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REVIEW OF  
**ARMENIAN STUDIES**  
A Biannual Journal of History, Politics, and International Relations

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Facts and Comments

**Alev KILIÇ**

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of the 1913-14 Armenian Reform Programme

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Communism Propaganda in Soviet Armenia

**Mehmet Sezai TÜRK - Abdülhakim Bahadır DARI**

**Özkan AVCI**



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YAYINCILIK

## REVIEW OF ARMENIAN STUDIES

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**Assist. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Uğur EKİNCİ** received his B.A. in International Relations and his M.A. in History from Bilkent University. He completed his Ph.D. in Politics and International Studies at SOAS University of London. He currently works as an assistant professor at the Institute of Security Sciences, Turkish National Police Academy, Ankara. Among his research interests are contemporary Balkan politics, domestic-international linkages, Turkish foreign policy, and political history.



**Prof. Dr. Naila Mamedali gizi VALIKHANLI** is a prominent scientist, historian-orientalist, the Director of National Museum of Azerbaijan History, and an academician of Azerbaijan National Academy of Science (ANAS). She conducts studies on a variety of fields that include: the problem of sources in the medieval history of the Arab Caliphate and Azerbaijan; the study, analysis, publication of medieval sources; socio-economic relations, political and cultural history, and the historical geography of the region of Caucasia; and the study of museum materials on Azerbaijan history. Some of her scientific works include *Arab geographers- travelers of IX-XII centuries on Azerbaijan* (Baku, 1974, in Azerbaijani); *Nakhchivan - from Arabs to Mongols* (Baku, 2003, in Azerbaijani); and *Zangazur- from Arabs to Mongols* (Baku, 2021, in Azerbaijani).



**Prof. Dr. Emin Arif SHIKHALIYEV** was born in 1975 in Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhchivan. He completed his undergraduate degree in 1998 from the Faculty of Language and History-Geography at Ankara University. He obtained his master's degree in 2000 and his doctoral degree in 2004 from the Social Sciences Institute at Ankara University. Since 2004, he has been serving as the Head of the Department of Caucasian History at the Nakhchivan Branch of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) and works at the Faculty of International Relations and Law at Nakhchivan State University. He became an associate professor in 2012, and a professor in 2021. During his academic career, he participated in many conferences and symposiums in Turkey, Iran, Russia, and Germany, and conducted scientific research at the UK's National Archives (London). Prof. Dr. Shikhaliyev has authored 9 books, and has published over 200 hundred articles in Azerbaijan and Turkey Turkish, as well as in Russian and English on a variety of subjects concerning the Armenian Question and the geopolitical interests of Great Powers, clash of civilizations, the Karabakh conflict, New World Order, and Caucasia.



**Prof. Dr. Mehmet Sezai TÜRK** graduated from the Faculty of Communication of Gazi University as an expert journalist in 1993. He began to work as a researcher at the Department of Printing Education of the Faculty of Technical Education in 1994. He completed his science expertise and doctoral studies in 2003. He was an Associate Doctor in Communication Sciences in 2010 and became a Professor in 2017. He has been a faculty member of the Department of Radio, Television, and Cinema of the Faculty of Communication at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University since 2018. Prof. Dr. Türk has also been serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Communication at Kyrgyzstan Manas University since September 2021.



He assumed many administrative duties throughout his career, such as the Head of Printing Education Department in 2003, Department Coordinator of European Union Credit Transfer System (ETCS) in 2003, Assignee Directorship at Gazi University Polatlı Vocational Higher School in 2003, Head of Department of Printing Education in 2004-2007-2010, Head of Audio-Visual Techniques and Media Production Department at Gazi Vocational School in 2009, Head of Accounting and Tax Department at Gazi Vocational Higher School in 2009, and Head of the Department of Radio, Television, and Cinema of Faculty of Communication at Gazi University. He has also served as a member of many academic institutions and their departments, including: Faculty Member of the Coordination Projects of Gazi University, Board Member of Gazi University Atatürk Vocational School in 2008, Member of the Board of Directors of Gazi University, Deputy Director of the LLP-Erasmus Coordinator at Gazi Vocational Higher School, Cinema Incentive Board of the Ministry of Culture, and the Associate Professorship Board of UAK. Prof. Dr. Türk has published numerous national and international articles and papers, and five books, was a part of European Union projects, four scientific research projects, five Turkish Standard studies, and has prepared reports as a technical expert on many subjects. His main fields of study are: Strategic Communication (Risk, Reputation, Topic Agenda, Image, Crisis Management), New Media, Visual Culture Analysis, Public Relations, Political Communication, Perception Management, Organizational Culture, and Body Policies.

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**Lecturer Özkan AVCI** completed his undergraduate degree in Public Relations and Advertising, Political Science and Public Administration, and Business Administration and master's degree in the Department of Public Relations and Publicity. His doctorate education continues in the field of Public Relations and Publicity. Since 2016, he has been working as a Lecturer in the Public Relations and Publicity Programme at Bartın University. He has studies on Public Relations, Emotional Intelligence, New Media, Propaganda and Communication Research that have appeared in books, book chapters, and articles published in both Turkish and international peer-reviewed journals.



**A**s always, the first article in the 45th issue of our journal is “**Facts and Comments**”. This article covers Turkey-Armenia relations as well as internal and international developments of Armenia in the period of January-June 2022. The Second Karabakh War led to a substantial change in the region, opening new horizons for establishing peace, stability, cooperation, and neighborly relations in the region. The first step to activate this regional potential will be the signing of the Peace Treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but no concrete development could be achieved during this period. Meanwhile, the peace treaty process with Azerbaijan caused heated arguments in internal politics in Armenia. In this process, the EU tried to fill the void left by the ineffective OSCE Minsk Group co-chair system, which is favored by Armenia but causes discomfort for Russia. Another development has been the initiation of a normalization process between Turkey and Armenia, with both sides designating special representatives for negotiations. The special representatives met three times, but Turkey’s insistence on holding the talks directly in respective capitals could not be realized due to Armenia’s preference to conduct them with a third-party involvement. The proposal promulgated by the Turkish and Azerbaijani Presidents to establish a regional platform of six countries (receiving cool reaction from non-regional parties), convened for its first meeting with one absentee, Georgia, on political bilateral differences with Russia. The month of April was again an occasion to bring into agenda the unfounded Armenian narrative and allegations, with the US administration again going to the extremes in this regard. This narrative and allegations used by the West reveal that they are regarded as a political tool to exert political pressure on Turkey.

In his article titled “**The Impact of Foreign Policy Thinking on the Introduction of the 1913-14 Armenian Reform Programme**”, Mehmet Uğur Ekinci elucidates how the Ottoman Empire’s decision-making elite approached the Armenian reform question in the aftermath of the Young Turk revolution and demonstrates how foreign political considerations shaped the introduction of the 1913-14 reform program known as the “Eastern Anatolian Reforms.” The Ottoman decision-makers prioritized safeguarding the Empire’s external security and international position over satisfying the reform demands of the Ottoman Armenians. Thus, Ekinci argues, Ottoman foreign policy calculations significantly affected the solutions developed for an internal problem, and, moreover, internal reform was used as a foreign policy tool.



In her article titled “**Some of the Historiographical Problems of Zangezur’s History**”, Naila Velihanly seeks to expose the falsifications and invalidity of the theories concerning the history of Zangezur of the 7-12th centuries geared towards proving that the region is an ancient Armenian land. For this, Velihanly refers to numerous primary sources and historical facts to explain that Zangezur was, in fact, the land of Caucasian Albania that witnessed many changes in ethnic makeup and political rule. Because Zangezur is a strategic region that today makes up the southern territory of Armenia and separates the main territory of Azerbaijan from the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan, the debate over its history still has ramifications for the South Caucasus today.

In his article titled “**The Reality of ‘Big Policy’ of Great Powers and their Stances on the Second Karabakh War**”, Emin Arif Shikhaliyev narrates the sequence of key events that led to the outbreak of the Second Karabakh War, what factors shaped to position of the relevant actors in this conflict, and how the outcome of the war affected these relevant actors. Shikhaliyev explains that South Caucasus may be considered a geopolitical “stage for wolves” whereby all countries claiming hegemony and regional states are seeking to assert themselves. Shikhaliyev warns that, although the war ended in Azerbaijan’s victory in the battlefield, the war nevertheless continues in the political, diplomatic and information realm. In this regard, the alliance between Azerbaijan and Turkey will play a key role in safeguarding their rights and allowing them to prevent other actors such as Armenia, Russia, or France from undermining their position in the South Caucasus.

In their article titled “**Communism Propaganda in Soviet Armenia**”, Mehmet Sezai Türk, Abdülhakim Bahadır Darı, and Özkan Avcı analyzes a select number of Soviet propaganda posters that were meant to legitimize the communist regime in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The authors explain that the Soviet administration used discourses that glorified the ideology of communism through the mass media it dominated, and in this way, it aimed for the peoples of the Soviet Union to embrace communism and implement the decisions taken by the regime without question. In this endeavor, it seems that propaganda posters were one of the preferred mediums to propagate the Soviet administration’s messages. By using the semiotics method, the authors reveal that the posters gave the message that communism played a leading role in the construction of a modern and prosperous Armenia, and at the same time, that the Armenian people were loyal to the communist ideology.

Have a nice reading and best regards,

Editor

## EDITORIAL / BAŞYAZI

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# FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

Alev KILIÇ\*

**Abstract:** *This article covers Türkiye (Turkey)-Armenia relations as well as internal and international developments of Armenia in the period of January-June 2022. The Karabagh War led to a substantial change in the region, opening new horizons for establishing peace, stability, cooperation, and neighborly relations in the region.*

*The first step to activate this huge regional potential will be the signing of the Peace Treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Despite mutually expressed constructive rhetoric to this end, no concrete development could be achieved during the period under review. Meanwhile, the peace treaty process with Azerbaijan caused heated arguments in internal politics of Armenia. As the work of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs was adversely affected following the war in Ukraine, initiatives by the European Union to fill the void has come to the fore. Russia appeared to note this development favored by Armenia with circumspection. Another noteworthy development has been the initiation of a process of normalization of relations between Türkiye and Armenia, both sides designating special representatives for negotiations. The special representatives have met three times, first in Moscow and twice in Vienna. Türkiye’s insistence on holding the talks directly in respective capitals could not be realized due to Armenia’s preference to conduct them with a third-party involvement. Regarding regional cooperation, the proposal promulgated by the Presidents of Türkiye and Azerbaijan to establish a platform of six*

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*convened for its first meeting in Moscow, with one absentee, Georgia, on political bilateral differences with Russia. As was to be expected, this regional approach has received a cool reaction by non-regional parties with interest in the region.*

*The month April was again an occasion to bring into agenda the unfounded Armenian narrative and allegations. It was again the US administration that went to extremes, with the US President repeating the very biased, baseless allegation of “genocide” multiple times. This accusation that is used by the US and the West in general clearly reveals that it is employed as a political tool to exert political pressure. However, this rhetoric is in fact casting a shadow to their own credibility, trustworthiness, neutrality, and influence.*

**Keywords:** *Pashinyan, Khachaturyan, Mirzoyan, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Zangezur Corridor, Armenia-Azerbaijan, Armenia-Turkey, European Union*

**Öz:** *Bu incelemede Ermenistan'daki iç gelişmeler ve dış dinamikleri ile Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkilerinin Ocak-Haziran 2022 tarihleri arasında gösterdiği gelişmeler ele alınmaktadır. Karabağ Savaşından sonra bölgenin değişen koşulları bölgede barış, istikrar, iş birliği ve iyi komşuluk ilişkileri tesisi yolunda büyük olanaklar ortaya çıkartmıştır. Bu bağlamda ilk öncelik, Ermenistan ile Azerbaycan arasında barış anlaşmasının imzalanması olacaktır. Dönem içinde bu yönde karşılıklı iyi niyet beyanlarına rağmen somut bir adım atılmamıştır. Azerbaycan ile barış anlaşması süreci Ermenistan iç politikasında da ateşli tartışmalara neden olmuştur. Ukrayna'daki savaş nedeniyle AGİT Minsk Grubu eş-başkanlığı sürecinin tıkanması üzerine Avrupa Birliği'nin bu rolü üstlenme çabaları ön plana çıkmıştır. Rusya'nın Ermenistan'dan kaynaklanan bu girişimleri ihtiyatla karşıladığı görülmüştür. Öte yandan, Türkiye ile Ermenistan arasında bir normalleşme süreci başlamıştır. Tarafların özel temsilcileri, ilki Moskova'da diğer ikisi Viyana'da olmak üzere üç kez görüşmüştür. Türk tarafının bu görüşmelerin iki ülke başkentlerinde yapılması önerisi Ermenistan tarafından üçüncü bir tarafın gözetimi altında yapılması ısrarı nedeniyle gerçekleşmemiştir. Bölgesel iş birliği bağlamında da Türkiye ve Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanlarının gündeme getirdiği altılı platform, ilk toplantısını dönem içinde Moskova'da bir eksikle yapmıştır. Gürcistan, Rusya ile ikili siyasi sorunları nedeniyle bu aşamada katılmamıştır.*

*Nisan ayındaki anma törenleri, gerçekçi ve hukuki temeli bulunmayan Ermeni söyleminin ve iddialarının bir kez daha gündeme taşınmasına vesile olmuştur. Burada gene en ileri ve aşırı giden ABD yönetimi olmuş, bizzat ABD Başkanı mesnetsiz soykırım suçlamasını defalarca tekrarlamıştır. ABD'nin ve genel*

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Paşinyan, Haçaturyan, Mirzoyan, Ermeni Devrimci Federasyonu, Zengezur Koridoru, Ermenistan-Azerbaycan, Azerbaycan-Türkiye, Avrupa Birliği

## Introduction

The change in the regional conditions following the Karabakh War has brought significant possibilities for facilitating peace, stability, cooperation, and good neighborly relations in the region. The first priority to prompt the regional potential in motion is, naturally, to negotiate and sign the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Despite the mutual statements of good faith in this direction, a tangible step has not been taken within the period. The 2020 November Moscow ceasefire agreement under the leadership of Russia, the 2021 January Moscow trilateral accord and the initiatives continuing within the scope of the 2021 November Sochi accord have dragged on because of Armenia's delaying tactics and efforts to bring the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs back into the equation. The European Union's endeavors to compensate the Minsk Group co-chairmanship's loss of function because of the war in Ukraine by taking on this role have stood out. The President of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister of Armenia have met twice in Brussels with the President of the European Council through trilateral meetings. Russia was observed responding in a reserved manner to these initiatives encouraged by Armenia.

Another important development is the initiation of a normalization process between Turkey and Armenia. The special representatives of both parties have met on three occasions, the first being in Moscow and the other two taking place in Vienna. The Turkish side's offer to conduct these meetings in the capitals of the two countries did not materialize due to Armenia's insistence on the meetings being conducted under the supervision of a third party. It has transpired that the goal of the Armenian side is to continue these negotiations separately from the ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan and to drive a wedge into the Turkey-Azerbaijan relations, whereas Turkey has emphasized beyond doubt that the goal of the normalization is to promote regional peace, stability, and cooperation in the Southern Caucasus and that she will hold continuous consultations with Azerbaijan to this end.

The six-country platform, which was proposed by the Turkish and Azerbaijani Presidents, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and İlham Aliyev, within the context of regional cooperation, was generally accepted by three regional countries (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) and three neighboring countries (Iran, Russia, and Türkiye) in that they would meet in a 3+3 format. Moscow held this first group meeting within the period, albeit with an absence. Georgia did not attend during this stage because of its bilateral political issues with Russia. In his statement to the TASS News Agency on 17 May, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister announced that preparations were being made for a second meeting. As one can expect, this regional approach has been met with reserved attitudes by non-regional countries interested in the region.

The peace agreement process with Azerbaijan has caused heated disputes internally in Armenia. The opposition, which consists of representatives of the militant former administrations have raised their voices and organized street demonstrations. As their numbers and representation rate are low, it has not produced results. It is worth noting that the Dashnaktsutyun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation - ARF), which is low in numbers but receives support from the West, assumed the demonstrations' lead and spokesmanship. An important development in the internal politics within the period was President Armen Sarkissian's resignation. A. Sarkissian, who was never in accord with the Nikol Pashinyan administration, joined the group that demanded Pashinyan's resignation after the Karabakh War, was in a continuous struggle for authority with Pashinyan, was revealed to have made false statements and was found to have violated the law during his application for the Presidency. He submitted his resignation during a foreign trip, left his country unlikely to return and settled in an unnamed country to which he feels a belonging. Without delay, a new president - Vahagn Khachaturyan, who is expected to be more compatible with the administration, was elected within the legal timeframe.

April has been a designated month for bringing the Armenian claims and discourse, based on the distortion of history and lacking legal bases, to the international agenda. Here, the United States (US) was, once again, the party that went too far and crossed the line. The US President himself repeated his baseless genocide accusation over and over again. This biased accusation of the US President, which is employed as a political pressure tool, now evident with other examples directed also to some others by the US and the West in general, is increasingly calling into question their own credibility, reliability, impartiality, and influence.

All these developments require an extensive evaluation.

## 1. Domestic Developments in Armenia

With a sudden decision on 8 December 2021, the Armenian Minister of Environment was dismissed without any explanation and Hakob Simidyan was assigned in his place on 10 December. Another minister change occurred in late March. The Armenian Minister of Emergency Situations was arrested on 30 March on charges of corruption. Armen Pambukhchyan was assigned in his place on 12 April.<sup>1</sup>

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1 "Armenia Gets New Minister of Emergency Situations," *Hetq*, April 12, 2022, <https://hetq.am/en/article/143324>

During his press statement to the press on 23 December, the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs at the Office of the Prime Minister explained that Armenia needs to know its enemies. Zareh Sinanyan, who is of US descent, expressed that Armenians do not know their enemies well enough, that they need to know them well in order to be able to fight them, that they have been living alongside them since the 11th century, yet still do not know them, that they still are receiving blows from them and, for this reason, the Armenian government needs to cultivate capable Armenologists, Turcologists, and Azerologists, that the primary goal needs to be bringing more attention to the Armenian Diaspora's voice and that the parliament could be divided into two chambers for this purpose<sup>2</sup>.

On December, the opposition began frequently alleging that the government proponents were obtaining government contracts and accusing the administration of corruption. The primary target was Assembly President Alen Simonyan. Pashinyan resolutely rejected these claims.

During the 7 January 2022 Orthodox Christmas rite, the Armenian Catholicos of Etchmiadzin Karekin II gave a speech criticizing the administration's abuse of power. This situation signified that the tension between the religious officials and the administration was continuing<sup>3</sup>.

On 10 January, it was announced that a corruption and unfair acquisition case was filed against the Armenian Chief of General Staff, two other generals, and the former Minister of Defense. During the trial that began on 19 January, the four defendants were charged with causing a total loss of 4.7 million dollars to the state. Afterwards, three generals were discharged. In this context, there have been other dismissals at the top ranks of the army, including the head of military intelligence<sup>4</sup>. During his parliament speech, the Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan explained that this was a part of the ongoing defense reforms. When asked why no appointment was made to the Chief of General Staff, he replied that the task was in competent hands by a deputy<sup>5</sup>.

The President of Armenia, Armen Sarkissian, not returning to his country following an overseas trip, announced that he had resigned during his "short vacation". A. Sarkissian, who is not expected to return to the country as he

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2 "There are already candidates for Diaspora Affairs Commissioners in foreign countries – Sinanyan," *ArmenPress*, December 23, 2021, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1071567.html>

3 "Karekin II Speaks Out Against Abuse of Power in Armenia," *Asbarez*, January 7, 2022, <https://asbarez.com/karekin-ii-speaks-out-against-abuse-of-power-in-armenia/>

4 "Armenian Army Chief, Ex-Defense Minister Go on Trial Over 'Faulty' Weapons," *RFL/RL*, January 19, 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armania-military-weapons-fraud/31662118.html>

5 "Defense Minister Explains Sackings of Top Generals," *RFL/RL*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/31732471.html>

could be subjected to judicial prosecution due to his false statements and actions, did not clarify where he will be residing. He explained that his reasons for resigning were for being unable to influence government policies and intervene against the difficult situation Armenia faced with, as he had very limited authority. In addition, he expressed that various political groups were conducting verbal abuse against him and his family members<sup>6</sup>. The government did not react to this sudden resignation and announced that preparations for the new presidential election would begin duly. The opposition was also unresponsive and indifferent to the resignation. The only expression of displeasure came from the Diaspora. Pashinyan stated that the new president would be determined by his own party which has the majority in the parliament and that he would serve in accord with the administration.

The High-Tech Industry Minister, Vahagn Khachaturyan, announced on 31 January that the Prime Minister offered him the presidency. The 61-year-old economist Khachaturyan was a member of former president Levon Ter-Petrosyan's political party and served as Yerevan's mayor between the years 1992-1996. The opposition announced that they would not present a candidate, nevertheless that they were displeased with the choice and would not be participating in the election. Khachaturyan expressed his displeasure to this decision of the opposition and that he was ready to parlay with the opposition leaders and to listen to their concerns. During the second round of the voting in the Parliament, in which the opposition did not participate, Khachaturyan was elected on 3 March as Armenia's fifth President by the votes of the governing parties<sup>7</sup>. The President of Russia Vladimir Putin congratulated him the same day. The new President officially took office with the ceremony conducted on 13 March. The opposition boycotted also the ceremony and did not attend<sup>8</sup>.

As a consequence of the conditions caused by the pandemic, the 28 January Armenian Army Day took place in a routine and lifeless manner. Senior members of the government and senior officers did not attend the ceremonies. The only event that was realized was the award ceremony of the Armenian Apostolic Church. On this occasion, the Armenian Catholicos of Cilicia (in Antelias/Lebanon) Aram I also sent a congratulatory message.

A US-based research firm, American International Republican Institute (IRI), stated on 4 February that, according to a survey, the Armenian people are

6 "President Armen Sarkissian resigns amid investigation into secret citizenship," *Armenian Weekly*, January 26, 2022, <https://armenianweekly.com/2022/01/26/president-armen-sarkissian-resigns-amidinvestigation-into-secret-citizenship/>

7 "Armenian Lawmakers Elect Former Minister Khachatrian As President," *RFL/RL*, March 3, 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-khachatrian-elected-president/31734110.html>

8 "Kachatrian Sworn In As New President Of Armenia," *RFL/RL*, March 13, 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-new-president-khachatrian/31750756.html>



pessimistic for the future. According to the survey, the majority do not expect any significant economic benefit from the opening of the borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan. %90 of the participants viewed Turkey as the primary political threat, while %47 considered Azerbaijan as the main threat. %47 of the participants supported the establishing of a dialogue with Turkey. The survey indicated that %61 of the Armenian people are of the opinion that the country is being governed, not by the public majority, but in accordance with the interests of certain groups. When one recalls that Pashinyan had received %54 of the votes during the 2020 June elections, the message behind the survey is clear<sup>9</sup>.

The Armenian opposition announced their decision as of 27 April to initiate street protests to overthrow the government<sup>10</sup>.

In his statement on 12 April, the Armenian Minister of Education announced that they were envisaging the increase of Russian language education in the schools.

Armenia's economy was unable to overcome the rough period as a consequence of the Karabakh War, the Covid-19 pandemic and afterwards, the situation that Russia's economy is faced with. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) foresees that Armenia's economy will have an even slower growth rate than what the government is anticipating for the coming years. The economy's growth rate dropped from 4.5% to 1.5% in 2022. Similarly, the Central Bank of Armenia lowered its GNP growth prediction from 5.3% to 1.6%. The Moody's credit rating agency fixed the rating at Ba3, but changed the outlook to negative<sup>11</sup>. Within the scope of its 432 million dollar stand-by agreement, the IMF lastly gave 72 million more dollars, thus, the total payment reached 396 million dollars. Armenia's total public debt reached 9.3 billion dollars, which is a record high. This constitutes 63.4% of the GNP. The Minister of Finance is expecting for this rate to drop down to 60.2% at the end of 2022. The IMF is of the belief that this will not be possible earlier than 2024<sup>12</sup>.

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9 "IRI polls in Armenia: 'Turkey and Azerbaijan are a threat to Armenia's security'," *JAM News*, February 4, 2022,

<https://jam-news.net/iri-polls-in-armenia-turkey-and-azerbaijan-are-a-threat-to-armenias-security/>

10 "Armenia opposition vows to unseat PM over Karabakh," *Arab News*, May 3, 2022,

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2074556/world>

11 "Armenia, Government of — Moody's changes Armenia's outlook to negative from stable; affirms Ba3 rating," *Moody's*, March 24, 2022, [https://www.moody's.com/research/Moodys-changes-Armeniasoutlook-to-negative-from-stable-affirms-Ba3—PR\\_463997?cy=can&lang=en](https://www.moody's.com/research/Moodys-changes-Armeniasoutlook-to-negative-from-stable-affirms-Ba3—PR_463997?cy=can&lang=en)

12 "Republic of Armenia: Technical Assistance Report-Government Finance Statistics," *IMF*, April 1, 2022, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2022/04/01/Republic-of-Armenia-Technical-Assistance-Report-Government-Finance-Statistics-515966>

It is estimated that 10-12% of the Armenian population is living on the savings of workers sent from abroad. According to the data of the Central Bank of Armenia, 127-9 million dollars were received in January through this way. 31.8% of this is from Russia and 32% from the US. On the other hand, the Minister of Finance mentioned the possibility of a 40% reduction in the remittances of approximately 850 million dollars sent from Russia this year.

It has been decided to conduct a general population census in Armenia between 13-22 October.

## **2. The Peace Agreement Process Between Armenia and Azerbaijan**

Soon after the November 2021 Sochi trilateral meeting, which was held to review the application of the November 2020 Moscow ceasefire agreement's provisions and reaching an agreement regarding the steps to be taken for achieving a lasting peace agreement, the US Secretary of State quickly interceded in the OSCE Ministerial Council held in Stockholm in early December, met with the parties, including the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov, and explained the policy that the US would follow: "We urge all parties to resolve other outstanding issues like border delimitation and demarcation, the restoration of economic and transport links, and to continue to engage with the Minsk Group co-chairs for a lasting peaceful end to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict."<sup>13</sup> The US has persisted in its stance of disregarding the developments on the ground, overlooking that the Nagorno-Karabakh War rhetoric is no longer valid. It continues advocating the Armenian viewpoints and expectations throughout the period, together with France, another ardent supporter of the Armenian narrative.

During their discussions within the Stockholm OSCE Council, the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers traded accusations. The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan called for OSCE's mediation in the resolution of the issues and expressed the belief that an independent state must be established within Nagorno-Karabakh. The attempt to bring the two ministers to meet with the co-chairs were futile and only the Armenian Minister had a meeting with the co-chairs. In a declaration they published, the co-chairs stated their wish to visit the region as soon as possible. However, this did not materialize during the period under review.

The 3+3 regional cooperation platform proposed by the Presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan was held in Moscow on 10 December. The statement of the

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13 "Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the OSCE Ministerial Council," *US Mission to the OSCE*, December 2, 2021, <https://osce.usmission.gov/secretary-of-state-anthony-blinken-at-the-osce-ministerial/>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye (Turkey) issued the following statements before and after the meeting:

“The first meeting of the 3+3 regional cooperation platform proposed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev for achieving lasting peace and stability in the South Caucasus will convene in Moscow on 10 December 2021.

Turkey will be represented at the meeting by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sedat Önal. Deputy foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Russian Federation and İran will also attend the meeting<sup>14</sup>.”

The statement made following the meeting is as follows:

“The first meeting of the 3+3 regional consultations took place on 10 December 2021 in Moscow at the Deputy Foreign Ministers level. In addition to the Russian Federation, Türkiye was represented with a delegation headed by the Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sedat Önal at this first meeting which is also attended by Azerbaijan, Armenia and İran.

A constructive exchange of views took place at the meeting about multidimensional progress in regional cooperation where it was agreed to focus on practical issues of common interest to all participants. Within the context of practical steps that can be taken for enhancing peace and stability through confidence building, it was foreseen to give priority to trade, economy, transport, culture and humanitarian issues.

Representatives of the five participating countries agreed to adopt a flexible working format and expressed their hope that Georgia too will join the consultations in the future.

The working procedures of the 3+3 consultations will be determined through contacts among the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.”<sup>15</sup>

The reports in the Armenian media regarding the 3+3 meeting express that the means of multilateral regional cooperation are being discussed and that an agreement has been reached for focusing on the practical subjects which all

14 “No: 409, 9 December 2021, Press Release Regarding the First Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Platform for Lasting Peace and Stability in the South Caucasus,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, December 9, 2021, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-409\\_-guney-kafkasya-da-kalici-baris-ve-istikrarin-tesisine-yonelik-bolgesel-isbirligi-platfomunun-ilk-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-409_-guney-kafkasya-da-kalici-baris-ve-istikrarin-tesisine-yonelik-bolgesel-isbirligi-platfomunun-ilk-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa)

15 “No: 413, 10 December 2021, Press Release Regarding the 3+3 Consultations,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, December 10, 2021, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-413\\_-3-3-bolgesel-istisareleri-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-413_-3-3-bolgesel-istisareleri-hk.en.mfa)

parties of the platform have interest in. Among these subjects are confidence building measures, the commercial, economic, transportation, cultural, and humanitarian dimension and responding to common threats. It was stated that the representatives of the five attending countries expressed that the door is open to Georgia and that they wish for Georgia to join the platform.

In the margins of the Eastern Partnership Summit held by the EU, the President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev and Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan met with the European Council President in Brussels on 14 December, first within a bilateral meeting and in a trilateral meeting afterwards. The European Council President published a written statement following the meeting that he mediated. The European Council President's statement indicated that he made a guarantee to the parties of the EU's promise to work closely with Armenia and Azerbaijan to end the conflict, establish an atmosphere of cooperation and trust and ultimately reach a comprehensive peace agreement. The Minsk Group co-chairs not being mentioned in the statement led to comments of the EU preparing to undertake their responsibility from now on. Within the period, the special representative that the EU assigned for the "South Caucasus and Georgian Crisis" has made contacts in the region in an increasingly visible manner.

The President of Azerbaijan Aliyev brought forward the "Zangezur Corridor" during the negotiations in Brussels as well and drew a comparison with the Lachin Corridor. Pashinyan reacted as expected and refused the concept of a corridor outside of his control within his own sovereign territory. Aliyev reiterated his views during the period, accused Armenia of obstructing the transportation corridors and expressed that such opposition can be solved through forcible means if necessary.

Both leaders met also on 16 December, in a trilateral meeting upon the invitation of the President of France, in his capacity as France assuming the EU Presidency. No statement was issued concerning this meeting. The President of France wrote "We will never abandon the Armenians" in his message posted on social media following the meeting.

To maintain this process, the President of France held a four-way meeting on 4 February via Zoom with the two leaders and the European Council President. In the meeting, the developments since their meeting in December were discussed and it was emphasized that this meeting provides a valuable opportunity for reviewing many aspects. The statements made following the meeting indicated that a concrete understanding was not reached.

During his online press conference on 24 December, Pashinyan made statements regarding the status of Karabakh which led to severe reactions and criticism from the Diaspora and the illegal Armenian administration in Karabakh. In summary, contrary to all the nationalistic rhetoric of the administrations before him, Pashinyan claimed that, during their meetings with the co-chairs and the preparation of the agreement drafts, they have agreed to resolve the subject within the framework of the United Nations principles and resolutions, that the UN resolutions are clear and are predicated on the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, therefore, Karabakh gaining independence or unifying with Armenia was never fundamentally attainable. This explanation led to criticism and accusations of abandoning Armenia's Karabakh cause. In his defense, Pashinyan expressed "I talked about the content of the negotiations that existed before I became Prime Minister in 2018. This is also why the war broke out."<sup>16</sup>

Pashinyan's statements during a similar press conference on 25 January particularly raised the eyebrows of the Diaspora. Once again, Pashinyan referred to the former administrations and explained that Armenia does not show hesitation concerning the issue of the Turkey-Armenia border and that the driving force behind the subject of recognizing the genocide are the Diaspora and diaspora organizations.

The officials of Azerbaijan announced that they issued international warrants against the leadership of the illegal Armenian administration in Karabakh due to the war crimes they committed. Likewise, the officials of Azerbaijan also made similar attempts against former Armenian presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan due to the war crimes they committed during their time in Karabakh. On the other hand, on 22 February, the illegal administration in Karabakh welcomed Russia's decision to recognize the separatist regimes in Donbas with joy and appreciation, expressing their hopes that this situation would establish a precedent for themselves.

