 from Anatolia. We established villages in the provinces of Tbilisi, Elizavetpol (Ganje) and Revan, where Armenians had never lived. We gave them the best lands and various privileges. In addition to the 124,000 officially settled Armenian families, there were also many unofficially settled Armenians. In total, it should be noted that more than 200,000 Armenian families were settled in the South Caucasus”.*<sup>53</sup>

Article 15 of the Turkmenchai Treaty signed between Tsarist Russia and the Qajar Monarchy on 10 February 1828 stipulates that the Armenians living in the Iranian geography came under the protection of the Tsar regime. According to the treaty, Armenians were exempted from customs and other taxes without any hindrance from the Qajar Monarchy. They were also given a one-year deadline for the transportation or sale of movable property and a five-year deadline for the sale or disposal of immovable property to leave Iranian territory.<sup>54</sup>

The project for the resettlement of Armenians in the South Caucasus was actually prepared in 1827 in the diplomatic office for the South Caucasus region, headed by the tsarist regime's ambassador to Tehran, A. S. Griboyedov. Griboyedov took an active part in the resettlement of Armenians living under the Qajar state in the newly occupied lands of North Azerbaijan.<sup>55</sup> For this project, General Paskevich wrote to St. Petersburg on 11 May 1827, requesting Colonel Lazarev (Gazaros Lazaryan), an influential figure among Armenians, to assist him.<sup>56</sup>

On 14 February 1828, immediately after the Treaty of Turkmenchai, Lazarev informed Paskevich in a letter: *“The Armenians did their best for our victory*

53 N. N. Şavrov, *Novaya Ugroza Russkomu Delu v Zakavkaze: Predstoyaşaya Rasprodaja Mugani İno-rodsam*, (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Redaksii Periodyçeskikh İzdaniy Ministerstva Finansov, 1911), 1, 58-59.

54 *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov*, c. 3, 130.

55 Enikolopov İ. K. *Griboedov i Vostok*, (Erevan 1954), 129; See. Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 256-259.

56 Sergem Glinkoyu, *Opisanie Pereseleniya Arмян Adderbidjanskikh v Predeli Rosii*, (Moskva: v Tipografii Lazarevikh İnstituta Vostoçnikh Yazıkov, 1831), 97-107; See Beydilli, “Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler”, 370-372.

*in wartime and now they want to leave their homeland and move to the newly annexed lands of the tsarist state”.*<sup>57</sup>

Ivan Chopin\* conducted a census of Armenians settled in the South Caucasus between 1829 and 1832. According to Chopin’s statistics, before the arrival of the Armenians, the population of Revan was 164,450 people, including 31,201 families. Of this population, 81,749 (51.53%) were Muslim Turks (16,078 families) and 25,151 (14.19%) were Armenians (4,428 families).<sup>58</sup>

After the Treaty of Turkmenchai in 1828, 35,560 Armenians, including 6,946 families, migrated from Iran to the region defined as the Armenian Province.<sup>59</sup>

Russian author Shavrov writes about these facts as follows: “*After the end of the Ottoman-Russian war of 1828-1829, we moved more than 84,000 Armenian families from Anatolia and more than 40,000 from Iran to the regions of Karabakh, Ganje, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Borchaly, Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki, where not a single Armenian lived. We settled Armenians in the best places and on fertile lands. More than 2,180,000 acres of fertile land were allocated for their comfortable living, and for this purpose private property worth 2 million manats was purchased from Muslims*”.<sup>60</sup>

Another Russian author Velichko provides the following information on the subject:

*“After the Treaty of Turkmenchai, Armenian Colonel Lazarev, under General Paskevich, was sent to Tabriz to bring about 40,000 Armenian families to the South Caucasus. The Patriarch of Echmiadzin also*

57 AKTI, *Sobranniye Kafkazskoyu Arkheografičeskoyu Komissieyu, Arkhiv Glavnago Upravleniya Namestnika Kafkazskago*, Tom VII, (Tiflis: v Tipografii Glavnago Upravleniya Namestnika Kafkazskago, 1878), 595.

\* Chopin, an ethnographer and historian of the Caucasus, was born in France in 1798. He came to Russia in 1820 and served for a long time in the tsarist administration in the Caucasus. In 1829, by order of General Paskevich, the governor-general of the Caucasus, he prepared a description of the newly annexed South Caucasus territories. In 1829-1832, he made a detailed study on Yerevan and Nakhchivan khanates, which were annexed to Tsarist Russia in accordance with the 1828 Turkmenchai Treaty and called the Armenian region. In 1830 he became an advisor to the Armenian regional government. In 1833 he became the chairman of the department of revenue and state-owned property of the Armenian Oblast, and after that he became a special officer of the chief administrator. See. A. Kupalov, “Şopen İvan İvanoviç”, *Russkiy Biografičeskiy Slovar*, (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Glavnago Upravleniya Udelov, 1911), s. 366.

58 İ. Şopen, *İstoričeskiy Pamyatnik Sostayaniya Armyanskoy-Oblasti v Epokhu Yeya Prisoedineniya k Rossiyskoy-Imperii*, (St. Petersburg: 1852), 525, 539-540.

59 Paşayev, *Ermenilerin Azerbaycan Halkına Karşı Arazi İddiaları*, 38-40, 42.

60 Şavrov, *Novaya Ugroza Russkomu Delu v Zakavkaze*, 59.

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*participated in this activity and ordered the Armenian priests under the Qajar State to encourage the population to move to the South Caucasus. Then, after the Treaty of Edirne, we welcomed more than 10,000 Armenian families from Anatolia. The Patriarch Karapet of Erzurum alone led 70,000 Armenian families to move to the Caucasus. Since then, the migration of Armenians from Anatolia and Persia to the newly annexed South Caucasus began with an almost imperceptible trickle and has continued continuously with a rapid flow in the last few years”.*<sup>61</sup>

On 24 December 1829, Colonel Lazarev, in his final report to General Paskevich, presented information on the results of the relocation of Armenians in a brief period of three and a half months, starting on 26 February 1828 and ending on 11 June 1829. For these actions, 16,000 gold and 400 silver rubles\* were spent from the Tsarist State Treasury. Another 1,500 Armenian families who wanted to move remained in Iran because Colonel Lazarev could not find time and resources for them.<sup>62</sup>

Tsarist Russia's forcible expulsion of Azerbaijani Turks from their lands and resettlement of Armenians in the South Caucasus was a preparatory stage for the establishment of Armenia in the future. The historical evidence we have mentioned is clear evidence that Armenians were settled in regions where they lived in small numbers or did not live at all. It is historically proven that before the Treaty of Turkmenchai, the Armenian population in the South Caucasus was small. Tsarist patronage and policy towards Armenians continued until the beginning of the 20th century. From 1896 to 1908 alone (in 13 years), 400,000 Armenian families were resettled in the South Caucasus.<sup>63</sup>

Shavrov describes this situation as follows:

*“By 1897, the number of new arrivals in the region was no longer 10,000, as in 1894, but about 90,000. In 1896, General Sheremet'ev, in his report on Armenians living in the Caucasus, put their number at 900,000. In 1908, this number reached 1.3 million. During this period the number of Armenians increased by more than 400,000. Of the 1.3*

61 V. L. Veličko, *Kavkaz. Russkoye Delo i Mejduplemennyye Voprosy*, (Bakü: Elim Yayinevi, 1990), 41.

\* Currency of the Tsarist State.

62 Glinkoyu, *Opisanie Pereseleniya Armanyan*, 114-116, 131; See Memmedova, “İrevan Hanlığı'nın Nüfusu”, 42-43; Beydilli, “Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler”, 376, 377-382.

63 Rauf Guseynzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 309-311; Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 11, 263, 272, 366; Memmedova, “İrevan Hanlığı'nın Nüfusu”, 35, 49.



*million Armenians currently living in the Caucasus, 1 million are not the autochthonous population of the Caucasus. We moved them here.*"<sup>64</sup>

### c. Resettlement of Armenians Displaced from Anatolia

In 1828-1829, Tsarist Russia attacked the Ottoman Empire from the east and occupied Kars, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe Ardahan, Beyazit, Erzurum, Mush, Oltun and Bayburd in a short time. Armenians living in Eastern Anatolia contributed greatly to the rapid advance of the Tsarist armies towards the interior of Anatolia. At the beginning of the war, 2,800 volunteer infantry and cavalry detachments were formed from Armenians. Since Armenian troops often acted in front of the Tsarist troops, General Paskevich assigned Armenian commanders to the captured regions. The appointed commanders conducted inhuman acts against the Muslim inhabitants of the region.<sup>65</sup>

On 2 September 1829, the Treaty of Edirne signed between the Ottomans and the Tsarists also had a negative impact on the Azerbaijani Turks living in the Caucasus. According to Article 13 of the Treaty, Armenians were granted the right to migrate to the South Caucasus with their movable property within a period of 18 months under the auspices of the Tsarist State.<sup>66</sup> The withdrawal of the Tsarist armies from Eastern Anatolia after the agreement put Armenians who had betrayed the Ottoman Empire in a desperate situation. In order to save the Armenians from this situation, the Tsarist authorities decided to settle them in the Caucasus, which they had recently occupied. In this case, the numerical majority of Armenians was ensured in the Caucasus, which was the Ottoman border. For this purpose, on 10 October 1829, General Paskevich wrote the following in a report to Tsar Nicholas I:

*"2,000 Armenians fought in the ranks of our soldiers in Beyazit, the majority of the Christian population celebrated our religious holiday in Erzurum, a volunteer battalion consisting of 800 Armenians was organized in Kars. Currently, a threat hangs over their families of 10,000 people. Please turn your attention to these unfortunate victims. Do not allow the Ottomans to take revenge on them for the love they showed to Russia. Therefore, I dare to request Your Majesty's permission to*

64 Şavrov, *Novaya Ugroza Russkomu Delu v Zakavkaze*, 60.

65 Beydilli, "Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler", 383-393; See Vagif Arzumanlı ve Nazim Mustafa, *Tarihin Kara Sahifaları, Deportasiya. Soykırım. Gaçkınlık*, (Bakü, Gartal Yayınevi, 1998), 28.

66 *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Possiyskoy Imperii*, c. 4, (St. Petersburg, 1830), 628.

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*settle these families in the provinces of Georgia and Armenia. I think an average of 50 silver rubles would be enough for each relocated family.*"<sup>67</sup>

On 18 November 1829, with the approval of Tsar Nicholas I, General Paskevich set in motion a special committee to oversee the affairs of the Armenian families to be relocated and established 12-point rules for the committee's activities. He also stated in a letter to the governor of Georgia on 3 December 1829 that he had given orders for the army commanders to assist Armenian families who wanted to move. Many Armenian families, who were in good financial condition, took advantage of this opportunity, quickly completed their preparations and set off. The Armenians who were relocated from Kars and its surroundings were resettled in the villages evacuated by Muslim Turks in the Caucasus due to the climatic conditions of the region they lived in. General Pankratyev informed General Paskevich that 95 families were given permission to live in and around the Lori stream and General Bereman informed General Paskevich that 400 families from Kars were given permission to live in Gyumri.<sup>68</sup>

General Paskevich's instructions were meticulously implemented. In addition to the newly created Armenian province (the Khanate of Revan and its surroundings), Armenians were also resettled in the Ganjabasar and Karabakh regions of Azerbaijan. Moreover, on 22 January 1830, General Paskevich informed the Tsarist War Minister Chernyshev in a telegram that 2,500 Armenian families who had migrated from Kars were being resettled in villages and cities evacuated from the Turks.<sup>69</sup>

The Ottoman government could not remain indifferent to the mass resettlement of Armenians along the border under the auspices of the Tsarist military authorities. Therefore, in order to prevent this project, Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839) issued a general amnesty for Armenians on 17 February 1830. In the general amnesty, a decision was taken to forgive the betrayal of the state and the atrocities committed against the civilian Muslim population during the Russian aggression and not to hold them accountable. However, despite these amnesties, the Catholicos of the Armenians of Erzurum was aware of the

67 *AKTI*, VII/830.

68 *AKTI*, VII/831-832; Ayrıca bkz. Vagif Arzumanlı ve Nazim Mustafa, *Tarihin Kara Sahifaları*, 29-31.

69 Recep Karacakaya, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Rus İlişkileri (1841-1898)*, I. Cilt (Ankara, Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yay. 2006), 12-13; *AKTI*, VII/832-833; Y. K. Sarkisyan, *Politika Osmanskogo Pravitelstva v Zapadnoy Armenii i Derjavi v Posledney Çetverti XIX i Naçale XX vv.* (Erevan: 1972), 64-65.

severity of the war crimes they had committed. After the Russians retreated, he expressed that they would not give up their intention to move because they were sure that they would one day be held accountable to the Ottoman Empire, albeit late.<sup>70</sup>

As can be seen, despite the massacres committed by Armenians in Eastern Anatolia during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828-1829, which was the first mass bloodshed between two peoples who had lived side by side for centuries, the Ottoman Empire showed the same tolerance to Armenians as it had shown to the Christian peoples living in the country, and did not adopt a policy of hatred towards them. In fact, the Ottoman Government ignored the massacre of tens of thousands of Muslim civilians and described this painful event as a “road accident” that occurred during the war. Therefore, the idea that Armenians were forcibly expelled from the Ottoman geography is nothing but a big lie. On the contrary, the Ottoman government tried to prevent Armenians from migrating.<sup>71</sup>

On 29 February 1829, General Paskevich, seeing that the deadline for emigration (18 months) was about to expire, sent a letter in Turkish and Russian to the governors of Erzurum and Kars, instructing the Armenian religious leaders Archimandrite Tatos, Mughdisi Karapetyan, and Aghajan Karapetyan, Ter-Hovanes Matevosov, Aghajan Osipov, and Hakop Hanakov to make some efforts to sell the properties, fields, etc. left by the Armenians.<sup>72</sup>

The table below shows the number of Armenian families displaced from Anatolia until 3 April 1831 and the names of the places of resettlement.<sup>73</sup>

70 Beydilli, “Doğu Anadolu’dan Rusya’ya Göçürülen Ermeniler”, ٣٨٦; See Vagif Arzumanlı and Nazim Mustafa, *Tarihin Kara Sahifaları*, 31; Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 264-265.

71 Sertçelik, *Rus ve Ermeni Kaynakları*, 53.

72 Beydilli, “Doğu Anadolu’dan Rusya’ya Göçürülen Ermeniler”, 395, 398; Vagif Arzumanlı and Nazim Mustafa, *Tarihin Kara Sahifaları*, 32.

73 *AKTI*, VII/847; See Vagif Arzumanlı and Nazim Mustafa, *Tarihin Kara Sahifaları*, 32-33.

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Province of emigration	Number of migrated families	Places of resettlement
Erzurum	7,298	5,000 families in and around Akhaltsikhe
Ardahan	67	1,050 families in and around Borchaly and Zalga 1,305 families in and around Pambak and Shorayel
Kars	2,264	2,264 families in and around Pambak and Shorayel
Kars and its surroundings	200	200 families in and around Armenian Province and Talin
Beyazit	4,215	In and around Armenian Province – Gokcha lake
Total	<b>14,044 families</b>	

It is a historical fact that more than 14,000 Armenian families moved from Anatolia to the South Caucasus. Assuming an average of six people per family, it can be estimated that more than 84,000 Armenians were settled in the South Caucasus. However, General W. Monteith and General Paskevich put the number of resettled Armenians at more than 90,000,<sup>74</sup> while Armenian historians Shahatunyan and Tavakalyan put the number at 100,000.<sup>75</sup>

According to the information provided by Kemal Beydilli based on official Ottoman records, 41,245 people from 8,249 families originating from the Iranian region and 100,000 Armenians from 20,000 families from Eastern Anatolia were relocated to the South Caucasus under the protection of Tsarist Russian forces.<sup>76</sup>

After the Treaty of Edirne, more than 106,000 Armenians consulted General Paskevich to settle in Akhaltsikhe. The first large influx of migrants was to Akhaltsikhe, and the second to the Borchaly region in the territory of present-day Georgia, where Azerbaijani Turks lived. General Paskevich resettled

74 W. Monteith, *Kars and Erzeroum: with the Campaign of Prince Paskiewitch in 1828 and 1829*, (London: Printed by Spottiswoode and Co. New Street Square, 1856), 300; P. F. Stepanov, "Zametka o Karsskoy Oblasti", *İzvestiya Kafkazskago Otdela İmperatorskago Russkago Geografiçeskago Obşestva*, Tom VII, (Tiflis: 1882-1883), 181; Lagov, *Armeniya*, 18; Şavrov, *Novaya Ugroza Russkomu Delu v Zakavkaze*, 60.

A. A. Şakhatunyan, *Administrativniy Peredel Zakavkazskago Kraya*, (Tiflis: Tipografiya Aşkhatavor, 1918), 168-169; See, Beydilli, "Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler", 407-408.

76 Beydilli, "Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler", 410. (See Annex 4)

100,000 Armenians who had migrated from Erzurum in Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe. In 1832, the majority of the population of Akhaltsikhe was now Armenians.<sup>77</sup>

For his role in the relocation of the Armenians of Erzurum, Archbishop Karapet was awarded the Order of St. Anna by the Tsarist Government on 20 October 1830. Afterwards, during his visit to Akhaltsikhe in 1837, Tsar Nicholas I personally met with Karapet and expressed his gratitude for his services. He also signed a decree on 24 April 1831 to allocate 380,000 silver rubles from the treasury to meet the economic needs of the Armenians on the condition that they would be returned without interest for 6 years.<sup>78</sup>

According to the census conducted by Ivan Chopin in 1830, 21,666 Armenians, including 3,682 families, moved from Anatolia to the region defined as the Armenian Province.<sup>79</sup>

After the Russo-Qajar (Russo-Persian) War of 1826-1828 and the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-1829, 57,226 Armenians, including 10,628 families, were resettled from Iran and Anatolia in the present-day city of Yerevan, which was defined as the Armenian Province. Russian sources state that officially 124,000 and unofficially 200,000 Armenians were resettled.<sup>80</sup>

During the First World War, about half a million Armenians living under Ottoman rule were resettled either in the South Caucasus region or in other provinces of Tsarist Russia. In June 1916, 160,000 Armenians were relocated to the South Caucasus, and in 1917, more than 300,000 Armenians were relocated to the South Caucasus with the retreating Tsarist armies from Anatolia. According to Armenian sources, approximately 350,000 Armenians migrated to the South Caucasus in 1914-1916. Most of the Armenian population was settled in Yerevan Province.<sup>81</sup>

From the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the number of Armenians in the South Caucasus increased as follows: 51,530 (9.37%) Armenians out of a total population of 550,000 in 1822-1826, 159,086 (21%)

77 Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 266.

78 Vagif Arzumanlı-Nazim Mustafa, *Tarihin Kara Sahifaları*, 33.

79 Şopen, *İstoričeskiy Pamyatnik Sostayaniya Armyanskoy Oblasti*, 539-540; See Vagif Arzumanlı and Nazim Mustafa, *Tarihin Kara Sahifaları*, 33; Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 266.

80 Şavrov, *Novaya Ugroza Russkomu Delu v Zakavkaze*, 59; See Vagif Arzumanlı and Nazim Mustafa, *Tarihin Kara Sahifaları*, 16, 35-36; Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 270-271.

81 *İstoriya Armyanskogo Naroda*, (Erevan: Erivan Üniversitesi Yay.1980), 214; Rauf Guseynzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 316.

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Armenians out of a total population of 750,000 in 1840, 334,242 (19.5%)  
Armenians out of a total population of 1,779,699 in 1873, 690,635 (32.4%)  
Armenians out of a total population of 2,186,500 in 1886, 784,347 (29.8%)  
Armenians out of a total population of 2,620,805 in 1897, and 1,208,615 (38.8%)  
Armenians out of the total population of 3,756,696 in 1916. In parallel with the massive increase in the number of Armenians, in 1849, the Armenian region was expanded into Azerbaijan and became the Yerevan Province of the Tsarist State. After the collapse of Tsarist Russia in 1917, the Armenian Ararat Republic was established on 28 May 1918 on a geographical area of approximately 9,500 square kilometres, including the city of Yerevan, with the support of the Imperialist powers.<sup>82</sup>

On 28 May 1918, when the Armenian Ararat Republic was established in Yerevan Province, it was unclear which city would be the capital. On 29 May 1918, the Azerbaijani Government of the time announced that it had given away the city of Yerevan to the Dashnak Government to make it the capital in order to put an end to the massacres. Although members of the Muslim Council of the city of Yerevan Mir Hidayet Seyidov Bagher Rizayev and Neriman Bey Nerimanbeyov protested against this decision, the Armenians' demand was fulfilled.<sup>83</sup>

After the establishment of the Armenian Ararat Republic, the policy of "Armenia without Turks" was rapidly implemented. As a result of the mass killings against the Muslim Turkish population, while 373,582 Turks lived in Yerevan Province in 1916, this number dropped to less than 20,000 by the end of 1920. During this period, approximately 565,000 of the 575,000 Turkish population living in the region were massacred or forced to migrate.<sup>84</sup>

Founded in 1918, the Armenian Ararat Republic became the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1920 as part of the USSR. In 1991, the present-day Republic of Armenia was established. Thus, the Yerevan Province, which was established a hundred years ago, became today's Republic of Armenia with a surface area of 29,800 square kilometres.<sup>85</sup>

The settlement of Armenians in the region continued in the following years. Between 1921 and 1936, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ArSSR)

82 Rauf Guseynzade, *Kafkaz i Armyane*, 310-312.

83 Azərbaycan Cumhuriyeti Devlet Arşivi (ACDA), fon. 970, liste 1, dosya 1, 51-54.

84 *Ermenistan Azərbaycanlılarının Tarihi Coğrafiyası*, (Bakü: Genclik Neşriyatı, 1995), 35.

85 Abdulla Mustafayev, *Ermenistanın Soykurum ve Deportasiya Siyasətində Nahçıvan*, (Bakü: ADPU Matbaası, 2013), 87.

government, with the approval of Moscow, relocated 42,000 Armenians from different countries of the world to Armenia. This process accelerated even more after the end of the Second World War. In November 1945, with the consent of the USSR Government, a special committee was established within the Armenian Government for the relocation of Armenians living in different parts of the world to the ArSSR and in 1946-1948, more than 100,000 Armenians from all over the world moved to the ArSSR. The policy of relocating Armenians living outside Armenia to Armenia continued in the following years.<sup>86</sup>

The information provided by the sources clearly reveals that almost all Armenians were relocated from Iran and Anatolia, as well as Syria, Greece, Lebanon, Bulgaria and Romania, and settled in the Caucasus on various occasions over the last three centuries.

## CONCLUSION

There is a lot of information in Armenian sources about the emergence of Armenians in the Phrygian region together with the Cimmerians, their migration to the west of Asia Minor (Anatolia) and their long years of living in this geography by making Anatolia their homeland. However, it is an undeniable fact that not only Armenians, but also Turks, along with other peoples, have been living in Anatolia for nearly a thousand years. Although Armenians claim to have had a state in Anatolia, the existence of a long-lasting independent Armenian state that left its mark on the Anatolian geography is not mentioned in historical sources. It is also a fact that they did not have the majority of the population in Anatolia. In addition, although it is known that there are Armenian sources that contribute to Anatolian history, it is impossible to say that the Armenian language is the only influential language in Anatolia. Apart from a few church architectures belonging to Armenians in Anatolia, it cannot be said that there are permanent material and cultural assets that leave a mark on the region. Moreover, considering the level of civilization and culture of the Hittite, Persian, Urartian and Roman states in Anatolia, it is hardly possible to compare Armenians with the peoples living in these states.

In the early 19th century, Tsarist Russia, which annexed the South Caucasus to itself by winning the wars against the Qajar and Ottoman states and changed the ethnic landscape of the region, created a buffer line consisting of the

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86 Fuad Aliyev-Urfan Hasanov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 22; Mahmudov, *İrevan Hanlığı*, 445.

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Armenian population in the South Caucasus against possible new wars against these states. With this aim, it relocated Christian Armenians en masse from Iran and Anatolia and settled them in the newly occupied regions of Revan, Nakhchivan, Karabakh and the surrounding areas. Thus, a new Armenian community began to emerge on the ethnic map of the South Caucasus from 1820 onwards. In addition, by resettling Armenians in the Caucasus, Tsarist Russia was not only to take precautions against possible attacks on Russian territory or to create a military cordon, but also to ensure that a society that would do what the Russians wanted was ready in the region. Armenians, on the other hand, took advantage of the historical opportunities and served the Tsarist State in the wars against the Qajar and Ottoman States and tried to establish a state for themselves in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, Tsarist Russia's colonial and occupying policy against Azerbaijani Turks in the South Caucasus was in line with the hostile plans of Armenians against the Turkish nation. Armenians were therefore a constant source of tension in the South Caucasus.

Consequently, the occupation of the South Caucasus by Tsarist Russia from the beginning of the 19th century started the tragic days of the Muslim Azerbaijani Turks who had lived in the territory of present-day Armenia for centuries. For the last two centuries, as a result of genocide and deportation policies against the Muslim Turkish population living in this region, the local Turkish population was forcibly removed from these regions or subjected to ethnic cleansing.