During early March, the European Parliament approved by majority vote a one-sided and misleading resolution which accuses Azerbaijan of systematically destroying the Armenian cultural properties in Nakhchivan and Karabakh. The chairman of the Armenia-European Union friendship group conveyed his contentment for the resolution and highlighted that the illegal Karabakh administration's alleged foreign minister's visit to Brussels and the friendship group formed between the illegal administration and the European Parliament were influential in the making of the decision. This admission, demonstrating who the European Parliament recognizes and cooperates with, provides sufficient ground to assess the decision's eligibility and reliability.

16 "Armenia PM responds to criticism from Karabakh officials in regard to his statements," *News.am*, December 26, 2021, <https://news.am/eng/news/679445.html>

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson gave the following response on 11 March regarding the final situation in the peace agreement:

“The signing of the agreement should be surely preceded by a negotiation process. Since mutual statements have not yet developed into a concrete negotiation process, as the two countries do not have rich experience of direct negotiations, Armenia will probably soon apply to the mediators - the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to initiate the peace negotiations with Azerbaijan. The issue is currently being elaborated.”<sup>17</sup>

This suggestion, which is not expected to bear results, once again reveals Armenia’s delaying tactics and its expectations from its Western allies.

In response to the question concerning the Nakhchivan corridor signed between Azerbaijan and Iran, the spokesperson stated:

“Tehran and Baku had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on building the 55-Kilometer Zangezur-Nakhchivan highway through Iran. The link connecting Zangezur in west Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan will be in the form of a corridor that runs just five kilometers from the border between Iran and Armenia and will include railways, roads and electricity transfer facilities. Baku had been seeking to set up a similar corridor to Nakhchivan through the Armenian territory in return for granting access to Armenia to a corridor that connects the country to Karabakh region inside Azerbaijan.”<sup>18</sup>

As it seems, Armenia is once again faced with a circumstance of condemning itself to be removed from regional connections.

Azerbaijan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeyhun Bayramov announced on 11 March that they sent a five-article document regarding the normalization of relations to Armenia and that they are awaiting a reply. The document has been made public on 14 March. It was written in the statement that Azerbaijan was ready to negotiate a peace agreement, given the condition that Armenia accepts these five basic principles. The articles are the following:

“- Mutual recognition of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of internationally recognized borders and political independence of each other;

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17 “Answer of the MFA Spokesperson to the question of ‘Armenpress’ news agency,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, March 11, 2022, [https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/03/11/spox\\_comment\\_/11341](https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/03/11/spox_comment_/11341)

18 “Iran agrees to host Azerbaijani corridor bypassing Armenia,” *ParsToday*, March 12, 2022, [https://parstoday.com/en/news/iran-il68616-iran\\_agrees\\_to\\_host\\_azerbaijani\\_corridor\\_bypassing\\_armenia](https://parstoday.com/en/news/iran-il68616-iran_agrees_to_host_azerbaijani_corridor_bypassing_armenia)

- Mutual confirmation of the absence of territorial claims against each other and acceptance of legally binding obligations not to raise such a claim in future;
- Obligation to refrain in their inter-State relations from undermining the security of each other, from threat or use of force both against political independence and territorial integrity, and in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the UN Charter;
- Delimitation and demarcation of the state border, and establishment of the diplomatic relations;
- Unblocking of the transportation and other communications, building other communications as appropriate, and establishment of cooperation in other fields of mutual interest.”<sup>19</sup>

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued this statement on 14 March:

“The Republic of Armenia responded to the proposals of the Republic of Azerbaijan and applied to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship to organize negotiations on the signing of peace agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the basis of the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Helsinki Final Act.”<sup>20</sup>

It was explained that the Armenian Prime Minister made a phone call with the US Secretary of State within the same day and the parties agreed on the peace negotiations being conducted through the Minsk Group co-chairs.

On 21 March, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs talked with both sides regarding the proposal. It is doubtful that Russia, especially in light of the current relations, would be open to sharing the process, which has been running under its leadership, with the two antagonist countries. Azerbaijan did not respond to Armenia’s Minsk Group suggestion. A response was also not received from the Minsk Group concerning the topic.

On 21 March, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs issued a follow-up statement regarding Azerbaijan’s five article proposal. In summary, Minister Mirzoyan stated the following:

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19 “No:117/22, Head of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Leyla Abdullayeva answers the media’s question,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, accessed June 27, 2022, <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no11722>

20 “MFA Statement,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, March 14, 2022, [https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/03/14/Statement\\_MFA/11345](https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/03/14/Statement_MFA/11345)

“Ultimately, there is nothing inadmissible in Azerbaijan’s proposal that was passed to Yerevan on March 10 except that these issues do not fully address the possible agenda of comprehensive peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We consider the rights of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and the addressing of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh to be key and fundamental. We do not make any contradiction between territorial integrity and the right [of peoples] to self-determination or in the demarcation of borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We strongly believe that it does not concern the rights of Nagorno-Karabakh’s Armenians, their status, etc.”<sup>21</sup>

It is possible to make an inference that, if Armenia does not back down from these statements, it finally has recognized Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity, including Karabakh. The illegal Armenian administration in Karabakh must have also come to this interpretation as it has declared that it will never accept living under the Azerbaijan administration under any circumstances, that this constitutes its red line and that it will not give up on its struggle with this issue. On the other hand, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by inviting the United Nations Representative in Yerevan to the Ministry on 19 March and claiming that the UN violated its principle of neutrality, delivered a formal protest. Its justification was that the UN Representative in Baku had attended a celebration in the city of Shusha, which is unquestionably a piece of land that belongs to Azerbaijan and is liberated from occupation. These differing discourses, inherently, hinder reliability and credibility.

Afterwards, Armenia declared a 6-article follow-up statement concerning the peace agreement negotiations, which is based on the subject of Karabakh’s status and the Minsk Group’s mediation in essence. Azerbaijan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed during an interview on 10 May that the 6 articles presented by Armenia did not constitute a “proposal” and that Azerbaijan is not interested in the mediation of the Minsk Group.

On 29 March, Armenia announced that it is ready to “immediately” to start bilateral peace talks and alleged that the motive behind this decision was preventing further military action by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh.

When Armenia’s request for the mediation of the Minsk Group co-chairs was left unanswered, the European Council President stepped in once again and invited both sides to Brussels on 6 April for negotiations. The OSCE US mission’s statement concerning the invitation said:

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21 “Azerbaijan’s Proposal ‘Not Fully Addressing’ Possible Peace Agenda,” *Azatoryun*, March 21, 2022, <https://www.azatoryun.am/a/31763387.html>



“We welcome the announcement that talks between Prime Minister Pashinyan & President Aliyev will take place in Brussels April 6. We call for greater attention to the humanitarian situation in Nagorno Karabakh & reiterate support for a diplomatic solution to all outstanding issues.”<sup>22</sup>

Prior to going to Brussels, Pashinyan made a phone conversation with the US Secretary of State.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland paid a visit to the region in his capacity as the OSCE term chairman and met with the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs on 1 April. Minister Mirzoyan repeated his suggestion of conducting the negotiations through the co-chairs and emphasized, this time using the title of the illegal, unrecognized so-called state in Karabakh, that their rights and status are essential for the Armenian side.

The trilateral meeting held with the European Council President on 6 April, in Brussels, at a working dinner, lasted approximately 4.5 hours. The Council President published a written statement following the meeting. In brief, the statement conveyed that the two leaders pledged to quickly initiate a tangible process for the preparation of a peace treaty text, that they would give the necessary instructions to their Foreign Ministers to accomplish it and that they came to terms regarding the formation of a joint border commission. The Council President, without going into details, expressed that the parties have a better understanding with regards to the parameters of the agreement as a result of the negotiations. Yet again, no reference was made to the Minsk Group by the Council President<sup>23</sup>.

After Prime Minister Pashinyan returned to Yerevan, he made a public briefing and evaluation speech at the Ministerial Cabinet about the Brussels meeting. He conveyed that the meeting was quite successful, shared information in line with the Council President and expressed that the essence of the meeting were the topics of security and stability.

On 8 April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye made the following statement concerning the trilateral meeting:

“We welcome the decision by Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of

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22 “U.S. welcomes Pashinyan-Aliyev meeting scheduled for April 6,” *Arka.am*, April 1, 2022, [https://arka.am/en/news/politics/u\\_s\\_welcomes\\_pashinyan\\_aliyev\\_meeting\\_scheduled\\_for\\_april\\_6/](https://arka.am/en/news/politics/u_s_welcomes_pashinyan_aliyev_meeting_scheduled_for_april_6/)

23 Heydar Isayev, Joshua Kucera, and Ani Mejlumyan, “Armenia and Azerbaijan make diplomatic progress in Brussels,” *Eurasianet*, April 7, 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-and-azerbaijan-make-diplomatic-progress-in-brussels>

Armenia reached at a meeting hosted by the President of the European Council Charles Michel on 6 April 2022 in Brussels to instruct their respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs to begin the preparations for a peace treaty as well as their agreement on the establishment of a joint border commission by the end of April between the two countries.

Republic of Türkiye supports and actively contributes to the efforts for establishing peace and stability in the region.”<sup>24</sup>

Following his meeting with the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs in Moscow on 7 April, Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs criticized the West’s unwise undertakings concerning Karabakh during a joint press conference. Russian Minister Lavrov claimed that the Western powers were attempting to exclude Russia due to the situation in Ukraine, usurp the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations and utilize the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict against Russia. He stated that the US and France ceased working with Russia within the framework of the Minsk group and accused the European Union of attempting to lay claim to the agreements that Russia had ensured between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

France’s Minsk Group co-chair visited Armenia on 11 April and expressed during the talks that his country wishes to resume the mediation practices. The US Minsk Group co-chair visited Armenia on 18 April and conducted high-level meetings. These separate, individual visits only to Armenia inevitably were indicators that the co-chair system has collapsed.

On 11 April, the President of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister of Armenia informed the President of Russia by phone on the Brussels meetings

Prime Minister Pashinyan gave an address to the parliament on 13 April for roughly one hour on how Armenia should act in the current circumstances. This speech drew reactions on a wide scale from the opposition, the Diaspora, and particularly the Karabakh Armenians. In summary, Pashinyan’s statements, indicating that his government is ready to officially recognize Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity and that international pressure to curb his demands concerning the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is increasing, are as follows:<sup>25</sup>

24 “No: 122, 8 April 2022, Press Release Regarding the Meeting Between Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Hosted by Charles Michel, President of the European Council, on 6 April 2022 in Brussels,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, April 8, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-122\\_-azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-ermenistan-basbakani-ab-konseyi-baskani-gorusmesi-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-122_-azerbaycan-cumhurbaskani-ermenistan-basbakani-ab-konseyi-baskani-gorusmesi-hk.en.mfa)

25 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s speech at the National Assembly during the discussion of the performance report of the Government Action Plan for 2021,” *Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, April 13, 2022, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2022/04/13/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech/>

“Today the international community clearly tells us that to be the only country in the world that on a bilateral level does not recognize the territorial integrity of an ally of Turkey, Azerbaijan, is a great danger not only for Artsakh but also for Armenia.

Today, the international community again tells us to lower the bar a bit regarding the question of the status of Artsakh, and you will ensure a great international consolidation around Armenia and Artsakh.

Otherwise, the international community says, do not rely on us, not because we do not want to help you, but because we cannot help you.

[...]

What this means in practice, what schedule, what format, still needs to be discussed and decided. But signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan as soon as possible is part of our plans.

[...]

We have operatively discussed these proposals and stated that there is nothing unacceptable in them for Armenia, especially since Armenia, de jure, recognized the territorial integrity and inviolability of borders of Azerbaijan by ratifying the Agreement on the Establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1992, and that recognition is still part of our domestic legislation.

We have stated that Armenia has never had territorial claims from Azerbaijan and the Karabakh issue is not a matter of territory but of rights. Therefore, we have stated that the security guarantees of the Armenians of Karabakh, the provision of their rights and freedoms and the clarification of the final status of Nagorno Karabakh are of fundamental importance for Armenia.”

The following day, Pashinyan gave a speech on the topic at the Parliament, expressed that he stood behind his statements of yesterday and defended himself with these words:

“[...] what I am talking about is about not surrendering Karabakh, dear colleagues. Note, it’s about not surrendering, because if we go the other way, we will surrender Karabakh. [...] There is an impression that there are people who dream that the people leave Karabakh as soon as possible. No, we say that the people of Karabakh should not leave Karabakh, the people of Karabakh should live in Karabakh, the people of Karabakh should have rights, freedoms, status in Karabakh. [...]”<sup>26</sup>

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26 “Excerpts of Pashinyan’s Speeches on April 13, 14,” *The Armenian Mirror Spectator*, April 19, 2022, <https://mirrorspectator.com/2022/04/19/excerpts-of-pashinyans-speeches-on-april-13-14/>

The opposition, which is supported by the Karabakh Armenians and the radical elements of the Diaspora, accused Pashinyan of treason and onwards from 25 April, declared to continuously conduct street protests and demonstrations until Pashinyan resigns. The most severe attacks and slurs against Pashinyan are being perpetuated under the leadership of the ARF, which is a part of the former President of Armenia Kocharyan's party coalition and receives its actual power and financial backing from its largest base in the US. In its communique of 14 April, the ARF declared that it is prepared to cooperate with everybody who is ready to fight for Armenia and "Artsakh" (the illegal Armenian administration in Karabakh). When one remembers ARF's history of terrorism, it is clear how this communique can be interpreted. It is known who battered the then-Armenian Parliament Speaker, current Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan to the point of hospitalization, in front of his wife, during the protests initiated after the defeat in the Karabakh War.

The intensity of the protests increased from 1 May onwards; roads were blocked and traffic was hampered. On 3 May, the police were forced to intervene, arresting about 200 people. Among those arrested, most of them being ARF members and supporters, was the ASALA terrorist murderer Hampig Sassounian, who assassinated the Turkish Los Angeles Consul General in 1982, sentenced to life imprisonment but released with the approval of the California Governor<sup>27</sup>. Once again, the leadership of the demonstrations was assumed by the ARF militants, who have a presence in the Parliament through the Deputy Speaker Iskhan Saghatelyan, a member of the ARF. He publicly confirmed this on 16 June during a meeting with journalists, saying: "the coordination of the actions of the 'resistance' movement and the responsibility of making final decisions was put on the National Assembly Deputy Speaker, member of the 'Dashnaksutyun' party."

While these demonstrations have caused a general disorder and community unease, they did not constitute a threat against the Pashinyan administration. The reputation of the old administrations and the representatives of the radical militant elements, who form the opposition, did not impress Armenian society. Thus, the aim of the demonstrations was not to present an alternative to or taking over the government, but rather limited to demanding the resignation of Pashinyan and opposing the peace process.

The spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed on 14 April that Russia is determined to support the signing of a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The spokesperson explained that the "Basic Principles for the Establishment of Interstate Relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia" proposed by Azerbaijan and Armenia's response to this must

27 "Yerevan police detain ASALA fighter Hampig Sassounian," *Panorama*, May 5, 2022, <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2022/05/05/police-Hampig-Sassounian/2677262>

form a basis for the peace agreement talks to commence between the two countries<sup>28</sup>. The spokesperson reminded that the topic was essentially discussed during the phone conversations between the two country leaders and the President of Russia and stated that the subject was also reviewed one day prior in Moscow amongst the Armenian and Russian Foreign Ministers.

The spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed that the US and France ceased all contacts with Russia within the Minsk Group co-chairmanship on 24 February, when in fact the actual situation in the Southern Caucasus did not allow for the talks to end, that because the US and France have ended their cooperation as co-chairs, consistent steps needed to be taken continuously for ensuring the long-term peace and stability in the region. The spokesperson stated that the Russian co-chair, in this case, will function as the Special Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia from now on to continue the normalization of the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Reacting to this statement, the US Department of State spokesperson stated that the US is ready to support a long-term, far-reaching peace between the two countries bilaterally with like-minded countries, as well as in the capacity of a Minsk Group co-chair.

On 19 May, the European Council President extended an invitation for a third summit meeting. It was striking that this call was made right after the meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the occasion of the Commonwealth of Independent States meeting held in Tajikistan on 12 May, and that this meeting was held soon after the parties “confirmed that the commitments agreed in Moscow were meticulously respected”. Again, in a visit that might have been connected to this, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Brussels during 17-18 May on the occasion of the Armenia-EU Partnership Council and hereby contacted with the EU high-level officials.

The trilateral summit meeting in Brussels was held on 22 May. Following the meeting, the European Council President issued a statement. In this statement, the EU Council President conveyed that the following subjects were discussed.

- **Border issues:** The first meeting of the demarcation commission will be held in the coming days.
- **Transportation:** The parties agreed on the opening of transportation routes.

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28 Elena Teslova, “Russian FM discusses Karabakh with Armenian counterpart,” *Anadolu Agency*, April 15, 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/russian-fm-discusses-karabakh-with-armenian-counterpart/2564634>

- **Peace agreement:** The parties agree to further their talks on this issue. In this context, the President of the European Council himself noted that he underlined the necessity to address the rights and safety of the ethnic Armenian population in Karabakh.
- **Social economic development:** The EU Economic Advisory Group will assist both parties in the economic development of the two countries and their peoples.

The EU Council President stated that they foresee a fourth summit meeting in July-August.

During a statement regarding the subject, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson criticized<sup>29</sup> on 25 May “the EU’s stubborn attempts to insert itself into these trilateral agreements at the highest level”, saying “we expect Brussels to help carry them out, not play geopolitical games” and “we don’t want this anymore”.

In reaction to the continuing initiatives of Armenia concerning the status of Karabakh, the President of Azerbaijan said on 16 June,<sup>30</sup> “If Armenia continues to call into question Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity, then Azerbaijan will have no choice but to do the same against Armenia.” In that context, President Aliyev described Armenia’s southeast Syunik (Zangezur) province as ‘historically Azerbaijani’ territory.

### 3. Armenia’s Foreign Relations

The foreign relations of Armenia within the period focused on mostly on the peace process with Azerbaijan and the normalization process with Türkiye. On the other hand, the primary and traditional motive of Armenia’s foreign policy, to maintain its relations with Russia as much as possible has continued, together with taking new initiatives in improving its relations with the powers that it can serve with its geopolitical position and balance Russia, without creating any doubt in its allegiance to Russia.

President A. Sarkissian visited Qatar on 8 December and asked for cooperation and support in making Armenia an advanced technology center during his

29 “Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, May 25, 2022,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, May 25, 2022, [https://mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/1814705/](https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1814705/); “Захарова: В Москве видят упорные попытки ЕС вклиниться в процесс реализации договоренностей лидеров Армении, Азербайджана и России,” *Arminfo.info*, May 25, 2022, [https://arminfo.info/full\\_news.php?id=69652](https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=69652)

30 Ruslan Rehimov, “Azerbaijani leader warns Armenia against territorial demands over Karabakh,” *Anadolu Agency*, June 16, 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/azerbaijani-leader-warns-armenia-against-territorial-demands-over-karabakh/2615683>

meeting with the Prince. He emphasized that Qatar Airways making flights four days a week to Doha Yerevan is contributing to the development of the relations<sup>31</sup>.

Pashinyan, who was invited to the US President's "Democracy Summit", stated during his virtual speech on 10 December that Armenia's democracy is faced with many dangers and claimed that the greatest danger -implying Azerbaijan without naming it directly- are the military threats against their security. Moreover, he argued that Armenia has chosen democracy over authoritarianism twice, that the first choice was the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" which brought him to power and the second choice was the 2021 June elections in which his party gained the majority<sup>32</sup>.

On 13 December, Eric Zemmour, the far-right party candidate of the French presidency electoral campaign, came to Armenia while Valerie Pécresse, another candidate, visited Armenia on 21 December. They, in an unprecedented way, with the aim of gaining the votes of French citizens of Armenian descent, conducted propaganda in Armenia. Zemmour found a suitable environment for Christian solidarity, xenophobia and Islamophobic discourses in Armenia. Pécresse, however, went to Karabakh and met with the illegitimate Armenian administration. Pécresse's travel, violating Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, was protested in Azerbaijan<sup>33</sup>. The Mayor of Paris also visited Armenia for an official visit on 27 May. She additionally met with the illegal authorities of Karabakh Armenians, though in the Syunik (Zangezur) province of Armenia.<sup>34</sup>

The Secretary of Armenia's National Security Council visited the US on 16 December and met with the US National Security Advisor. The topics of the peace process with Azerbaijan and normalization process with Turkey were brought up<sup>35</sup>.

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31 "Working visit of the President Armen Sarkissian to the State of Qatar," *President of the Republic of Armenia*, December 8, 2021, <https://www.president.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2021/12/08/President-Armen-Sarkissians-working-visit-to-the-State-of-Qatar/>

32 "Armenia is committed to contributing to the global mission of strengthening democracy – PM Pashinyan delivers remarks at 'Summit for Democracy'," *Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, December 10, 2022, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2021/12/10/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech/>

33 "Fransa Cumhurbaşkanı adayı Zemmour seçim kampanyası için Ermenistan'a gitti!", *Artı 33*, 13 Aralık 2021, <https://www.arti33.com/fransa-cumhurbaskani-adayi-zemmour-secim-kampanyasi-icin-ermenistana-gitti/>

34 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo arrives in Yerevan for official visit," *Public Radio of Armenia*, May 26, 2022, <https://en.armradio.am/2022/05/26/paris-mayor-anne-hidalgo-arrives-in-yerevan-for-official-visit/>

35 "Armenia's National Security Council Secretary meets with U.S. National Security Adviser in Washington D.C.," *Armenpress*, December 16, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1070890.html>

The eleventh assembly of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation between Armenia and Georgia was held in Tbilisi on 20 December under the chairmanship of the two countries' prime ministers. The two prime ministers expressed their satisfaction regarding the developing relations between the two neighboring countries. Pashinyan noted that they adopted an ambitious goal of increasing the annual mutual trade to 1 billion dollars in the medium term in 2019, but the pandemic conditions slowed this process, that they did not give up on this goal and they are determined to achieve it in 2026. On 29 March, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs went to Georgia for a working visit and was received by the Prime Minister. This visit was reciprocated on 30 April and the Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs visiting Armenia was also received by the Prime Minister<sup>36</sup>.

In order to suppress the internal uprising in Kazakhstan, in response to the President of Kazakhstan requesting support from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Armenian Prime Minister, who holds the organization's term presidency, issued a declaration on 5 January announcing the decision to jointly send peacekeepers with the aim of stabilizing and normalizing the situation in Kazakhstan. It was reported that Armenia joined the operation with about 100 soldiers, which was led by Russia with approximately 2500 soldiers.<sup>37</sup>

Upon the Speaker of the US House of Representatives' invitation, the Speaker of the Armenian Parliament paid a visit to the US Congress 19 January. No representative from the opposition was present at the Armenian delegation. Well-known pro-Armenian figures were part of the US delegation. The parties expressed their wishes for the improvement of the relations and broadening of the cooperation between the Armenian-US parliaments. Within this scope, the US side praised the work of the Friends of Armenia group within the US Congress and reminded that this group receives bipartisan support and plays an important role in the strengthening of the relations. The Armenian speaker thanked his US interlocutor and all his fellow workers for the recognition of the Armenian "genocide" and their valuable contributions in the adopting of a decision in this direction. The parties also agreed that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can only be resolved through peaceful negotiations under the supervision of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs<sup>38</sup>.

36 "Ermenistan ve Gürcistan başbakanları Tiflis'te görüştü," *ArmenPress*, 20 Aralık 2021, <https://armenpress.am/tur/news/1071207.html>

37 "Armenian troops to pull out of Kazakhstan after CSTO intervention in anti-government protests," *Armenian Weekly*, January 12, 2022, <https://armenianweekly.com/2022/01/12/armenian-troops-to-pull-out-of-kazakhstan-after-csto-intervention-in-anti-government-protests/>

38 "Armenian Parliament President meets US House Speaker," *ArmenPress*, January 20, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1073452/>



On 19 January, a military delegation under the chairmanship of a US Brigadier General came to Armenia for a two-day working visit. The Brigadier General is the deputy director of Partnership, Security Cooperation and Space Studies at the US European Command. The delegation visited the peacekeeper brigade at the Ministry of Defense and attended the ceremony of the Armenian peacekeeper soldiers who returned from Kosovo. In addition, the delegation visited the military hospital and was present at the ceremony where the technical material provided with the support of 665,000 dollars from the US was handed over<sup>39</sup>. On 3 May, under the presidency of a Major General who is a US National Guard commander, the Kansas State National Guard delegation, with which Armenia has established relations and implemented joint military projects since 2003, visited Armenia and was received by the Minister of Defense.

On 20 January, a joint cultural event night was organized in the Dubai Expo 2020 with Saudi Arabia's pavilion having the title "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes Armenia"<sup>40</sup>.

The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs paid an official visit to Luxembourg on 26 January that constituted a first at the Foreign Minister level. In Minister Mirzoyan's meeting with his Luxembourg counterpart, the parties expressed their intention to increase the political dialogue between their two countries<sup>41</sup>. During his meeting with the Assembly Chairman, Mirzoyan thanked the Luxembourg Parliament for its decisions supporting the Karabakh Armenians.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria paid a two-day working visit to Armenia on 2 February. After the private and inter-delegation meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a joint press release was made. The Austrian Minister conveyed that he urged the resolving of the conflicts within the region, that he was pleased with the Türkiye-Armenia normalization dialogue, that the normalization between Türkiye and Armenia would constitute a major step for the entire region and the Armenian people. On the occasion of this visit, the opening ceremony of the Austrian Development Agency was held with the participation of the two ministers. The two ministers stated that they also discussed the Armenia-EU relations during their meeting. The fact that the second and third Turkey-Armenia normalization process meetings were held

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39 "USA donates \$ 665,000 worth of medical equipment to Armenia for a mobile hospital," *ArmenPress*, January 20, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1073556.html>

40 "Armenian music from pavilion of Saudi Arabia Kingdom of Dubai Expo 2020," *Ilurer.am*, January 21, 2022, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2022/01/21/Armenian-music-from-pavilion-of-Saudi-Arabia-Kingdom-of-%E2%80%9CDubai-Expo-2020%E2%80%9D/647605>

41 "Luxembourg, Armenian Foreign Ministers Celebrate 30 Years of Diplomatic Relations," *Chronicle.lu*, January 27, 2022, <https://chronicle.lu/category/at-home/39320-luxembourg-armenian-foreign-ministers-celebrate-30-years-of-diplomatic-relations>

in Vienna during the term, shed light on the main topic discussed during the visit<sup>42</sup>.

The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs attended the Munich Security Conference and made contacts on this occasion. In this context, in his meeting with the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs on 19 February, the Iranian minister emphasized that the relations between the two countries have deepened and expanded, and especially underlined the ambitious southern-northern corridor that will connect Iran's gulf ports to the Black Sea<sup>43</sup>. The meeting Mirzoyan held on the same day with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia was a first for Armenia.

Prime Minister Pashinyan went to Kazakhstan to attend the 24-25 February meetings of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council. The Armenian Minister of Defense, who was appointed in November, also made his first visit to Russia on 24 February, met with his Russian colleague and briefed him on the issues of defense cooperation between the two countries, as well as on the changes in the upper echelons of the Armenian military<sup>44</sup>.

In the vote to suspend Russia's membership in the Council of Europe due to its attack on Ukraine, Armenia was the only country to vote in favor of Russia in the 47-member Council. It also did not participate in the vote to suspend Russia's membership of the UN Human Rights Council, thus becoming the only CSTO member who did not vote against Russia<sup>45</sup>.

Prime Minister Pashinyan, together with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Health, Regional Administration and Infrastructure, made an official visit to France on 9 March; was received by the President of France and the two leaders participated in the "Goals: Armenia-France" forum in Paris<sup>46</sup>. The President of France stated that the forum will initiate a process that will strengthen bilateral cooperation, the commitment to Armenia and the determination to work together, and emphasized France's readiness to deepen its ties in humanitarian and economic areas with friendly Armenia. Pashinyan, in his briefing at the Council of Ministers on his return, said that they have created a

42 "Austria will continue to be committed to Armenia, minister says," *Panorama*, February 2, 2022, <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2022/02/02/Austria-Armenia/2635310>

43 "FM terms safeguarding Caucasus as Iran's priority," *Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, February 20, 2022, <https://irangov.ir/detail/380481>

44 "PM Pashinyan takes part in a narrow-format sitting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council," *Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, February 24, 2022, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2022/02/24/Nikol-Pashinyan-Eurasian-Intergovernmental-Council/>

45 "Rusya'nın Avrupa Konseyi üyeliği askıya alındı," *Aydınlık*, 25 Şubat 2022, <https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/haber/avrupa-konseyinden-rusya-karari-turkiye-ve-azerbaycan-ne-oy-verdi-302973>

46 "Pashinyan in France on Working Visit," *Hetq*, March 9, 2022, <https://hetq.am/en/article/142001>

multi-layered agenda with France and that it is important to focus on the implementation of this agenda and to develop economic relations. Within this framework, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs made a phone conversation with his French counterpart on 18 March.

Pashinyan made a phone conversation with the US Secretary of State on 14 March. The parties discussed the issues on the agenda of the US-Armenia relations, and pointed out the importance of maintaining the strategic dialogue in order to develop and strengthen bilateral cooperation in various fields<sup>47</sup>. Before leaving for the trilateral summit to be held in Brussels with the President of Azerbaijan at the invitation of the European Council President, Pashinyan made another phone call with the US Secretary of State on 5 April and informed him on the developments<sup>48</sup>.

The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs met with the First Deputy Secretary General of NATO in Brussels on 17 March and delivered a speech at the North Atlantic Council on the same day. Thus, Mirzoyan found the opportunity to conduct propaganda in favor of the illegal Armenian administration in Karabakh at a NATO forum. During his visit to the region, the Special Representative of the NATO Secretary General for the Caucasus and Central Asia met with Pashinyan on 25 April. Pashinyan stated that Armenia attaches importance to partnership with NATO, especially in peacekeeping missions and is interested in expanding it. The Special Representative conveyed the greetings of the Secretary General and expressed that Armenia is an important partner for NATO, that they follow Armenia's peacekeeping activities in Kosovo with appreciation, that NATO wants peace and stability in the South Caucasus and is ready to help in this process<sup>49</sup>.

In a statement to the press on 24 March, the Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization explained that the members of the organization are actively exploring the issue of granting Armenia and Azerbaijan the status of observer members, one degree above the current dialogue partnership.

The Greek Cypriot Administration's Minister of Foreign Affairs called his Armenian counterpart on 8 April and confirmed that their bilateral relations are at an excellent level and reiterated the support and solidarity of the Greek Cypriot Administration with the Armenian people in the negotiations to be held.

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47 "Secretary Blinken's Call with Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan," *US Embassy in Armenia*, March 14, 2022, <https://am.usembassy.gov/nikol-pashinyan/>

48 "Secretary Blinken's Call with Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan," *US Department of State*, April 5, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-armenian-prime-minister-pashinyan-3/>

49 "Armenian FM meets with NATO First Deputy Secretary General, delivers remarks at North Atlantic Council," *ArmenPress*, March 17, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1078187.html>

The Ağrı Mountain in Turkey (Mount Ararat) and the Egyptian pyramids were featured on the special stamp issued by Armenia on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of diplomatic relations with the Arab Republic of Egypt.

On 12 April, on the occasion of the 13th anniversary of the establishment of relations with the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Eurasian Council held the first Armenian-Chinese forum in Yerevan<sup>50</sup>. The Chinese Ambassador, who made the opening speech of the forum, expressed his contentment with the forum held for the first time by the China-Eurasian Council for Political and Strategic Research this year. The first of the two panels was "Armenian-Chinese Relations in a Changing World Order" and the other was "Chinese and Armenian Cooperation within the Framework of the Belt and Road Initiative". On 20 April, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs made a phone conversation with his Armenian counterpart. The parties touched upon the importance of opening economic and transportation routes between Armenia and Azerbaijan and agreed that this would also be beneficial for China-Armenia trade. With a trade volume of 1.26 billion dollars in the recent period, China has become Armenia's second largest trading partner after Russia, whose total trade volume with Armenia was 2.5 billion dollars last year.