Appendix



**Annex 1:** Franz Roubaud's 1893 painting of the Yerevan Fortress siege in 1827 by the Russian forces under leadership of Ivan Paskevich.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capture\\_of\\_Erivan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capture_of_Erivan) (Accessed January, 28 2025).

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**Annex 2:** Russian painter Vladimir Ivanovich Moshkov's painting "Transportation of Armenians from Iran to Azerbaijan (Nakhchivan, Revan, Karabakh)" dated 1828.<sup>88</sup>

88 Заглавная страница, <https://shorturl.at/cYleX> (Accessed January 28, 2025)

III ПРИЛОЖЕНИЕ.

ХРИСТИАНЕ!

По дошедшимъ до меня досповѣрнымъ слухамъ неблагонамѣренныя люди стараются распространить не только пелѣнья и лживыя преданія, но даже вселить страхъ въ просвѣщенныхъ дозволеніе переселившихся въ благословенную Россію, и имѣть ошвернить желаніе сердецъ ихъ.

Քրիստոնեայք,

Լսելի եղև յահանջս իմ, թէ արք չարամիտք ջանան ոչ միայն հրապարակել զուսու և զանպատեհ զրոյցս, այլև սուղ երկիւղ մեծ, որոյ կամին անցանել յորհեալ Ռուսաստան. և զայս օրինակ կամին դարձուցանել զչեղ ՚ի գովելի ցան կութեանէ արաի ձերոյ:

Въ ошвернение сего и по доверенности ко мнѣ Армянскаго народа, по долгу обязанности, возложенной на меня Главнокомандующимъ нашимъ, объявляю вамъ, что великодушный Монархъ Россійскій даетъ желающимъ переселившимся надежное, спокойное и счастливое убѣжище въ Его государствѣ. — Въ Эриванѣ, Нахичеванѣ и Карабахѣ, гдѣ сами изберете, получите вы въ изобиліи хлѣбодородную землю, ошчещи засѣянную, коей дѣлшая только часть обработывалася въ пользу Казны. — Вы освобождаетесь въ продолженіи шестии лѣтъ отъ всякихъ податей и, для переселенія бѣднѣйшимъ изъ

Եւ ես առ ՚ի հերքել զայս ամբ ըստ պարտեացն որովք բեւսուարեալ եմ ՚ի սպարապետէն, և ՚ի հաւատարմուէ ազգին որ ապրս, յայտ առնեմ ձեզ, թէ մեծահոգի ինքնակալն ամ Ռուսաց պարգևէ պնդելի որք ցանկան դաղթել, զապահով զխաղաղ և զերջանիկ տեղի ազատանի ՚ի յընդարձակ կայսերութեան իւրում:

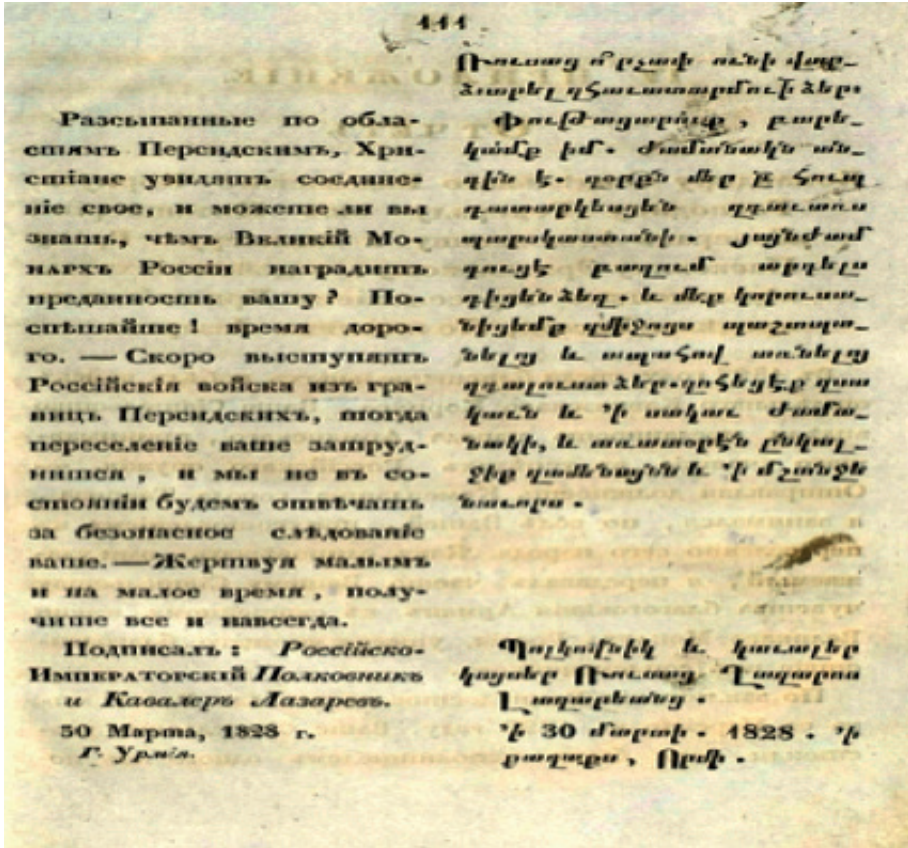
՚ի գուտան Երեւանայ, Նախիջևանայ և Ղարապաղու, զորս դուք ընտրեաջիք, տայի ձեզ լայնատարած և արդասարերկիր, որ արդէն իսկ ըստ մասին սերմանեալ է. և ՚ի պազոյ նորին զտաներորդ մասն միայն տաջիք Տէրութեւ և յընթացս վեց ամաց ազատ լիցիք յամ հարկատուութեւ և որք միանգամ ա-

вась, подана будетеъ по-  
моць. — Ты, кои имѣютеъ  
здѣсь недвижимость, оп-  
равивъ семейства свои,  
могутъ оснавити по се-  
бѣ повѣренныхъ для про-  
дажи оной, срокъ коей  
опредѣленъ по Туркман-  
чайскому прапкшапу до  
пяти лѣтъ; имена оснави-  
вшихся ихъ доснавивших  
мною къ Посланнику или  
Коммисару, при Его Вы-  
сочествѣ Аббасъ Мирзѣ  
пробывающимъ, дабы они,  
яко подданные Великаго  
Государя, были подъ вы-  
сокима Его покровитель-  
ствомъ.—Въ Россіи уви-  
диде вы терпимость вѣръ  
и равенство правъ Рус-  
скаго съ прочими поддан-  
ными Государя, и забуде-  
те всѣ горести, вами

և լի ազատ իցեն 'ի Հէնջ,  
տայի նյ օգնուի շուելոյ :  
Ոչք միանգամ թողու  
սառ զհուննս իւրեանց և  
զանշարժ ինչս, յես առա-  
քելոյ զընտանիս իւրեանց  
կարեն թողուլ սառ զարս  
տմանս 'ի վաճառել զնս մի-  
շէ ցհինգ տմն՝ ըստ սահմա-  
նադրուե արարելոյ 'ի թէ-  
ուիս զաշանց թուրքման-  
այի : Չանուանս և զհա-  
շուեզիրս ընչիցն զորս թող-  
ջիք սառ, առարկելոյ մե-  
րու՛մ գործակալի որ առ  
Ազատմիրոյ շահատայն,  
զի լիցին Ք աշտուպանուք նո-  
րին կայսերական մեծուե, ո-  
րու՛մ լիջիք հպատակք : 'ի  
Ռուսաստան փեսջիք զթոյ-  
լառուս թիւն տմ կրօնից .  
և զհաւասարուի իրուանց  
Ռուսոյ Ք այլոյ հպատակոյ  
կայսերն . սեղ մուսաջիք  
զամ նեղուիս զոր կրեցիք .

терпимыя.—Тамъ найде-  
ше вы новое общество,  
населенное Христіанами,  
и не увидиде болѣе угне-  
тенеіе свайной вѣры! Тамъ  
будете вы жить подъ по-  
кровительствомъ зако-  
новъ и почувствуете бла-  
гошворное ихъ дѣйствіе.—  
Тамъ наконецъ вы улучи-  
дите благосостояніе ва-  
ше, и малыя пожертвова-  
нія, сделанныя вами,  
вознаградятся стократно.  
—Вы оснавите роди-  
ну, любезную для всяка-  
го; но одна мысль о зем-  
лѣ Христіанской должна  
приводить вась въ вос-  
торгъ.

անդ գաջիք զնոր հայրենիք  
բնակեալ 'ի Քրիստոնէից,  
և ոչ ևս տեսջիք զքր կրօ-  
նն մեր 'ի նեղուե . սեղ  
կեցջիք Ք հօրանաւորուք ու-  
րեանց և զգասջիք վաղազոյն  
զբարեբար աղեչուի նոցին .  
հուսկ ազա սեղ վիճակ ձեր  
բարեզոյն լիցի . և փոխա-  
նակ սակաւուն գոր կորուս-  
ջիք, սեղ տայի ձեզ հա-  
րիւրագատիկ Շշմարեա է  
թէ թողուք զելիկեր ծնըն-  
դեան ձերոյ որ սիրելի է  
տմնս . բոց մտածելն թէ  
բնակելոյ էք 'ի Քրիստո-  
նեոց Տէրուե, որորսի աղ-  
զել 'ի ձեզ զմեծ ցնծուի .  
Քրիստոնէացն ճաղա-  
ղեալք 'ի գուսառ արար-  
կոց տեսցեն վերջապէս զան  
ձինս ժողովեալ 'ի մի վայր,  
և զիտէք արդեօք թէ բա-  
րութիւնք մեծ ինքնակա լին



**Annex 3:** Armenian Colonel Lazarev’s appeal in Russian and Armenian languages on Armenians to move from Iran to the South Caucasus as soon as possible. The appeal was made on 30 March 1828 in the city of Urmia.<sup>89</sup>

Table – V

İran'dan göçürülen Ermenilerin genel yekûnû	Hâne	8.249
	Kişi	41.245
Osmanlı resmi kayıtlarına göre Erzurum'dan göçürülen Ermenilerin yekûnû	Hâne	4230
	Kişi	21.150
Toplam olarak Doğu Anadolu'dan göçürülen Ermeniler	Hâne	20.000
	Kişi	100.000

**Annex 4:** Statistics provided by Kemal Beydilli based on Ottoman archives.<sup>90</sup>

89 Sergem Glinkoyu, *Opisanie Pereseleniya Armyan Adderbidjanskikh v Predeli Rosii*, 107-111.

90 Beydilli, “Doğu Anadolu’dan Rusya’ya Göçürülen Ermeniler”, 410.

ERMENİ SİLAHLI ÇETELERİNİN ERİVAN'A BAĞLI BÖLGELER VE  
KÖYLERDE YAPTIKLARI MEZALİM

15/3  
mg

Г. ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЮ СОВЕТА МИНИСТРОВ  
АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ.

16 28  
27

Уполномоченного Веди-Басарского  
района и Маллистана Эриванского  
уезда Магеррама Ахкеев

З А Я В Л Е Н И Е.

По условию заключенного перемирия турки очистили Кавказ, стали покидать и Эриванскую губернию. Положение мусульман стало критическим, так как было ясно, что начинается истребление их армянами. Вскоре после ухода турецких войск, из Эривани для покорения мусульман Эриванской губернии, был двинут мощнейший вооруженный отряд армян под командованием полковника Долуханова. Последний, обратившись к мусульманам с воззванием привлечь их к покорности и обещая, ввести Эриванскую губернию, водворить в ней полный порядок, законность и дружественные отношения с мусульманами.

Доверившись полковнику и обещаниям, провозглашенным им воззванием к мусульманам и, жители Веди-Басарского района, пропустили его с отрядом в село "Давалу".

Полковник Долуханов обещал своим в отношении мусульман не исполнял. Находясь в его отряде никто из Артух с войсковыми частями не вывел мусульманское население в селах: Сейд-Кетанлу, Хараба-Кетанлу и Шаганоб. Жасы этой резни не поддаются описанию; над группами убитых стариков, женщин и детей совершались бесчеловечные глумления; распаривались у убитых животы, выкалывались у них глаза, а иногда трупы сжигались. В эти же селениях были вырезаны и находившиеся там беженцы в несколько сот душ. Вызвались и полковнику Долуханову делегатам было обещано, что бойня эта будет прекращена, но обещание не исполнилось. Продвигавшемуся в сторону Шарура Долуханову организованными силами мусульман было нанесено тяжелое поражение и он вынужден был вновь в порядке отступления занять село "Давалу". В ту же приблизительно пору в селениях: Карахач, Кадилу, Верхний Карахлар, Агасибеклы, Дахна и Шагбулу прибыли армянские отряды, кои называли себя запаша и сасунцами. Черед тем как вырезать жителей означенных селений, отряды эти забрали в плен несколько сот красивых молодых женщин и девушек, кои и сейчас находятся в их руках и подвергаются бесчестиям. По побуду захваченных женщин была отправлена в Эривань делегатка, которая должна была добиться перед парламентом Армении освобождения этих несчастных. Парламент обещал вернуть этих женщин мусульманам, но освобождения не последовало.

По имеющимся у меня сведениям, армяне хотели отправить их в Ново-Волзетский уезд, чтобы там подвергнуть их новым пыткам, глумлениям и насилиям, но этого, за отсутствием сообщения с Ново-Волзетским уездом, не случилось; этому плану помешала выпавшая глубокая зима, занесшая дороги. Горе мусульманам Веди-Басарского района, у коих отняли жен и детей, при одном сообщении, что их жены ежечасно подвергаются бесчестиям со стороны армянской части, неслыханно. Все переносит многострадательная мусульманка Эриванской губернии, но таксо повора она в местности может. Мусульмане Веди-Басарского уезда и англичан освободить захваченных женщин, но хлопоты эти успеха не имели.

После поражения, нанесенного армянам в Шаруре, приблизительно в средних числах января, между воюющими сторонами было через посредство английского генерала Гипона, заключено на определенных условиях перемирие, при чем генерал Гипон тогда же заявил сторонам, что новое открытие враждебных действий, будет сочтено враждебным актом против союзных держав.

Спустя 8-10 дней после сделанного Гипоном заявления, армянская регулярная войска пала на село "Ашар", которое находится на расстоянии 1-1/2 версты от села "Давалу". В этом селе население было захвачено

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по домам, при чем часть запертых в домах не была истреблена, а другая часть успела спастись бегством. После этих Аштарских событий началась бомбардировка броневиком и заводом артиллерии, как села "Аштар", так и других сел: Халиса, Дзатгран, Шираду, Карабах, которые расположены почти в полотно железной дороги. По пути армянские войска начали наступать и на наше село "Бейк-Веди", которое наступление это отразило. Бомбардировка вышеуказанных сел продолжалась шесть дней, она была остановлена английским полковником, ныне генерал-губернатором Нахичевани Даухен, который мною был привезен на место военных действий и видел, как современные бомбардировкой села, так и имущество, ограблены и увезены за их пределы. Тут же Даухен видел и бронированный поезд и пушки, поставленные выше села "Аштар" и направленные против села "Бейк-Веди". Генерал с места военных действий выехал в Эривань, чтобы понудить Правительство Армении известить свои воююки на Давалы.

На следующий день, после отъезда Даухена в Эривань, армяне окружили "Бейк-Веди" и начали бомбардировку и военные действия.

И немедленно об этом сообщил Именующему Нахичеванской мусульманской дружиной Келбали-Алану, который пред'явил ультиматум, вынудил армян прекратить наступление. Армянские же части, прекратив огонь, начали грабить и бегать вышеуказанными селами: Аштар, Халиса и др., при чем все ограбленные вещи видел командир английской роты в Аштару, Гло.

Пославшие меня сюда мусульмане Веди-Басарского района и Маллистана уполномочили меня просить Правительство Азербайджана:

1/ принять решительные и безотлагательные меры перед Правительством Армении о немедленном освобождении задержанных армянских солдатами мусульманских земель во избежание новых на этой почве кровопролитий;

2/ Издать особый указ, в коем объявить, что Веди-Басарский район и Маллистан Эриванского уезда составляют неотъемлемую часть Азербайджана и никому уступлены быть не могут;

3/ Предпринять шаги перед Армянским Правительством о возмещении убытков жителей разоренных сел: Аштар, Халиса, Дзатгран, Шираду, Карабах, Шагабу, Кадилу, Карабах, Верхний-Карабахлар, Ахкиза, Кешин-Даг, Агасибеклю, Хараба-Ветанлу, Саяд-Катанду и Шагаиб.

П р и л о ж е н и я: 1/ Мирский приговор жителей Басарского района 2/ мандат на мое имя за соответствующими подписями и приложениями печати Веди-Басарского мусульманского Национального Комитета.

10 марта 1919 года.

Гор. Баку.

10.3.1919  
**BCA. 930 01. 4-61-1**  
**ADA. 970-1-41**

**Annex 5: Armenian atrocities committed by armed gangs in the regions and villages of Yerevan.<sup>91</sup>**

91 Yusuf Sarnay ed., *Azərbaycan Belçələrində Ermeni Sorunu (1918-1920)*, (Ankara: T. C. Başbakanlık Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Cumhuriyet Arşiv Daire Başkanlığı 2001), 370-371.

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# UNVEILING METSAMOR: NAVIGATING THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AMID NUCLEAR CONCERNS

(METSAMOR'UN SIRLARINI AÇIĞA ÇIKARMAK:  
NÜKLEER TEHDİTLER ARASINDA GÜNEY KAFKASYA'YI ANLAMAK)

Mohammad Reza PASHAYI\*

**Abstract:** *The establishment of the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant (Metsamor) nuclear facility in the Armenian SSR during the Soviet era added a new dimension to the geopolitical landscape. Ostensibly built for the production of nuclear energy, the plant actually caused numerous difficulties over the course of eight years.*

*Metsamor's post-earthquake damage combined with radioactive problems to cause global concern. Moreover, the region has become a source of international concern due to the dual nature of Metsamor, both contributing to energy production and providing material for nuclear weapons. The confluence of factors such as ecological fallout, seismic events, nuclear waste and the specter of nuclear weapons has led to deep and widespread concerns at regional and global levels.*

**Keywords:** *Metsamor, Radioactive Leakage, Nuclear Dump, Environmental Problems*

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**Öz:** *Sovyet döneminde SSR Ermenistan bölgesinde Metsamor Nükleer Enerji Santrali'nin (Metsamor) kurulması jeopolitik manzaraya yeni bir boyut kazandırdı. Görünüşte nükleer enerji üretimi için inşa edilen tesis, aslında sekiz yıl boyunca çok sayıda zorluğa neden oldu.*

*Metsamor'un deprem sonrası hasarı radyoaktif sorunlarla birleşerek küresel endişeye neden oldu. Dahası, Metsamor'un hem enerji üretimine katkıda bulunan hem de nükleer silahlar için malzeme sağlayan ikili yapısı nedeniyle bölge uluslararası bir endişe kaynağı haline geldi. Ekolojik serpinti, sismik olaylar, nükleer atıklar ve nükleer silah hayaleti gibi faktörlerin bir araya gelmesi, bölgesel ve küresel düzeyde derin ve yaygın endişelere yol açmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Metsamor, Radyoaktif Sızıntı, Nükleer Çöplük, Çevre Sorunları*

## **Introduction**

After World War II and during the Cold War, a significant battleground expanded between the Eastern and Western blocs, especially centered on nuclear advancements. This rise in hostility and rivalry was triggered by the United States' use of the atomic bomb in Japan to end the war and to send a message to the Eastern Bloc enemy, the Soviet Union. Although the atomic bombings in Japan's Hiroshima and Nagasaki happened in the past, but the pursued nuclear arms race remained unabated between the Western and Soviet Blocs throughout the chaotic and tumultuous years of the Cold War. This dynamic, the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, has led to a perception of a "balance of terror", a fear of mutual annihilation and total annihilation in a possible nuclear war for both sides and the world. The Soviet Union began to witness its initial successes in nuclear energy in 1949. The Obninsk channel-type reactor, the USSR's first nuclear power plant, was constructed in Moscow in 1954 to provide strategic nuclear capabilities (Petros'yants 1984, 42). This facility was the world's first operational nuclear power plant (Semenov 1983, 47).

In addition, investments in nuclear technology and advancements in nuclear production led to the construction of functional power plants that could be sold or used for commercial purposes in many republics that were part of the Soviet Union, including Armenia (Zheludev and Konstantinov 1980, 34). Armenia's Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant was built using what is often described as first generation Soviet technology. In the 1970s, Metsamor was constructed as two split units, Metsamor-1 and Metsamor-2, to meet the growing energy demands of the copper and aluminum industries in Armenia (Yuksel 2014, 4). The construction of the Metsamor-1 launched in 1973, with claims that "the Armenian nuclear power plant has been designed for seismic conditions and is, therefore, more expensive" (Semenov 1983, 50). It became operational on December 28, 1976. The target was to produce over 880 MWK of electricity (IAEA 152). The Metsamor-1 had the WWER 440/V230 type as reactor and a capacity of generating 416 MWe (Nuclear Power in Armenia 2023). This type of reactor used in Metsamor-1 is considered a primitive reactor carrying a higher risk than the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine. The Metsamor-2 is equipped with the WWER 440/V270 type reactor, completed three years later in 1979, with a power output of 400 MW (Ogan 2007).

The Soviet Union, after the 1970s, became a prominent manufacturer of nuclear power plants using four different types of reactor models in

their construction. These reactors included VVER, PBMK, EGP, and BN. Especially the years after 1986, which means a period of about 40 years, most of the reactors based on the VVER-type reactor, also used at Metsamor, are considered most unsafe and the most disposed to accidents among these Soviet reactor models (Stefanova, Chantoin and Kolev 1995, 270; Cabbarli 2003, 241). The Metsamor 1 reactor, which was built with the old technology, was also not earthquake resistant. The dangerous part of the Metsamor 1 is that it is located in the city of Hochtamberyan, which is located on the Agri Mount fault line, that is potentially hazardous (Lavelle and Garthwaite 2011). Adding to the lack of an earthquake-resistant system in the first reactor, the decision to build the plant based on political considerations, despite numerous warnings from Soviet scientists during its construction, made it vulnerable to unforeseen disasters, such as an earthquake (Zulfugarov and Babayev 2012, 234). In spite of the first unit, Metsamor 2 reactor is claimed to be resistant to an earthquake of magnitude 8 (Nadirov and Rizayev 2017, 47-48; Ozdasli 2016, 50). But the challenges go beyond seismic concerns and often stem from political, strategic or power-related factors that are of international or regional interest. The fact that the construction of the Metsamor plant ignored scientific warnings, rather than purely technical or security concerns, reflects a broader political calculus in which strategic, economic or regional interests take precedence over security and expert advice. Moreover, the possible consequences of ignoring the earthquake-resistant system at the first reactor underscore the need for a comprehensive re-evaluation of all security and safety procedures at Metsamor to successfully lessen both natural and man-made risks. However, a significant portion of the primary documents on the deployment of Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia's nuclear energy and weapons on the territory of Armenia are not accessible in primary sources. As a result, the information and documents are based on the analysis of secondary sources or research, and this article focuses on only one aspect of the history and potential developments of Armenia's nuclear power plant in the Soviet and post-Soviet period. The economic importance and nuclear energy potential of Metsamor for Soviet Armenia and beyond is emphasized. But why does Armenia persist with its nuclear activities at Metsamor, despite being aware of the potential catastrophic consequences similar to Chernobyl?

## **1. Armenia's Economic Dependence on the Armenian Diaspora, Russia and the EU**

Since gaining independence in 1991, Armenia has been dependent on Russia for energy, security, military and border protection, but has preferred

rapprochement with the West, especially in economic matters, largely due to the influence of Armenian diaspora activities in the US and the EU (Socor 2013). Due to Armenian irredentism, the occupation of Azerbaijani territories and the Karabakh war, economic difficulties and a low average income, Armenia relies on the help of the Armenian diaspora in the US, EU and Russia as a source of income. In 2005, Armenians living abroad were granted dual citizenship, and 2 million Armenians living in Russia were allowed to vote. Diaspora and Working Armenians who do not reside in the country have the right to have a voice in the elections (Karabayram 2011, 287). The fact that Armenia strategically navigates the complexities of leveraging economic benefits from both the Diaspora and Armenians working abroad. The Diaspora, seasonal workers going to Russia and other countries, and donations from states and international organizations play an important role in keeping Armenia's budget afloat. In cases such as Metsamor, where Russian investments and influence are significant and Armenians cannot repay their debts, Russia's significant external influence on Armenia is evident (Goksel 2012, 45). This underscores the broader geopolitical leverage Moscow exerts in the region, which is often intertwined with Armenia's economic vulnerabilities and political decisions.