The Armenian Prime Minister, accompanied by a delegation including the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, and the Secretary of the National Security Council, went to Russia for a two-day official visit on 19 April and met with the President of Russia at his residence near Moscow. At the end of the talks, a 30-item joint declaration was signed, the text of which was also published in the press and was based on the strengthening of alliance relations and the implementation of the previously reached agreements. The President of Russia stated that 200 documents were signed between the two countries in the past years, indicating an intense relationship in every area. Pashinyan made a phone conversation with the President of the European Council before his departure to Moscow<sup>51</sup>.

The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs paid a working visit to the US on 2-6 May to attend the US-Armenia Strategic Dialogue meeting, upon the invitation of the US Secretary of State. The two ministers signed the Civil Strategic Nuclear Cooperation Memorandum at a ceremony held on 2 May. With this agreement, it was noted that the nuclear experts, industries, and

50 "China-Eurasia Council holds First Armenia and China Forum dedicated to 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations," *China Daily*, April 12, 2022, <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202204/12/WS62552887a310fd2b29e567d8.html>

51 "Official visit of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to the Russian Federation," *Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, April 19, 2022, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2022/04/19/Nikol-Pashinyan-visit-to-Russia/>

researchers of the two countries could establish strong and close ties. Armenian Minister Mirzoyan conveyed that this and the other two signed documents will contribute to the energy security and independence of Armenia and to the strengthening of democracy. Both ministers expressed their satisfaction with the raising of the relations between the two countries to the level of Strategic Dialogue<sup>52</sup>.

Prime Minister Pashinyan made an official visit to the Netherlands on 10-11 May. At the end of the talks, a joint press conference was held with the Dutch Prime Minister. Pashinyan also gave a speech at the Clingendael Institute, which is a think tank.

The new President of Armenia, Vahagn Khachaturyan, went to Switzerland on 21 May to attend the Davos Economic Forum and made contacts in the margins of the meeting.

The President of Lithuania paid an official visit to Armenia on 20 May.

The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs went to Italy on 20 May to attend the 132nd Committee of Ministers meeting of the Council of Europe.

The President of Montenegro paid an official visit to Armenia on 26 May.

The Armenian President Khachaturyan paid an official to Georgia on 30 May.<sup>53</sup>

Prime Minister Pashinyan discussed the developments in the region with the Iranian President on 2 June by phone. The Iranian President is reported to have underlined that Iran supports Armenian sovereignty over all roads passing through Armenia.<sup>54</sup>

The Greek Deputy Minister of Defense paid a visit to Armenia on 2 June together with a delegation.<sup>55</sup>

The EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus visited Armenia on 3 June and had talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister,

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52 “2022 U.S.-Armenia Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement,” *US Department of State*, May 3, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/2022-u-s-armenia-strategic-dialogue-joint-statement/#:~:text=Blinken%20hosted%20Armenian%20Foreign%20Minister,breadth%20of%20the%20bilateral%20relationship>

53 Marianna Mkrtchyan, “Zurabishvili: Peace in Our Region is What We Need for the Economic Development and Stability of Armenia and Georgia,” *ArmInfo*, May 30, 2022, [https://arminfo.info/full\\_news.php?id=69751&lang=3](https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=69751&lang=3)

54 “Iranian President Discusses Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks with Pashinian,” *Azatutyun*, June 2, 2022, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/31880233.html>

55 Siranush Ghazanchyan, “Deputy Defense Minister of Greece to visit Armenia,” *Public Radio of Armenia*, June 2, 2022, <https://en.armradio.am/2022/06/02/deputy-defense-minister-of-greece-to-visit-armenia/>

where both of them reaffirmed the importance of restoring the work of the OSCE Minsk Group's co-chairmanship.<sup>56</sup>

The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs attended a meeting of the CSTO Council of Ministers meeting in Yerevan on 10 June.<sup>57</sup>

Pashinyan paid an official visit to Qatar on 12 June. A number of documents were signed on this occasion. Yerevan and Doha were also declared as sister cities.<sup>58</sup>

The Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan visited Bulgaria on 14-15 June.<sup>59</sup>

The Speaker of the Armenian Parliament visited Iran on 16 June, where he called on Iran to play "a more active role" in the region. He was also received by the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>60</sup>

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe paid an official visit to Armenia on 16-17 June. She was received by the President and the Prime Minister.<sup>61</sup>

The US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs visited Armenia on 18 June. She announced that the US is ready to work with Russia on Karabakh peace in the OSCE Minsk Group format. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs spokesperson dismissed those assurances in a press conference. She underlined that "new realities must be taken into account."<sup>62</sup>

56 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "PM Pashinyan receives EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus," *Public Radio of Armenia*, June 3, 2022, <https://en.armradio.am/2022/06/03/pm-pashinyan-receives-eu-special-representative-for-the-south-caucasus-2/> ; "The Foreign Minister of Armenia received the Special Representative of the European Union for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, June 3, 2022, [https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2022/06/03/Mirzoyan\\_Klaar/11483](https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2022/06/03/Mirzoyan_Klaar/11483)

57 "'Amended' statement of Russian Foreign Minister: what happened during Lavrov's visit to Armenia?," *JamNews*, June 11, 2022, <https://jam-news.net/amended-statement-of-russian-foreign-minister-what-happened-during-lavrovs-visit-to-armenia/>

58 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "PM Pashinyan arrives in the State of Qatar for official visit," *Public Radio of Armenia*, June 13, 2022, [https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2022/06/03/Mirzoyan\\_Klaar/11483](https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2022/06/03/Mirzoyan_Klaar/11483)

59 Marianna Mkrtychyan, "Ararat Mirzoyan met with members of Bulgaria-Armenia Friendship Group," *Arminfo*, June 15, 2022, [https://arminfo.info/full\\_news.php?id=70032&lang=3](https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=70032&lang=3)

60 "Armenian Speaker Wants 'More Active' Iranian Role In Region," *Azattyun*, June 16, 2022, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/31901571.html>

61 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "CoE Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić to visit Armenia," *Public Radio of Armenia*, June 16, 2022, <https://en.armradio.am/2022/06/16/coe-secretary-general-marija-pejcinovic-buric-to-visit-armenia/>

62 "US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried is in Yerevan," *Ihurer.am*, June 18, 2022, <https://www.ihurer.am/en/2022/06/18/US-Assistant-Secretary-of-State-for-European-and-Eurasian-Affairs-Karen-Donfried-is-in-Yerevan/744622>

The visit of the US Assistant Secretary was assessed in the press to carry the following messages:

- The West should not be excluded as mediators.
- One can count on collective and effective assistance from the West.
- The US Biden Administration has become more active in the South Caucasus region.
- The US intends to prevent Ukraine's defeat and seeks to maximize the coalition of countries in support of Kiev.

The Armenian President attended the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) on 18 June. He also met with the Russian President, who assured him that "Armenia is not just our partner, it is also our strategic ally and we appreciate it."<sup>63</sup>

Pashinyan attended the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council held in Minsk on 20-21 June.<sup>64</sup>

Armenia's Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, who has been in the US since the beginning of June where he was protested in his meetings, this time was sent to Greece by the Prime Minister's Office. On 20 June, the ARF Central Committee of Greece informed in a press release that on 23 June the Commissioner will have a meeting in Athens on Armenia-Greece-Cyprus diaspora issues organized by the Armenian Embassy in Greece. The local ARF has been suggested not to participate in such a meeting. On 24 June, a memorandum on trilateral cooperation on diaspora issues was signed between Armenia, Greece, and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus. The Greek Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs said on this occasion, "We are working together for the international recognition of the Pontian Genocide, the Armenian Genocide, as well as the international condemnation of the occupation of Cyprus."<sup>65</sup>

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63 "President Vahagn Khachaturyan attended plenary session of St. Petersburg International Economic Forum," *Ilurer.am*, June 18, 2022, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2022/06/18/President-Vahagn-Khachaturyan-attended-plenary-session-of-St-Petersburg-International-Economic-Forum/744573>

64 "The narrow-format session of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council being held in Minsk," *ArmenPress*, June 20, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1086491.html>

65 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "Trilateral meeting of Greece, Cyprus and Armenia on Diaspora Issues to be held in Patras," *Public Radio of Armenia*, June 20, 2022, <https://en.armradio.am/2022/06/20/trilateral-meeting-of-greece-cyprus-and-armenia-on-diaspora-issues-to-be-held-in-patras/>

#### 4. Relations with Türkiye

Changing conditions in the region after the Karabakh War brought the relations with Türkiye to the forefront for Armenia. The Pashinyan administration, which has been assessing the situation in the field as well as the geopolitical changes in a more realistic manner, has been giving signs of recalibration for some time. In his speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 13 December, during the budget negotiations of the ministry, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced that Türkiye and Armenia would appoint special representatives to discuss the normalization of relations and emphasized that Türkiye would carry out the steps to normalize relations with Armenia in coordination with Azerbaijan. Minister Çavuşoğlu also announced that charter flights will start between Istanbul and Yerevan. These flight permits were mutually granted on 10 January, and the first flights began on 24 January.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia made a statement the next day, on 14 December, and expressed with oft repeated words, that Armenia is ready for the process aimed at normalizing relations with Turkey, without any preconditions, as it is now included in the government's program. The spokesperson of the Ministry continued, "we assess positively the statement of the Foreign Minister of Turkey on the appointment of a special representative for the normalization of relations, and confirm that the Armenian side also will appoint a special representative for the dialogue." Turkey appointed Ambassador Serdar Kılıç as the special representative with the Presidential decision dated 11 January 2022<sup>66</sup>. Shortly after, Armenia appointed the 31-year-old Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Ruben Rubinyan, who is known to be close to Pashinyan, as the special representative.

The decision to appoint mutual special representatives to normalize relations was also welcomed by third parties. The US Secretary of State expressed his satisfaction and support for the process. Expressing that they welcomed the decision to appoint a special representative, which was a wise and logical step, the spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said:

"We assume that the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations will contribute to the improvement of the general situation in the region, will contribute to the formation of an atmosphere of neighbourliness, trust and confidence in the region and among the peoples. [...] We are ready to support that process by all means".<sup>67</sup>

66 "Atama Kararı," *Resmî Gazete – Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, 11 Ocak 2022, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2022/01/20220111-5.pdf>

67 "Russia salutes processes aimed at normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations – Zakharova," *ArmenPress*, December 15, 2021, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1070867/>



On this occasion, it was also reminded by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Armenia had requested from Russia to act as an intermediary for the normalization of relations with Türkiye. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan declared that they fully support the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process, and underlined the statement of the Turkish Foreign Minister that all steps will be taken in coordination with Azerbaijan.

As the normalization of relations with Armenia is of great importance for Türkiye in terms of peace, stability, and cooperation in the region, for Armenia to sign a peace agreement with another neighbor Azerbaijan as soon as possible bears significance and priority. Türkiye's regional approach is not new, in fact, upon the initiative and proposal of the Turkish and Azerbaijani Presidents, a platform based on a group of six countries was established with the name 3+3, holding its first meeting on 10 December. Whereas Armenia appears to see the priority in the normalization of bilateral relations with Türkiye, and to achieve this under its own conditions, it continues to strive and seek to exert pressure on Türkiye with territorial claims and "genocide" claims, through the support of the Diaspora and third-party countries where the Diaspora is influential.

Radical organizations of the Diaspora and their supporters in Armenia are adopting a negative stance towards the normalization process at home and abroad and did not waste time in launching a disruptive campaign. The Diaspora High Commissioner under Prime Minister Pashinyan made a statement on 23 December and said that he is certain that Armenia will not build its relations with Türkiye at the expense of the nation's interests. The High Commissioner said:

"Even though normal relations with neighbors arises from Armenia's security, those relations must not be built at the expense of the honor, future and identity of the nation. 'Until this moment, I haven't seen any sign that Armenia has been in a process with Turkey that has been at the expense of our national issues and the history of our nation. I won't be able to convince Armenians abroad to support the process of normalization of relations with Turkey, if the latter overlooks certain facts and truths that it is obliged to acknowledge, if we want to have normal relations'."<sup>68</sup>

The US-born High Commissioner went on and claimed, "The fifth Turkish column is very active in Armenia; it intoxicates all spheres of life, including the relations with the Armenian Diaspora".

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68 "High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs: Armenia won't build relations with Turkey at expense of interests of nation," *News.am*, December 24, 2021, <https://news.am/eng/news/679071.html>

In a statement dated 27 December, the ARF Bureau, whose central structure and financial source is in the US, strongly opposes the normalization process and threatens to be prepared for a pan-Armenian revolt if the Armenian rulers continue this path. Another ARF wing, the ARF Western USA Central Committee, claimed in a statement published on 7 January that the normalization process is full of threats to the national security of Armenia. It is stated that they will attempt to leave this process inconclusive, as they did in 2009.

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) also, in its open letter to the US President and the US Congress on 11 January, stated that the intentions of Azerbaijan and its supporter Türkiye are clear: to continue their attacks against Armenia and “Artsakh” (Karabakh) in line with their end goal of the “genocide of the first Christian nation”. ANCA asked the US President and the Congress to hold Azerbaijan and Türkiye accountable for their “continued aggression and war crimes”, to strengthen the US-Armenia strategic cooperation, and for the US government to place the “Armenian Genocide” term permanently. The Friends of Armenia group in the Congress did not delay in taking action in this direction. ANCA was able to take its recklessness to the point of issuing a report card to the US ambassador of 3 years in Yerevan, giving grades in 16 subjects and passing the verdict that she failed with an “F” and should be replaced as soon as possible.

The Armenian Government’s ban on imports of the Turkish goods on 20 October 2020, which had been extended until 31 December 2021, was terminated with a decision on 30 December. Armenia’s imports from Türkiye are essentially consumer goods and clothing. Before the prohibition, in 2020, the imports reached approximately 872 million dollars (5% of Armenia’s total imports). The ban had no impact on the Turkish economy, those who were victims were the consumers.

The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu conveyed in a statement on 27 December that the first meetings of the special representatives would likely be held in Moscow, that the Armenian side expressed such a request, that the Turkish side wanted the two representatives to be in direct contact with each other before the meeting, that the representatives were assigned for direct dialogue and that they are expected to prepare a roadmap for the normalization.

The special representatives of the two countries held their first meetings in Moscow on 14 January. Following the meeting, the two countries’ Foreign Ministries made similar statements. The statement of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is as follows:

“Special Representatives for the normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia, respectively, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and the Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Mr. Ruben Rubinyan met on 14 January 2022, in Moscow.

During their first meeting, conducted in a positive and constructive atmosphere, the Special Representatives exchanged their preliminary views regarding the normalization process through dialogue between Türkiye and Armenia. Parties agreed to continue negotiations without preconditions aiming at full normalization.

Date and venue of their second meeting will be decided in due time through diplomatic channels.”<sup>69</sup>

Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’s Spokesperson’s responses to the press questions regarding the meeting are as follows:

“Question: What are the main objectives the Armenian side tends to achieve through the Armenia-Turkey dialogue?

Answer: Armenia’s expectations from this dialogue, in fact, have not changed since the early 1990s. We expect that diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey will be established as a result of the process, and the border between the two countries, which was unilaterally closed by Turkey in the early 1990s, will be opened.

Question: It’s been argued that by agreeing to launch a dialogue with Turkey, Armenia accepts the preconditions that Turkey has always put forward in the context of normalization of relations with Armenia. How would you comment on that?

Answer: The Republic of Armenia has repeatedly stated about its readiness to normalize relations with Turkey without any preconditions. In this regard, I should note that Armenia’s approach has not changed; the same position is reflected in the 2021-2026 program of the Government of Armenia.

We have previously mentioned that in our contacts with international partners, we have repeatedly stressed the need to adhere to the principle of “no preconditions”. In our opinion, the Turkish government also shares the approach of starting the dialogue without preconditions.

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69 “No: 18, 14 January 2022, Press Release Regarding the Meeting of the Special Representatives for the Normalization Process Between Türkiye and Armenia, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament, Mr. Ruben Rubinyan,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, January 14, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_18\\_turkiye-ile-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-gorusmeleri-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_18_turkiye-ile-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-gorusmeleri-hk.en.mfa)

Question: The first meeting of the special representatives of the two countries of the Armenia-Turkey dialogue is scheduled for January 14 in Moscow. What is the format of the meeting? What are the expectations of the Armenian side from this meeting?

Answer: The meeting of the special representatives of Armenia and Turkey in Moscow will be hosted by the Russian side. In fact, this is an introductory meeting. It could hardly be expected to have tangible results as a result of one meeting, but it will mark the launch of the process.”<sup>70</sup>.

In a statement made by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was expressed that the Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs was mediating the negotiations and it was stated that:

“The two sides displayed the readiness to conduct a constructive and depoliticized dialogue in the spirit of openness and determination to achieve practical results, moving step by step from simple to complex matters. It was agreed to go ahead with the search for points of agreement, which would benefit the people of both countries and the region’s stability and economic prosperity.”<sup>71</sup>

The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs said at a press conference that the two sides were pleased to have their first meetings in Moscow and added, “Our role is to help the parties establish a direct dialogue. I hope it will be a success.”<sup>72</sup> The US and the European Union also announced that they welcomed the starting of the negotiations.

During an interview he gave on 17 January, the Armenian special representative stated:

“Very substantive issues were not discussed at the first meeting. We discussed general approaches to the process. ... It’s still too early to say what kind of approaches Turkey will take.

We must try to achieve peace in the region and our position is sincere. We expect Turkey to demonstrate a similar position because it’s simply

70 “The answers of the MFA Spokesperson Vahan Hunanyan to the questions of ‘Armenpress’ news agency,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, January 13, 2022, [https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/01/13/answers\\_Spox/11263](https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/01/13/answers_Spox/11263) ; “Mirzoyan, Çavuşoğlu Meet, Agree to Advance Normalization of Ties,” *Asbarez*, March 14, 2022, <https://asbarez.com/mirzoyan-cavusoglu-meet-agree-to-advance-normalization-of-ties/>

71 “Armenia, Turkey agree to conduct depoliticized dialogue — Russian Foreign Ministry,” *TASS*, January 14, 2022, <https://tass.com/politics/1388389>

72 “Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s remarks and answers to media questions at a news conference on Russia’s foreign policy performance in 2021, Moscow, January 14, 2022,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, January 14, 2022, [https://mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/1794396/](https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1794396/)

impossible for Turkey to pursue a policy in the region without having a relationship with Armenia.”<sup>73</sup>

The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, informing about the parliament discussions and in response to a question, stated:

“There it is written in black and white the Armenian government’s position over the Armenian Genocide. No government has ever attempted, and I hope in the future no government will ever even attempt to doubt the fact that the Armenian Genocide is a historical fact.”<sup>74</sup>

It has been announced simultaneously and with similar texts by the two countries that the Turkish and Armenian special representatives will hold their second meeting on 24 February in Vienna. The text of the statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye is as follows:

“The next meeting of the Special Representatives of Türkiye and Armenia in the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Mr. Ruben Rubinyan, will take place on February 24th in Vienna.”<sup>75</sup>

After the meeting, a similar statement was made by the Foreign Ministries of the two countries. The following is the statement made by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

“Special Representatives for the normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia, respectively, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Ruben Rubinyan met today (February 24) in Vienna.

The Special Representatives confirmed that the ultimate goal of the negotiations is to achieve full normalization between Türkiye and Armenia, as agreed during their first meeting in Moscow. They exchanged views on possible concrete steps that can be mutually taken to that end and reiterated their agreement to continue the process without preconditions.”<sup>76</sup>

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73 Karlen Aslanian and Naira Nalbandian, “Armenian Official Cautious After First Talks with Turkish Envoy,” *Azattyun*, January 17, 2022, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/31658465.html>

74 “No government will ever even attempt to doubt historical fact of Armenian Genocide – FM,” *ArmenPress*, January 19, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1073407.html>

75 “No: 44, 3 February 2022, Press Release Regarding the Second Meeting of the Special Representatives of the Normalization Process of Türkiye and Armenia,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, February 3, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-44\\_-turkiye---ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcilerinin-ikinci-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-44_-turkiye---ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcilerinin-ikinci-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa)

76 “No: 63, 24 February 2022, Press Release Regarding the Meeting of the Special Representatives for the Normalization Process Between Türkiye and Armenia, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Ruben Rubinyan,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, February 24, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-63\\_-turkiye-ve-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcileri-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-63_-turkiye-ve-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcileri-hk.en.mfa)

On 2 March, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs made the following remarks during the Parliament discussions on the talks in Vienna:

“I regard the second meeting of Armenia’s and Turkey’s representatives as positive. The discussion was much more specific than the first one was supposed to be. At the same time, I think we all understand that it’s hard to expect very tangible results even from the second meeting. It’s a process that should provide solutions to issues accumulated for decades and centuries”.<sup>77</sup>

The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu invited his Armenian colleague and Special Representative Rubiyan to attend the Diplomacy Forum to be held in Antalya on 11-13 March. The Armenian Minister confirmed that he would participate after an initial indecisiveness and hesitation. The following is the announcement made by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this matter:

“We welcomed the statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia that Foreign Minister Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan will attend the Antalya Diplomacy Forum to be held on 11-13 March 2022. Such reciprocal steps will contribute to the advancement of dialogue and discussions on confidence-building measures between the two countries in line with the aim of full normalization.”<sup>78</sup>

No response was given concerning the Special Representative.

On 12 March, on the occasion of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, the Foreign Ministers of Türkiye and Armenia held an approximately 30-minute bilateral meeting. Thus, the two Foreign Ministers met in such a bilateral setting for the first time since 2009. Following the meeting, Minister Çavuşoğlu explained that the meeting was productive and constructive, that the parties put in effort towards peace and stability. The Armenian Minister Mirzoyan made a similar assessment and stated, “we are continuing with the process of normalization without preconditions”.

77 “Yerevan Encouraged By Second Turkish-Armenian Meeting,” *Azatutyun*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/31732812.html> ; “I assess second meeting of representatives of Armenia and Turkey as positive: Ararat Mirzoyan,” *Ilurer.am*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2022/03/02/I-assess-second-meeting-of-representatives-of-Armenia-and-Turkey-as-positive-Ararat-Mirzoyan/673522>

78 “QA-4, 8 March 2022, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Tanju Bilgiç, in Response to a Question Regarding the Participation of Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, to the Antalya Diplomacy Forum,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, March 8, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc\\_-4\\_-ermenistan-disisleri-bakani-ararat-mirzoyan-in-antalya-diplomasi-forumuna-katilimi-hk-sc.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-4_-ermenistan-disisleri-bakani-ararat-mirzoyan-in-antalya-diplomasi-forumuna-katilimi-hk-sc.en.mfa)

The Foreign Ministries of the two countries issued similar statements concerning the bilateral talks. The statement from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is as follows:

“Minister Çavuşoğlu thanked Minister Mirzoyan for accepting the invitation.

The two Ministers reiterated their will to conduct the process aiming at full normalization and good neighborly relations between Türkiye and Armenia without pre-conditions. They also agreed that normalization is needed across the region.

The two Ministers expressed their support to the works of the Special Representatives of two countries to that end.”<sup>79</sup>

The Armenian Minister Mirzoyan conducted talks with several participants in the margins of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, including the Russian Minister of Foreign and Affairs and the EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy High Representative.

The text of the Armenian Minister’s interview with Anadolu Agency, provided to the Armenian press by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is as follows:

“Question: What would you like to express about your participation at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum?

Answer: I want to walk you through the highlights of the developments between Armenia and Turkey during the previous months. The leaders of the two countries – Prime Minister Pashinyan and President Erdogan exchanged public statements, expressing readiness to launch talks between the two countries. Later the two countries appointed Special Representatives for the dialogue between Armenia and Turkey. They have already had 2 meetings respectively in Moscow and Vienna agreeing to continue negotiations without preconditions aimed at full normalization of the relations. I paid a visit to Antalya to participate in the Antalya Diplomatic Forum to reiterate once again the political will of the Government of the Republic of Armenia to achieve full normalization of relations with Turkey and open the era of peaceful and sustainable development in the region.

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79 “No: 83, 12 March 2022, Press Release Regarding the Bilateral Meeting of H.E. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye, and H.E. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Armenia on 12 March 2022 at the Margin of Antalya Diplomacy Forum,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, March 12, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_83\\_sayin-bakanimizin-antalya-diplomasi-forumu-marjinda-12-mart-2022-tarihinde-ermenistan-disisleri-bakani-ararat-mirzoyan-la-yaptigi-ikili-gorusme-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_83_sayin-bakanimizin-antalya-diplomasi-forumu-marjinda-12-mart-2022-tarihinde-ermenistan-disisleri-bakani-ararat-mirzoyan-la-yaptigi-ikili-gorusme-hk.en.mfa)

Question: How would you evaluate the ongoing normalization process between Turkey and Armenia?

Answer: Overall, we consider it positive. Armenia is ready to establish diplomatic relations and to the opening of the borders with Turkey. I was glad to hear from my Turkish counterpart that there is a political will on their side to lead the process to that end as well. Amid the rapidly developing situation in the world, I do believe we should not hesitate to undertake concrete steps.

Question: What are the benefits of the normalization process for Armenian and Turkish people? Answer: People are already benefiting from direct flights between Yerevan and Istanbul. Opening of the borders will have its positive impact on the connectivity, trade and economic relations between the two countries, people to people contacts and overall stability in the region.

Question: Are there going to be reciprocal official visits between Turkey and Armenia? Did you extend an invitation to Turkish officials to visit Armenia or received an invitation to visit Turkey?

Answer: Let me emphasize that this is the first visit of a high-level official of Armenia to Turkey in a decade. Needless to mention that if the process of normalization proceeds smoothly and we achieve positive results, mutual visits can take place.

Question: What can you tell us about the Armenian people's approach to the normalization process?

Answer: Generally, the population of Armenia wants to normalize relations with Turkey. It is reflected in public opinion polls, as well. Of course, both in Armenian and Turkish societies, there are certain groups that, let me say, are skeptical about this process. Officials from both sides should take political leadership to address these issues. During my meeting with Minister Chavushoglu, we have exchanged views on certain sensitivities and I hope that they will be taken into account.”<sup>80</sup>

During a speech he made in the parliament on 13 April, Prime Minister Pashinyan said that the normalization talks with neighboring Türkiye should not be neglected, should be continued, and that the parties should do their best for the continuation of the talks. He noted that the Armenian side is aware of

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80 “Interview of the Foreign Minister of Armenia to ‘Anadolu’ agency,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, March 15, 2022, [https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/03/15/fm\\_mirzoyan\\_anadolu/11351](https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/03/15/fm_mirzoyan_anadolu/11351)



the possible risks in the negotiations, but believes that the negotiations should continue and dialogue should be established, that results may not be achieved quickly, that they expressed this to their international partners, and that these partners strongly support the normalization of bilateral relations.

It was featured in the Armenian press on 14 April that the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu complained that Armenia was not willing to hold talks in their own capitals and announced, without providing a date, that the third meeting would be again held in Vienna. It was stated that Çavuşoğlu invited Armenia to be “more courageous” and wanted it to abandon its insistence on holding talks in third countries. In addition, Çavuşoğlu said:

“On the one hand, you say that relations must be normalized and the [Turkish-Armenian] border must be opened. On the other hand, you do not dare to meet in Turkey and Yerevan. If you don’t agree to even meet in each other’s countries how are you going to take steps on other issues?”<sup>81</sup>

In an interview with the press on 15 April, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson responded to the statements of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs as below:

“Question: When and where is the next meeting of the Special Representatives of Armenia and Turkey scheduled?”

Answer: There is a preliminary understanding between the sides that the next meeting may take place in Vienna. As soon as the date and the place of the meeting are finally confirmed the public will be informed properly.

Question: In an interview, the Foreign Minister of Turkey stated that they would like the meeting to take place in Armenia or Turkey? What is Armenia’s position in this regard?

Answer: During the previous attempts of normalization, the meetings were held in Armenia and Turkey, both at the level of negotiators and even presidents, but, as you know, no result has been achieved. I mean, the important thing is the political will to reach a normalization and the readiness to undertake clear concrete steps. We demonstrate both, and we expect the same from Turkey. If there is a will, the place of the meeting will become a purely logistic issue. Moreover, the proposal of holding the meetings of the special representatives in Armenia and

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81 Tatevik Sargsian, “Turkish FM Expects ‘More Courageous’ Steps from Yerevan,” *Azattyun*, April 14, 2022, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/31803677.html>

Turkey indicates that in Turkey's perception, the process is solely bilateral. In this case, it would be logical not to observe almost weekly statements of the representatives of Turkey that they advance the process in coordination with Azerbaijan.

Question: Regarding the normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations, Minister Chavushoglu also emphasized the need for bold steps. How would you comment on that?

Answer: The Armenian side fully agrees with the need for bold steps. We have repeatedly demonstrated our readiness to move forward, including with the participation of the Foreign Minister in the Antalya Diplomatic Forum, and the lifting of the economic embargo. The resumption of flights between Armenia and Turkey was also an important bilateral step. We are convinced that the only way forward is to undertake consistent clear steps. For example, we offered the Turkish side to open the land border for holders of diplomatic passports as a first stage, but the Turkish side is hesitating. We think this will be a small but substantive, importantly, logical step. We hope it will be possible to achieve a result on this issue.”<sup>82</sup>

The hallmark of the month of April for Armenians is the tradition of carrying hate mongering anti-Turkey and anti-Turkish discourses and claims to the international agenda. This year as well, there have been statements from circles that have used the issue as a political tool against Türkiye, which are now losing their impact. This year, the US, where the Armenian lobby is active and has been cooperating with other anti-Türkiye lobbies, came to the fore, and the US President took his statement further than last year. As can be presumed, Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Cyprus, as members of the triple alliance with Armenia, fulfilled what was expected of them. Canada also joined in the choir. Moreover, the militant front of the Diaspora did not surprise with their outbursts either. The influential Diaspora organization ANCA finally started to see the truth and made comments stating that the wording of the US President's statement was good, but it was empty. The Armenian administration displayed a more cautious attitude, and Prime Minister Pashinyan underlined the importance of normalizing relations with Türkiye. In Russia, an exhibition held in St. Petersburg on this occasion was canceled at the last moment.

The statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye regarding this subject is as follows:

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82 “Answers of the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson to the questions of Armenpress news agency,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, April 15, 2022, [https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/04/15/comment\\_15.04/11405](https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/04/15/comment_15.04/11405)

“Statements that are incompatible with historical facts and international law regarding the events of 1915 are not valid. This includes the unfortunate statement made by US President Biden today, which is the repetition of the mistake he had made in 2021. We reject such statements and decisions, which distort historical facts with political motives, and condemn those who insist on this mistake.

One-sided and selective approaches that serve no purpose other than to draw enmity from history are morally problematic and politically ill-intentioned. A humanitarian and conscientious stance requires commemorating all sufferings experienced at that period, without ethnic or religious discrimination. Türkiye respectfully commemorates the sufferings of all the Ottoman population, including the Armenians. We reject the attempts to exploit this pain for political purposes.

Türkiye is of the opinion that controversial episodes in history such as the events of 1915 should be studied without prejudice by respecting the scientific and legal principles in order to reach a just memory. With this understanding, Türkiye proposed the establishment of a Joint History Commission and opened its archives.

Türkiye strives for peace and stability in its region and in the world, and the spirit of cooperation to prevail. The normalization initiative with Armenia is another manifestation of this understanding.”<sup>83</sup>

On this occasion, the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sent the following message to the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul:

“Dear Sahak Mashalyan, Patriarch of the Armenians of Turkey,

Distinguished Members of the Armenian Community,

My dear citizens,

I greet you with my most heartfelt feelings and love.

You have gathered under the roof of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul today to commemorate the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives in the harsh conditions imposed by the First World War.

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83 “No: 141, 24 April 2022, Press Release Regarding the Statements Made by the Government Officials of Some Countries on April 24, 2022,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Türkiye*, April 24, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-141\\_-24-nisan-2022-tarihinde-bazi-ulkelerin-hukumet-yetkililerince-yapilan-beyanlar-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-141_-24-nisan-2022-tarihinde-bazi-ulkelerin-hukumet-yetkililerince-yapilan-beyanlar-hk.en.mfa)

I respectfully commemorate the deceased Ottoman Armenians once again, and convey my sincere condolences to their surviving relatives.