Armenia's Western adventure accelerated with the annexation of Abkhazia and Ossetia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea to Russia in 2014, and the loss of the Second Karabakh War, in which Armenians invested politically and militarily for three decades. Armenia's Western-oriented foreign policy and pursuit of economic integration with Europe is part of a broader strategy aimed at pitting Armenians in both the US and the EU against Russia and, if necessary, protecting itself from Russian influence by aligning with the Western bloc. This strategic approach is not unique to Armenia but has spread to other countries in the region. Georgia follows the same policies, while Azerbaijan tries to maintain a balance. Despite its relations with the West, which values its security, Armenia has never severed ties and maintains a careful relationship with Russia. Moreover, Armenia has developed a model of multilateral relations not only with the West but also with Russia and Iran for various natural gas products, reflecting Armenia's successful efforts to diversify its economic interests beyond raw materials (Saha et al. 2018, 3). At the same time, Armenia is trying to improve its dialogue with the European Union by participating in various EU institutions and organizations. In the aftermath of the Karabakh War, Armenia's agreement to sit at the peace table with Azerbaijan and Türkiye was a necessary step to de-escalate decades tensions, ensure regional stability, and address protracted conflicts that impede economic growth and regional and international relations. As a result,



since 2020, European countries, notably France, have further complicated the delicate balance of power and diplomacy in the South Caucasus by increasingly advocating for a more active role in shaping Armenia's Western-oriented foreign policy, including calls for military support to strengthen Armenia's position in the region and efforts to integrate the country into the EU.

### **1.1. Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant's Role and Energy Crisis:**

Metsamor, Armenia's only nuclear power plant, has been described by the European Union, the United States, and numerous international organizations as the "most dangerous nuclear power plant" worldwide due to its old Soviet-era design and lack of robust modern safety mechanisms (Hadzhieva 2016). Despite these pressing concerns, Metsamor remains an indispensable component of Armenia's energy infrastructure, providing around 40% of the country's electricity and thus reducing its dependence on foreign energy sources (Dixit 2019).

Historically, during the Soviet era, Armenia's natural gas needs were met through imports from Turkmenistan, facilitated by a trans-regional pipeline through Azerbaijani territory. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union profoundly altered the geopolitical landscape and triggered a series of diplomatic and economic challenges for Armenia. Yerevan's irredentist policies, coupled with persistent international lobbying to advance its so-called genocide claims, exacerbated regional tensions. Moreover, Armenia's occupation of around 20% of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory, including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding regions, has led to a serious deterioration in regional and global diplomatic relations. This not only led the closure of the borders between Türkiye- Armenia and Azerbaijan-Armenia, but also strategically led Azerbaijan to impose an embargo on Turkmenistan's natural gas exports to Armenia. As a result, Armenia found itself grappling with an acute energy crisis and further strengthened its dependence on the aging and unstable nuclear infrastructure of Metsamor.

### **1.2. Energy Crisis Resolution and Restarting Metsamor:**

Armenia's presence in the South Caucasus, despite being a small power, is linked to the interests of many global powers and its two neighbors, Iran and Russia. They do not seek to save Armenia, but they would never dare to

abandon it or allow it to be destroyed. The oscillation between salvation and ruin helps them maintain a balance in the region, countering Azerbaijan and Türkiye. Consequently, in the face of Armenia's energy crisis, Russia and Iran emerge as its "saviors"—Russia by restarting Metsamor to provide nuclear energy resources, Iran by supplying natural gas, and both offering military support. Both Russia and Iran are aware of issues in the region. Russia is fully cognizant of the possible radioactive leakage and environmental risks at Metsamor, while Iran knows it is acting in contradiction to Articles 3/16 and 154 of its constitution, which declare that it "supports the just struggles of the "mustad'affun" against the "mustakbirun" in every corner of the globe" (Iran's Constitution 1989). While Armenia is not among the "oppressed", but rather the aggressor that occupied the territories of an Islamic country for decades, causing the displacement of nearly a million Azerbaijanis, Iran has, nonetheless, supported and continues to support Armenia. In addition to the energy crisis following both the closure of the borders and the interruption of Turkmen gas, Armenia's energy problem was also caused by the sabotage of power lines from Georgia to Armenia by Azerbaijani troops during the war (Ustohalova and Englert 2017, 23). Fully aware of the risks associated with possible radioactive leakage and environmental insecurity, Armenia decided to restart the Metsamor plant. Despite military and financial support from the Russians and Iranians during the conflict with Azerbaijan, Armenians' main concern in restarting the damaged plant was the urgent need for energy.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia not only maintained its supremacy and dominance over the newly independent republics through economic or military mechanisms such as the CSTO, but also consistently opposed the intervention of global and non-regional powers seeking to influence the South Caucasus in order to protect its own strategic interests and prevent its neighbors from forming alliances with Western powers. These included the US, the EU, Türkiye and Iran. The issue of "nuclear energy security" therefore became a focal point for the European Union, especially due to post-security nuclear concerns about Soviet-built nuclear power plants in the east of the continent and their impact on fuel, energy and the environment. As a result, after 1991, Russia under President Boris Yeltsin moved closer to the West and this change was welcomed by Armenians, who wanted closer relations with the West.

In the early days of independence, the EU supported calls for the closure of the Metsamor plant, citing earthquake risks in the region and the end of its operational life. Following the reopening of the plant despite opposition

from various opponents, an important agreement was signed between EU representatives and Armenia in Brussels in September 1999. As a result of this agreement, accepted by the Armenians, it became obligatory to shut down Metsamor by 2004 (Ogan 2007). However, Armenia's strategic bargaining tactics, led them to demand €1 billion in exchange for the closure of the facility, a demand rejected by EU representatives who offered €100 million. Years later, the goal of shutting down the Metsamor was also not achieved, "nevertheless, the EU contributed to upgrading the safety of the plant and strengthening the nuclear regulatory authority" (Mills 2020, 65). All these years, Armenia has characterized these pressures as coming from a "hostile country", either because it did not take them seriously or because it attributed them to the influence of Azerbaijan and Türkiye. As a result, they found support from the EU and the US in the international arena due to Armenian Diaspora and were able to efficiently use the Metsamor question in their favor. Thus, we find Armenia engages a dual strategy, convincing the EU and senators in the US while at the same time employing tactics to turn the situation in its favor.

The war, which directly affected the Armenian economy due to the economic blockade imposed by Azerbaijan and Türkiye, led to an increase in energy prices and thus caused significant difficulties for the Armenian economy (Cabbarli 2003, 237). Due to Armenia's economic collapse during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988-1994) and in the following years, Armenia became completely dependent on Russia for energy. Iran's support for Armenia, particularly in the economic and energy sectors, was driven by a combination of strategic imperatives, notably the determination to avoid being marginalized by Azerbaijan. This support was significantly influenced by Iran's regional policies aimed at maintaining its influence in the South Caucasus, balancing its opposition to both Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and securing access to Central and South Asian markets through strengthened ties with Armenia. Moreover, Iran has always considered Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan but wanted it to be occupied by Armenia as it profited from the conflict between the two countries, thus Iran's openly siding with Armenia after the Second Karabakh War has further increased the complexity in the region and the search for a solution. Armenia's stubborn occupation policy and its attempt to manage its ever-increasing energy costs by ignoring the Four Resolutions enacted by the UN have also added to its difficulties, resulting first in Armenia's indebtedness through bilateral agreements with Russia, and then in Russia's control of Armenia's economy, military and energy sector, including border controls.

Armenia has been in negotiations with the EU on the decoupling of the Metsamor Power Plant. “Previously, the EU had made several calls for the plant and similar facilities in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Lithuania to be shut down. All but Metsamor were closed” (Fotyga 2017). At each stage, the plant not only did not close, but continued to operate in 1995 and the following years with financial support from the EU. The Metsamor has been the subject of controversy, with some arguing that by closing it, Armenia is using it as leverage to secure financial and military funding from EU countries (Mills 2020, xv). Therefore, a proposed solution to address concerns about the old plant is the construction of a new one (Kovynev 2015). The possibility of shutting down Armenia’s old Metsamor and constructing a new reactor have been ongoing for several years and remains a question of speculation. Despite calls for action due to the perceived dangers associated with Metsamor, Western countries have refrained from imposing sanctions on Armenia. Nonetheless, Western countries have sided with Armenia in the international arena. In contrast, Türkiye and Azerbaijan have voiced their concerns about Metsamor in international forums, accusing Western countries of double standards. Whatever the different positions, the geopolitical context in the South Caucasus plays a role in triggering the reactions of many countries to the Metsamor issue, resulting in a complex and nuanced diplomatic panorama in the Caucasus region. Despite recognizing the significant risks associated with Metsamor, the West has refrained from imposing sanctions on Armenia, limiting its reaction to mild criticism. This tolerance reflects Armenia’s historically favorable position in Western diplomatic relations in the Caucasus.

### 1.3. Double Standards and Armenian Non-Compliance:

Throughout both Karabakh Wars and following the liberation of its occupied territories, Azerbaijan has expressed concern over Armenia’s inconsistent adherence to international commitments, treaties and legally binding agreements, highlighting a selective interpretation pattern that undermines the credibility of negotiated settlements. Following the Second Karabakh War in 2020, Armenia was accused of strategically prioritizing Article 6 of the ceasefire agreement while failing to comply with Article 9, designed to enhance regional connectivity and serve as a cornerstone for the post-war peace process. Notably, while the corridor envisioned to connect mainland Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan has yet to materialize, the discourse around a transportation route to Karabakh has been reframed in international narratives as the ‘Lachin Corridor’— a term that has been widely disseminated despite

referring to an infrastructure crossing located on Azerbaijan's sovereign territory.

Armenia's approach to its obligations under the Metsamor power plant agreement with the EU exemplifies concerns about selective implementation of commitments. While the agreement sets out a framework for the eventual decommissioning of the plant, Armenian officials have argued that its closure is contingent on either the construction of an alternative plant or the provision of €1 billion in financial assistance. Moreover, Armenia's energy negotiations are intertwined with broader geopolitical considerations, as policymakers have actively sought to use these discussions to gain concessions, such as the lifting of embargoes imposed by Azerbaijan and Türkiye, the reopening of borders, and the construction of a pipeline to facilitate the export of Iranian gas to Yerevan. These diplomatic maneuvers were perceived as efforts to gain unilateral advantages without addressing the historical context of Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani territory or its ongoing territorial claims against Azerbaijan and Türkiye as enshrined in the constitutional framework.

#### **1.4. Armenia's Dilemma: Economic Challenges and Nuclear Concerns**

The collapse of Armenia's economy, coupled with regional ecological inequality, possible radioactive leakage and even the threat of a latent explosion of the Metsamor Power Plant, highlighted by the Armenian authorities following the war and ceasefire, is leading them to prioritize and deal with economic challenges (Yüksel 2014, 4, 2020, 17; Ornarli 2011). As expressed by Paul Brown, "The Armenian government restarted the Metsamor reactor in 1995 after closing it in 1988 when a nearby earthquake killed 25,000 people. The move came after four years of power cuts which left most of the population without heating through the winters. The plant provides one-third of the country's electricity" (Brown 2004). Armenian officials openly accepted this approach, especially during the restart of the plant. However, in the following years, situations such as "EU halts aid to Armenia over quake-zone nuclear plant" have arisen. Often, ecological issues related to the Metsamor nuclear power plant have often been reinterpreted through the Armenian government and its lobbying in the US and EU, diverting attention away from the actual environmental damage caused by the plant. These efforts have led to the denial of the ecological damage caused by radioactive leaks and the release of radioactive waste and the discharge of contaminated wastewater into nearby rivers (Dermoyan 2021). Despite Armenia's efforts

to downplay these concerns, independent monitoring organizations, radiation detection systems, and ecological realities in the region have played important roles in revealing the extent of environmental contamination and raised alarm in the international community about the risks associated with Metsamor's activities.

Areg Galstyan considers the closure of Metsamor in 1988 as “a big mistake that created an energy crisis and inflicted suffering on the people and the economy” (Brown 2004). Dr. Antonyan, shedding light on the real justification, stated that, “As a citizen, I can say we do not have an alternative power supply, so we should operate the reactor now. As far as the future is concerned, I would say in a seismic area we should not have a nuclear plant” (Brown 2004). As Torosyan argues, “Despite what politicians and diplomats say, many Armenians see the decision to prolonging Metsamor's lifespan as symptomatic of the general difficulty the government has had in tackling the country's persistent economic woes, especially unemployment and inflation. Still, others cannot believe that the government would ‘play with nuclear safety,’ so to speak” (Torosyan 2012). Politicians and ordinary citizens are united in recognizing the lack of safety of the facility, given the seismic activity in the region. However, Armenians believe, the lack of viable energy alternatives leaves no choice but to keep the lights on, even in the face of potential dangers to both the environment and the region.

After the decree on the reopening of Metsamor in 1995, Armenia and Russia signed the Protocol on cooperation in the field of nuclear energy on June 6, 2000. But financially collapsed Armenia has had a difficult time paying for uranium as fuel, which it receives from Russia. Later, as the debt increased, Armenia was forced to hand over its assets to Russia in 2002, including Nairit, Mars (the largest defense industrial facilities), the Hrazdan hydroelectric power plant and five other important industrial facilities, and paid off its debt of \$ 101 million. Due to these financial constraints, Russia decided to transfer Metsamor's shares to UES (Russian Electric Systems), a Russian company operating in the field of nuclear energy. As the debts grew, Armenians had to transfer ownership of the Power Plant to the Russians (Ogan 2005, 110). This did not only mean that the fuel was from Russians, but also that the Power Plant was owned by Russians, and the electricity produced was sold to Armenians. In 2006, Emil Danielyan wrote that “UES already owns a cascade of Armenian hydroelectric plants and manages the finances of the nuclear power station at Metsamor” (Danielyan 2006). In this situation, Armenia, like all countries in the region, became a victim of Russia's exploitation policy.

In this context, Armenia has become more dependent on Russia's energy influence and strategic economic policies than any other country in the region.

In the aftermath of this energy and economic crisis, Armenia faced long-lasting consequences, grappling with the loss of key state assets and industrial facilities due to its inability to manage its mounting debt. This highlighted Armenia's difficult financial situation at the time.

The main concern about the Metsamor nuclear power plant is the potential for earthquake-related damage and subsequent risks of radioactive leakage, particularly following the 1988 Spitak earthquake. The Armenians insist on the issue that there was no damage and that it was pointless that the Plant was closed for seven years. During these years, the European Commission was also concerned about the safety of the Metsamor plant. In a report published in March 2015, the EU called on Armenia to take action on the Metsamor issue related to the Implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy in Armenia; "The early closure and decommissioning of the MNPP (Mezdamor Nuclear Power Plant) remains a key objective for the EU and under the ENP Action Plan. Since the power plant cannot be upgraded to meet current internationally recognized nuclear safety standards, it should be closed as soon as possible. The new power plant should comply with the latest international safety standards" (Joint Staff Working Document 2015). However, the same year, Armenians had discussions with Russians regarding the renovation and extension of the lifespan of the facility, which was expected to be closed in 2008, were conducted with the Russia-Armenia Treaty in 2014. In December 2015, despite the European Union's readiness to provide a \$289 million loan for the decommissioning of the plant, Armenia and Russia signed a financial agreement that allows Moscow to allocate a \$270 million loan and a \$30 million grant for the modernization of Metsamor. This agreement with the financial and technical assistance provided by Russia in 2015 also ensured to extend the operational life of the Metsamor NPP until 2026 (WNN 2014; Miholjeic, 2018: 42). In 2018, when the pro-Western Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was elected to power, he initially pursued a policy of balance. The reconstruction of Metsamor was once again in question, and this time, the Armenians announced that they would not incur debt to Russia, opting instead to fund the reconstruction themselves. On June 10, Prime Minister Pashinyan declared Armenia's decision to decline the Russian loan and conditions for the modernization of the Soviet-built Metsamor plant, but instead finance it within the Armenian state budget (RFE/RL's Armenian Service 2020). The decisions were made before the Second Karabakh War. Therefore, we find

these days is included in the records that the EU and the United States have long pressed for the closure of the nuclear power plant on the grounds that it does not meet safety standards (RFE/RL's Armenian Service 2020). However, pursuing the 2020 Karabakh War and the Russians assuming a neutrality for the first time, followed by Armenia's defeat in the war, the country felt abandoned. Armenians did not disregard Russia despite their move to the West after 2020. But at the same time, Pashinyan's taking sides against Russia and the government's announcement that it could choose equipment and service suppliers for the plant, which generates about 40% of Armenia's electricity, were the foundations for cutting it off from Russia and taking over the Western side as well.

With the 2015 Russia-Armenia Agreement, Metsamor's lifespan was extended to 2026. In 2021, under Rosatom's regulation, the plant had to undergo a 141-day shutdown to extend its operational life. Furthermore, Russia's economic influence in the South Caucasus, including Armenia, has increased significantly. However, after the Second Karabakh War and with the liberation of the occupied Azerbaijani territories, Armenians were deterred from irredentist policies towards neighboring states. Instead, they sought to establish closer relations with the United States and the EU, which had already been initiated. On May 2, 2022, they signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Civil Nuclear cooperation with the United States. However, on December 14, 2023, a "decision" was reported by Armenian media, stating that the Cabinet in Armenia formally approved plans to spend \$65 million "to modernize the Metsamor plant and extend the lifespan of the second reactor until 2036" (Zartonk Media 2023; news.am Staffs 2023). The repair and maintenance of the reactor will be conducted by "Rosatom" service engineers. All of this implies that "Rosatom Service will upgrade Metsamor from 2023 to 2026" to lengthen the reactor's life, which was initially scheduled to end in 2026.

In fact, the Armenian Government intends to construct a new block to replace the existing nuclear power plant or a new nuclear power plant. In this context, the early shutdown of the Metsamor has also not materialized in recent years "due to the lack of necessary replacement capacity—whether fossil or renewable that could ensure energy security. But the EU provided important support to enhance nuclear safety in Armenia" (Mills 2020, 66). Armenia acknowledges that, with Metsamor in operation, it remains entirely dependent on Russia for nuclear energy. To diversify its options, Armenia observes the construction of a second Nuclear Power Plant, but constructed with Western collaboration, as an escape route.



Armenians are aware of the need for a period of 6-10 years to construct a new nuclear power plant block or a new nuclear power plant. Armenians are aiming to construct a new power plant, generate electricity from it, complete the construction of the new nuclear power plant by 2036, and then to reach a point where they can safely decommission Metsamor, a nuclear facility that has raised significant security concerns in the region. Therefore, it is imperative to start work on updating the old Metsamor to facilitate the construction and completion of the new facility by 2026.

Russia's longstanding presence in the Caucasus region continues to shape its relations with Armenia. In addition, the Russia-Ukraine war, the European Union's growing distancing from Russia, and Western sanctions, especially on the export of technology and semiconductor sectors, have created opportunities for Armenia to play a more active role in the re-export of European products to Russia.

In almost two years, Armenia's technological imports from the EU have increased significantly. The reason behind this surge is their intention to re-export the goods they import to Russia without causing them to be transported to Russia, thus engaging in trade for war profits as a bridge between the EU and Russia. Therefore, Ukraine has become dependent on the material, military, technological and intelligence resources of the United States and the EU, and the EU has imposed the same sanctions on Russia as the United States. These circumstances could potentially have negatively charged repercussions on Russia's energy influence in both the EU and the Caucasus. Armenia, which has historically been reliant on Russia in various aspects, possibly will be affected by such uncertainties. Furthermore, Russia funds, repairs, and maintains Metsamor, leaving Armenia dependent on Russian support for the energy it desperately needs.

In reaction to such challenges, Armenia has tried to adjust its energy policy and choose new steps to moderate its energy dependence on Russia. This issue of energy independence is being discussed during the meeting between Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington in December 2022. Armenia seeks to enhance energy security cooperation with the United States. To establish this commitment, a Memorandum of Cooperation and Understanding was signed, which aimed at strengthening economic and diplomatic relations between the two countries. The agreement between Armenia and the United States introduces numerous questions and outlooks about the future of the Metsamor Plant not only for

Armenia, but also for its near and distant neighbors and those affected by this power plant. There is also a commitment to further develop nuclear energy in the coming years, an issue that will probably become evident in the agreements with the United States. In accordance with this, the Armenians arranged to establish contacts with possible investors in Armenia's nuclear energy technology in order to construct a new nuclear power plant in the country (WNN, 2015). Due to Armenia's geopolitical importance in the region, its position attracts the interest not only of Iran, Türkiye and Azerbaijan, but also of various international and regional powers. The challenges posed by this deteriorating power plant affect all the states involved.

In this Agreement, as of 2023, all repairs, equipment modifications, maintenance, and personnel training will be carried out by Rosatom, and inspections will be conducted by Rosatom too. As we will find in the repairs in the coming years, the same conditions were included in the agreement by Russia. Armenia is facing an energy shortage, acquiring natural gas from Iran and Russia. After the Second Karabakh War, particularly following September 19, 2023, which saw the liberation of all of Karabakh, including Khankandi and the remaining territories, and the disarmament of separatist forces, Armenians observed losses and attributed the situation entirely to the Russians. There were even rumors that the sale of Russian gas to Armenians could be stopped if Armenians pursued more pro-Western policies. As Zolyan noted at Carnegie, "any Armenian steps toward the West tend to be perceived as a hostile act in Moscow. And the Kremlin still has plenty of ways to exert influence over Yerevan: it could give the green light to Baku to launch another military operation, halt natural gas exports, or deport ethnic Armenians from Russia, for example" (Zolyan, 2023). However, this issue was not officially confirmed. Russia, Armenia's traditional strategic ally, fulfills the majority of Yerevan's gas supplies, with Armenia generating up to 98 percent of its electricity locally. However, Armenia's "self-sufficiency depends on the countries from which we import the gas and the uranium that operate our thermal and nuclear power plants." (Burada kaynak belirtmek lazım) In essence, there is a hidden dependence on both Russian gas and fuel for the Nuclear Plant to produce electricity despite assertions of independence. Although Armenian government officials emphasize self-sufficiency, they overlook the intricate energy supply chain. As Armen Manvelyan points out, "in fact over 70 per cent of Armenia's electricity depended on Russia" (Markosyan 2023). Therefore, as after 1988, despite the numerous dangers, both the state and the Armenian people are unwilling to decommission the plant, due to Armenia's economic needs and the economic and energetic

difficulties that decommissioning Metsamor would create. The only concrete plan is that Armenia has repeatedly attempted to significantly extend the life of Metsamor to eliminate its energy deficits and improve its current energy security.

Due to the economic dependence of Armenia, the problems between Russia and Georgia, the closure of Georgia's borders with Russia and Armenia with Azerbaijan, and the transportation of uranium from Russia to Armenia by airlines for the fuel needs of a damaged power plant, the nuclear danger has always existed for the region. Therefore, the transportation of this fuel by air raises concerns, as aircraft could potentially be involved in carrying nuclear material, resembling a nuclear bomb threat on every trip. This is predominantly worrisome given the immediate halt to the Second Karabakh War by shooting down a Russian helicopter and the incidents like the one-day Khankendi Operation, where a Russian military vehicle was driven into Azerbaijani positions, resulting in casualties for Russian soldiers but caused the war or the operation stopped. In the event of any aircraft malfunction, a scenario involving a plane crash and the transfer of nuclear fuel to the South Caucasus becomes a significant concern. Evacuation to any region in the Caucasus may also be part of an inevitable scenario.

### **1. The potential disaster and consequences of an event like Chernobyl in Metsamor**

The Metsamor, located next to the borders of Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Iran. This old, damaged and Soviet technology plant from 1976 is now considered the most dangerous nuclear power plant in the world (Puiu 2017). According to international regulations, nuclear power plants should be at least 80 kilometers away from settlements (Philip 2014, 4; IAEA 2006, 154). Metsamor poses a greater risk to neighboring countries than Yerevan. It was built in an earthquake-prone area and was closed for many years due to the 1988 earthquake. Therefore, the Metsamor is another important issue in Türkiye Armenia and Azerbaijan-Armenia relations, although it has not been discussed extensively at both regional and international levels. In addition, in the event of an accident or technical malfunction, Armenia would be the only country responsible for the events, even if the safety and security of the plant is certified by the IAEA or EU countries. But the one undeniable fact is that this has potentially disastrous consequences for the South Caucasus. The persistent decisions for Metsamor's reoperation activities appear to be based

on political and economic rather than scientific concerns. While Armenian politicians are aware that the power plant's technological lifespan ended years ago and its current location is no longer safe due to earthquakes, they persist in continuously revamping its activities.

Despite ongoing risks and criticism, as well as scrutiny from Western foreign policy, Armenia announced in December 2014, following negotiations with Russia, that it planned to extend the Metsamor reactor until 2026 instead of closing it in 2016. However, estimates suggest that Armenia plans to phase out Russia and its technology after that date and aims to build a new nuclear power plant with “an additional investment of \$150 million” with the help of the West. Over time, Armenia's nuclear projects and the extension of Metsamor's previously planned operational life reflect the desire to develop a new plant. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has also recognized this strategy, stating that “The lifetime extension of Unit 2 is one of the main priorities of the Government of the Republic of Armenia. If safe operation after 2026 is substantiated as a result of relevant studies, the Government of the Republic of Armenia intends to operate Unit 2 at least until 2036” (IAEA 2021). This decision means that the ecological problems caused by the Metsamor reactor will continue, particularly the release of nuclear waste water used to cool the reactor into the Aras River. The Aras River flows along the Azerbaijan-Iran border before merging with the Kura River and eventually reaching the Caspian Sea (Babayev 2012, 234; Ozdasli 2016, 51-52). As a result, the environmental consequences will not be limited to the immediate vicinity of Metsamor in Armenia, but will affect all countries along the Aras River, where radioactive waste is discharged, and the wider region extending to the Caspian Sea.