I wish God's mercy to all Ottoman citizens who passed away forever in the difficult conditions of the First World War.

The last years of the Ottoman Empire, which corresponded to the First World War, were a very painful period for millions of Ottoman children.

It is a duty of humanity to understand and share these common pains without any religious, ethnic or cultural discrimination.

It is important for us, who have been partners in joy and worry for centuries, to bind together the wounds of the past and strengthen our human ties even more.

With this understanding, I believe that we should build the future together, inspired by our deep-rooted unity of up to a thousand years, instead of magnifying the pain.

As a matter of fact, we have started a positive process with our neighbor Armenia for this purpose.

I know that the normalization process is sincerely supported by our citizens of Armenian origin, who favor close cooperation between the two neighboring countries, and I attach great importance to this.

I expect you to make a strong contribution to the evaluation of this historical opportunity that has emerged in the name of permanent peace and stability in our region after many years.

I want you to make sure that we will make every effort to ensure that our Armenian citizens, who have left lasting traces in our cultural and human lives throughout our centuries-long partnership on this land, lead their lives in peace, security and safety.

With these feelings and thoughts, I once again commemorate the Ottoman Armenians we lost in the First World War with respect, and convey my greetings and respect to all my citizens who participated in the commemoration ceremony.”<sup>84</sup>

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84 “Cumhurbaşkanımız Sayın Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’ın Türkiye Ermenileri Patriği Sayın Sahak Maşalyan’a gönderdikleri mesaj,” *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı*, 24 Nisan 2022, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/136602/cumhurbaskanimiz-sayin-recep-tayyip-erdoganin-turkiye-ermenileri-patrigi-sayin-sahak-masalyan-a-gonderdikleri-mesaj>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye published the following statement on 28 April concerning the third meeting on the Turkey-Armenia normalization process:

“The third meeting of the special representatives for the normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and Deputy Speaker Ruben Rubinyan will take place in Vienna on May 3, 2022.”<sup>85</sup>

Following the meeting, the statement below was made by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

“Special Representatives for the normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia, respectively, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia Ruben Rubinyan held their third meeting today in Vienna.

The Special Representatives reaffirmed the declared goal of achieving full normalization between their respective countries through this process. In this sense, they had sincere and productive exchange of concrete views and discussed possible steps that can be undertaken for tangible progress in this direction.

They reiterated their agreement to continue the process without preconditions.”<sup>86</sup>

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also made statements with the same content.

Following the trilateral Brussels summit, the President of Azerbaijan Aliyev called the President of Turkey Erdoğan 23 May and provided information regarding the negotiations and the agreements reached. In this context, Aliyev stated that the parties agreed on the opening of the Zangezur Corridor and the construction of both a railway and a highway there.

At a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart in Yerevan on 9 June, Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs said the Armenian side is happy to hear

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85 “No: 145, 28 April 2022, Press Release Regarding the Third Meeting of the Special Representatives of the Normalization Process of Türkiye and Armenia,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, April 28, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-145\\_-turkiye---ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcilerinin-ucuncu-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-145_-turkiye---ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcilerinin-ucuncu-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa)

86 “No: 147, 3 May 2022, Press Release Regarding the Meeting of the Special Representatives for the Normalization Process Between Türkiye and Armenia, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Ruben Rubinyan,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, May 3, 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-147\\_-turkiye-ve-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcileri-gorushmeleri-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-147_-turkiye-ve-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcileri-gorushmeleri-hk.en.mfa)

statements by the top leadership of Türkiye that they are ready to normalize and establish diplomatic relations with Armenia and are going to open the Armenian-Turkish border. He added:

“On the other hand, we see differences in approaches in a sense that Turkey constantly announces that this normalization process must take place without preconditions, but we regretfully see connection between Armenia-Turkey normalization process and the Armenia-Azerbaijan process. A connection that the representatives of Turkey’s leadership are trying to find or highlight on every occasion. We don’t think that this is constructive. There are also some differences in a sense that we have different ideas about peace. Nevertheless, I want to state once again that hearing statements by Turkey that they are going to open the closed border with Armenia is welcome.”<sup>87</sup>

Most recently, Pashinyan answered questions from the Armenian media and NGOs about the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process and proposals such as the Zangezur Corridor, and indicated the following:

“The Turkish side often makes statements that are not very useful for the process of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. The ‘Zangezur Corridor’ formulation coming from Turkey also hinders the process, but the Armenian side sees an opportunity to normalize relations and is sincerely willing to do everything in that direction, ARMENPRESS reports Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said this during a Facebook live, answering the questions of the media and non-governmental organizations. [...]

Touching upon the question whether there are opportunities for the final normalization of relations with Turkey, the Prime Minister answered. ‘If I say now that there is no opportunity, the question will arise as to why we are negotiating. If we negotiate, it means that there is at least a certain understanding that it is possible to do it, it is possible to move forward step by step, in small steps. We often say that the dialogue is not effective, it has not yielded results yet, but on the other hand we see that direct flights, for example, have been restored. But on the other hand, we understand that in the past there were direct flights from Yerevan to Istanbul, from Istanbul to Yerevan. And now we are trying to move forward in small steps.’

The Prime Minister did not consider it right to make announcements in advance, even if there are some vague signs that it is possible to move

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87 “Moscow welcomes the process of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations,” *ArmenPress*, June 9, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1085616.html>

forward in small steps. ‘In the past, a document was signed, mutual visits at the highest level took place, there were contacts, but the issue was not resolved. The fundamental reason that the issue failed to be resolved at that time is that although the original document had no connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict or Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, at the ratification stage Turkey linked it to Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, the change of status quo in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, etc.’ [...]

To the question whether Turkey still connects the issues, Pashinyan answered. ‘At least in public statements we can see that Azerbaijan and Turkey are in consultations with each other, we can even say that they are clarifying positions on this issue. At least with this one can see that there is a connection. I think time will show how strong and deep that connection is in the current situation’.

[Avoiding his personal opinion, he concluded:] ‘We work with the logic that there is an opportunity, we must honestly do everything. Otherwise, the dialogue would be senseless. We think there is an opportunity, and we are willing to do everything to use that opportunity. The constant chants of “Zangezur Corridor” from Turkey hinder the process and create a negative background. Statements are being made that are not very useful for the process,’

He assured that it does not mean that the Armenian side will stop the dialogue based on those statements.’<sup>88</sup>

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88 “Formulations like “Zangezur corridor” coming from Turkey hinder the processes – PM on Armenian-Turkish rapprochement,” *ArmenPress*, June 27, 2022, <https://www.armenpress.am/eng/news/1087030/>

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

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# THE IMPACT OF FOREIGN POLICY THINKING ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE 1913-14 ARMENIAN REFORM PROGRAMME

(1913-14 ERMENİ İSLAHAT PROGRAMININ KABULÜNDE  
DIŞ POLİTİKA MÜLÂHAZALARININ ETKİSİ)

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**Abstract:** *This article aims to elucidate how the Ottoman decision-making elite approached the Armenian reform question in the aftermath of the Young Turk revolution and to demonstrate how foreign political considerations shaped the introduction of the 1913-14 reform programme known as the "Eastern Anatolian Reforms." Because of the concern that the recognition of regional and communal privileges would disrupt the unity and territorial integrity of the Empire, the decision-makers acted reluctantly to introduce special reforms for Armenians and endeavoured to resolve their problems with general or palliative measures. However, after the defeat in the First Balkan War of 1912-13, they quickly revised their preferences as a result of the change in Empire's position in international power politics, external pressures, and strategic calculations, and decided to introduce a reform programme that went beyond the limits that they defended earlier. The primary aim for the Ottoman decision-makers in so doing was, rather than ending the grievances of the Armenian citizens, to safeguard the Empire's external security and international position. Thus, it is concluded that foreign policy calculations significantly affected the solutions developed for an internal problem, and, moreover,*

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*internal reform was used as a foreign policy tool. The article traces the developments regarding the Armenian reform issue in the aftermath of the Young Turk revolution and uses memoirs and newspaper articles to infer the approach and preferences of the decision-makers regarding the reform issue.*

**Keywords:** *Young Turks, Committee of Union and Progress, Ottoman Armenians, Armenian revolutionary-political organizations, Eastern Anatolian Reforms.*

**Öz:** *Bu makale, Jön Türk devrimi sonrasında Osmanlı karar alıcılarının Ermeni ıslahatı meselesine nasıl yaklaştıklarını aydınlatmayı ve dış siyasetle ilgili düşüncelerin “Şarkî Anadolu Islahâtı” adıyla bilinen 1913-14 reform programının kabul edilme sürecini nasıl şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bir bölgeye ve gruba ayrıcalık tanınmasının imparatorluğun birliğini ve toprak bütünlüğünü bozacağı endişesini taşıyan karar alıcılar, Ermeniler için özel ıslahatlar yapma konusunda uzun bir süre isteksiz davranmışlar, Ermenilerin sorunlarını genel veya yatıştırıcı tedbirlerle çözmeye çalışmışlardır. Ancak 1912-13 Birinci Balkan Savaşı’ndaki yenilginin ardından İmparatorluğun uluslararası güç politikalarındaki değişen konumu, dış baskılar ve stratejik hesaplar sebebiyle tercihlerini hızla değiştirmiş ve daha önce savundukları sınırların ötesinde bir reform programını hayata geçirmeye karar vermişlerdir. Osmanlı karar alıcılarının bunu yaparken birincil amacının Ermeni vatandaşlarının şikayetlerini sona erdirmekten ziyade devletin dış güvenliğini ve uluslararası konumunu korumak olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Böylece dış politikayla ilgili hesapların ülkenin iç meseleleriyle ilgili geliştirilen çözüm yollarını önemli ölçüde etkilediği ve hatta dahili reformun dış siyasetin bir aracı olarak kullanıldığı sonucuna varılmıştır. Makalede Jön Türk devrimi sonrasında Ermeni ıslahatı meselesine dair gelişmelerin izi takip edilmiş, karar alıcıların ıslahatlara yaklaşımını ve tercihlerini anlamak için hatırat ve gazete makalelerinden yararlanılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Jön Türkler, İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, Osmanlı Ermenileri, Ermeni Devrimci-Siyasi Örgütleri, Doğu Anadolu Reformları*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 ended the three decades of Sultan Abdülhamid II's rule and brought those who had championed reform and liberty to power. During the Hamidian era, Armenian revolutionary organizations, while continuously raising their demands for extensive reform in Eastern Anatolia, especially in European circles, had entered into collaboration with the Young Turks to change the regime. This cooperation continued for a few years after the revolution. During the Constitutional Period, Armenian political parties and the Armenian Patriarchate of İstanbul repeatedly asked the Ottoman government for a series of reforms in Eastern Anatolia. Particularly bearing in mind that the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) had long adopted an enthusiastically reformist and liberal discourse and since the late Hamidian era had been in alliance with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF/Dashnaktsutyun), which was the leading Armenian revolutionary-political organization, one would have expected the Ottoman government to accept these demands without much resistance.

However, the Sublime Porte received the Armenian demands for reform with caution and initially preferred to resort to rather general or palliative measures to resolve the problems in Eastern Anatolia. This attitude and policy changed abruptly in 1913, when the government decided to launch a comprehensive provincial administration reform. Less than one year later, it also adopted a special reform programme for Eastern Anatolia. All these sweeping reforms, which largely overlapped with the demands of Armenian revolutionaries, were introduced as a result of a remarkably swift process. The government, as well as its pundits in newspapers, presented these to both Ottoman and European public opinion as an outcome of their reformist and liberal outlook. Yet, a more detailed examination of this process displays the significant impact of foreign policy thinking on the calculations of Ottoman decision-makers regarding domestic reform.

To explain how the Ottoman decision-making elite of the time, i.e. the Young Turk governments, approached the Armenian reform question, it is necessary to investigate (1) why they did not show enough consideration to the Armenian demands for years, and (2) what were the causes and motivations that changed their strong aversion to these demands. Thus far, the predominant answer given to the first question has been the prevalence of Turkish nationalism and Islamism. According to this view, it was fundamentally these ideologies that created an exclusionary attitude towards non-Muslims and made the Ottoman decision-makers unsympathetic towards any arrangement

that could politically empower them in central or regional administration.<sup>1</sup> Since it is well known that the consciousness of Turkish identity was a rising trend among the Young Turks, this might seem at first glance a simple and convincing explanation. However, one should not neglect the fact that the CUP was in alliance with the Armenian nationalist Dashnaktsutyun from the late Hamidian era until 1913, that the Young Turks championed for years the idea of equality and freedom of all Ottoman citizens, and especially that they, recognising various structural problems in Anatolia, regarded far-reaching reforms necessary. Therefore, even though it is correct that the Ottoman government approached the Armenian demands with prejudice and suspicion, attributing this solely to CUP being motivated by ethnic nationalism would be a fairly narrow approach.

As for the second question above, it is indeed interesting to observe that certain reforms that the Ottoman decision-making elite had neglected, delayed, or resisted for a long time were launched rapidly in 1913-14. While their apparent objective was ensuring order, tranquillity, and a more effective provincial administration in Eastern Anatolia, when the process is examined more closely, their connections with foreign policy thinking becomes clearer. Not only were the formulation and launching of these reforms prompted by external pressures, but they were also directed at certain strategic foreign policy aims. The course of developments and the ideas of the decision-makers indicate that the introduction of a reform package in the same scope was very unlikely without such concerns and objectives.

This article aims to elucidate how the Ottoman decision-making elite approached the Armenian reform question in the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution and to disentangle the influence of domestic and foreign political considerations over the reform process of 1913-14. It will first present the demands and activities of Armenian political actors, as well as their relations with their Ottoman counterparts, during the early twentieth century. Then, it will discuss how the Armenian reform question was viewed by the Young Turks, particularly by the Unionists, who were always the majority in the parliament and remained in power, except for a six-month interval in 1912-13. This will be followed by the examination of the reform process between late 1912 and early 1914. The article will conclude with an overall assessment.

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1 The Western scholarship is abundant of studies portraying the 1908 Revolution as a nationalist one and arguing, with reference to controversial, often marginal, statements of some political figures, that their ideology drove the Young Turks to exclude and assimilate non-Turks from the very beginning. See, for example, Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: The Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11; Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London and New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 23.

## ARMENIAN POLITICAL ACTORS AND THEIR DEMANDS FOR REFORM

Having adopted in 1895 a reform programme under collective pressure from Britain, France and Russia, the Porte initially took a number of steps for its implementation. Six Christian assistant governors (four Greeks and two Armenians) and a number of Christian assistant *mutasarrıfs*, district governors (*nâhiye müdürü*) and assistant district governors were appointed to Eastern Anatolia. New slots for Armenians were opened in civil offices, the police and the gendarmerie, and some steps were taken to improve finance, security, justice, education and public services in the region.<sup>2</sup> However, after a few years, the permanent Commission of Control at İstanbul ceased to convene, and the commission responsible for executing the reforms in the provinces was disbanded shortly after the death of Şâkir Pasha, the President of the Commission, in late 1899.<sup>3</sup> As there was no longer a particular official body to superintend and execute the reforms, the Hamidian government signalled that the reform process was over. Armenians in the Empire and abroad protested this, and increasingly adopted the view that European control was essential in order for the Ottoman government to execute reforms fully.

Although Armenian revolutionary organisations were primarily concerned with Eastern Anatolia, the common goal of overthrowing the Hamidian rule brought them closer to the Young Turks from the late 1890s onwards.<sup>4</sup> A delegation of Armenian revolutionaries attended to the grand congress of Ottoman opposition parties, which was held in Paris in 1902, and defended that foreign intervention should be sought to ensure the execution of reforms in the Empire. This view found only partial support among the Young Turks.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the liberal wing, led by Prens Sabahaddin, agreed that obtaining foreign intervention would be useful, as long as it did not breach the territorial integrity of the Empire, the remaining members, including the Ahmed Rızâ group, which would later develop into the CUP, opposed any kind of external involvement in the domestic affairs of the country.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the Armenian delegates openly declared in the congress that in addition to the

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2 Ali Karaca, *Anadolu Islahâtı ve Ahmet Şâkir Paşa (1838-1899)* (İstanbul: Eren, 1993), 79-206; Musa Şaşmaz, *British Policy and the Application of Reforms for the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, 1877-1897* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000), 184-269.

3 Salahi R. Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians: Victims of Great Power Diplomacy* (London: K. Rustem & Brother, 1987), 244; Karaca, 172.

4 Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1963), 171-172.

5 Arsen Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ile Ermeni Siyasi Partileri Arasındaki İlişkiler," in *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya*, ed. Rober Koptaş (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), 16-19.

6 M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2-3, 34.

common goal of transforming the Abdülhamid regime, they would continue to work for the execution of necessary reforms in Eastern Anatolia as stipulated in the Treaty of Berlin of 1878.<sup>7</sup> The Young Turks, who defended reforms that would apply to the whole country for the benefit of all Ottomans, objected to this.<sup>8</sup>

Despite such differences of opinion, the Dashnaktsutyun, the leading Armenian revolutionary organisation of the time, continued to participate in the common front against Abdülhamid, which included the CUP and Prens Sabahaddin's League of Private Initiative and Decentralization (*Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti*). Their congress in Paris in December 1907 pledged collective action, both violent and non-violent, to restore the constitution. The decision of the Dashnaks to take part in this front was rather pragmatic, as they believed that Armenian revolutionaries would never be able to supplant the Hamidian regime without the help of the Young Turks. After the congress, both the CUP and the Dashnaktsutyun worked vigorously for revolution. Other Armenian revolutionary-political formations, the Hunchaks and the Armenekan Party, on the other hand, were not ready to cooperate with Turkish revolutionaries, even though they showed sympathy to Sabahaddin's League, whose programme, emphasising minority rights and regional autonomy, was closer to their position.<sup>9</sup>

Their rapprochement with different factions of the Young Turks led Armenian revolutionaries to adopt a somewhat more careful discourse with regard to the territorial integrity of the Empire and build their arguments on equality, constitutionalism, proportional representation, and regional decentralisation.<sup>10</sup> However, as the implementation of the 1895 reform programme slowed down, they redoubled their efforts to draw the attention of European governments and public opinion to this issue.<sup>11</sup> They also increased their activities in Eastern Anatolia. Consuls in the region reported that the revolutionaries were pressuring Armenian peasants to support them and purchase arms from them.<sup>12</sup> In order to prevent armament and border crossings from Russia, Ottoman

7 M. Şükrü Haniöğlü, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 193.

8 This difference was one of the key unresolved issues in the 1902 Congress and eventually led to its breakup. See Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question* (İstanbul: Documentary, 1988), 804; Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, ed. Behçet Cemal (İstanbul: Selek, 1959), 341; Haniöğlü, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 194-195.

9 Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...", 23-26.

10 Rober Koptaş, "Zohrab, Papazyan ve Pastırmacıyan'ın Kalemlerinden 1914 Ermeni Reformu ve İttihatçı-Taşnak Müzakereleri," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 5 (2007): 160.

11 "Şü'ünât," *Şûra-i Ümmet* 3 (1902), 4; "Ermeni ve Makedonya mitingi," *Şûra-i Ümmet* 41 (1903), 2.

12 Bülent Özdemir, "Osmanlı Şehirlerinde Yaşayan İngiliz Konsolosları ve Ermeni Sorunu," in *Hoşgörürden Yol Ayrımına Ermeniler*, eds. M. Metin Hülügü, Şakir Batmaz, and Gülbadi Alan (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2009), 4: 367.

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security forces frequently conducted searches and operations targeting Armenian revolutionaries, which sometimes caused minor conflicts.<sup>13</sup>

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the dethronement of Abdülhamid II the following year increased Armenian hopes for the improvement of their conditions.<sup>14</sup> As the constitution and parliamentary system were back in effect, the revolutionary organisations formally renounced violence and started to operate as political parties.<sup>15</sup> The Dashnaksutyun promised to defend the independence and integrity of the Empire as long as the constitutional regime persisted. The Revolutionary Hunchak Party changed its name to Social Democratic Hunchak Party (S.D. Hunchak). A group of revolutionaries from various groups founded the Constitutional Ramgavar Party, which would work for further democratisation and the cultural values of the Armenian community. Similarly, the Veragazmyal Hunchak Party declared that it halted revolutionary activities and would defend the rights and freedoms of the Armenians in the political sphere. The common ground of all these organisations was their support for decentralisation and, hence, the autonomy of the provinces (*vilayetler*) in Eastern Anatolia, which they all referred to as “Armenia”<sup>16</sup>, despite the Ottoman Armenians never enjoying majority status in any of the said provinces.

The jubilation and optimism amongst Armenians did not last too long, however. Only a few months after the revolution, Armenian newspapers began to comment that the constitution did not bring anything concrete to their congeners.<sup>17</sup> Armenians from various parts of Anatolia continued sending complaints to Armenian newspapers and the Patriarchate of İstanbul. The complaints were largely related to land and security. During the conflicts in the 1890s, many Armenians had evacuated the region, and their lands were subsequently seized by Muslim groups, including Kurdish tribes and those who were settled there by the state. When Armenian *émigrés* came back after the revolution, the Muslims refused to hand back these lands. The former claimed that local authorities tended to favour the latter in these disputes.<sup>18</sup> In addition, as they did not completely trust local authorities and the non-Muslims were not permitted to bear arms, the Armenians felt insecure against Kurdish incursions. In early November 1908, a delegation from the

13 Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians...*, 248-251, 271-275.

14 Union nationale arménienne de France, *La cause nationale arménienne: documents concernant le problème de la libération de l'Arménie turque* (Paris: [n.p.], 1945), 16.

15 Avagyan, “İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...”, 85; Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians...*, 280; Uras, *The Armenians in History...*, 833.

16 Avagyan, “İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...”, 33-49.

17 Cited from the Armenian daily *Puzantion* in Hüseyin Câhid, “Berlin muâhedenâmesinin 61'inci mâddesi,” *Tanîn*, 19 October 1908.

18 Erdal Aydoğan, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Doğu Politikası 1908-1918* (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2007), 150.



Patriarchate presented a memorandum to Kâmil Pasha, the Grand Vizier, requesting the appointment of new officials in Eastern Anatolia, the non-interference of Hamidiye officers in public affairs, the punishment of those who maltreated the Armenians, the renewal of trials for released culprits, the restoration of lands to their previous (Armenian) owners, aid to farmers, and remission of taxes.<sup>19</sup>

The inter-communal conflicts in Adana in 1909<sup>20</sup> further increased Armenians' mistrust towards the Young Turk rule. The S.D. Hunchak, blaming the local administration for acting lethargically in protecting Armenians, held the view that the Armenians should prepare themselves for an armed defence in a near future.<sup>21</sup> Some members of the Dashnaksutyun also blamed the CUP for the incidents and insisted that it could not be trusted. However, the party's congress still decided to maintain close relations with the CUP, as it was the leading defender of the constitutional and parliamentary system, which the Dashnaks regarded essential for the Armenians' struggle for rights and freedoms.<sup>22</sup> Despite harsh criticisms from some factions of the Armenian revolutionary movement,<sup>23</sup> in early September 1909, delegates of the Dashnaksutyun came together with those of the CUP and signed a protocol, which strongly underlined the integrity of the country and the preservation of the regime.<sup>24</sup> Despite mutual suspicions and disagreements, both parties acted pragmatically as there was still the threat of counter-revolution.<sup>25</sup> They also collaborated to some extent in assisting Armenian revolutionary activities in Russia.<sup>26</sup>

Despite some initiatives such as the formation of a reform commission, the absence of a serious step for reforms led to more complaints on the side of the Armenians. While Armenian newspapers called the government to pay more attention to the grievances of their brethren in Eastern Anatolia,<sup>27</sup> the Patriarchate continuously reported to the Porte incidents of violence, murder,

19 Recep Karacakaya, *Türk Kamuoyu ve Ermeni Meselesi: 1908-1923* (İstanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm, 2005), 82-84.

20 For a recent and comprehensive account of the Adana incidents, see Yücel Güçlü, *The Armenian Events of Adana in 1909: Cemal Paşa and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2018).

21 Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...", 86-87.

22 Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...", 66-72.

23 Aydoğan, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Doğu...*, 284.

24 For the full text of the protocol, see "İttihâd-ı anâsır," *Tanîn*, 7 September 1909; Uras, *The Armenians in History...*, 836-837.

25 Murat Koptaş, "Armenian Political Thinking in the Second Constitutional Period: The Case of Krikor Zohrab" (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2005), 109.

26 Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 99-102.

27 A typical example is [Mihran (Mihri) Apikyan,] "Ermeniler millet-i hakimeye ne dilden yalvarmalı? Ve niceye dek?" *Nevâ yâhûd Sadâ-i Ermeniyân*, 22-23 May 1910.

brigandage, and forced conversion. Under these circumstances, the CUP offered to the Dashnaks an alliance for the 1912 elections. The Dashnaks accepted the offer in return for the following promises: (1) the government would consult the Dashnaksutyyun about the governors that would be appointed to Eastern Anatolia; (2) there would be a minimum of twenty Armenian deputies in the parliament; (3) at least 30 per cent of the local gendarmerie and police in Eastern Anatolia would be composed of Armenians; (4) more Armenian officials would be employed in the region; (5) Armenian guards would be formed against Kurdish incursions; (6) lands would be restored to their previous Armenian owners and the Kurds residing there would be removed; and (7) no more Muslim migrants would be settled in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>28</sup>

These were very significant promises, which would entail a comprehensive, and path-breaking, reform programme if they were ever fulfilled. However, the CUP gave only nine seats to the Dashnaks in the next parliament and did not seem enthusiastic at all to follow the rest of its promises. The Freedom and Entente Party (FEP), the main opposition to the CUP, also failed to meet the expectations of its Armenian supporters, primarily the S.D. Hunchak, during its short-lived government in late 1912.<sup>29</sup> As a result, the Armenian parties, disappointed of their hopes from the Turkish political leadership, decided to cooperate amongst each other by the year 1913.

## **THE ATTITUDE OF THE OTTOMAN POLITICAL ELITE TOWARD THE REFORM ISSUE**

### **Before the Revolution**

During Abdülhamid's reign, the Young Turks regarded the restoration of the constitution, in addition to its other benefits, as the cure to the Armenian Question. They believed that if the Armenians were represented in the parliament, their concerns about inequality would go away and they would become more attached to the state.<sup>30</sup> Besides, according to them, the maintenance of the constitutional system would also prevent European intervention for the recognition of special privileges for the non-Muslim communities in the Empire.<sup>31</sup>

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28 Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...", 98-99.

29 Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...", 96-103.

30 Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians...*, 276.

31 Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 31.

Among the Young Turks, Prens Sabahaddin, the leader of the liberal League, defended the view that political unity of the Empire could better be preserved under decentralisation (*adem-i merkeziyet*), which he conceptualised as “*chacun soit absolument maître chez soi, sous la direction générale d’une politique commune*.”<sup>32</sup> For him, due to the vast socio-political and economic differences among provinces, the decisions concerning provincial administration should be left to local governments and councils and the bulk of tax revenues should be spent in their own locality.<sup>33</sup> This view was adopted by the Ottoman Liberal Union, which was founded by the members of the League after the revolution, but never became popular among the Ottoman political elite. The Union could only participate in the 1908 elections, winning only one seat in the parliament, and the unsuccessful attempt of counter-revolution in the following year led to its dissolution. The idea of decentralisation as defined above was not supported by the Ottoman political elite thereafter except, though partly, in the loose anti-CUP coalition under the FEP.

Despite the bold declarations of Sabahaddin, to what extent the liberals would implement decentralisation if they ever came to power is also questionable. A few months after the revolution, Sabahaddin advised his followers “to demonstrate to our Christian compatriots the necessity of cordial unity with the Muslims and to illustrate the absolute necessity of not pursuing policies for autonomous administration or independence for all Ottoman elements, without distinction of ethnicity and faith, such as Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, etc., who compose the Ottoman world.”<sup>34</sup> Sir Gerard Lowther, the British Ambassador in İstanbul, also observed that he did not mean by decentralisation “autonomy of particular geographical areas—e.g., Armenia—but the conferring on the provincial authorities of the existing *vilayets* of the Empire of wider administrative powers on the lines laid down in Midhat Pasha’s Constitution.”<sup>35</sup> This stance was not too different from that of the CUP, which also defended expanding the powers of provincial governments (see below).

The CUP, on the other hand, became the leading Young Turk organisation especially after its final reorganisation in 1907. As its name implies, the committee had the goal of reforming the country through bringing together

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32 Quoted in Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 86. Translation of the French quote: “Everybody being absolutely the ruler of their own place under the general direction of a common policy.”

33 Nezahet Nurettin Ege, *Prens Sabahaddin: Hayatı ve İlmi Müdafaları* (İstanbul: Güneş, 1977), 159-165.

34 Quoted in Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 368.

35 Quoted in Feroz Ahmad, “Unionist Relations with the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 1: 429.

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the communities of different religions and ethnicity under a single “Ottoman” nation.<sup>36</sup> Although the growing awareness of Turkishness among the Unionists led some circles to criticise them for being nationalist, they rejected this, calling themselves “patriotic” instead.<sup>37</sup> On the one hand, they were highly critical of Hamidian Islamism and showed willingness to improve the conditions of the non-Muslims. On the other hand, however, they expected the non-Muslims to relinquish their aspirations for autonomy or independence and stick together with their Muslim countrymen for the well-being of the common “homeland.”

A conversation between a Unionist Turk and an Ottoman Greek in Paris published in *Şûra-i Ümmet*, the official organ of the committee, is a good example to illustrate the viewpoint of the CUP with regard to the non-Muslims. At one point in the conversation, the Greek expresses his surprise that a Turk finally regards him as a fellow citizen, and complains about the maltreatment he received from the Hamidian government and Turks in general. The Unionist protagonist says in response that it is understandable to see the Turks feel offended as Christians work against the government, appeal to the Great Powers for the slightest problem and slander against the Turks in their press. The Greek replies that any community would do the same if it met the injustices that Ottoman Christians has been subjected to for centuries, and gives a fairly long list of these. He concludes that all that the Christians want from the Turks is to earn trust in their hearts by treating them as fellow citizens without assuming superiority over them. The protagonist ends his account with the words “What I did first after returning home was to send to my Greek compatriot the programme of our committee, which conformed to his desires.”<sup>38</sup> A palpable subtext of this story is that the committee acknowledged the grievances of the Christians and was ready to embrace them as equal citizens, but at the same time expected them to be loyal to the Empire.

As the Unionists acknowledged the deprived socio-economic conditions and administrative shortcomings in the provinces, they supported the principle of “expansion of responsibilities” (*tevsi-i me'zûniyet*), i.e., extending the prerogatives of local governments for a more effective provincial administration. On the other hand, they firmly opposed the idea of decentralisation, which was advocated by the liberals and non-Muslim revolutionaries.<sup>39</sup> As Cemâl Pasha

36 Ahmed Rüstem Bey, *La guerre mondiale et la question turco-arménienne* (Berne: Imprimerie Stämpfli & cie., 1918), 25-26.

37 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 40.

38 “Bolonya ormanında bir Rum ile muhâvere,” *Şûra-i Ümmet* 41 (1903), 3-4.

39 The expression “*tevsi-i me'zûniyet*” was in fact included in the 1876 Constitution (Article 108), and was translated in its French version as “*décentralisation*.” Despite supporting the constitution, however, the Unionists did not embrace this translation, hence Prens Sabahaddin’s neologism “*adem-i merkeziyet*,” which, for them, implied the absence of central authority: Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, *İnkılâp Tarihimiz ve “Jön Türkler”* (İstanbul: Tan, 1945), 171-172.

wrote in his memoirs, the committee's position was that powers and responsibilities of local governments should be expanded without decreasing the control and influence of the central government over the provinces.<sup>40</sup> This was due to the belief that since the Empire was made up of various ethnicities, regional autonomy would disrupt its unity and bring it to collapse.<sup>41</sup> Because of their special concern with unity and integrity, the Unionists were against granting privileges to particular regions or guarantees to particular communities. Earlier experiences had convinced them that this would not prevent but foster further rebellions and even secession. For Ahmed Rızâ, this was almost a vicious circle: "Christians acquired privileges when they rebelled [and] they desired to rebel when they acquired privileges."<sup>42</sup> Thus, he argued elsewhere, reforms could have a divisive effect if not formulated as a whole for the entire Empire.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Bahaeddîn Şâkir, one of the founding members of the CUP, responded to the supporters of decentralisation by reminding what had happened to Eastern Rumelia and Crete.<sup>44</sup>

While endeavouring to cooperate with Armenian revolutionaries against the Abdülhamid regime, the Young Turks, especially the Unionist wing, were somewhat suspicious about their real intentions.<sup>45</sup> The Empire's earlier experiences of nationalist separatism, the recent memory of the violent acts undertaken by Armenian revolutionaries and their continuing efforts to obtain European support for reforms were among the factors that influenced the Young Turks' views of the revolutionaries and their demands. When, in the 11<sup>th</sup> Universal Peace Congress held on 2-6 April 1902 in Monaco, Armenian revolutionaries called for an international conference for supervising the execution of the 1895 reform project, the CUP accused the revolutionaries, with an open letter to the congress, of aiming to split the Ottoman Empire and its subjects into parts. Regarding special regulations for a region or community as deleterious, the committee declared that the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin would be executed, if necessary, in all provinces without any distinction.<sup>46</sup>

Two years later, an editorial article in *Şûra-i Ümmet*<sup>47</sup> asked, "What do the Armenian revolutionaries want?" and answered this question as follows:

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40 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 342, 345-346.