Thus, we see that the Metsamor radioactive waste will not only affect Türkiye on its eastern border and Azerbaijan and Iran on both sides of the river, but will also adversely affect the five Caspian Sea littoral states (i.e. Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan) in various ways. Whatever the reasons, these changes will affect all five Caspian states, with the most immediate impacts expected in Azerbaijan and Iran due to wastewater and possible radioactive leakage to Türkiye. The Iranian population living around the Aras River has suffered for years from rising cancer cases due to the use of the river for drinking water and agriculture. Nuclear waste has been ignored for political reasons, including years of protests by this community and even Iran's support for the Armenian government against Azerbaijan. Finally, after the “One Day Karabakh Operation” on September 19, 2023 and the liberation

of all occupied territories, Iran decided to play the Azerbaijani card. In an agreement with the Armenian side, it was agreed that Armenia would clean the river for a year in 2024 and clean up the nuclear waste dumped into the river (Tehran Times Staffs 2023; Nour News Staffs 2023).

It should be recognized that Metsamor's struggle is not limited to the current environment and possible radioactive leaks. In addition, Armenia has a security problem related to the operation of the plant and the needed fuel. The fact that the Metsamor plant is operated by the Russians and not by Armenia, and that the fuel brought from Russia is illegally removed from the plant and sold on the black market, raises the question of international nuclear security (Borger 2010; Nanagulyan et al. 2020). But this incident also raises many questions. For example, according to a report published in *The Guardian* on March 11, 2010, 18 grams of smuggled enriched uranium were hidden in a lead-lined cigarette packet belonging to two Armenians in Georgia. Interestingly, the enrichment level of this uranium is 89.4 percent. In an electricity-generating nuclear power plant, uranium is typically enriched to levels ranging from 3% to 5% U-235, which is sufficient for civilian power generation and does not require higher levels of enrichment (Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation 2021; Ferreira 2024). The main justification for enriching uranium beyond this threshold lies in the specific requirements for nuclear weapons, where a higher concentration of U-235 is needed for weapons production. Illegal diversion or unethical procurement of fuel for peaceful nuclear purposes, as in the case of the two Armenian citizens, could significantly alter the security dynamics and legal framework of the region and pose significant risks to both regional stability and international non-proliferation efforts.

This issue also serves as a proof that Armenia are treated more equally in international law and international relations. In recent years, the US and the EU have daily threatened MENA countries to build Nuclear Power Plants and Nuclear Facilities in Libya, Syria and Iraq have been bombed and destroyed by Israel (Brands and Palkki 2011, 156; Wertman 2022; Makovsky 2012; Squassoni and Feickert 2004, 5). At the same time, when Iran's nuclear activities were first revealed in 2003, it was subjected to threats, bombings, embargoes and maximum pressure. But 20 years later, it was officially announced and confirmed by IAEA experts that Iran would increase its uranium enrichment to 60% by 2023 (Murphy 2023). While the West and Israel bombed Libya, Syria and Iraq, which did not follow their policies, the UAE and the Saudis built US-approved power plants (Solomon 2023; Kaufman 2023; Mason 2020; Deen 2023). Iran was somewhere in the middle of these two groups. Its

facilities were neither bombed nor officially allowed to enrich. But only after the agreement in 2015, Iran had the right to enrich its nuclear fuel to about 3.67. The agreement was canceled by the US and sanctions returned, and according to recent reports, Iran has spent \$400 billion to circumvent Western sanctions, a figure that was unofficially revealed by the former minister (Radio Farda Staffs 1400/2021). The West constantly exerts pressure by making various claims against states that do not align with its strategic interests. However, it is largely indifferent to cases like that of Armenia, where Russia supplies enriched uranium to the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant, an old facility operating without adequate safeguards or regulatory oversight in accordance with standards set by experts from the European Union and the United States, that take Metsamor among the “most dangerous” nuclear plants still in operation (Mersom 2019; Shaffer 2021; According to Lavelle and Garthwaite 2011; Rzayeva 2022, 43–45). Paradoxically, this enriched uranium with the potential to produce nuclear weapons is not only inadequately safeguarded, but is also accessible to ordinary Armenian citizens, often smuggled and as discussed earlier, illegally traded on the black market. It is clear how different and double standards the West applies to Arabs, Iranians and Armenians in the same region.

A third problem specific to Azerbaijan’s tasks, in addition to concerns about radioactive leaks and illicit trafficking of highly enriched nuclear materials, is evident in reports that Armenians have left and buried nuclear waste in the Karabakh region, which they have occupied for 27 years (Aras 2008,166). Except for the years 1989-1995, when the Metsamor Power Plant had to be shut down due to damage, the wastes of this power plant were transported to the Caspian Sea via the Aras River, and therefore our discussions on environmental problems only reflected the radioactivity leaks and the wastes dumped into the Aras River.

The decontamination of waste from the Metsamor Power Plant was not limited to the operation of the Metsamor Power Plant. However, as Jabbarli, Ozdasli and Ogan note in their research, there are also allegations that nuclear waste was dumped and buried in Karabakh during the years of Armenian occupation. Therefore, Azerbaijan’s problems will not be limited to the Aras River and the Caspian Sea but will also have to face this problem in its own territory, because it is a fact that after the liberation of the occupied territories, it faces a hidden underground danger, the threat that poses a risk to the Azerbaijanis dwelling within it. Those who have emigrated from their homeland for many years, those who have returned to their homeland, and the modern agricultural

towns and cities that have been planned for many years and the agricultural products produced in them (Jabbarli 2003, 245). This situation increases the risk that the ongoing radioactive leaks from Metsamor will continue to pose a danger to Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea and affect the entire region.

At the same time, the waste buried in Karabakh poses a threat to Azerbaijan and proves Armenia's anti-environmental activities. In the face of this threat to the environmental security of the 21st century, Türkiye and Azerbaijan constantly raise the issue in the international arena. Throughout the century, both Türkiye and Azerbaijan, as well as global actors, have repeatedly stated that the Metsamor Plant poses a regional threat in their meetings with the Secretary General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international organizations.

From a scientific point of view, radioactive leaks from Metsamor cannot be detected by instruments in the region, as the AIEA claims, but locals in eastern Türkiye and northwestern Iran are concerned about an increase in cancer and birth defects among humans and animals. (Ogan 2007; Mehrnami 2023; Chalabi 2023). However, another interesting aspect of Armenia's Metsamor plant is that, even considering the year it was built in the context of Soviet borders, its proximity to the borders of Türkiye and Iran signals a strategic rapprochement with these two neighboring countries. Today, the plant is located geographically far from Armenia's capital, but close to neighboring countries. The oldest and most dangerous Metsamor nuclear reactor poses a significant threat directly to Azerbaijan, Iran and Türkiye, primarily because of the risk of accidents. Geographically located in a mountainous and windy region and having suffered new earthquakes and damage in the last 35 years, Metsamor radioactive leaks from the plant spread into the environment even in the absence of an explosion. As mentioned earlier, this problem is exacerbated by Armenia's dumping of nuclear waste into the Aras River. This puts the three neighboring countries in a very dangerous situation, even in the absence of a major accident. There is therefore an urgent need for these countries to raise greater awareness of the dangers inherent in Metsamor, emphasizing not only its existence but also the potential risks it poses.

For political and economic reasons, Iran and Russia declined to comment, while international objections from Azerbaijan and Türkiye were portrayed by some as coming from opposing states. However, the IAEA rejected Azerbaijan and Türkiye's requests for an investigation, emphasizing that the nuclear waste was buried in Azerbaijan's occupied territories and discharged into the

Aras River, that radioactive leaks cause cancer and that the plant should be shut down (Armenpress Staffs 2023). In 2016, the European Union initiated a peer-reviewed stress test to analyze the safety capability of Metsamor. The test revealed that the plant's design related to seismic activities have deteriorated over time. The report also emphasized that there are no plans for nuclear waste leakage from the spent fuel compartments used for the interim storage of nuclear waste (EU Peer Review Report 2016). On the one hand, Tomczyk argues the EU's claim that Metsamor should be shut down due to decades of radioactive leaks (2019). On the other hand, Armenia's claim in late 2023 that there are no problems at the Metsamor Power Plant and that everything is under control reinforces its assertive stance on the nuclear power plant. Armenian policy makers and even the head of the Armenian government's Nuclear Safety Committee Khachatur Khachikyan stated that "there are no grounds to shut down the plant [...] The Metsamor NPP's current safety level is sufficient for it to operate safely," but none of these claims diminish the dangers that Armenia's Metsamor NPP poses to the region every day.

### Conclusion

In nuclear energy projects resulting from necessity, comprehensive technical studies have generally been lacking, and political decisions have taken precedence over geographical concerns. Many such plants, built in earthquake zones, or in unsuitable locations or with cost-cutting flaws, have led to disasters - Chernobyl being the most notorious. Armenia's Metsamor Power Plant is another example.

The Metsamor Power Plant was damaged in the 1988 Spitak earthquake, about 107 kilometers away, and was shut down the same year due to concerns of "seismic danger". Despite advances in nuclear technology, even the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in Japan suffered radiation leakage after the 2011 earthquake, underscoring the risks associated with seismic activities. However, the Metsamor Plant was later reopened due to Armenia's energy crisis during the First Karabakh War.

The Metsamor was built using old Soviet Union nuclear technology and is still under Russian maintenance. The Plant is located in a region with no major rivers and in critical need of water resources. It has been a constant source of ecological concern since its restart. The plant, which continues to operate despite multiple repairs, discharges its waste into the Aras River, which in turn



flows into the Caspian Sea, posing a significant environmental threat to the entire region.

Originally planned to be shut down between 2014 and 2017, Metsamor's lifespan was extended by Russia until 2026. However, since 40% of Armenia's electricity comes from this plant, Metsamor cannot be shut down so easily, despite all the criticism. Thus, in December 2023 Armenia announced further repairs to keep it running until 2036. This means that by 2036, if Armenia builds another nuclear power plant with the help of the US or France, if Russia allows another country to build a nuclear power plant, or if Metsamor is not destroyed by an explosion in the next 13 years, we can talk about shutting down Metsamor. Although the IAEA declared the plant stable in September 2023, an unforeseen earthquake or explosion could render the South Caucasus, Eastern Türkiye and Northwest Iran uninhabitable. Meanwhile, Iran and Russia have remained silent on the dangers of Metsamor due to their strategic and economic interests, while Azerbaijan has suffered from nuclear waste dumping for decades.

Although Azerbaijan and Türkiye have addressed the pollution of Metsamor's Aras River and brought it to international attention, it has been in question for years. Pollution from Metsamor, along with toxic waste from Armenia's mining industry, continues to contaminate the Aras River, causing serious health problems in Iranian border villages too. In addition to nuclear pollution, the process of emptying the waste of Armenia's Agarak copper mine, gold and aluminum mines is also discharged into the Aras River. In the border villages of Iran's northwest and Araz neighborhood, these pollutants cause stomach, esophagus, and intestinal cancer. A joint plan should be devised to convince other neighbors to agree with. This regional and inter-regional cooperation should not only remain at the state level, but also bring together environmental organizations, human rights organizations, nature NGOs and others. Bringing these states and NGOs together will be one of the key activities to direct the attention of global institutions and environmental organizations to the existing and potential dangers of the Metsamor NPP. This will require a planned and strong public diplomacy.

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**CONTRIBUTION TO OTTOMAN-ARMENIAN  
HISTORIOGRAPHY:  
REVIEWING KEMAL ÇİÇEK'S "THE  
ARMENIANS OF MUSA DAGH, 1915-1939:  
A STORY OF INSURGENCY AND FLIGHT"**

(OSMANLI-ERMENİ TARİH YAZIMINA KATKI: KEMAL ÇİÇEK'İN  
"MUSA DAĞI ERMENİLERİ, 1915-1939: BİR AYAKLANMA VE KAÇIŞ  
HİKÂYESİ" ADLI KİTABININ DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ)

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**Author:** Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek

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**Abstract:** *Werfel's novel tells a story of the supposedly heroic uprising of the Musa Dagh Armenians against the Ottoman army in mid-1915. Describing his study not as a critique of Werfel's story but as a reconstruction of the*

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*incident's history, Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek analysed various aspects of the Musa Dagh Revolt, its causes and aftermath, using a wide range of sources.*

**Key Words:** *Musa Dagh Revolt, Kemal Çiçek, Franz Werfel, The Forty Days of Musa Dagh novel, Anti-Turkish Propaganda, Armenian Terrorism, 1915 Events*

**Öz:** *Werfel'in romanı, 1915'in ortasında Musa Dağı Ermenilerinin Osmanlı ordusuna karşı sözde kahramanca başkaldırışının hikâyesini anlatmaktadır. Çalışmasını, Werfel'in hikâyesinin bir eleştirisi olarak değil, vuku bulanların tarihinin yeniden inşası şeklinde tanımlamış olan Dr. Kemal Çiçek, çok sayıda kaynak kullanarak Musa Dağı İsyanının, öncesinin ve sonrasının çeşitli yönlerini analiz etmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Musa Dağı İsyanı, Kemal Çiçek, Franz Werfel, Musa Dağı'nda 40 Gün romanı, Türk-Karşıtı Propaganda, Ermeni Terörü, 1915 Olayları*

## Introduction

Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, an Emeritus Professor of History at the New Türkiye Research Centre, presents a multi dimensional work of historical analysis that is a good read and simple to understand. This substantial work is also praised by many history professors. The first page and the back cover of the book contain praise for the work by various professors of history. The book describes in detail events that occurred before and after the rebellion, the activities of the Ottomans and Allied States, the actions of the Armenian people and the insurgents, and includes the explanations of different people (such as foreign diplomats, clergymen, some rebel Armenians). In addition, the study utilizes Turkish, Armenian and other foreign historical sources and presents the explanations of various historical researchers such as Eric Feigl, Edward Erickson, Maxime Gauin and Yücel Güçlü.

In the introduction chapter of his book, Çiçek shares a variety of interesting explanations and quotes regarding the pro-Armenian Austrian Jewish writer Franz Werfel and his 1933 novel “The Forty Days of Musa Dagh”. He illustrates why Werfel’s novel is an example of the conflict between propaganda and historical analysis. Werfel’s best-selling book led to a propaganda narrative about Musa Dagh and movies based on the same book.

## A Glance at Franz Werfel’s Novel and Armenian Propaganda

Werfel’s novel tells a story of the supposedly heroic uprising of the Musa Dagh Armenians against the Ottoman army in mid-1915. An examination of Werfel’s sources reveals that he was politically motivated and relied heavily on propaganda material and the collective memory of Armenian survivors of the Musa Dagh incident. Çiçek also states that Werfel’s knowledge of the Musa Dagh Armenians’ story appears to be based on interviews with the Mekhitarist Abbot Mesrob Habozia and Father Aginian, who granted him full access to their libraries. He also used the private papers of Johannes Lepsius, a pro-Armenian German missionary and notorious Turcophobe. Another source Werfel used to prepare his story were the documents of Naim Andonian, which have been proven to be forged (pp. 1-2).

Çiçek adds in his introduction chapter a quote of Werfel during his interview with author Vartkes Aharonian stating that history was “more than the truth, because an epic represents the truth colored by imagination. An epic written

by a true poet contains more reality than a history written by a historian” (p. 1). Such a comment gives an idea of how the widespread mindset of Werfel and people who support his book as well as the pro-Armenian claims regarding the 1915 events go against historical analysis.

It is expressed that Werfel believed in what he wrote. On the other hand, Çiçek adds viewpoints of Austrian historian Eric Feigl, who stated that Werfel had no idea about the question of the authenticity of his source (the Naim Andonian documents). Feigl explained that Werfel “originally did this in good faith, and when he found out that he had been taken in by a forgery, it was too late. Out of fear of Armenian reprisals, he did not even dare to publicly acknowledge his error” (p. 2). Thus, Feigl claimed that Werfel was not completely convinced of the accuracy of his book. Additionally, Feigl made a reference to the testimony of Abraham Sever (Rabbi Albert Amateau):

“... Before his death, Werfel told me that he felt ashamed and contrite for having written the book and for the many falsehoods and fabrications the Armenians had foisted on him. But he dared not confess publicly for fear of death by the Dashnag terrorists.” (pp. 2-3)

It is mentioned that the first print of Werfel’s book contained the note “Do not use this against the Turks”. Feigl wrote that Werfel’s book went through a “true purgatorium”, that the Armenians and their sympathizers have “cleared the book from all passages which could create doubts in the minds of the reader or any historian” (p. 3-4).

When evaluating the claims made in his novel, the reader needs to consider the comment below made by Werfel during an interview in response to a question on the authenticity and fairness of his novel:

“I never do research work... When I wrote *The 40 Days of Musa Dagh*, I described a little storekeeper and afterwards the Armenians came to me and said: “How did you know him?”. He was not a real character. He was imaginary, but the Armenians were so pleased they greeted me as one of their own. I really didn’t know much about the Armenians. I do not think it is a good idea to do too much research on any subject about which one writes. One’s mind gets cluttered up with too much detail. You should know enough about your subject, but not too much” (p. 5)

## **An Overview of What Took Place Before, During and After the Musa Dagh Revolt**

The Musa Dagh Revolt is one of the various subjects utilized in the Armenian narrative. Refusing to surrender and compromise, committing acts of provocation, sabotaging transportation and communications, spying for the Allied Navy (p. 55), refusing to pay taxes and planning to assassinate a tax collector (p. 52), setting fires, and using women and children as human shields to prevent Ottoman shelling (pp. 33, 69) were among the terrorist activities of the Armenian insurgents. Furthermore, at an Ottoman cabinet meeting in 1906, the government decided to send new instructions to the provinces to improve security and to more thoroughly investigate the allegations of extortion and armament by Armenian rebels. One of the serious allegations made at this meeting was that the insurrectionists were planning to poison the army's food supplies (p. 53).

The rebellious Musa Dagh Armenians were encouraged by the Zeytun, Van, Shabin-Karahisar and Urfa uprisings. Moreover, the Musa Dagh rebellion inspired the Urfa Armenians (p. 29). Branches of the Hunchak, Dashnak and Ramgavar parties were established in the Musa Dagh region, threatening the peace that had lasted in the region for centuries. From the beginning of the Erzurum uprising in the 1890s, these branches began to recruit members and sympathizers that would serve what they called the "Armenian Cause" (p. 48). Additionally, it is explained with the testimonies of Armenians who chose to revolt in Musa Dagh that the inhabitants of the region were encouraged to rebel by some Hunchak leaders, such as Kheder Bey and Aghassi Toursargsian, who had taken part in the 1895 Zeytun revolt (p. 58-59). It is noteworthy that the Armenian insurgent Haroutune Boyajian, who was about 7 years old at the time of the rebellion, was aware of the aims of the rebels and wrote the following comment in his memoirs:

"Around 1895, some Armenian revolutionaries had reached our villages from the Mediterranean Sea. They contacted the leading villagers in the area and made them realize that the mountains behind their villages could provide an excellent defence and the Mediterranean Sea an outlet to possible means of contact with the outside world, which might help us, should the Turkish atrocities threaten our area. They certainly succeeded in inculcating among the Musa Daghians the spirit of independence and self preservation." (p. 49)

Moreover, Boyadjian expressed that even after the Ottoman governor sent a letter to the Armenians, offering a peaceful solution, the Armenians refused to surrender. Similarly, Boyadjian's statement "The Armenian spirit was aroused, and there was to be no surrender under any circumstances. It was to be either a miraculous salvation, or honorable death!" (p. 58) is among the comments that gives the reader an idea regarding the radical nationalist Armenian mentality.

Britain and Russia, aiming for the independence of the Ottoman Armenians in line with their own interests, engaged in various activities through their consulates within the Ottoman Empire to arm and incite the Armenians towards rebellion (p. 19). On January 1915, the Allied Powers expanded their operations and the cooperation between the Armenians and the Allied Navy increased. American Military Historian Edward Erickson, who has done extensive research on the Musa Dagh revolt, stated that the Armenian insurgents were active in the Musa Dagh region and in close contact with the Allied Powers even before the First World War. He also explained that there was an increase in the Allied naval activity in December 1914 and that British landing parties were "gleefully greeted" by Armenians. Diplomat-Researcher Yücel Güçlü indicated that the Musa Dagh Armenians were collaborating with the Allies, especially with the British Navy's Middle East intelligence section. In addition, French Historian Maxime Gauin wrote that the French Army was planning an attack on Alexandretta to support the Musa Dagh insurgents (pp. 47-48).

Furthermore, Çiçek writes about events that took place after the Musa Dagh Armenians escaped the Ottoman Empire through the Allied Powers and the Armenian Eastern Legion that supported the French Army. According to a 1916 report, among the Armenians who had been taken to the Port Said camp in Egypt by the Allied Navy after the revolt, many of the former leaders and supporters of the Musa Dagh rebellion insisted on resuming the insurgency against the Turks (p. 82). The Armenians who were rescued from the Musa Dagh revolt by the Allied Navy returned to their homes in the Ottoman Empire after the end of the Great War. However, their return to Musa Dagh caused incidents between them and the Muslims of the region. Hovhannes Ipredjian, one of the rebel Armenians, stated that their return caused tragic consequences for the Muslims of the region. It appears that the Armenians returned to resume the war (p. 92). A quote of Ipredjian further demonstrates the intentions of the Armenian insurgents:

"When we arrived in Port Said we sent an application to the French, saying that we wanted to fight against the Turks, on condition that our

Cilicia was given to us. The French agreed. One day, French and British doctors came and examined us. Those who were healthy were enlisted; those who were too old were appointed as guards. We, the youth, were six hundred soldiers. We laid the foundation of the Armenian Legion.”  
(p. 87)

### **Actions of the Ottomans in Response to the Musa Dagh Incidents**

An examination of Ottoman sources reveals that the depiction of events in the novel contradict Ottoman archival sources and foreign archives. The so-called defense of Musa Dagh is greatly exaggerated by the Armenian survivors. The number of Ottoman soldiers involved in suppressing the rebellion and the intensity of the clashes between the two sides do not reflect the truth (pp. 103-105). Moreover, it is reported that the rebellion lasted 53 days, not 40. Rachel McGinnis Kirby emphasized that the length of the struggle was deliberately altered to capitalize on the rich biblical connotations of this number (p. 4).

Various information presented in the book indicate that the intent of the rebellious Armenians on Musa Dagh was not to defend themselves, but to cooperate with the Allied forces and to facilitate their intervention. The telegrams about the rebellion characterize the incident not as a heroic defense against the Ottoman army, but as a revolt aimed at facilitating the landing of the Allied forces on the shores of Svedia by land and sea (pp. 72- 74).

The Ottoman response to the Musa Dagh insurgency was lenient. The Armenian rebels were invited to surrender several times (pp. 68-69). The Ottoman army also acted with much caution during operations in order to avoid civilian casualties (pp. 71-72). The Ottomans warned local authorities, church leaders and priests to stay out of trouble, and the local population promised to remain loyal to the state and the government (pp. 52-53).

Similarly to the events during the Shabin-Karahisar insurgency, the Ottoman army considered the Musa Dagh revolt as a local incident that could be dealt with peacefully. The Istanbul Government was not too concerned by the revolt and paid little attention to it. The available telegrams also show that the local Ottoman authorities were in continuous contact with the insurgents and especially avoided harming civilians. This was also why the final attack on the rebels was delayed and why the army did not intervene with heavy weaponry.



Although occasional incidents were reported from the region from 1890s onwards, the governorship and the Ottoman military refrained from intervening because the government believed that these armed groups were looking for an excuse before they acted (pp. 50-51). According to the Ottoman investigation, Baron Agasi, the socialist Hunchak leader of the rebels in the Svedia region, aimed to sow seeds of enmity between Armenians and Muslims (pp. 50-51).

### **A Comprehensive Historical Analysis and Valuable Contribution to Academic Literature by Dr. Kemal Çiçek**

Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek's book is a product of comprehensive historical analysis based on in-depth research and documentary evidence. It is also the first book aiming to present the facts against Werfel's fictionalized narrative of Musa Dagh distorting historical facts. This work is a valuable contribution to the field of historical analysis and is a must-read for those who wish to be informed regarding the events of 1915 against the Armenian claims (World War I, Armenian nationalism, revolts and propaganda). Çiçek describes his study, not as a criticism of Werfel's story, but as a reconstruction of the Musa Dagh incident's history (p. 104).

Werfel's comment claiming that a poet's epic contains more reality than a historian's work is false. However, it brings to mind the common tendency among people to find propaganda more "believable" compared to facts. People are naturally inclined to believing propaganda that appeal to their emotions, nationalism and negative biases. Even though works like Werfel's novel, which distort history and are not based on reliable sources, are far from the reality, many people tend to see the propaganda in such works as "truth". Thus, it is possible for a poet with political motives to be more convincing compared to an unbiased historian and the poet's work would likely contain more "perceived truth" than a historical study.

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