41 [Talât Paşa], *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları*, ed. Alpay Kabacalı (İstanbul: İletişim, 1990), 64.

42 Quoted in Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 40.

43 Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri, 1895-1908* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2008), 199-200.

44 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 89.

45 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 46.

46 "Şü'ûnât," *Şûra-i Ümmet* 3 (1902), 4; also see Kuran, 167.

47 "Ermeni mes'alesi," *Şûra-i Ümmet* 57 (1904), 1-2. Hanioglu indicates that the author was Sâmipaşazâde Sezâi: Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 340.

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“If they want equality, justice, freedom, and security, we recognise that they are right, and declare and pronounce that we have the same desires and opinions as them... [Or, do they want] An autonomous government in the lands that they dare to call “Armenia?” If so, the insurrection of the Armenians is not a revolution, but a war [on us].”

While denouncing the earlier massacres and blaming them on Abdülhamid, the editor also censured the revolutionaries for their use of violence and their ongoing attempts to revive the Treaty of Berlin. In conclusion, he called the “Turks, Kurds, Albanians, Arabs, in short the entire Ottoman public” to offer the Armenians rights and justice, but not independence or autonomy.

In 1906, *Şûra-i Ümmet* published a letter allegedly sent by an Ottoman Armenian living in the United States and providing advice for the long-term well-being of the Empire.<sup>48</sup> In addition to asking for individual rights, the freedoms of belief and publication, and the equality among men and women, it also suggested bringing all Ottoman subjects into unity, erecting sculptures of Ottomans who served the “homeland” in various ways, proclaiming national holidays, and inspiring children in schools with “brotherhood and patriotism” instead of religious fanaticism. The publication in the official journal of the CUP of such an article, preaching unity and nationhood with the words of an “Armenian,” whether real or fictitious, implies how the committee regarded the Armenians at that time. Read together with the earlier reports and articles cited above, it can be concluded that the CUP, on the one hand, did not intend to exclude the Armenians if they were willing to be a part of the Ottoman nation and, on the other hand, maintained its “red lines” concerning their demands for special rights and privileges.

### After the Revolution

In line with their earlier political thinking, the Young Turks, under the leadership of the CUP, upheld after the 1908 revolution a “state-based patriotism,” which, according to them, would act as the cement keeping different religious and ethnic communities together.<sup>49</sup> As Hüseyin Câhid, a prominent Unionist journalist, wrote later, even though the Unionists had initially aimed to promote “Turkishness,” after the revolution they usually referred to themselves as “Ottomans,” instead of “Turks,” to discourage nationalisms in the Empire.<sup>50</sup> The official publication of the CUP exclaimed, “There is no longer a Macedonia, Kurdistan, Armenia, etc. today. Wherever

48 “Amerikada bir Ermeni vatandaşımızdan gelen mektûb,” *Şûra-i Ümmet* 102 (1906), 4.

49 Hasan Kayalı, *Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 3-9.

50 Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Siyasal Anılar*, ed. Rauf Mutluay (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 1976), 39.

our glorious flag floats is an Ottoman land. Our history, glorious past, present, and future are inseparably amalgamated... Our feelings and characters are alike. It is altogether the Ottoman character.”<sup>51</sup> Primarily because of its language policies, such as advocating education in Turkish and restricting the use of other languages in official transactions, the CUP was often accused of pursuing Turkification under the guise of Ottomanisation. Yet, the members of the committee repeatedly declared that they had no such intention, and their only ambition was to establish the feeling of unity and responsibility to the “common fatherland” in the heart of every citizen. For them, the Ottoman nation needed a common language, and this would naturally be Turkish as it was the language of the state and the most widespread language in the Empire.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, however, the Unionists did not conceal their mistrust towards the non-Muslims, who they believed were working for their communal interests rather than the common interests of all Ottoman citizens.<sup>53</sup> In order to forestall the pursuit of ethnic interests through political activities, the CUP took certain measures that contradicted its liberal discourse. For example, the Law of Associations, adopted in August 1909, prohibited political societies violating “the laws, common decency and the unity of the state” and having “national and communal names and causes.” The last clause was passed despite strong objection and negative votes of the non-Turkish deputies in the parliament.<sup>54</sup>

As regards the Armenians in particular, the Unionists had strong suspicions about the intentions of their revolutionaries even though the committee often co-opted with them for political purposes.<sup>55</sup> In his memoirs Talât Pasha wrote, “I always displayed the greatest indulgence to the [Armenian] revolutionary organisations and pretended as if I did not know their real objectives.”<sup>56</sup> An important cause of the suspicions about the Armenian revolutionaries must have been the historical memory of earlier nationalist revolutions, which had resulted in the formal or virtual loss of various parts of the Ottoman Europe since the 1820s. They had also sought autonomy in Eastern Anatolia and engaged in violent activities during the Hamidian period. Although the Armenian revolutionaries, who had sought autonomy in Eastern Anatolia and

51 Vicdânî, “Vilâyet-i Selâse, Kilisa mesâili, Osmanlılık,” *Şûra-i Ümmet [Daily]*, 1 February 1909.

52 Aydoğın, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Doğu Politikası...*, 40-43; Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 343-344.

53 For instance, on 7 November 1908, Hüseyin Câhid wrote in the leading pro-CUP newspaper, “No matter how strongly we hope for mutual friendship and unity among Ottoman elements in the future... we know that nobody wants and works for the survival of this state as much as the Muslim element... Other elements are almost always in pursuit of a [particular] purpose.” Hüseyin Câhid, “Millet-i hâkime,” *Tamîn*, 7 November 1908.

54 Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1 İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi* (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı, 1988), 368-370.

55 Ahmed Rüstem Bey, *La guerre mondiale...*, 26-28.

56 [Talât Paşa], *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları*, 25.

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resorted to violence during the Hamidian period, no longer openly claimed autonomy or independence after the 1908 Revolution, the Turkish political elite, in light of the past experiences, regarded their requests for regional reforms as a smokescreen. They were concerned with the Armenians' potential collaboration with their sympathisers in Europe and Russia, who often made blunt declarations supporting an autonomous government in Eastern Anatolia,<sup>57</sup> and disgruntled with their reference to Eastern Anatolia as "Armenia."<sup>58</sup> Past experiences also led the policymakers to believe that regional or communal privileges would not put a check to further political demands, but, on the contrary, open new venues of opportunity for those seeking autonomy and freedom.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to the suspicions among the political elite, the Muslim majority in Eastern Anatolia, due to the earlier conflicts and the agitations of the revolutionaries, harboured an increasingly negative attitude towards the Armenians. Besides, some of those Muslims, such as landowners and Kurdish feudal lords, were materially benefiting from the status quo. Thus, the Muslims, and naturally their representatives in the parliament, tended to oppose any significant step for the fulfilment of Armenian requests regarding land disputes and security. For example, the government decided in early 1909 to send investigatory committees to the region to find out the exact needs of the inhabitants and to resolve disputes between the two communities,<sup>60</sup> but this did not materialise due to strong opposition from Muslim deputies in the parliament, particularly those from the Eastern provinces.<sup>61</sup>

The lingering suspicion towards the Armenians was clearly incompatible with the CUP's objectives of erasing the negative impressions of the Hamidian rule, modernising the Empire with sweeping reforms, winning the trust and support of all communities, and strengthening their bonds with the state. The incongruity manifested itself most plainly in the committee's responses to the requests of the Armenians for Eastern Anatolia. On the one hand, it did not categorically reject them in order not to alienate the Armenians. Except for

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57 For a collection of speeches by a number of European intellectuals, see *Pour l'Arménie et la Macédoine: manifestations franco-anglo-italiennes* (Paris: Société nouvelle de librairie & d'édition, 1904). Borrowing the rhetoric of Alexander Gorchakov, former Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Denys Cochin claimed in his speech that the Armenian and Macedonian questions could be solved through either "autonomy" or "anatomy," meaning partition.

58 An Armenian intellectual wrote that although the real name of Eastern Anatolia was "Armenia," this name made many Turks uncomfortable and the government advised the Armenians to use "Eastern Anatolia" or "Kurdistan" instead: [Apikyan], 22-3 May 1910. When quoting Armenian spokesmen, pro-CUP newspapers used the sign "(!)," expressing disagreement with sarcasm, next to the word "Armenia:" "Vilâyât-ı şarkiye ıslahâtı," *İntihâb-ı Efkâr*, 27 December 1912.

59 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 342, 346.

60 Aydoğan, *İttihat ve Terakkî'nin Doğu Politikası...*, 58.

61 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 347-348.



the ones that would entail political and administrative empowerment of the Armenians in the region, the CUP government received the requests concerning economic development, security, land disputes, public works and services quite favourably. In a protocol with the Dashnaksutyun in September 1909, the committee agreed to the principle of “expansion of responsibilities” for the provinces. It even showed a flexible attitude towards the requests for the use of local languages in public transactions. On the other hand, the abovementioned suspicions and concerns, as well as the attitude of the Muslim population limited the government’s room for manoeuvre.

In December 1911, a delegation of the Ottoman Armenians living in Britain visited Tevfik Pasha, the Ottoman Ambassador, and complained about the indifference of local authorities to the ongoing injustices in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>62</sup> Armenian politicians in İstanbul also submitted two reports to the Porte. In response, the Porte decided in January 1912 to send capable governors to the provinces of Bitlis and Mâmuretü’l-Azîz, expand the prerogatives of the governors of Erzurum, Van, Bitlis and Mâmuretü’l-Azîz in appointing and dismissing officials, appoint judicial personnel from outside the region to ensure impartiality, better subsidise the efforts to catch bandits, increase the number and quality of the gendarmerie, prevent the collection of taxes by Kurdish tribes, accelerate the resolution of land disputes in courts, and send a commission to the region to investigate needs relating to public works, justice, economy and finance.<sup>63</sup> The government’s prompt response to the appeals of the Armenians indicates its desire to improve security, tranquillity, and life conditions in Eastern Anatolia. Yet, the Porte still did not look favourably upon requests that would increase the influence of Armenians in regional administration. For example, it rejected the requests that a larger number of Armenian governors and public officials be appointed in Eastern provinces on the grounds that this would be incompatible to the principle of equality in the constitution.<sup>64</sup>

## THE ROAD TO THE REFORMS

Despite the aversion of the decision-making elite with regard to granting regional privileges, particularly those requested by the Armenians, the Ottoman government eventually introduced radical reforms regarding the administration of Eastern Anatolia in the years 1913-14. As will be explained

62 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin Siyasî Tarihçesi (1877-1914)* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2001), no. 103.

63 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 104; Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1940-67), 2/1: 51; Önder Kocatürk, “Türk-İngiliz İlişkilerinin Kopuş Sürecinde Son Aşama (1911-1914),” (Ph.D. Dissertation, İstanbul University, 2010), 439-440.

64 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 104; Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2/1: 51-52.

below, external incentives and pressures, and foreign political considerations played a crucial role in determining not only the decision to introduce these reforms, but also their scope.

### **The First Balkan War and Armenian Lobbying in Europe**

The First Balkan War broke out on 8 October 1912, after the Porte rejected the collective ultimatum by Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro concerning the situation of Ottoman Macedonia. Within only a few months, the war proved to be a disaster for the Ottoman Empire as the Balkan allies got through the Ottoman defences and occupied almost the entire Rumelia. In addition to the psychological damage it created, the defeat against the Balkan states also revealed the Empire's precarious military situation. For the recovery to happen as quickly as possible, the Ottoman government wanted to see tranquillity and order in its territories. In Eastern Anatolia, however, Armenian revolutionaries were still active and the tensions between Muslims and Christians were acute. Despite the lack of trust concerning the goodwill and sincerity of the Armenian political parties, the circumstances made the Ottoman government anxious to come to terms with them to alleviate the situation in Eastern Anatolia as soon as possible.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, the Armenian political leadership had become convinced that neither the CUP nor the incumbent minority government under the FEP differed much from Abdülhamid in approaching the reform question.<sup>66</sup> Seeing the war as an opportunity to draw international attention for their cause, they hoped to convince the Great Powers to handle their reform demands for Eastern Anatolia in the forthcoming peace conference. The Armenian National Assembly in İstanbul, which included a constellation of political parties as well as members of the clergy, unanimously decided to voice Armenian grievances abroad.<sup>67</sup> With the encouragement of the revolutionaries, Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, Iran, Egypt, Europe and the United States submitted numerous petitions to Western governments, while pro-Armenian publications in the West increased rapidly.<sup>68</sup> The Armenian Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin) also took its part in these efforts; upon the advice of Russia, it formed in November 1912 a delegation, led by Boghos Nubar Pasha, to lobby in

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65 Ahmed Rüstem Bey, *La guerre mondiale...*, 48.

66 Mikaël Varandian, *L'Arménie et la question arménienne* (Paris: Laval, [1917]), 75-76.

67 R. Koptaş, "Zohrab, Papazyan ve Pastırmacıyan...", 164-165.

68 "Tebriz Ermenileri," *İntihâb-ı Efkar*, 28 December 1912; Roderic H. Davison, "The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914," *The American Historical Review* 53, no. 3 (1948): 495; Dikran Mesrob Kaligian, "The Armenian Revolutionary Federation under Ottoman Constitutional Rule, 1908-1914," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston College, 2003), 258.

European capitals for reforms in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>69</sup> In his book, Krikor Zohrab, a leading Armenian political figure and jurist, summarised the demands of the Armenian political leadership as (1) the appointment of a governor-general with the consent of the Great Powers, (2) participation of Armenians in public offices, and (3) decentralisation.<sup>70</sup>

The increasing tensions in Eastern Anatolia and the Armenians' engagement in lobbying at a time when the Balkan War inflicted a heavy blow upon the Ottoman Empire concerned the European Powers that the status quo in Asia Minor could not last for long. British diplomats in the Ottoman Empire were writing to London that unless the Porte satisfied its Armenian citizens with immediate and extensive reforms, they would cooperate with Russia against the Ottoman rule before too long.<sup>71</sup> Western newspapers published reports that a large Russian force in the Caucasus was ready to enter Eastern Anatolia in case of a civil conflict.<sup>72</sup>

Certain developments of the 1900s had rekindled Russian interest in Eastern Anatolia and the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. By obtaining railroad concessions for the north-east of Anatolia at the turn of the century, Russia got one step ahead of the other Great Powers in permeating the region.<sup>73</sup> The defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905 and the formation of Franco-Anglo-Russian Triple Alliance in 1907 had redirected Russian attention to the affairs of the Balkans and the Middle East. According to the understanding between Britain and Russia, the northern provinces of Persia were declared a Russian sphere of influence; thus, Eastern Anatolia became the next destination for Russian expansion.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, Russian state officials began to consider a substantial revision in the government's longstanding Armenian policy. The new General Governor of Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, advised the government to relax the concerns of Armenian nationalism and instead use it to extend Russia's influence further into Eastern Anatolia. Michel de Giers, the Russian Ambassador in İstanbul, also found it essential for Russian interests to win over Ottoman Armenians.<sup>75</sup>

69 Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...", 122-123; Uras, *The Armenians in History...*, 630.

70 Marcel Léart, *La question arménienne à la lumière des documents* (Paris: A. Challamel, 1913). Zohrab preferred to use a pseudonym for some reason; see: R. Koptaş, "Zohrab, Papazyan ve Pastırmacıyan...", 166.

71 Kaligian, "The Armenian Revolutionary Federation...", 249-50; Joseph Heller, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire 1908-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), 83-84.

72 For example, see "Turks killing Armenians," *The New York Times*, 27 November 1912. This report referred to an earlier one published in *The Morning Post*.

73 Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians...*, 242-244.

74 Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence 1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 31.

75 Seyit Sertçelik, *Rus ve Ermeni Kaynakları Işığında Ermeni Sorununun Ortaya Çıkış Süreci* (Ankara: TBMM, 2009) 264-265.

## The Impact of Foreign Policy Thinking on the Introduction of the 1913-14 Armenian Reform Programme

The severe defeat in the Balkan War signalled that the Ottoman Empire could not support itself for too long. Anticipating its imminent disintegration, Russia decided to act pro-actively. In order to prevent other Powers from establishing themselves in Eastern Anatolia, it was necessary to obtain the sympathy of the peoples inhabiting the region. As a result, Russia redoubled its efforts in offering protection and support to both Armenians and the Kurds.<sup>76</sup> In addition to the strategic and expansionist considerations, its own Armenian population in the Caucasus, which amounted to around one million, the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, and the Armenian revolutionaries also pressured Russia to pay attention to the grievances of the Ottoman Armenians. Serge Sazonov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, repeatedly told the Ottoman ambassador that the Armenian presence in Russia would not permit them to remain indifferent in case of conflict or revolution in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>77</sup>

In late November 1912, Russia took the lead for reforms. Sazonov expressed to Turhan Pasha, the Ottoman Ambassador, his concerns about the situation of the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, particularly their lack of security and the problems with local administration. He also instructed Giers to notify the Porte that unless comprehensive reforms in favour of the Armenians are introduced in Eastern Anatolia, there could be disturbances, which might lead some European Powers to intervene.<sup>78</sup> Gabriel Noradunkyan Efendi, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, promised to submit these points to the consideration of the Council of Ministers.<sup>79</sup>

The Boghos Nubar mission commenced its visits in Paris in early December 1912. The delegation met Raymond Poincaré, the French Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Halil Rifat Pasha, the Ottoman Ambassador. The ambassador, having observed the Armenians' dedication to convince the Powers to include Armenian reforms in the forthcoming conference regarding the Balkan War, advised the Porte to satisfy the Armenian political leadership with far-reaching reforms before the Powers intervened.<sup>80</sup>

In response to these developments, the Ottoman government hastily set about elaborating a reform project in December 1912.<sup>81</sup> Anticipating collective

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76 Reynolds, *Shattering Empires...*, 63-64, 72-73. At that time the Russians did not want a conflict between Muslims and Christians in Eastern Anatolia, as that would lead other Powers to intervene and frustrate their plans of annexation: Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 75.

77 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, nos. 130, 147.

78 MID [Russian Foreign Ministry], *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov: reformy v Armenii, 26 noyabrya 1912 goda-10 maya 1914 goda* (Petrograd: Gosudarstvennaya tipografiya, 1915), no. 2.

79 MID [Russian Foreign Ministry], no. 3.

80 Kaligian, "The Armenian Revolutionary Federation...", 251-252; Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 110.

81 MID [Russian Foreign Ministry], nos. 4, 6, 8.

pressure from Europe, Kâmil Pasha, the Grand Vizier, found it necessary to strengthen the bonds between the Armenian population and the state through providing better administration, public works, and services.<sup>82</sup> Reşîd Bey, the Minister of Interior, declared to the Armenian press that the government was considering comprehensive reforms in Eastern Anatolia “based on the principle of expansion of responsibilities.”<sup>83</sup> A special commission including leading members of the government and some Armenian intellectuals convened on 21 and 24 December.<sup>84</sup> The discussions yielded a draft project stipulating (1) the merging of the six Eastern provinces into two, (2) the appointment to each of one governor-general, one European inspector-general, and one reform commission with foreign experts (3) the increasing of the number of districts and sub-districts (*kazâ*), (4) the permission of the use of local languages in petitions and courthouses, (5) the employment of foreign officials in the reorganisation of the police, the gendarmerie, and the judiciary, (6) the allocation of financial resources to settle land disputes. While announcing the draft project to the press, Reşîd Bey noted that it was only recommendatory and would be evaluated by the government.<sup>85</sup>

Even though the meetings yielded a fairly comprehensive draft for reforms, the government was undecided about the final version. Newspapers reported in January 1913 that the government was considering limiting the reforms in Eastern Anatolia to (1) the enlargement of the powers of governors, (2) the reorganisation of the gendarmerie and the police, (3) the amendment of the agriculture tax, and (4) the construction of public works.<sup>86</sup> For Giers, the draft was even inferior to the reform programme of 1895. He reported to St. Petersburg that although the earlier programme had established a permanent reform commission at the capital, in direct contact with the ambassadors of the Powers, this draft stipulated a commission, made up of three Muslims, two Armenians and one Chaldean, in the provinces. Besides, the draft was silent about the employment of Armenians in provincial administration and security.<sup>87</sup> It is also important to note that the government clearly stated that all administrative, financial, judicial, military and religious laws in force

82 Zekeriya Türkmen, *Vilâyât-ı Şarkîye (Doğu Anadolu Vilayetleri) İslahat Müfettişliği 1913-1914* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006), 34.

83 “Şarkî Anadolu hakkında,” *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 18 December 1912.

84 Those who participated in the meetings were Kâmil Pasha (Grand Vizier), Reşîd Bey (Minister of Interior), Abdurrahman Bey (Minister of Finance), Noradonghian Efendi (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Maghakia Ormanian (Former Armenian Patriarch of İstanbul), Diran Kelekian (Editor-in-chief of the İstanbul daily *Sabah*), Calouste Gulbenkian (Businessman) and Nazaret Daghavarian (Former Deputy from Sivas): “Anatoli islâhâtı,” *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 21 December 1912 (evening edition, no. 624); “Vilâyât-ı şarkîye islâhâtı,” *İntihâb-ı Efkâr*, 27 December 1912.

85 “Vilâyât-ı şarkîye islâhâtı,” *İntihâb-ı Efkâr*, 27 December 1912.

86 “Şarkî Anadolu islâhâtı,” *İntihâb-ı Efkâr*, 11 January 1913.

87 MID [Russian Foreign Ministry], no. 8; André Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire ottoman* (Lausanne and Paris: Payot et cie., 1917), 210.

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throughout the Empire would be exactly enforced in the Eastern provinces.<sup>88</sup> All these show the government's care to avoid creating a region with exceptional status. Although the FEP, the party in power, had a more liberal outlook compared to the CUP, and the ongoing war in the Balkans and the likelihood of international intervention in Eastern Anatolia prompted the government to come to terms with the Armenians, decentralisation did not carry the day.

Whilst the government was still elaborating on the reform project, the CUP came back to the power with a coup on 23 January 1913. The new Mahmud Şevket Pasha government could not overlook the reform issue due to similar concerns: the Russian pressure for reforms in favour of the Armenians was growing serious, and even the governments of the Triple Alliance, which were expected to side with the Ottoman Empire in a dispute with Russia, were repeatedly advising the Porte to promptly introduce the reforms to prevent Russian intervention.<sup>89</sup> The Boghos Nubar mission kept touring ambassadors and political figures in Paris and requesting their help for the improvement of the conditions of the Ottoman Armenians.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, the Arabs in Syria and Lebanon were demanding similar reforms and there were rumours that British and French intervention was imminent. Weakened both militarily and economically due to the Balkan War, the Empire might not have been able to defend itself if a Great Power occupied its territories with the pretext of providing security. In case of foreign intervention for reforms, the Ottoman government could lose its control over the region.

These considerations prompted the Porte to forestall the outbreak of a civil disorder in the Eastern provinces and the involvement of the Powers in the reform question at the same time. In early March 1913, delegations were sent to Europe to assure foreign governments that the Ottoman government was seriously intending to introduce reforms in Eastern Anatolia and the Arab lands.<sup>91</sup> Considering that any further discontentment in the provinces could result in the loss of Anatolia and the Arab territories, the CUP government acknowledged the urgent necessity of improving security, administration, and economic conditions in the provinces. Since all this could not be fulfilled effectively by the central government, some, albeit limited, degree of provincial autonomy was regarded inevitable.<sup>92</sup> Despite the objection of a few ministers, the Porte issued on 26 March 1913 the Temporary Law on

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88 MID [Russian Foreign Ministry], no. 8.

89 Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, 2/III: 32, 42; Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 113.

90 William J. Van der Dussen, "The Question of Armenian Reforms in 1913-1914," *Armenian Review* 39, no. 1 (1986): 16-17.

91 Kaligian, "The Armenian Revolutionary Federation...", 259.

92 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrızam ve Harbiye Nazırı Mahmut Şevket Paşa'nın Günlüğü* (İstanbul: ARBA, 1988), 46, 53; Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, 2/III: 56-57.

Provincial Administration, which reorganised the provincial government with a separate budget and enlarged responsibilities.<sup>93</sup>

At first sight, this law was in line with the principle of “expansion of responsibilities,” which had been in the constitution since 1876 and defended by the CUP. The parliament had been discussing its implementation since 1908, but was never able to agree on the specifics.<sup>94</sup> In the end, it was due to the Empire’s international status and external pressures that this principle was finally put into effect. As explained above, the grave military and economic situation of the Empire and the threat of international isolation aggravated the concerns about a possible Great Power intervention or even annexation as a result of agitations for reform. In addition, after the disaster in the Balkan War, the government prioritised internal restructuring to bring back its strength and, as Cemâl Paşa underlined in his memoirs, to improve its international status.<sup>95</sup> Ensuring the unity of citizens and their loyalty to the state was still essential as before, but required new methods. While encouraging thousands of Bulgarians and Greeks living in the Western provinces to move to Bulgaria and Greece, the Porte wanted to alleviate the grievances of the minority groups that did not have a kin state in order to prevent them from seeking help from abroad.<sup>96</sup> Yet, the government still tended to limit regional reforms largely to economic and security measures and hoped to put an end to local demands through providing better public services and settling inter-communal disputes.<sup>97</sup> Although the Law on Provincial administration was an important opening towards decentralisation, it was still a carefully circumscribed one.

Following the proclamation of the law, the Unionist leadership also elaborated a strategy that would, on the one hand, break the pressure created by reform demands, and, on the other hand, put an end to the Empire’s international isolation. First of all, due to the large size of the Empire’s territories and the shortcomings in communication and transportation, it would be difficult to supervise the reforms from the centre anyway. After consultations with Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa, the Ambassador at Vienna, the government decided to adopt the Austro-Hungarian model and divide the Empire into six

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93 Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 310-3. For the full text of the law, see Cenk Reyhan, “Yerel Yönetim Metinleri (XX): 1913 Tarihli Vilâyat Genel İdaresi Geçici Kanunu,” *Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler* 9, no. 1 (2000): 131-152.

94 Siddık Sami Onar, *İdare Hukukunun Umumi Esasları* (İstanbul: Marifet, 1952), 553.

95 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 83-84, 109.

96 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 109-110.

97 Babanzâde İsmail Hakkı, “Bir bomba münâsebetiyle,” *Tanin*, 17 April 1913; Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 112. For the latter aim, the number of the gendarmerie and courthouses were increased throughout Anatolia: Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2/II: 320-1; Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 128.

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inspectores-general.<sup>98</sup> In order to balance the Russian threat, it also planned to approach Britain, who had supported the Ottoman Empire against Russia for decades. Even though the conclusion of the Triple Entente in 1907 signalled a reversal in Britain's Near Eastern policy, the Ottomans were still hopeful that they could earn British friendship, even pledge an alliance, if they took advantage of conflicting interests with Russia. With this consideration in mind, the Mahmud Şevket Pasha government gave a number of concessions to Britain in various areas such as oil prospecting and the construction of railroads and ports,<sup>99</sup> but desired more comprehensive cooperation, preferably over the affairs of Eastern Anatolia. According to his memoirs, Halil Bey, a prominent member of the CUP, suggested that the Grand Vizier invite a reputed and experienced British inspector-general, such as Lord Curzon, Lord Kitchener, or Lord Milner, along with a number of experts to superintend reforms in the region.<sup>100</sup> Thus, he argued, the Cyprus Convention of 1878, where Britain pledged assistance to the Ottoman Empire against Russia, would be revived. The Grand Vizier strongly endorsed this idea.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, on 24 April, the Porte requested from Britain two inspectors-general for Eastern Anatolia and a number of experts of administration, security, justice, agriculture, forestry and public works, and on 15 May another inspector-general for Western Anatolia.<sup>102</sup> With this latter request, the government made it clear once more that it was unwilling to introduce a special regime in the Eastern provinces. Indeed, as Câvid Bey, one of the more liberal members of the CUP, wrote in his memoirs, the government regarded it essential to adopt a uniform reform programme for all provinces to avoid "a second Macedonia" in the East.<sup>103</sup>

This *démarche* to Britain, as Roderic Davison put it, "was aimed at keeping Russia and England at odds,"<sup>104</sup> and was more than a tactical move confined to Eastern Anatolia. It was rather an attempt of international balancing through cooperation in an internal issue. Mahmud Şevket Pasha told Baron Wangenheim, the German Ambassador in İstanbul, that British officials were requested particularly for provinces inhabited by Christians, i.e. Greeks and Armenians. Their employment, he continued, would assure the British

98 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 96, 150-151. This would be formalised with the imperial *irâde* dated 1 July 1913: Turkey, *Düstür Tertib-i Sâni Cild 5* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1332 AH), 561.

99 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 110-112, 125.

100 [Halil Menteşe], *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları*, ed. İsmail Arar (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı, 1986), 167-169.

101 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 35, 90-91, 96-97, 184.

102 Türkmen, *Vilâyet-i Şarkîye...*, 33-36; Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, 2/III: 60-65; Van der Dussen, "The Question of Armenian Reforms...", 17.

103 Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 3 İttihat ve Terakki* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2000), 574.

104 Davison, "The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914," 493.



government of the Porte's sincerity towards reform and thus make it support the territorial integrity of the Empire in case of an international dispute with regard to the situation of these communities.<sup>105</sup> In other words, reforms would operate as almost a cover to secure British support in future international disputes.

Due to the perceived Russian threat, the Porte went even further to propose alliance to Britain in June 1913. Anticipating negative reactions from other Powers, the Foreign Office declined,<sup>106</sup> but it was still inclined to send officials to Eastern Anatolia. However, upon the strong objection of Russia, who saw the region as a potential sphere of influence, the British government did not fulfil this request either.<sup>107</sup> The Porte continued its efforts for the appointment of British inspectors-general and experts until October to no avail.<sup>108</sup>

In short, the Empire's fragility and vulnerability after the defeat at the First Balkan War, Russia's interest in the Armenian affairs, the imminence of Russian intervention, and the increasing possibility of European control over Eastern Anatolia, drove both the FEP and CUP governments to hastily prepare extensive reform packages for the benefit of Armenians. The CUP government, while introducing the Law on Provincial Administration, at the same time planned to establish British-led inspectorates in Eastern Anatolia. By directly involving Britain in the reform process, the government aimed to ensure its support against the Russian threat. From all these developments one can conclude that war, strategic calculations, and the relations with the Great Powers not only prompted the Ottoman policymakers to address, albeit partially, the longstanding Armenian demands for reform, but also shaped the formulation of the reforms.

### The Russian Initiative

Despite the efforts of the Boghos Nubar mission in Europe, Russia did not want the Armenian reforms to be discussed in an international conference as this would involve other Powers in the affairs of Eastern Anatolia. On the other hand, it was also evident that Russia's unilateral supervision of the reforms would raise objections from other Powers. Thus, after discussions with the British government, Russia agreed that the reform issue should be settled together by the allies in the Triple Entente, which had also prepared

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105 Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2/III: 65.

106 Feroz Ahmad, "Great Britain's Relations with the Young Turks 1908-1914," *Middle Eastern Studies* 2, no. 4 (1966): 321-322.

107 Heller, *British Policy towards...*, 84-85.

108 Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2/III: 149; Kocatürk, "Türk-İngiliz İlişkilerinin...", 682-683.

the 1895 reform programme and urged Abdülhamid to accept it.<sup>109</sup> However, upon German objections, the settlement of the reform question was eventually left to the ambassadors of all six Powers in İstanbul.<sup>110</sup>

As mentioned before, with the belief that foreign intervention could be averted if the reform question were to be tackled seriously,<sup>111</sup> the Mahmud Şevket Pasha government took urgent steps in this direction. After his assassination on 11 June 1913, the same government remained in power, under the Grand Vizierate of Saîd Halîm Pasha, and followed the same approach. Having received the news that the ambassadors of the Great Powers in İstanbul were about to convene to decide on a reform programme, as well as the rumours that Russia would soon provoke incidents in Eastern Anatolia to use them as a pretext for annexation,<sup>112</sup> the government shortly adopted further regulations for provincial administration and submitted them to the Powers. The regulations established six inspectorates throughout the Empire, two in Eastern Anatolia. Christian inspectors-general, who were to be selected by the Porte, would be appointed to these two Eastern inspectorates. In case of disagreement between the inspectors-general and ministries, the government would arbitrate. The inspectors-general would not be authorised to dismiss officials.<sup>113</sup> With these regulations, the Porte hoped to pre-empt the conference by displaying its sincerity and dedication for reforms. Evidently, enlarging the scope of the principle of “expansion of responsibilities” was certainly more acceptable for the Ottoman decision-makers than leaving the entire Eastern Anatolia under direct European control.

Thus, the Russian initiative and the impending ambassadors’ conference prompted the Ottoman government to take a further step in favour of reforms. Even though the British government had not given a positive reply to its request for officials, the Porte formally established inspectorates-general and immediately reported this to the Powers. The new regulations entailed, to a certain degree, European involvement in reforms, which the Ottomans had long opposed; yet at that moment this was seen more preferable to foreign intervention. Moreover, the regulations were still formulated as general reforms for all parts of the Empire. By carefully avoiding establishing a privileged region, the Porte hoped to retain the control over the future of Eastern Anatolia and the Armenians as much as possible.

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109 Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire ottoman*, 208-209.

110 Davison, “The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914,” 495-496; Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2/III: 96.

111 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 197-198.

112 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 120.

113 Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire ottoman*, 224-225; Van der Dussen, “The Question of Armenian Reforms...”, 18-19; Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 133; Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2/III: 119-120.

## The Ambassadors' Conference and the Russo-German Understanding

The attempt of the Ottoman government to prevent the ambassadors' conference through updating its reform programme failed, as Russia rejected the Ottoman proposals. Sazonov told Turhan Pasha that the reform package was not comprehensive enough to end the grievances of the Armenians and if any disturbance took place in Eastern Anatolia Russia would have no other choice but to intervene in order to prevent the incidents from spreading into its territory.<sup>114</sup> The conference began on 3 July 1913. The discussions were based on the Russian draft proposal, prepared by André Mandelstam, the Chief Dragoman of the Russian Embassy in İstanbul, in tandem with the Armenian Patriarchate and the Dashnaksutyun.<sup>115</sup> According to the proposal, the six Eastern provinces would be merged into one and administered by a Christian governor-general, appointed by the Powers and assisted by an equal number of Muslim and Christian counsellors. Provincial councils, public offices, courthouses, the police and the gendarmerie would be made up equally of Muslims and Christians. Every community in the region would be permitted to open schools, collect taxes to finance them, and carry out education in their mother tongue. The Porte would not settle any more Muslims in the region. Similar regulations would be adopted in favour of the Armenians residing in other parts of the Empire, particularly in Cilicia. The implementation of all these would be guaranteed by the Powers.<sup>116</sup>

As Britain and France had already declared their approval of this project, it would be the attitude of the Triple Alliance, particularly of Germany, that would determine the outcome of the negotiations. The German government did not oppose the introduction of reforms in principle. As Germany was expanding its influence towards the Eastern parts of the Ottoman Empire, thanks to the good relations with the Porte and the construction of the Baghdad Railway, it was in its interest to see stability in the region. For the same reason, Germany did not want to arouse antipathy among Ottoman Armenians by thwarting the Russian initiative for reforms.<sup>117</sup> However, the Allies wanted to keep the reform project moderate as they suspected that the Russians were laying the groundwork of a later annexation through suggesting a special status for Eastern Anatolia.<sup>118</sup> Thus, Germany and Austria-Hungary defended

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114 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 130.

115 R. Koptaş, "Zohrab, Papazyan ve Pastırmacıyan...", 167-169; Manoug Joseph Somakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers, 1895-1920* (London and New York, NY: I.B.Tauris, 1995), 158.

116 Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire ottoman*, 217-224; Uras, *The Armenians in History...*, 638-647.

117 Davison, "The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914," 491-493.

118 Davison, "The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914," 496-497; Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War...*, 73.

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in the negotiations the implementation of the Ottoman package.<sup>119</sup> As Russia insisted on its own proposal, the conference adjourned without agreement.

After the conference, Russia and Germany decided to resolve their differences through bilateral talks.<sup>120</sup> On 23 September, their ambassadors in İstanbul agreed on the following points: the provinces would be merged into two inspectorates; the inspectors-general would be appointed by the Porte upon the recommendation of the Powers; they would have the authority to appoint and dismiss officials; Muslims and Christians would have equal share in provincial councils, public offices, the police and the gendarmerie; the reforms would be supervised by the ambassadors and consuls of the Powers; and the Porte would act in agreement with the Powers for further reforms. These points were shortly agreed upon by the other four Powers.<sup>121</sup>

Although this was closer to what it had declared to the Powers by its own initiative, the Ottoman government was still not happy with the proposal. The Porte particularly found the stipulations about the inspectors-general (i.e., that two European officials, who would be equipped with large authorities over administration, security, and justice, would be selected by the Powers and would not be removed from their posts without their consent) too excessive, and believed that parity in official positions would not be welcomed by the Muslims.<sup>122</sup> Governors in Eastern Anatolia were already writing to İstanbul that the Muslims received the news about the prospective reforms, particularly the employment of Christian officials in regional administration, with bitterness.<sup>123</sup> Under these circumstances, the Porte continued negotiations with the Russians and was able to extract some minor concessions.

In the meantime, as a last-ditch attempt to prevent European control, the CUP approached Armenian political leaders for bilateral agreement. Although the Armenians had no serious hopes from the government, the Dashnaktsutyun still agreed to meet in order not to be blamed for being irreconcilable.<sup>124</sup> During the meetings, the CUP delegates tried to persuade the Dashnaks to reject European involvement, by arguing that would bring nothing but harm to both the Turks and the Armenians, and to confide in the government's goodwill and determination for reform. They stated that since the conflict in

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119. Kaligian, "The Armenian Revolutionary Federation...", 275.

120. Van der Dussen, "The Question of Armenian Reforms...", 20.

121. Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire ottoman*, 234-235.

122. [Halil Mentеше], *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi...*, 174; Said Halim Paşa, *L'Empire ottoman et la guerre mondiale* (İstanbul: ISIS, 2000), 6-7.

123. N. Fahri Taş, *Osmanlı-Ermeni İlişkileri 1912-1914 (Vilâyat-ı Şarkîyye Islâhatı)* (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2006), 102; Aydoğan, *İttihat ve Terakkî'nin Doğu Politikası...*, 314; Türkmen, *Vilâyât-ı Şarkîyye...*, 46.

124. Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...", 126.

the Balkans was over, the government could deploy more forces to check Kurdish incursions and spend more energy to improve the Armenians' welfare.<sup>125</sup> The Dashnaks responded that they could do little to stop European involvement at that point, and they would not relinquish the demands as to European governors-general and the equal division of the gendarmerie among Muslims and Christians.<sup>126</sup> After the discussions ended with no result, in December, Saîd Halîm Pasha invited Boghos Nubar Pasha to İstanbul for discussion, but the latter refused, politely advising the Grand Vizier to communicate with the Patriarchate instead.<sup>127</sup>

As the hopes to come to terms directly with the Armenians failed, the Ottoman government, despite all its unwillingness, concluded that it could not defy the Powers anymore. In a telegram to the Porte, Halîl Rifat Pasha summarised his concerns, which were shared by the Ottoman decision-makers. He wrote that due to the wars in the past two years the Empire had become so weakened that "*raison d'État*" required avoidance from any further tensions both inside and abroad. It would not be able to defend itself, he continued, if Russia invaded Eastern Anatolia by using an incident in the region as pretext. Therefore, the ambassador concluded, accepting the reform project would save the Empire from a big disaster, even if its terms injured to some degree the Ottomans' self-esteem.<sup>128</sup>

These considerations finally led Saîd Halîm Pasha to sign the reform agreement with the Russian delegation on 8 February 1914.<sup>129</sup> Compared to the Russian draft project, the final agreement was far more acceptable for the Ottomans. The appointment of European inspectors instead of governors would maintain Ottoman supremacy at least on paper, and the formation of two inspectorates was more assuring than seeing the whole Eastern Anatolia under a single European inspector-general. The number of Armenians to be employed in regional offices and positions was also reduced for some provinces during the negotiations. Nevertheless, the agreement still meant a special regime for Eastern Anatolia and the political and administrative empowerment of a specific community, i.e., the Armenians. Both these consequences had long been objected to by the Ottoman decision-makers. Despite this, to prevent public discontent, pro-CUP newspapers published

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125 Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 358; [Talât Paşa], *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları*, 31, 70-71; [Halil Mentеше], *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi...*, 175.

126 Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti...", 125-127; R. Koptaş, "Zohrab, Papazyan ve Pastırmacıyan...", 171-172; Kaligian, "The Armenian Revolutionary Federation...", 304.

127 Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2/III: 164.

128 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 152.

129 Davison, "The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914," 500-504; Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire ottoman*, 236-238; Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians...*, 283-284.

articles exaggeratedly praising the benefits of reform and the government's reformism.<sup>130</sup>

Within a few months, Dutch and Norwegian officials were appointed as the two inspectors-general to Eastern Anatolia. Yet, when they were on their way, World War I broke out. Although the Ottoman Empire was not a belligerent and would remain out of the war until the end of October, the government regarded the outbreak of the war as an opportunity to suspend the reform process. After all, the Great Powers were no longer in a position to impose the execution of reforms, and the recently concluded secret alliance with Germany provided enough security against a Russian occupation with the pretext of protecting the Armenians. On 8 August 1914, only a few days after the Ottoman government declared general mobilisation, Talât Pasha, the Minister of Interior, requested the two inspectors-general to wait in the capital because "the present serious circumstances make the application of the sanctioned reforms impossible."<sup>131</sup> Following the Ottoman entry into the war, the Porte, stating that "serious and thorough reforms" would be undertaken after the war, terminated the contracts of the inspectors-general and their entourages.<sup>132</sup>

To sum up, the agreement of the Great Powers on a reform scheme forced the Ottoman government to accept a special regime for Eastern Anatolia, which would go beyond what it envisaged for the entire country. Under these circumstances, in order to avoid losing its control over the region, the Porte, on the one hand, continued negotiations with Russia, and, on the other hand, requested the Armenians to declare their opposition to European involvement in the reforms issue. Yet, since the Armenian political leadership refused this and the Powers maintained their collective stance for the introduction of reforms, it reluctantly signed the agreement, which was after all more acceptable than the initial Russian proposal. As the outbreak of the World War removed international pressures, the Ottoman government immediately suspended the implementation of the reform agreement.

## DISCUSSION

This article has demonstrated that the Ottoman government's adoption of a comprehensive reform programme in 1913-4 was driven primarily by

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130 For example, see "Anatolî islâhâtı," *Tanîn*, 12 February 1914. Again, anticipating protests from the Muslims, the newspapers announced the agreement with slightly milder terms. For instance, this article reported that the inspectors-general would be selected by the government, although the agreement clearly stated that their names would be communicated to the Porte by the Great Powers.

131 Van der Dussen, "The Question of Armenian Reforms...", 11.

132 Ali Karaca, "Türkiye'de Ermeniler İçin Yapılan Reformlar (Örtülü Bir İğgale Doğru) ve Tehcir Gerçeği (1878-1915)," in *Uluslararası Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri Sempozyumu, 24-25 Mayıs 2001, Bildiriler*, eds. Selçuk Erez and Mehmet Saray (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2001), 157-158.

concerns regarding the Empire's external security, international status, and relations with the Great Powers. Developments in the domestic political scene, on the other hand, such as the wave of liberalism after the Young Turk Revolution, the repeated requests of Armenian political spokespeople and the growing inter-ethnic tension in Eastern Anatolia, remained insufficient alone to lead the government to introduce such comprehensive reforms in Eastern Anatolia as demanded by its Armenian citizens.

The reluctance of the government to accommodate local demands was due to a number of factors. First, since past experiences had brought about the conviction that reforms on regional or communal basis could create new opportunity spaces for nationalist revolutionary movements, Ottoman political elite were very cautious in their approach to such demands. Rather than addressing the particular demands of communities, the Young Turks promoted, since their inception, the idea of civic equality, with no privileged community or region. The policies they adopted after the revolution indicate that, despite championing radical reforms, their priority was, just like Abdülhamid,<sup>133</sup> maintaining order and the loyalty of the citizens. This is why the Young Turk governments endeavoured not to lose their control and influence over the provinces and their steps for resolving local grievances did not go beyond palliative measures.

Second, the recent memories about the conflicts in Eastern Anatolia as well as the continuing Armenian agitations created a certain degree of mistrust towards Armenian political parties and the Patriarchate. Thus, decision-makers considered the grievances they voiced to be exaggerated and assumed their demands were a part of a hidden agenda. In fact, even when lobbying in Europe, Armenian spokespeople repeatedly declared that they did not have any separatist aspirations and what they only wanted was the improvement of the conditions of their brethren in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>134</sup> Yet, their insistence that European control was necessary for the serious and continuous implementation of reforms<sup>135</sup> made the Ottoman decision-makers question their real intentions. The reports sent from Eastern Anatolia regarding the activities of revolutionaries and the assistance they received from abroad must have reinforced their concerns. As indicated before, no matter how frequently it emphasised brotherhood between Turks and Armenians and blamed Abdülhamid for his reckless use of force against the latter, the CUP still harboured strong suspicions towards the Armenians. Even Mahmud Şevket Pasha, who was actually not a member of the committee and disapproved

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133 Stephen Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia," *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 2 (1973): 139-155.

134 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 183; Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire ottoman*, 211.

135 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin...*, no. 118.

extreme Turkish nationalist opinions voiced in the cabinet,<sup>136</sup> thought that the ultimate goal of the Armenians was independence.<sup>137</sup> Nor did he regard the grievances presented by the Patriarchate genuine; he recorded in his diary that it was the Armenians who provoked the Muslims in the first place and even if some of the complaints were true, they were overly exaggerated.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, in reply to the argument that the Armenians did not want independence or autonomy but only reforms, he stated that they were not sincere and working for foreign intervention.<sup>139</sup>

Third, the Young Turk governments, due to their extreme focus on order and tranquillity, felt obliged to bear in mind the fragile balances among communities. In Eastern Anatolia, there was already a high level of mistrust and resentment among the Muslims towards the Armenians.<sup>140</sup> Reports from the region signalled that any arrangement empowering the Armenians in administration would receive strong protest. Rumours that places would be allocated to Armenians in provincial councils and offices and that land disputes would be settled by Christian governors-general created considerable displeasure.<sup>141</sup> The government was not necessarily pro-Muslim; it was also concerned with Kurdish revolts and even, on occasion, cooperated with Armenian revolutionaries to suppress them.<sup>142</sup> Besides, due to its modernist outlook, the CUP would normally be expected to have sided with the urban Armenians to curb the depredations of the tribal Kurds.<sup>143</sup> However, in order to assure the loyalty of the Kurds, it made certain gestures such as establishing bonds with their leaders and complying with their demands as to the appointment of local administrators and public officials.<sup>144</sup> Anticipating that the fulfilment of the Armenian demands would embitter the Muslims and result in further conflicts with the Armenians as well as protests against the government, İstanbul was very cautious in its steps regarding Eastern Anatolia.<sup>145</sup>

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136 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 91.

137 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 124.

138 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 160, 163.

139 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 183.

140 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrazam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 135; Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire ottoman*, 212-213.

141 Aydoğan, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Doğu Politikası...*, 313-315.

142 Reynolds, *Shattering Empires...*, 64.

143 Rather than being purely religiously motivated, the clashes between the Kurds and the Armenians owed much to socio-economic differences: Reynolds, *Shattering Empires...*, 52; S. Aslıhan Gürbüz, "Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia (1878-1890)" (M.A. Thesis, Bilkent University, 2008), 71.

144 Reynolds, *Shattering Empires...*, 65-66.

145 As mentioned before, the government formed in early 1912 a reform commission to be sent to Eastern Anatolia. Interviewed by the Armenian daily *Jamanak*, Mustafa Fevzi Efendi, the President of the Commission, stated, "It would not work if we just met the demands of the Armenians but ignored the Kurds. We have to satisfy both sides; only then full peace can come between the two peoples:" "Anatoli islâhâtı," *Tamim*, 25 February 1912.



Although the government recognised the problems of the region in terms of security, economy, administration, and public works and services, because of these concerns, it tried to eliminate these problems through general arrangements formulated for the entire Empire. The Young Turks were eager to introduce reforms, but how they defined reforms did not overlap with what the Armenian political leadership wanted.<sup>146</sup> Instead of appointing Christian governors or employing more Armenians in public offices and security forces as the Armenians demanded, the government sought to alleviate their grievances through sending more capable officials to the region, increasing the number of policemen and gendarmes, ameliorating the justice system and enlarging the prerogatives of governors.<sup>147</sup>

An anonymous article appeared in *Şûra-i Ümmet*, the official organ of the CUP, in 1902, and re-published in 1909, articulating quite succinctly how the CUP approached the Armenian Question. It starts with recounting Armenian endeavours to find support among Western governments and public opinion for the due execution of the reform project of 1895. For the author, while some provisions in the project were for everyone's benefit, others would "pave the way for the Armenians' administrative separation from other people and their achievement of privileges and independence in the future." Approving Abdülhamid's policy of at first resisting, and then not implementing this project, the article continues, "the state will, without a doubt, never agree to their independence or privileges, and to leave the other peoples dwelling in Eastern Anatolia under their sovereignty and influence." On the other hand, the author warns the reader that the reoccurrence of conflicts in Eastern Anatolia would likely result in foreign intervention. Pointing out a number of historical examples, such as the independence of Greece and Balkan countries as well as the autonomy of Crete, he underlines that foreign intervention always brought terrible consequences for the Empire. He concludes:

"The principal means to debar the occurrence of revolts and disturbances and the split of our beloved homeland into pieces is to assure the welfare and development of the true-hearted Ottoman people altogether. However, as this will not be achieved within a short period of time, without forgetting this important point, which shall constitute the essence of our efforts, we must endeavour to our best capacity against the recurrence of the Armenian incidents in order not to cause

146 For a prominent Unionist journalist, the main goal of reforms was "to rescue everyone from poverty:" Babanzâde İsmâil Hakkı, "Ermeni patrikinin beyânâtı," *Tanîn*, 11 May 1913.

147 The government's unwillingness to introduce regional reforms was noted and criticised by the Russian government, who argued that earlier experiences of reforms that led to the independence of certain regions would not recur in Eastern Anatolia because the Armenians, who were only in minority, would never think of independence: Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2/III: 75; G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* (London: H.M.S.O., 1926-1938), 10/I: no. 493.

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the intervention of our external enemies, who want to take advantage of our weakness and pursue their selfish and wicked interests.”<sup>148</sup>

What all these statements boil down to is that the CUP’s long-term goal was to maintain the order and unity of the Empire, and to achieve this, it advocated reforms for the *whole* country and provision of better social and economic conditions to *all* citizens. On the other hand, for the short term, it was more concerned with the threat of foreign intervention, and this is the primary reason for its anxiousness to prevent conflicts in Eastern Anatolia. In other words, if only foreign intervention was an imminent possibility, the committee would consider special arrangements for the Armenians; if not, it would stick to its policy of carrying out general reforms throughout the Empire. This is exactly what happened in the end. The quick and severe defeat in the First Balkan War, the Armenians’ search for international support to revive Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, and the imminence of international intervention changed the calculations of the Ottoman decision-makers.

The primacy of foreign policy in the Armenian reform question manifested itself in three phases and forms: Firstly, the loss of power and prestige with the Balkan defeat made the Ottoman policymakers extremely concerned about the Empire’s security. They thought that if one or a number of Great Powers intervened in, or annexed, a part of the Empire, the terrible financial and military conditions incurred by the war would not allow the Ottomans to defend themselves. Thus, until the Empire bounded up its wounds, they wanted to avert any kind of disturbance which could be used by the Powers as an excuse for intervention or even annexation. Accordingly, the government pragmatically relaxed its categorical objection to decentralisation.<sup>149</sup> In the meantime, it endeavoured to appear conciliatory to the Armenians, as well as to the other communities demanding similar reforms, and called for their support against the “conspiracies” of foreign Powers.<sup>150</sup> Accordingly, Unionist newspapers published several articles praising the government’s reformism and claimed that the reforms being introduced in Eastern Anatolia did not result from outside pressure but merely from the government’s true will to

148 D[?], “Ermenilere dâir,” *Şûra-i Ümmet* 3 (1902), 2; later serialised verbatim in “Ermenilere dâir,” *Haftalık Şûra-i Ümmet* 197 (1909), 13; “Ermenilere dâir,” *Haftalık Şûra-i Ümmet* 198 (1909), 13; “Ermenilere dâir,” *Haftalık Şûra-i Ümmet* 197 (1909), 13; “Ermenilere dâir,” *Haftalık Şûra-i Ümmet* 199 (1909), 7. The re-publication of the article demonstrates that the CUP retained these views after the revolution.

149 [Mahmud Şevket Paşa], *Sadrâzam ve Harbiye Nazırı...*, 131. Talât Pasha also admitted in his memoirs that the defeat in the Balkan War made the Ottoman government more flexible in its attitude towards regional demands: [Talât Paşa], *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları*, 66.

150 Câvid Bey, who was in Paris for lobbying against European intervention, told the Armenian daily *Azadameer* that the government was no longer against decentralisation, thus the Armenians should believe in the government and not pay attention to the counsels from abroad, which “are not always sincere:” “Câvid Beğ Efendinin beyânâtı,” *Tanîn*, 16 July 1913.

improve the well-being of its Armenian citizens.<sup>151</sup> The fundamental aim in making all these gestures was to prevent a Great Power intervention at a time when the Empire was too weak to defend itself.

Secondly, the imminent threat of Russian intervention urged the Ottomans to approach Britain, who had traditionally supported the Ottoman Empire against Russian expansionism for decades and formally pledged this with the 1878 Cyprus Convention. In the spring of 1913, when the Armenians were lobbying European governments for reforms, the Ottoman policymakers regarded the reform issue as a means to strengthen the bonds with Britain. They believed that conferring the responsibility of supervising reforms in Eastern Anatolia to the British would put a check to a Russian intervention (for Russia would then have to deal with Britain), dispel international pressures regarding the reform question, and induce the Armenians to stop lobbying abroad. Above all, it could even lay the groundwork for a defensive alliance with Britain, which was in fact proposed simultaneously. Without the incentive of balancing the Russian threat, which appeared imminent to the Ottomans at that moment, it is doubtful that the CUP government would delegate the reforms in Eastern Anatolia to foreign experts. Unsurprisingly, Talât Pasha stated in his memoirs that the government's appeal to Britain aimed to pre-empt international intervention and revive the pledge of Britain in 1878 to protect the Ottoman Empire against Russia.<sup>152</sup> Saîd Halîm Pasha also wrote that British supervision of reforms was expected to put an end to both Armenian grievances and Russian intrigues.<sup>153</sup> This strategic move of killing many birds with one stone backlashed before too long, however, when the Russian government convinced the British not to become involved and took the initiative of preparing a reform project in line with Armenian demands.

Thirdly, as Russia and Germany agreed upon a reform project, and the other Powers declared their consent, the Porte could not simply ignore it because of the Empire's precarious military and economic situation and the threat of international isolation. It still did not adopt the project outright, however. In order to reduce the degree of European control stipulated in the project, the government, on the one hand, engaged in a series of negotiations with Russia, which did yield a few concessions, and, on the other hand, approached the Armenian political leadership for settling the question without European involvement. Nevertheless, it eventually signed the reforms agreement with Russia, which included a number of terms that did not conform to the earlier approach of the Ottoman political elite towards provincial administration. In other words, strong and united posture of the six Powers not only compelled

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151 "Vilâyât-i şarkiyede," *Tanîn*, 2 July 1913.

152 [Talât Paşa], *Talât Paşa'nın Amları*, 70.

153 Said Halim Paşa, *L'Empire ottoman...*, 6.

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the Ottoman government to introduce a more radical reform scheme than it would normally adopt, but also prompted it, as a last resort, to seek bilateral agreement with Armenian leaders. As the Armenians did not give up the idea of European control, these overtures did not bear fruit, but if it did, the Ottoman government was ready to adopt a reform scheme more or less identical to the one stipulated in the agreement with Russia.<sup>154</sup> Even in that case, the original stimulus would still have been external pressure.

To conclude, this article has argued that the Empire's status in international power politics, external pressures, and strategic calculations were critical in the introduction of reforms that had long been objected to due to the concern that the recognition of regional and communal privileges would disrupt the unity and territorial integrity of the Empire. The primary aim for the Ottoman decision-makers in so doing was to safeguard the Empire's external security and international position. As the concerns about the long-term outcomes of regional reforms and the loyalty of minorities had not vanished and the new institutional framework had not yet been normatively internalised, the emergence of World War I removed the *raison d'être* of the 1914 reforms for the Ottoman government.

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154 Cavid Bey declared to the Armenian press in July 1913 that the only difference of opinion between the government and Boghos Nubar Pasha was about European control over reforms: "Cavid Beğ Efendinin beyânâtı," *Tanîn*, 16 July 1913.

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

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# SOME OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PROBLEMS OF ZANGEZUR'S HISTORY

(ZENGEZUR TARİHİNİN YAZIMIYLA İLGİLİ BAZI SORUNLAR)

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**Abstract:** *Zangezur, the mountainous region that now makes up the southern territory of Armenia and separates the main territory of Azerbaijan from Nakhchivan, has long been a subject of debate in historiography over the ownership of these lands by these two countries. It is no secret that Armenian historiography has been trying to justify in academic circles the alleged exclusivity of the region's Armenian population and its belonging to "Greater Armenia" almost since the ancient period. Many books have been published in Armenia and beyond in which the region of Zangezur is presented as a so-called Armenian region, contrary to scientific and historical literature and numerous primary sources. The irrefutable evidence and numerous reliable facts presented in this article expose the falsifications and invalidity of these theories concerning the history of Zangezur of the 7-12th centuries.*

**Keywords:** *Zangezur, Syunik, Albania, South Caucasus, historiography, sources*

**Öz:** *Günümüzde Ermenistan'ın güney topraklarını teşkil eden ve Azerbaycan'ın anakara topraklarını Nahcivan'dan ayıran dağlık bölge Zengezur, bu iki ülke arasında söz konusu toprakların kime ait olduğuyla*

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*ilgili tarih yazımında uzun süredir bir tartışma konusu olmuştur. Ermeni tarih yazımının neredeyse antik dönemden bu yana bölgede sadece Ermeni nüfusu bulunduğu ve bölgenin “Büyük Ermenistan’a” ait olduğunu akademik çevrelerde kanıtlamaya çalıştığı gizli bir bilgi değildir. Ermenistan ve ötesinde, bilimsel ve tarihi literatüre ve sayısız birincil kaynağa aykırı bir şekilde Zengezur bölgesini sözde bir Ermeni bölgesi olarak tanıtan pek çok kitap yayınlanmıştır. Bu makalede sunulan, aksi iddia edilemez deliller ve sayısız güvenilir olgular, Zengezur’un 7-12’nci yüzyıl tarihiyle ilgili söz konusu iddiaların çarpıtmalarını ve geçersizliğini ifşa etmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Zengezur, Sünik, Albanya, Güney Kafkasya, tarih yazımı, kaynaklar*

## Introduction

According to written sources from the 14th century in the early Middle Ages, the territory referred to as Zangezur mainly occupied the right bank regions (south of the Kura River) of Caucasian Albania - *Sisakan* entirely and Utik, Artsakh, Paytakaran partly. In ancient and early medieval sources (Greek, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic, Persian, etc.), the region of Zangezur was referred to as *Syunik*, *Syuni*, *Sivnieti*, *Sivnik*, *Sisakan*, *Sisajan* (*as-Sisajan*). Some gaps in the study of that topic in the historiography, due to objective and subjective reasons, make a more comprehensive and objective scientific study of Zangezur necessary.

From the 19th century, and in particular in the second half of the century, information about Zangezur, or rather Syunik, can be found in the books of Armenian authors such as H. Shahatunyants, A. Sedrakyan, S. Jalalyants, M. Gyumushkhanetsi, G. Alishan, M. Smbatyants, and N. Adontz, written in Armenian with few exceptions.<sup>1</sup> In the 1930-50s, already in the Soviet period, the *Syunik/Sisakan* theme was again introduced into scientific discourse by Armenian authors A. Abrahamyan, B. Harutyunyan, A. Utmazyan and T. Sahakyan.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, in contrast to Utmazyan's work, which was aimed at Armenian-speaking readers, other authors' works on the class struggle and national movement in Zangezur-Syunik were written in Russian. The serious changes that took place in the political life of Soviet Armenia in the mid-1960s had a major impact on Armenian historiography. According to Russian Professor V.A. Shnirelman:

“Since then, it has become particularly important for Armenian historians to prove the autochthony of Armenians in and the Armenian Plateau, to trace the origins of their statehood and to demonstrate that

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1 G. Alishan, “Միսական” [Sisakan], Venice, 1893 (in Armenian) ; S. Jalalyants, *Ճանապարհորդությունն ի Մեծն Հայաստան*, Մաս Ա (Տփղիս, 1842), *Ճանապարհորդությունն ի Մեծն Հայաստան*, Մաս Բ (Տփղիս, 1858) [*A Voyage to the Kingdom of Greater Armenia*, Tiflis, Part I - 1842, Part II - 1858] (in Armenian) ; *History of Events Taken Place at the Monastery of Sevan by Manuel Vardapet of Gümüşhane* [Kiwmiwšpanatsi], Vagharshapat, 1871 (in Armenian) ; Ar. Sedrakyan, “Հնութիւնք հայրենեաց ի գա-ւաւիին Երնջակու”, Վաղարշապատ, 1872 [“Native Antiquities in the Yernjak Region”] (in Armenian) ; M. Smbatyants, “Տեղագիր Գեղարքունի ծովագարդ զավառի” (Վաղարշապատ, 1895) [“Topography of Gegharkunik sea-dwelling province” (Vagharshapat, 1895)] (in Armenian) ; O. Shakhkathunian, “ստորագրութիւն կայսրուիկէ էջ մի միմինի եւ հիւզ գաւառացն արարատայե” (h. 2, 1842) V.2, Echmiadzin, 1842 (in Armenian).

2 А.Г. Абрамян, “Крестьянское движение в Сисакане”, Исторические записки Института истории АН СССР, 1938 (№3): 60-75; Б. Арутюнян, “Крестьянские волнения в Сюнии в X в”, Ученые записки Ереванского Государственного Педагогического Института, т.2 (1950): 14-36; Т.М. Саакян, “Крестьянские восстания в Сюнике в X веке”, Известия АН Армянской ССР, 1956, (№3): 37-44 ; А.М. Utmazyan, *Մյունիքը IX-X դարերում* (Երևան, 1958) [*Syunik in the IX-X centuries* (Yerevan: Yerevan University Publishing House, 1958)] (in Armenian).

from the second half of the first millennium BC up to 1915, Armenians were the dominant majority in the Armenian Plateau”.<sup>3</sup>

It was during these years that the history of Zangezur-Syunik, especially its ancient and medieval period, began to be written in Russian, English and other languages as well (majority of works still published in Armenian). In these works, the subject of Zangezur was either a direct object of study or was covered in connection with the history of Albania-Aqvan, which Armenian historians referred to as the “Eastern Region” of Armenia .<sup>4</sup>

In Azerbaijani historiography, the period of early medieval history of Zangezur is covered in the books of academician Ziya Buniyadov, correspondent member of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences Farida Mammadova, Akif Muradverdiyev, in a collective monograph prepared by the Institute of History named after A. Bakikhanov of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (edited by academician Yagub Mahmudov) as well as in book of Musa Urud.<sup>5</sup> However, in all these publications (excluding the book by A. Muradverdiyev), the early medieval history of Zangezur was not a specific subject of the authors’ study, but rather addressed in the context of the specific topic they were investigating.

### Syunik as “native” Armenian lands

In books of Armenian authors, which differ from each other in titles and the main topic of research, a large part of Caucasian Albania, including Sisakan-Syunik, is presented as “native” Armenian lands. Almost all Armenian authors adhere to this thesis, which is outlined in historian G.M. Grigoryan’s book as follows:

3 В.А. Шнирельман, *Войны памяти. Мифы, идентичность и политика в Закавказье* (Москва: ИКЦ, «Академкнига», 2003): 68.

4 Т. Hakobyan, *Սյունիքի թագավորությունը: Պատմա-աշխարհագրական առումով* [*The Syunik Kingdom in Historical-Geographical Context*] (in Armenian) (Yerevan: Mitk’. 1966) ; Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв* (Ереван: АН АрмССР, 1990) ; А.Ш. Мнацаканян, *О литературе Кавказской Албании* (Ереван, 1963) ; Т.М. Sahakyan, “Սյունյաց թագավորութիւնն հիմնումը և նրա քաղաքական դերը XI դա- րում”, *ՊԲՀ*, № 3 (1966): 221-228 [Historical and Philological Journal] (in Armenian) ; В.А. Ulubabyan, *Դրվագներ Հայոց Արևելից կողմանց լատմության (V-VII դարեր)* (Երևան, 1981) [*Essays on the History of the Eastern Region of Armenia (V-VII centuries)*] (Yerevan: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the ArmSSR, 1981)] (in Armenian) ; Hewsen H. Robert, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

5 З.М. Бунятов, “Азербайджан в VII-IX века”, В кн.: *Избранные сочинения в 3-х томах*. Т.1 (Баку: Элм, 1999) ; Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны* (Баку: ЦИКА, 2003) ; Musa Urud, *Zəngəzur (elmi-publistik nəşr)* (Bakı: Nurlar, 2005) ; A. Muradverdiyev, *Zəngəzur tariximizin yaddaşı* (Bakı: Xəzər, 2007) ; *Qubadlı: Qədim Azərbaycan torpağı Zəngəzurun qapısı* (Bakı: Turxan, 2013) ; Nailə Vəlixanlı, *Zəngəzur - ərəblərdən monqollaradək* (Bakı: Təhsil, 2021).

“The eastern part of (the interfluve) has been an Armenian territory with an Armenian population since ancient times... The indigenous inhabitants of Artsakh, Utik and Syunik have been Armenians for centuries and remain so until the present day... There was no ‘Syunik’ or ‘Artsakh’ language. These ‘languages’ are still large-scale dialects of the national Armenian language”.<sup>6</sup>

It should also be noted that Grigoryan, naming such conclusions as “historical truth”, considers the studies of Azerbaijani scholars Z. Buniatov, I. Aliyev, D. Akhundov, F. Mamedova on political history and historical geography, language, culture of Caucasian Albania, including Syunik, as “anti-science” and attempts to prove that these authors are “distorting” historical facts.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Grigoryan accuses academician Buniatov, who “for the first time in science”<sup>8</sup> presented Syunik as a region of, of “distortion of historical facts” and making “unsubstantiated statements”<sup>9</sup>.

Repeating the thoughts of previous authors (G. Alishan, T. Hakobyan, A. Mnatsakanyan, B. Ulubabayan and others) about Utik, Artsakh and other Albanian provinces, Grigoryan also writes that “Syunik has never been part of Caucasian Albania. It has always been part of ...”.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he considers “incorrect” the opinions of scholars such as C.W. Trever, J. Markwart, N. Adontz<sup>11</sup> regarding the borders of Caucasian Albania.<sup>12</sup> Like “all Armenian authors”, who, according to Grigoryan, rely on the data of ancient and early medieval historians, he also claims that the right-bank part of the (the interfluve of the Kura-Arax) was part of the Great Armenia from the 2nd century BC to the 5th century AD under the name “Armenian Aqvanq”.<sup>13</sup> That is, it is concluded that all of the right bank, including Syunik, Utik and Artsakh, belonged to even before the advent of Christianity.

6 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 38.

7 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 22 ; Farida Mammadova, a well-known researcher of the history of Caucasian Albania, for more details, see: Ф.Дж. Мамедова, *Политическая история и историческая география Кавказской Албании (III и. до и. э.-VIII в. и.э.)* (Баку: ЭЛМ, 1986): 54-84 ; Ф.Дж. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и Албаны* (Баку: ЦИКА, 2005): 144-214.

8 Ф.Дж. Мамедова, *Политическая история и историческая...*, 70.

9 З.М. Бунятов, “Азербайджан в VII-IX века”, 117 ; Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 16.

10 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 16.

11 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании* (Москва-Ленинград: Издательство АН СССР, 1959) ; J. Markwart, *Eransahr nach der Geographie Moses Chorenaci* (Berlin: Weidmannsche, 1901) ; Н. Адонц, *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана. Политическое состояние на основе Нахарарского строя* (Санкт-Петербург: типография Императорской Академии наук, 1908).

12 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 18.

13 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 18.



It should be noted that the 13th century author Stepannos Orbelian, who wrote “a specially dedicated book on the ancient records” about the Sisakan genus, especially noted the difficulties he experienced while making the history of “our country”, as he himself called Sisakan. According to him:

“Having searched through many works, we found no written record of these topics left as a praiseworthy monument to posterity. I do not know whether [such accounts] were never written, or whether they were lost through so many destructions and robberies.... My brothers, as I longed to treat this subject for such a long time, I engaged in research that took me to places near and far, to monasteries and to coffers containing testaments, and among scholars educated in historical facts. But I found [almost] no memory of the [earliest] traditions specific to this land [of Siwnik’]. Thus from all the historians of I gathered everything I discovered that was accurate [about the earliest times]. Similarly there was a small amount of information available in the homilies of Petros, Bishop of Siwnik’, about Babak [Babik]who had been the lord of Siwnik’. There was also [information taken] from ancient letters written by the kings [g48] of , the princes of Siwnik’, the Armenian kat’oghikoi and the bishops of Siwnik’, which had remained from ancient times preserved in a grotto in the blessed monastery of the patriarchs of Tat’ev. [Information was also gleaned from] inscriptions on the churches and from the colophons of books. Here and there I found a number, a date or day of the year relating to some or other actions or words of princes and bishops, to building, ruin, rules and regulations and prerogatives of the Holy See, about generous gifts made to the blessed churches. This information I incorporated into the body of this History.”<sup>14</sup>

Apparently, the scarcity, or rather absence, of information about the ancient history of Syunik-Sisakan forced Stepannos, who held an important spiritual post of metropolitan in his homeland, to limit himself mainly to the information of early medieval Armenian historians (F. Buzand, M. Khorenatsi, Egishe, Ghevond and others) and to repeat what they had written.

The absence of a mention of Sisakan in the “ancient monuments” is also confirmed by N. Adontz, who, incidentally, noted that the equivalence of names Syunik and Sisakan, according to one of the main sources Stepannos Orbelian - Moses Khorenatsi<sup>15</sup>, is “obscure” and “we cannot say anything

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14 Step’annos Orbelean, *History of the State of Sisakan*, translated by Robert Bedrosian from the Classical Armenian text of K. Shahnazarean (Paris, 1860), <https://rbedrosian.com/SO/so1.htm>

15 Moses Khorenatsi, also known as Moses of Chorene, the author of the *History of the Armenians*. The exact period during which Movses lived and wrote has been the subject of debate among scholars since the 19th century, with some scholars dating him to the 7th to 9th centuries rather than the 5th. Aram Topchyan, *The Problem of the Greek Sources of Movsēs Xorenac’* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2006): 5–14, notes 21–22, 31–33.

definite in what relation they [Syunik and Sisakan] were between themselves and with the Saks...”.<sup>16</sup>

In Armenian historiography, the inclusion of Syunik into Armenia is explicitly based on the Greek historian Strabo's accounts from 189 BC. According to these accounts, two Armenian rulers, Artaxias (Artashes) and Zariadr (Zareh), “who devoted themselves to territorial conquest”<sup>17</sup>, managed to expand at the expense of neighboring territories. “One says that Armenia was originally a small country... by annexing lands from the surrounding nations as follows: Caspiane, Faunitida [Phaunitis] and Basoropeda from the Medes”<sup>18</sup>, “where various population groups lived, but no Armenians were amongst them”.<sup>19</sup> As can be seen, the name of Syunik is absent among the areas mentioned, but Armenian researchers, having read Faunitida as “Saunitis”, identified it with Syunik. Even the Armenian-origin American historian Robert Hewsen acknowledged the “phonetic discrepancy” between the two names and considered this a mistake on the part of the manuscript's copyist.<sup>20</sup> Referring to this information of Strabo, V. Shnirelman writes that the conquest policy of the Armenian rulers covered the left bank of the Arax River, including Syunik (apparently referring to the identity of Syunik to Faunitida), noting at the same time: “although the details of this conquest policy remain unknown”.<sup>21</sup>

Recalling that the Armenian King Tigranes II (95-55 BC), taking advantage of the conflict between the Parthian and Roman Empires, launched an offensive from the province of Sophen near the Euphrates and, among other directions, expanded his territories eastwards,<sup>22</sup> Shnirelman admits that “sources are silent about Tigran's conquest of Caucasian Albania”.<sup>23</sup>

Incidentally, one piece of information relating to the period of the military campaigns mentioned by Strabo attracts attention in terms of assessing the complex events that rapidly unfolded in that era. Thus, the Greek author reported that in the 1st century BC, the state of Atropatena, covering the

16 Н. Адонц, *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана...*, 422-423.

17 В.А. Шнирельман, *Войны памяти...*, 42.

18 Страбон, *География*. в 17 книгах. Перевод и комментарии Г.А. Стратоновского (Москва: Наука, 1964), XI, XIV: 5.

19 В.А. Шнирельман, *Войны памяти...*, 43.

20 Hewsen H. Robert, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*, 190.

21 В.А. Шнирельман, *Войны памяти...*, 42, 43.

22 See: *История армянского народа*. Под ред. М.Г.Нерсисяна (Ереван: Ереванский университет, 1980): 42.

23 В.А. Шнирельман, *Войны памяти...*, 42. It is interesting that in Chapter IV of his work (p. 62) V. Shnirelman, contrary to what he wrote earlier, emphasizes that the real fame of Tigran II was brought by his “joining” Artsakh and Utik - regions of Caucasian Albania situated between the rivers Kura and Arax (Araks).

southern lands of historical Azerbaijan, “they are frequently plundered” by “its powerful neighbours - the Armenians and Parthians”, but at the same time “they [Atropatenians] resist however, and recover what has been taken away”.<sup>24</sup>

Tigran II’s “powerful, though not long-lasting state”<sup>25</sup>, created as a result of “accidental conquests”<sup>26</sup>, did not last long indeed: after the Roman attacks in 60 BC, the Armenian ruler lost practically all of his conquered lands. Despite this, Armenian historiography continued to present Armenia, deprived of all its annexed lands, as an independent state. In this connection, Shnirelman, referring to the maps drawn by S.T. Yeremyan and included in the two-volume of the “History of the Armenian People”<sup>27</sup>, writes: “On these [maps] the right bank of the Kura River with the provinces of Gogarene, Sakasena, Artsakh, Utik, Syunik and Caspian (Paytakaran) were represented as parts of Greater Armenia from the 2nd century BC. In other words, the Armenian state included the lands of present-day Georgia and Azerbaijan”.<sup>28</sup> It is well known from history that the struggle for hegemony in the Near East between Rome and Parthia, which started before 1 BC, ended with the Arsacid (Arshakuni) dynasty gaining political supremacy over several countries, including Caucasian Albania, Armenia and Iberia, and with the coming to power of the minor branch of the Arsacid dynasty in these countries.<sup>29</sup>

### About the genealogy of Syunik rulers

The Albanian author Moses Kalankatuy<sup>30</sup>, in a mythological account of the origin of Aran - ruler of Caucasian Albania, appointed by the Arsacids, points to his belonging to the family of Sisaka, a descendant of Yaphet (son of Prophet Noah), which is considered by many peoples (including the peoples of the Caucasus and also the Turks), and in Muslim sources, as an ancestor. M. Kalankatuy writes that he “...was a certain Aran of the Sisakan family, descended from Japheth, who received the plains and mountains of Albania from the river Araxes to the fortress of Hnarakert”.<sup>31</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, to

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24 Страбон, *География*, XI, 13, 2.

25 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании*, 88.

26 Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 151.

27 С.Т. Еремян, *Атлас к книге «История армянского народа»* (Ереван: Айпетрат, 1952)

28 В.А. Шнирельман, *Войны памяти...*, 63 ; Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 213.

29 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании*, 145; Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 348.

30 Movses Kaghankatvatsi, or Movses Daskhurantsi, is the reputed author (or authors) of a 10th century classical historiographical work on Caucasian Albania known as *The History of the Country of Albania. The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movses Dasxuranci*, translated by C.J.F. Dowsett (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

31 *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movses Dasxuranci*, 4.

whom M. Kalankatuy referred in this information, wrote that Aran was descended from Sisak, son of Gegham, grandson of Hayk, the legendary ancestor of the Armenians.<sup>32</sup> Referring to that genealogy presented by M. Khorenatsi, Armenian historiography claims the Sisak family, including the Syunik, to be of Armenian descent. As evident, M. Kalankatuy, referring to the records of M. Khorenatsi as a primary source, at the same time the ancestor of the first Albanian Arsacid ruler Aran called not Hayk, but Noah's son Japheth, an ancient progenitor of many peoples. According to Trever, "the first kings of Albania were undoubtedly representatives of the local Albanian nobility from among the most advanced tribal chiefs. Their non-Armenian and non-Iranian names (Orois, Kozis, Zober) in the Greek transmission also indicate to this..." Therefore, she concluded that:

"this legendary genealogy was created in the first centuries AD, probably at a time when in the middle or perhaps late first century AD the Parthian Arsacids for political purposes managed to place representatives of their clan (in Armenia, Atropatena, the Maskut country and Albania) on the thrones of several countries in South Caucasus".<sup>33</sup>

K.V. Traver was skeptical about the "historical significance" of the legend that Aran belonged to the Sisak clan. In her opinion, the fact Movses Khorenatsi added to this legend which dates back to the 1st century AD, information about Sisak's descent from the Hayk family (i.e. Armenian ancestry) is evidence of the great role of the Syunik-Sisakan region in the political relations between Albania and Armenia at that time. At the same time, in her opinion, "in order to bring the interests of Armenia and Albania closer together, the Arsacids may have created the legend of the formation of Albanian statehood under the direct influence of Valarshak, the legendary settler of the Armenian land".<sup>34</sup>

Obviously, such information is of a legendary nature, while not considered to be accurate or significant facts from a historical point of view (this is exactly what K. Trever's reasonable concerns are based on), nevertheless serve to legitimize the genealogical history of the nation, which began with Prophet Noah. This can be seen, in particular, in the conclusions drawn by the founder of Azerbaijani historiography, A. Bakikhanov, who usually drew his conclusions from a variety of Eastern (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Chinese, etc.) sources. Based on these sources, he writes about Japheth as the first Turkic ruler, a contemporary of the first mythical Persian King Keyumars, and calls

32 Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 405, notes.

33 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании*, 145.

34 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании*, 145, 146.

his eldest son and successor of Japheth, Turk, as “a justice-loving and humane king”.<sup>35</sup> In which case, it is possible to assume a Turkic origin of Aran, coming from “the Sisakan family, descendants of Japheth”.<sup>36</sup>

However, even if based on a legend, the appointment of Aran from Sisakan, i.e. from Syunik, as the ruler of the entire Caucasian Albania, indicates that Syunik was one of the regions of that country, its population was autochthonous Albanian rather than Armenian, and that Syunik had an important position (possibly explained by its military and political significance) compared with other provinces of the region.

N. Adontz, who attributed Syunik-Sisakan to one of the regions of “Greater Armenia”, referred to the information of the 9th century Arab geographers-travelers Ibn Khordadbeh and Ibn al-Faqih to support his idea. However, a comparative analysis of these sources with other sources of this period (al-Yakubi, al-Balazuri) proves that the toponym “Sisakan” mentioned by N. Adontz in Ibn Khordadbeh refers to a completely different place, and Ibn al-Faqih’s is the result of the publisher’s mistaken conjecture.<sup>37</sup> Thus, “Sisajanshah”, whom Ibn Khordadbeh names among the rulers of the countries subordinated to the Sassanid Shahinshah Ardeshir I (224-241), is mistakenly identified by Adontz with Sisakan-Sunik.<sup>38</sup> Actually, as-Sisajan in Ibn Khordadbeh’s work referred to Khorasan in the Middle Ages, but is now called the region of Sistan. Neither this region, nor Barashan, mentioned in the same text and related to Azerbaijan, have any connection with Armenia, contrary to Adontz’s statement. The erroneous conjecture of Ibn al-Faqih’s publisher - to read the toponym *Savshin-Shakashin-Sakasena* as *Sisar* - caused another mistake by Adontz and led to his faulty statements.

It should be noted that early medieval Sisakan, along with other neighboring countries, is presented in various sources as a separate, independent province governed by a local prince. Thus, the inscription on the wall of the temple in *Naghshi-Rustam*<sup>39</sup>, commemorating the victory of the second Sassanid ruler Shapur I (241-272) also mentions “Mahelonia” among the countries he conquered (Atropatene, Armenia, Iberia, and Albania).<sup>40</sup> In the Pahlavi version of the inscription (there are also Persian and Greek inscriptions on the wall of the temple), Mahelonia is mentioned as Se(a)kan (SYKN), which has led

35 А.А. Бакиханов, *Гюлистан-и Ирам* (Баку: ЭЛМ, 1991): 27.

36 N. Vəlixanlı, *Azərbaycan VII-XII əsrlərdə: tarix, mənbələr, şərhlər* (Баку: ЭЛМ, 2016), 105.

37 N. Vəlixanlı, *Azərbaycan VII-XII əsrlərdə...*, 193, 198, notes 17.

38 Н. Адонц, *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана...*, 218.

39 Naqsh-e Rostam is an ancient archeological site and necropolis located about 12 km northwest of Persepolis, in Fars Province, Iran.

40 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании*, 134-136.

many scholars to claim a reference to Sunik-Sisakan here (few researchers have read “Mahelonia” as Mingrelia or Maggal, referring to the Ingush).<sup>41</sup>

Adontz also writes of the “separatist tendencies” of the Sisakan-Syunik region, believing that this “must surely be attributed primarily to the ethnic features of the country”.<sup>42</sup> According to him, the “tribal exclusivity” of Syunik was “maintained and renewed by migratory currents from the adjoining mountainous countries”.<sup>43</sup> Adontz, pointing out the traces preserved from these settlers in the geographical names, in particular, noted that the connection of the ethnic origin of the name Balasakan with the Saka tribes “is beyond doubt”.<sup>44</sup> F. Mammadova, who researched the issue, suggested that the tribal exclusivity of Syunik was constituted by “Kurds called Mari”.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that the local population of early medieval Sisakan, which differed from other areas of the region in its “separatist tendencies”, spoke a language that was not similar to that of its neighbors. The 6th century Syrian author Zakharias Ritor lists “the country of Sisakan, with its own language” among the five faithful nations of the “northern region”, by which he means the South Caucasus, and states that its people are “believers, but there are pagans among its population”.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, he separates Sisakan from Armenia, Georgia (which he calls Jurzan), and Arran-Albania, and emphasizes that they all had their own languages, but were united by the same faith - Christianity. Another author of the same period, Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea, also reports that the Syuniks, whom he refers to as “Sunnis”<sup>47</sup>, were “a people separate from the Persian-Armenians [Armenians living in Sassanid-controlled Eastern Armenia]”.<sup>48</sup>

Adontz, while recognizing Syunik as Armenia, wrote that “geographically and ethnically, Sisakan stood somewhat apart from Armenia; and this apartness could sometimes give the impression of a completely separate country”.<sup>49</sup> Once again, the author saw the reason for this “separateness” as

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41 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании*, 135, notes 2.

42 Н. Адонц, *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана...*, 421.

43 Н. Адонц *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана...*, 423; Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 208-209.

44 Н. Адонц, *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана...*, 423.

45 Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 209.

46 Н. Адонц *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана...*, 218-221 ; З.М. Бунятов, “Азербайджан в VII-IX века”, 117 ; Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 263.

47 The 11th century Azerbaijani poet Gatran Tabrizi refers to Sunik-Sisakan as “Suni-Sini”. N. Vəlixanlı, *Azərbaycan VII-XII əsrlərdə...*, 91.

48 Н. Адонц, *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана...*, 221.

49 Н. Адонц, *Армения в эпоху Юстиниана...*, 221.

the presence of diverse and multilingual ethnic groups that had settled in Syunik.

Written sources and material culture also confirm the presence of a dominant Albanian ethnos throughout Caucasian Albania from the 1st century AD onwards, with “ethnic heterogeneity”.<sup>50</sup> In that regard, of particular interest is the opinion of the Russian historian A.P. Novoseltsev on the peoples living in Syunik during that period. Referring to Syrian, Byzantine, and Armenian sources, he also mentions the differences between these peoples and the weak ties between them, indicating that the spread of the Armenian ethnos to the north-east, towards Syunik and then Albania increased only from the last years of the 6th century (after the Byzantine-Sasanian treaty of 591).<sup>51</sup> Incidentally, he cited local multiethnicity (we would add, inherent in multi-ethnic Albania) as one of the reasons for the spread of the Armenian ethnos in this region of the South Caucasus. At the same time, Novoseltsev argued that as a result of the spread of the Armenian ethnos in the region, local tribes were gradually subjected to assimilation, but this process was not completed even in the 6-7th centuries. Only the Christianization policy pursued by the Armenian and Albanian churches accelerated assimilation.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, both Greco-Roman and other sources report that, from the first centuries AD to the Arab conquest, various ethnic groups migrated to all regions of the South Caucasus. Interestingly, Strabo, who lived at the turn of the two eras, wrote about nomadic tribes (without mentioning its names) who served as mercenaries for Albanian and Iberian forces during wartime and attacked in peacetime to commit looting.<sup>53</sup> Other sources also mention invasions by these tribes, more commonly referred to as “Huns”, into Albania and other areas of the South Caucasus.<sup>54</sup> There is also ample evidence of the settlement of large, compact masses of nomads and their subsequent involvement in the political, economic and cultural relations of local states.<sup>55</sup> Of high interest is the account by Moses Kalankatuy about the arrival of the Gor and Gazan brothers with a large army to Syunik, their settlement there and their adoption of Christianity.

“In the first year of his reign, Babik sallied forth to hunt, and he toured and inspected his deserted land. Coming to Salat, .... That day was the first day in the month of Hori, and on that day those assembled there

50 Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 380.

51 А.П. Новосельцев, В.Т. Пашуто, Л.В. Черепнин, *Пути развития феодализма (Закавказье, Средняя Азия, Прибалтика)* (Москва: Наука, 1972), 45.

52 А.П.Новосельцев et al., *Пути развития...*, 45.

53 Страбон, *География*, XI, 4, 5.

54 See: Ю. Джафаров, *Гуны и Азербайджан* (Баку: Азернешр, 1993).

55 *Azərbaycan tarixi*, V.2 (Баки: Elm, 2000): 26-34; Ю. Джафаров, *Гуны и Азербайджан*, 88-89.

performed a great service, and there was great healing among those present. Unbelievers who witnessed this were converted, and Gor and Gazan, two rich brothers who had followed Babik with many other soldiers, were baptized. Babik drew lots, and Gor received the village of Xot, while the younger Gazan was allotted the desirable Salat. All this took place twenty years before the reign of the wicked Yazkert who wished to destroy the Christian faith and make us submit to Gehenna. St. Vardan and his holy followers were martyred by this same Yazkert, 1,066 chosen men, 120 years before the Armenian era began.”<sup>56</sup>

However, despite extensive propaganda by Albanian clerics, not all the tribes settled in the region converted to Christianity. That confirms the report of Zacharias Rhetor that among the population of Sisakan as early as the 6th century there were pagans along with “believers” (i.e. Christians). Note also that the diversity of the population of Syunik-Sisakan in the pre-Arabic period in the subsequent centuries was further increased by Muslim Arabs settling in the entire South Caucasus, including Zangezur, and by Turkic-speaking tribes, referred to in sources as “Scythian Turks”, “Turkmans” (who entered the region in approximately 7-12th centuries).

Despite that, G.M. Grigoryan, following other Armenian researchers, who considered Syunik to be an “ancestral” Armenian territory, called incorrect<sup>57</sup> the opinion of academician Z. Buniatov that the Armenianization of the Caucasian Albania provinces of Syunik and a significant part of Artsakh (and let us add, the Armenianization of the Christian population of these provinces) took place in the early 7th century.<sup>58</sup> Grigoryan generally denied the very existence of the process of “Armenianization”, which other scholars (e.g. S. Yeremyan, V. Shnirelman, etc.) also confirm in their studies. V. Shnirelman, in particular, writes the following about Armenianization of some Albanians: “Meanwhile, those Albanians who remained Christians after the Arab conquest and Islamization and lived on the right bank of the Kura River were quickly Armenianized, and the Albanian Christian Church merged with the Armenian Church”.<sup>59</sup> Grigoryan accused F. Mammadov of bias and falsification of historical facts because she claimed an Albanian rather than an Armenian population in Syunik and Artsakh. At the same time, in her conclusions, F. Mammadova referred to the report of the 7th century author Stephen of Syunik that “at his time, both the Syunik and Artsakh languages were spoken in Syunik and Artsakh”.<sup>60</sup> Calling the right bank provinces of

56 *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movses Dasxuranci*, 65.

57 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 22.

58 З.М. Бунятов, “Азербайджан в VII-IX века”, 117, notes 98.

59 В.А. Шнирельман, *Войны памяти...*, 103.

60 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 33.



Albania “the Eastern Armenian province of Aghvank”, Grigoryan denied the existence of factors that led to the “Islamisation and Grigorisation of the Albanian Christian population” and accused Azerbaijani authors of making groundlessness arguments.<sup>61</sup>

At the same time, the sources of that period contain many facts regarding the adoption of Islam and Muslim names not only by Albanians, but also by Armenians themselves. For example, the Armenian historian Asoghik reported that during the attack of the Muslim Abu Dulaf on the Armenian province of Vaspurakan by the Emir of Gohtan (one of the regions of Syunik), among the Armenian warriors killed on the battlefield were Muslims who had converted to Islam. Asoghik wrote of this with shame, adding that “it is not worth mentioning”.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, the staunch Christian, Asoghik saw this change of faith as the reason for the Armenians’ defeat: “For this reason, God delivered them to the Muslims, in 432 of the Era”.<sup>63</sup> Or another example, the Sajid Emir Yusif in the year 926 or 927 temporarily appointed Dabil Nasr as ruler in his place. According to Catholicos Hovhannes Draskhanakertsi, more than 40 members of the nobility, whom he describes as “infidels”, i.e. those who have renounced Christianity, turned out to meet the new emir.<sup>64</sup> As can be seen, this part of the population of Dabil was practicing Islam. Consequently, claims that there was no process of Islamization of Armenians are refuted by historical facts.

It should be noted that completely denying the existence of the Artsakh and Syunik languages, Grigoryan called them “local dialects of the national Armenian language”. Asserting that Armenians allegedly “could not re-Armenianise”, he also denied the real and objective process of “Grigorisation” and “Armenisation”.<sup>65</sup> Thus, in fact, Grigoryan forgets and rejects the ethnic peculiarity – “tribal exclusivity” of the population of Syunik-Sisakan in the ancient and early medieval times, as written about in various sources (Arabic, Armenian, etc.) and literature (N. Adontz, A. Novoseltsev and others). He explains the separate and independent position of Sunik from Armenia by its “enormous military might and political weight among all the other principalities of Armenia, the competition for power and priority by its

61 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 33.

62 Асогик, *Всеобщая история Степ’аноса Таронского Асох’ика по прозванию-писателя XI столетия*, Пер. с древнеарм. Н. Эмин (Москва: типография Лазаревского института Восточных языков, 1864), 133.

63 Tim Greenwood, *The Universal History of Step’anos Tarōnec’I: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 242

64 О. Драсханакертци, *История Армении*. Пер. с древнеарм. М.О. Дарбинян-Меликян (Ереван: Советакан грох, 1986): 180. А.Н. Ter-Gevondian writes that most of these people were Armenians, and explains this by the increase in the number of Armenians during Ashot’s long stay in the city of Sparapet. However, Catholicos John emphasizes that these were “infidels”, i.e. non-Christians.

65 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 33.

high clergy”.<sup>66</sup> According to Grigoryan, Adontz’s words on “tribal exclusivity” and “ethnic specificity” of Syunik should not be understood as different languages, but in the sense of a dialect of the Armenian language.<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that the academician Z. Buniatov, referring to the “History” of Kirakos Gandzaketsi, an author of the 13th century, has clarified the issue of the process of “Armenisation” and its timing. As Kirakos’ report suggests, even in his time only a part of the Albanian nobility could speak Armenian, which gradually became Armenianized as a result of Grigorianization.<sup>68</sup> It turns out that not only in the early 12th century, but much later, the process of Armenianization had not yet been completed among ordinary Christian Albanians, including the Syunik people. Therefore, the church strife in the region, which Armenian historians explain as “centrifugal aspirations of individual feudal formations”,<sup>69</sup> was apparently based not only on political and ideological reasons, but also on differences in bloodline and ancestry.

The existence of a “peculiar” language among the population of Syunik-Sisakan is confirmed by Koryun and Movses Khorenatsi<sup>70</sup>, as well as Moses Kalankatuy, regarding the creation of the Albanian alphabet. According to the above-mentioned sources, Mesrop Mashtots, who wanted to create an alphabet for Georgians, Armenians and Albanians, met with the Albanian King Asuagenes [Asualen] for this purpose, and then with the Syunik translator Benjamin, sent by the ruler of Syunik, Vasak. Benjamin, who apparently knew both Armenian and Albanian, helped Mashtots create an Albanian alphabet of 52 phonemes.

“and King Asualen in Albania, and they voluntarily accepted his teaching in accordance with the divine gifts which had been granted him and through which the Holy Spirit gave an alphabet to the Armenians and Georgians. They were well pleased and gave him chosen youths to teach, and from Siwnik’ he summoned the interpreter Benjamin whom the young Vasak sent through Bishop Anania. They came to Mesrob, and with their aid he created an alphabet for the guttural, disjointed, barbarous, and harsh language of the Gargararik”.<sup>71</sup>

In this report, attention is drawn to the fact that Vasak, the ruler of Syunik, through Bishop Anania invited the Syunik translator Benjamin to create the

66 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 32. For more detail: Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 264, 379-391.

67 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 33.

68 З.М. Бунятов, “Азербайджан в VII-IX века”, 118 ; Ф. Мамедова, *Кавказская Албания и албаны*, 92-93. Also see: Киракоса Гандзакети, *История Армении*. Пер. с древнеарм., предисл. и коммент. Л. А. Ханларян (Москва: Наука, 1976): 133.

69 Г.М. Григорян, *Очерки истории Сюника IX-XV вв.*, 32.

70 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании*, 308.

71 *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movses Dasxuranci*, 69.

Albanian alphabet and Benjamin was directly involved in this process. Trever, referring to somewhat different information contained in a new edition of the writings of Koryun and Movses Khorenatsi, created during the Middle Ages and called “Pseudo Koryun”, presents Benjamin as a monk of “Albanian origin” and claims that Mesrop Mashtots was introduced to “alien Albanian” through him.<sup>72</sup>

The absence of reference to the Syunik people’s own language in this information can be explained by the fact that Benjamin, a “Syuniker” of “Albanian origin”, who was an interpreter for the Syunik ruler Vasak and was sent to help Mashtots in this capacity, knew languages of numerous Albanian tribes in addition to his mother tongue. The reference to Benjamin’s “Albanian origins” and the fact that he is “Syuniker” allows us to speak of the “special” Sunik language as one of the languages of the Albanian tribes.

Of course, such different, contradictory approaches to the events and facts of the history of Zangezur in the early Middle Ages cause historians an understandable desire to find out how true these estimates and interpretations are. In this endeavour, of course, unbiased sources and objective researchers should be relied upon.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, historically, geographically and politically, as well as ethnically, Zangezur constituted an integral part of Caucasian Albania, hence the historical lands of Azerbaijan. As is known, Caucasian Albania itself was a poly-ethnic state, formed not by any homogeneous element, but according to Strabo was made up of 26 tribes.<sup>73</sup> Undoubtedly, a comprehensive study of all the diverse multilingual sources on the history of the region allows us to assert that throughout its history the Zangezur was a diverse area subject to many changes in ethnicity and political rule.

Studies by pro-Armenian scholars, based on unsubstantiated claims or direct distortion of sources, have been repeatedly exposed in our historiography by leading Azerbaijani historians. The tendentiousness and distortion of historical reality adopted in the works of the relevant Armenian scholars are no exception in the studies on the history of Syunik, which covered a large part of Zangezur. The first discussions between Azerbaijani and Armenian academics in this area began back in Soviet times. Initially the discussion was

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72 К.В. Тревер, *Очерки по истории и культуре Кавказской Албании*, 308.

73 Страбон, *География*, XI, 4.

mainly about the ethno-cultural affiliation, borders, and history of Caucasian Albania. Azerbaijani scholars such as Z. Buniatov, F. Mammadova, I. Aliyev and V. Piriyeu stated that Zangezur (Syunik) and Karabakh (Artsakh) were regions of Caucasian Albania and were inhabited by Albanian tribes, based on reliable facts. Until now, the issue of ownership of the lands of Caucasian Albania has been one of the key themes of the Armenian national myth and ideological struggle against Azerbaijan. Armenian scholars who are a part of this ideological struggle have demonstrated a masterful arsenal of techniques that allow them to obscure or brighten a particular event in the history of the region, while maintaining an impression of objectivity in their narrative.

We call on scholars to study history independently and objectively. It is our duty as historians to try to prevent the assertion of false speculation in historical science. In our view, the best tool against pseudo-historians is the proper study of history. More precisely, the best tool is the truth itself.

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

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# THE REALITY OF "BIG POLICY" OF GREAT POWERS AND THEIR STANCES ON THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR

(BÜYÜK GÜÇLERİN "BÜYÜK SİYASET" GERÇEĞİ VE İKİNCİ KARABAĞ SAVAŞI'NDAKİ TUTUMLARI)

Emin Arif SHIKHALIYEV\*

**Abstract:** *20% of Azerbaijan's territory was occupied by Armenia as a result of the First Karabakh War of 1994-1988 between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There was no commitment to peace between the two sides and the solution to the problem was entrusted to the states. But hopes for peace were dashed and no final resolution was reached since the OSCE Minsk Group started this process in 1994. The continuing occupation of Azerbaijani lands by Armenia was increasing the likelihood of triggering a new war. The economic and military strengthening of Azerbaijan changed the balance of power in the region. Azerbaijan resorted to using military force in retaliation against Armenia's repeated military attacks in 2020, causing the breakout of the Second Karabakh War. Armenia's border violation on 27 September 2020 and its invasion attempt was the beginning of this "sudden war". The desire in Azerbaijan to get back the occupied territories both at the official level and among the public meant that Armenia's attacks were not left without a response. As a result of the war, Azerbaijan liberated important part of its territories based on its right to self-defense. Although the war ended in Azerbaijan's historic victory in the*

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*battlefield, the war nevertheless continues in the political, diplomatic and information realm.*

*In reality, the ability to act as a major power hinges on the control over sources of energy and strategic regions. From this viewpoint, the South Caucasus may be considered a geopolitical “stage for wolves” whereby all countries claiming hegemony and regional states are seeking to assert themselves. In other words, this is a scene for a power struggle among regional and global players. Thus, the great powers’ geopolitical interests have long been in contradiction on this stage. Taking this into account, Azerbaijan should outline a new strategy to repel any potential attack. Turkey’s stance on the issue will be crucial at this stage. Therefore, further strengthening of Azerbaijani-Turkish military cooperation, along with bilateral ties in other fields, will be pivotal in this period of history. Namely as a consequence of historical necessity, a joint declaration on allied relations was signed in Shusha on 15 June 2021 between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Taking all this into consideration, this article examines geopolitical rivalry in the South Caucasus and great powers’ stance in the Second Karabakh War.*

**Keywords:** *South Caucasus, Geopolitical Rivalry, Big Policy, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Second Karabakh War, Great Powers, Shusha Declaration*

**Öz:** *Ermenistan ile Azerbaycan arasında geçen 1988-1994 Birinci Karabağ Savaşı'nın sonucu olarak Azerbaycan topraklarının %20'si Ermenistan tarafından işgal edilmişti. Çatışan taraflar arasında uzlaşma sağlanamadığından sorunun barışçıl yollarla çözümü devletlere havale edilmiş, fakat 1994 senesinden itibaren AGİT Minsk Grubu nezdinde devam eden barış görüşmeleri beklentileri karşılayamamış ve nihai aşamaya varılamamıştı. Azerbaycan topraklarının Ermenistan tarafından işgalinin sürmesi yeni bir savaş çıkma olasılığını artırmaktaydı. Azerbaycan'ın ekonomik ve askeri olarak güçlenmesi bölgedeki güç dengelerini değiştirdi. Ermenistan'ın 2020 yılında defalarca saldırıları karşısında Azerbaycan, askeri kuvvet kullanımına başvurdu ve İkinci Karabağ Savaşı patlak verdi. Ermenistan'ın 27 Eylül 2020 tarihli sınır ihlali ve işgalci tavrı bu “ani savaşın” başlangıcı idi. Azerbaycan'da hem resmi düzeyde hem de halkta artan topraklarını geri alma isteği de Ermenistan'ın saldırılarının karşılıksız kalınmamasını sağladı. Savaş sonucunda Azerbaycan tarafı meşru müdafaa hukukuna dayanarak işgal altındaki topraklarının büyük kısmını kurtardı. Savaş muharebe meydanında Azerbaycan'ın tarihi zaferi ile sonuçlansa da politik, diplomatik ve bilgi alanında halen devam etmektedir.*

*Bilindiği gibi, büyük güç olmanın yolu stratejik bölgeleri ve enerji kaynaklarını kontrol etmekten geçer. Bu bağlamda Güney Kafkasya'yı “kurtlar sofrası”*

*olarak tanımlamak mümkündür. Bu sofrada her bir küresel veya bölgesel devlet kendi gücüne göre yer almak ister. Diğer bir ifadeyle, bu sofrada küresel veya bölgesel olmakla jeopolitik bir sofradır. Bu sofrada büyük güçlerin çıkarları çatışmaktadır. Bunu dikkate alarak Azerbaycan, gidişata uygun olarak satranç tahtasında kendi oyununu oynamalı, her hamleye karşı yeni bir strateji oluşturmalıdır. Özellikle böyle bir dönemde Türkiye'nin tutumu oldukça belirleyici olacaktır. Görünen o ki, Azerbaycan-Türkiye askeri işbirliği ve üslerin konuşlandırılması artık tarihi bir zarurete dönüşmüştür. Bu tarihi zaruretin sonucu olarak 15 Haziran 2021'de Azerbaycan ile Türkiye arasında askeri müttefikliği ihtiva eden Şuşa Beyannamesi imzalandı. Bu hususlar dikkate alınarak makalede Güney Kafkasya'da jeopolitik rekabet ve büyük güçlerin İkinci Karabağ Savaşında tutumları analiz edilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Güney Kafkasya, Jeopolitik Rekabet, Büyük Siyaset, Ermenistan, Azerbaycan, İkinci Karabağ Savaşı, Büyük Güçler, Şuşa Beyannamesi*

## Introduction

Historically, “battles for influence” and rivalry have been underway among major forces to gain control over the world’s energy-rich regions representing strategic importance. However, the interests of the inhabitants of these contested regions are not taken into account in the process. Therefore, regional states are faced with the risk of diminishing power and sovereignty and their role waning in the international system. Simultaneously, developments weakening the central government consistently occur in the targeted states, creating the risk of plunging them into chaos.

It is worth mentioning that the struggle among states for ultimate dominance is not a new concept. Geopolitical interests have always been at the core of big policies pursued by major powers in certain periods of history; meaning that there has always been attempts at the division of territories among global powerhouses, resulting in new borders being drawn up. This has triggered new conflicts of interest due to the lack of a substantial system regulating international relations and each of the states involved has sought to demonstrate its supremacy. To this day, the situation has not changed for the better. To the contrary, it has become more dangerous, and tensions have risen. Despite, the existence of an international systems and the desire of the states comprising this system to reach agreements under the same umbrella, nothing has come to fruition truly satisfying the needs of the states and international system.

There is a real notion of “a powerful state” and the “big policy” it pursues in political history. Taking this factor as a basis, a conclusion may be made that world orders based on peacemaking among states have succumbed to geopolitics throughout history.<sup>1</sup>

Propaganda, machinations, unrest, and wars show no signs of abating in several countries. A similar situation is seen in the South Caucasus region. It is no coincidence that Georgia’s territorial integrity was violated, and the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict escalated. Until recently, Armenia occupied 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan, a much more powerful country, with significant tacit support and involvement of major powers that describe themselves as “liberal and democratic”. It is common knowledge that Russia played a major role in this occupation. Russia’s geopolitical interest in the violation of Georgia and Ukraine’s territorial integrity should be highlighted as well.

Overall, the following point may be made when studying the real situation in world politics: if a certain measure is in favor or harms major powers, the issue of its compliance with international law is placed on the back burner and those

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1 For more detailed information, see: Parag Khanna, *Yeni Dünya Düzeni: Yeni Yükselen Güçler 21. Yüzyılı Nasıl Belirliyor?* (İstanbul: Pegasus Yayınları, 2011), p. 15.

powers proceed as they deem necessary. In other words, major powers consider themselves “exceptional”, as in, international law does not truly apply to them.

There is an important point that is worth mentioning. Overall, if the developments currently happening in the world are profoundly studied, it turns out that these events are being closely followed and controlled by global powers. A double standard policy is observed regarding numerous hotspots worldwide, including the South Caucasus region, the ongoing events, and some conflicts between states. As for the South Caucasus region, global players are not interested in the solution of disputed issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the conflicts in Georgia, just like the disputes in many other regions of the world.

The established facts and an analysis of global developments lead to the conclusion that unresolved conflicts and interference with them, as well as efforts to succeed in geopolitical rivalry, are not in line with anyone serving as a mouthpiece for “peace”.

On the basis of these factors, an overall conclusion may be made that the present-day world order is experiencing comprehensive chaos and uncertainty. Undoubtedly, certain goals are pursued behind those high-toned slogans that are currently being declared, including “democracy”, “ensuring peace and well-being in the world”, and “facilitating stability in regions”. Interestingly, these principles are voiced in the slogans promoted by all world great powers. Certainly, the slogans being announced have hidden agendas. The main goal is the division of the world among the powerhouses, as has always been the case in human history. However, no common ground is in sight in this division, which is considered the reality of the current geopolitics, and there is no room left for shifting toward a balanced policy meeting mutual interests.

### **The Reality of Russia’s “Big Policy” and Evaluating the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in this Context**

Given the impact of the abovementioned global issues, an analysis of the developments that have occurred in the South Caucasus, in particular, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, has a great scientific and political relevance. Overall, important points may be made when studying the developments that have happened in most of the former Soviet states, including the countries of the South Caucasus region, since the 1990s, as well as Russia’s geopolitical priorities. Russia, which is one of the five permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) members, has violated or threatened the territorial integrity of the countries countering or defying it. Prof. Alexander Dugin, a well-known Russian strategist known for his Russia-centric pan-

Eurasian views, has commented on prospects for Russia's relations with other post-Soviet states, as well as the future and fate of the countries countering Moscow. On this point, Dugin said the following:

“Ensuring any former Soviet country's territorial integrity dwells upon its ties with Russia. If any of the post-Soviet states maintains good relations with Russia, it has secured its territorial integrity. But if these relations are poor, those countries' integrity is violated... The hegemony of such countries as Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, which have bad relations with Russia, has already been disrupted”.<sup>2</sup>

The current situation once again reflects the reality of “powerful states” and the “big policies” they are pursuing. It is not a mere coincidence that Russia's “big politics” was observed not only in other former Soviet states, but also in the South Caucasus region and regarding the Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and the Karabakh war in particular. This reality, which remains relevant to this day, is that just like in most of the former Soviet states, complete resolution of conflicts and disputed issues in the South Caucasus and establishment of peace in the region does not comply with the long-term interests of Russia's regional security policy in any way.

If the root cause of the Karabakh problem is taken into consideration, it is clear that the Russia has historically desired to use (or abuse) the Armenian people as one of the primary tools for meeting and securing its geopolitical interests. The separatist movement aimed at realizing the idea of “greater Armenia” and acquiring “ancient historical territories” has served this purpose. Restoring stability in the South Caucasus and a real solution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan problem is undesirable from Russia's point of view. Moscow's policy is underpinned by its future objectives, namely, **keeping the parties dependent on itself and securing its leverage of influence in the region.**

It is worth mentioning that this course of Moscow that has been pursued for many years and Russia's double-faceted games are not in line with its mission as a mediating state. On the one hand, Russia had assumed the task of mediation between the conflict parties. On the other hand, it provided a significant amount of weaponry to Armenia and did not refrain from declaring that this bilateral collaboration continued. Overall, it would be more appropriate to regard the presence of the Armenian state and Armenian separatist forces in Karabakh as a guarantee of Russia's presence in the South Caucasus. The purpose of this article is not to go back to the Nagorno-

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2 AYTEK YUSIFSOY, “‘Rusya'ya qarşı gelenlerin toprak bütünlüğü ihlal ediliyor – Gürcistan, Ukrayna, Moldova...’ – Aleksandr Dugin”, *YeniÇağ.info*, 4 Mayıs 2017, <https://yenicag.info/rusyaya-karsi-gelenlerin-toprak-butunlugu-ihlal-ediliyor-gurcistan-ukrayna-moldova-aleksandr-dugin/embed>

Karabakh conflict, as related issues were covered in detail in our previous research. However, we recall that the negotiated settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had been mediated by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairs Russia, the United States, and France. Each of these countries had its own stance on the issue, which was impeding progress in peace talks. It is clear that all the three countries are global powerhouses. It is also an accepted reality that these powers had geopolitical clout to put pressure on the invading state. The point is that the main problem regarding the settlement of any conflict is not the capabilities of major powers, but the political will required to solve it. It was the lack of a keen interest in the Karabakh conflict settlement that was preventing the Minsk Group from fulfilling its duties. Representatives of the co-chairing countries paid numerous visits to the region not to solve the conflict, but to merely defuse tension.

Thus, they were mostly engaged in “exercising control over the conflict”, not execution of the “conflict resolution mechanisms”. Therefore, it is understandable that the public in Azerbaijan regarded the co-chairs’ visits as “**tours**” lacking substance.

In the wake of the double-standard policy of international organizations, the Minsk Group member states, and other countries, the Armenian side failed to pursue a real solution of the problem and instead repeatedly violated the ceasefire. As a result, a war occurred on 2-5 April 2016 (the “Four Day War”), which indicated that the Nagorno-Karabakh problem was not in fact a frozen conflict, although the course of developments was eventually diverted to its previous state for some reason with the aid of certain facilitators, namely, Russia’s interference. Furthermore, Armenia believed that these state of affairs would be maintained indefinitely in line with its interests and continued to stage provocations. Encouraged by its foreign backers, Armenia resorted to another provocation in July 2020. Certainly, there were certain reasons for its actions:

One of them was related to the efforts of incumbent Armenian leadership to distract the public’s attention from its failures internally and externally. Azerbaijan’s economic development, increasing international stance and continuous success were threatening Armenia and its regional ambitions.

Secondly, those territories are crossed by the routes of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, and Great Silk Road, which are Azerbaijan’s projects of an international scale. Armenia sought to take over relevant strategic heights to accomplish its goal in the context of these routes.

Thirdly, Armenia was trying to activate the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) members against Azerbaijan so as not to be alone. As known, Armenia is the only CSTO member in the South Caucasus. Article 4 of the CSTO Charter states: “if one of the States Parties is subjected to aggression by any state or group of states, then this will be considered as aggression against all States Parties to this Treaty”, which potentially duty bounds CSTO members to protect Armenia in case the latter is attacked. Against Armenia’s expectations, however, CSTO merely confined itself to issuing a declaration calling the parties to “immediate ceasefire”.

Some commentators claim that the mentioned attacks had been incited by Russia and France.<sup>3</sup> It should also be taken into account that Armenia’s Nikol Pashinyan government, which relied on unyielding support from major powers, embarked on its attack with the slogan of a “new war for new territories”. Armenia, which bound its hopes with the seemingly everlasting support of major powers, continued to violate the Line of Contact, attempting to deal a psychological blow to Azerbaijan and resorting to provocative methods. Defiant and strongly worded statements from Pashinyan, such as “**Karabakh is Armenia. Period**”, which were erroneously adventurous steps that countered international law, served as a precursor of a new war. Prior to Pashinyan’s governance, Armenian leaders and officials sought to convey to the world community that Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh were the main parties to the conflict, saying that the warring sides were accordingly Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. They alleged that Armenia was seeking to put forward a constructive stance in peace talks and tried to convince the international community that Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians were merely pursuing ethnic self-determination and that no territorial claims were on the agenda. However, Pashinyan’s phrase “**Karabakh is Armenia. Period**” essentially amounted to admitting to the policy of an invading state in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and unavoidably exposed Armenia’s true intentions as a state to the rest of the world.

On 27 September 2020, Armenia violated the ceasefire, launching an attack on Azerbaijani territory, which sparked an “instantaneous war”. It is noteworthy that the firm resolve of both the government and people in Azerbaijan to regain their territories was also a precursor of these developments. The Azerbaijani side launched a counter-offensive, regaining significant areas, historical land and strategic territories and heights that had been under occupation.

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3 Mehmet Koçak, “Ermeni saldırılarının arkasında kimler var?”, *HyeTert.org*, 29 Temmuz 2020, <https://hyetert.org/2020/07/29/ermeni-saldirilarinin-arkasinda-kimler-var/> ; Suinbay Suyundikov, “Ermeni saldırılarının arka planı ve Türk Dünyası”, *21. Yüzyıl Türkiye Enstitüsü*, 20 Temmuz 2020, <https://www.21yyte.org/tr/fikir-tanki/ermeni-saldirisinin-arka-planı-ve-turk-dunyasi>

Azerbaijan, which attained a clear victory in the ensuing war against the invading Armenia, had the upper hand over the Armenian armed forces, combining years of intense training and military reorganization with high-tech weapon systems such as unmanned aerial vehicles purchased from Turkey. Despite calls from Russia and Western countries, as well as international organizations, to immediately halt the fighting and resume peace talks, Turkey, Pakistan, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Ukraine, Israel and other countries either explicitly or implicitly expressed strong support for Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan, who had previously claimed that “Karabakh is part of Armenia”, engaged in provocative acts in Shusha (a culturally significant Azerbaijani town), arranged for the establishment of settlements, and stationed armed separatist troops in the occupied territories, faced a deplorable situation during the war. As the situation on the battlefield turned increasingly against Armenia, Pashinyan was forced to ask world leaders for assistance. It is worthy of note that Armenia, which faced a dire predicament, followed its usual pattern of behavior, releasing false reports regarding an alleged presence of Syrian mercenaries and Jihadist groups in Azerbaijan in hopes of capitalizing on rising Islamophobic, xenophobic and anti-Turkish sentiments in Western countries.

The main goal of these fake news was to draw the attention of the world’s Christian majority countries, in particular, Western countries and major powers, to this matter by framing Armenia as a victimized Christian country under the merciless attack of Muslim aggressors (Azerbaijan and Turkey). The hope was to prompt Christian-majority countries to adopt a crusader-like mentality and enact sanctions against Azerbaijan in the name of Christian solidarity. There is a significant point that should be made in this regard. A threat is posed by the fact that the killings and beheadings, committing “Jihadist” acts while exclaiming “Allahu Akbar” (“Allah [God] is the greatest”) is the primary aspiration of terrorists, who act under the pretext of religion. Nevertheless, there is absolutely no premise of unfair and groundless killing in Islam. These deliberate actions merely facilitate the campaign aimed at sullyng Islam at the international stage. Thus, spreading rumors that “beheading terrorists are fighting Christian Armenians on the frontline” on the Azerbaijani side may be regarded as an attempt at re-igniting centuries-old, religion-based anti-Muslim reflexes in Western countries. Therefore, “Jihadist groups” was a dangerous phrase used as part of an anti-Azerbaijan campaign. It is not a coincidence that French President Emmanuel Macron emphasized the importance of putting the issue into the agenda of the Council of Europe by stating “the issue of Syrian jihadists in Nagorno-Karabakh is a serious and game-changing reality”.<sup>4</sup>

4 “Fransa Cumhurbaşkanı Macron: cihatçılar Gaziantep üzerinden Karabağ’a gitti, elimizde kanıtlar var”, *Euronews*, 1 Ekim 2020, <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/10/01/fransa-cumhurbaskan-macron-cihatc-lar-gaziantep-uzerinden-karabag-a-gitti-elimizde-kan-tla>



On the contrary, there are plenty of reports stating that PKK fighters and other terrorists had been brought to Armenia from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and further sent by the Armenian side to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Information is also available regarding the activity of mercenaries in the region.<sup>5</sup> However, France and like-minded countries and officials turned a blind eye to Armenia's close ties with such to terror groups. France, which is one of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, should have put forward a neutral stance on the issue, to say the least.

At the same time, Armenia sought to exaggerate the involvement of Turkish armed forces in the war, releasing false reports through media outlets around the world. However, a substantial response was delivered to the allegations with due arguments by Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev. Aliyev went to great lengths to expose Armenia's propaganda on the state-run TV channels of numerous countries regarding to both the "Jihadist" issue and the contribution of Turkish armed forces to warfare, as well as strongly criticized those making such claims.<sup>6</sup>

The point that should be kept in mind is that it was Armenia and Azerbaijan who were in the battlefield during the Second Karabakh War, which meant that it was them who could truly know what was going on in terms of the actors involved in the war. However, while Armenia's propaganda was taken at face value by the Western public, Azerbaijan's rebuttals were met with automatic skepticism and dismissals, revealing disturbing biases and unfair treatment in Western countries.<sup>7</sup>

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5 "Ermenistan PKK'lı teröristleri Azərbaycan cəpə hattında istifadə edir", *TRT Haber*, 24 Eylül 2020, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/ermenistan-pkkli-teroristleri-azerbaycan-cephe-hattinda-kullaniyor-518306.html> ; Nikolai Korsakov, "Активизация Армении на Ближнем Востоке: чем это грозит России", *Gazeta.ru*, September 19, 2020, <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2020/09/19/13256293.shtml>

6 "Prezident İlham Əliyev 'Rossiya-1' telekanalının '60 dəqiqə' proqramında sualları cavablandırır", *ARB24 – YouTube kanalı*, 29 Eylül 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhVDFekmoDY> ; "Prezident İlham Əliyevin 'Rossiya-1' kanalına müsahibəsi", *Xeberoxu.az*, <https://xeberoxu.az/Prezident-Ilham-Əliyevin-Rossiya-1-kanalina-musahibesi-20200929203710932>, accessed September 28, 2020.

7 For more detailed information, see: Carlotta Gall, "Turkey Jump Into Another Foreign Conflict, This Time in the Caucasus", *The New York Times*, October 1, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/01/world/middleeast/turkey-azerbaijan-armenia-war.html> ; "İlham Aliyev was interviewed by Russian TASS news agency", *Presidency of the of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, October 19, 2020, <https://en.president.az/articles/43547> ; "President İlham Aliyev gave interview to US Fox News TV channel", *Trend News Agency*, October 25, 2020, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3323234.html>.

### **France's Stance on the Second Karabakh War and Behind-the-Scenes Issues: Clash of Interests Between France and Turkey**

France's position on Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and the Second Karabakh war is particularly worth mentioning. As mentioned earlier, Armenia, which faced a predicament, followed its conventional methods by issuing false reports regarding an alleged presence of Syrian mercenaries and Jihadist groups in Azerbaijan. Having failed to scrutinize the fake news aimed at blackmail or unwilling to do so, France unconditionally supported Armenia's propaganda. It put forward an openly pro-Armenian stance by adding a religious slant to the issue, stressing its alleged gravity and the importance of bringing the issue to the attention of the Council of Europe. Apparently, France wanted trigger a crusades-like reflex in the whole of Europe against Azerbaijan and Turkey.

This approach completely ran counter to France's commitment to impartiality as a mediator in the Karabakh conflict settlement. According to our subjective reasoning, one of the main causes of France openly backing Armenia in the latter's conflict with Azerbaijan is the clash of its geopolitical interests in the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and Africa with those of Turkey. France's activity in the Mediterranean region has a long history. Currently, France continues striving to realize its goals concerning Libya and to have a say in the ongoing struggle for power in the Mediterranean Sea.

In reality, the ability to act as a major power hinges on the control over sources of energy. In any case, the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves as well as oil and gas fields worth trillions of dollars in the eastern Mediterranean sparked differences among major powers. From this viewpoint, the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean regions may be considered a geopolitical "stage for wolves" whereby all countries claiming hegemony and regional states are seeking to assert themselves. In other words, this is a scene for a power struggle among regional and global players. Thus, the French and Turkish geopolitical interests have long been in contradiction on this stage. France, which lacks international support in the projects in the Mediterranean region and has also been gradually sidelined from the Middle East, sees Turkey as the biggest obstacle to its policies on Libya. Gas exploration in the vicinity of Cyprus continues to heighten tension between France and Turkey. Since Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus were not included in the activities on operating the reserves of natural gas discovered near the island, Turkey, in turn, launched drilling in eastern Mediterranean, in accordance with its maritime border delineation deal with Libya. The issue increased tensions between Athens and Ankara, while France threw its weight behind Greece. Following the outset of the Second Karabakh War, France immediately called for a ceasefire, expressing utmost concern over Turkey's alleged moves aimed at encouraging Azerbaijan to regain Nagorno-Karabakh. Although the

statement was made under the influence of the Armenian community of France, its actual reason was France's rivalry and struggle with Turkey in Libya and eastern Mediterranean.<sup>8</sup>

More profound comprehension and analysis of the Turkish-French tensions requires considering this crisis not in the context of the Libyan issue alone, but as part of an overall struggle and competition on the scale of the entire African continent. In fact, the stand-off over Libya is only the tip of the iceberg in the rivalry between Turkey and France. As for the unseen part of the iceberg, it entails a clash of Ankara's policy on Africa with France's strategic interests. As is known, this continent is of great political, economic, social, and cultural importance for France. Just like the "**Great Game**" reflecting rivalry for control over Asia between Russia and Britain in the 19th century, such major powers as France, Britain and Germany sought to establish supremacy over Africa.<sup>9</sup> In accordance with the General Act of the 1885 Berlin Conference, which sought to discuss the partitioning of Africa, France emerged as a major colonial power on the continent.<sup>10</sup> The decolonization policies that started after World War II certainly affected this continent. However, France sought to retain its political, economic, and cultural dominance in the territories that were under its control, though most of the colonial areas had gained independence, and even managed to increase its influence. From 1961, France exercised control over the national reserves of 14 African countries. These included **Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon.**<sup>11</sup>

African countries had to place their national currency reserves in France's central bank. Since France's treasury was receiving revenues to the tune of 500 billion dollars a year from Africa, the country was reluctant to give up the benefits of the colonial currency system. A number of African leaders opposing the system were either assassinated or removed from office through coups (a convenient development for France), while the compliant ones received French awards on many occasions. France, which was receiving significant revenues from Africa, was doing its utmost to sideline all countries opposing its endeavors. The remarks of Jacques Chirac, a former French president, regarding the French colonies in Africa, are definitely food for thought.

8 Okan Yeşilot, "Fransa-Türkiye ilişkilerinde Dağlık Karabağ gerginliği", *Anadolu Ajansı*, 1 Aralık 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/fransa-turkiye-iliskilerinde-daglik-karabag-gerginligi/2061558>.

9 Cemil Ömer Kızıllhan, "Afrika ekseninde Türkiye-Fransa ilişkileri", *21. Yüzyıl Türkiye Enstitüsü*, 11 Eylül 2020, <https://21yyte.org/tr/merkezler/bolgesel-arastirma-merkezleri/avrupa-birligi-arastirmalari-merkezi/afrika-ekseninde-turkiye-fransa-i-liskileri>.

10 Fahir Armaoğlu, *19. Yüzyıl siyasi tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu basımevi, 1997), p. 420.

11 Mustafa Efe, "Afrika'da Fransa kâbusu - II: Yeni sömürgecilik", *Anadolu Ajansı*, 6 Şubat 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/afrika-da-fransa-kabusu-ii-yeni-somurgecilik/1726100>

“Without Africa, France will slide down into the rank of a third [world] power,” he said. Remarkably, his predecessor, Francois Mitterrand, admitted the truth by saying in 1957 that “France will have no history in the 21st century without Africa”.<sup>12</sup>

Currently, African countries must still pay colonial debt to France. Though this unfair system has been repeatedly condemned by the European Union, it is evident that France would not be able to stay afloat without this colonial system, which provides it with around 500 billion dollars annually. Therefore, France deems the strengthening of such a geopolitical player as Turkey in the regions it exerts influence upon historically, politically, economically, and culturally as a serious threat to its interests. Evidently, the policy pursued by Turkey on Africa and the Middle East contradicts France’s strategic and economic interests. Therefore, France did not refrain from openly supporting Armenia in its conflict with Azerbaijan, which is backed by Turkey and is one of the states representing the Turkic world. Both chambers of the French parliament went so far as to adopt resolutions recognizing the self-proclaimed “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” of the Armenian separatists.

### Ceasefires, Interference, and Geopolitical Attacks

In addition to the above-mentioned conclusions, another important point is worth mentioning. It concerns the ceasefire in the Second Karabakh War. Azerbaijan’s advances and regaining of its territories that had been occupied by Armenia occurred amid relevant political conditions that emerged following a 26-year-long ceasefire. Meanwhile, questions arose for many regarding changes in the position of Russia, which held “the key to the lock” in the region. It is not a coincidence that when the dominance of either side in any clash or short-term military conflict did not trample upon the overall Russian policy in the past, Moscow remained silent in this regard for some time or opted to assert its presence instead. This was the case during the Four-Day War in April 2016. Nearly two weeks after intense clashes broke out on 27 September 2020, Russia sought to interfere with the matter again, inviting the Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers to Moscow. The parties agreed at the meeting held with Russia’s mediation to observe a humanitarian ceasefire from 10 October 2020 to exchange prisoners of war, other detainees, and the dead bodies.<sup>13</sup> Reaching a ceasefire was extremely important for Russia, which considered the South Caucasus as its “backyard”. Exerting its influence and

12 Mavis Enyan, “South Africa to build nuclear power for security and energy purposes”, *ThePeoplesNewsAfrica.com*, <https://thepeoplesnewsafrica.com>, accessed November 12, 2020.

13 “Azərbaycan, Rusiya və Ermənistanın XİN başçıları bəyanat qəbul ediblər”, *Report.az*, 10 Ekim 2020, <https://report.az/dagliq-qarabag-munaqiseshi/azerbaycan-ve-ermenistan-xin-bascilarinin-ucterefli-gorusu-basa-catdi/>

demonstrating to the rest of the world once again that it held the key to the conflict settlement was crucial for Moscow. However, it was crystal clear that the ceasefire was temporary and hostilities would be resumed. 24 hours barely passed before Ganja, Mingachevir, Barda, Goranboy, Terter, and other Azerbaijani cities, districts and villages were subjected to missile attacks from Armenia's territory. In particular, strikes dealt upon Ganja, Azerbaijan's second largest city, targeted civilians, causing numerous casualties and injuring others. This was another manifestation of Armenia's policy of using terror as a war tactic. The attacks showed that Armenia was in such a deplorable condition that it resorted to staging acts of terrorism against civilian population. Yerevan's only hope was to pave the way for immediate involvement of the CSTO in the conflict if Baku launched a counterattack on the Armenian territory.

The mentioned ceasefire violation also displayed Armenia's pro-Western stance. Although Armenia, Russia's ally, is governed by Pashinyan, a person backed by Moscow's rivals, such as Western countries, Russia's loosening its grip on this country appeared unrealistic. It was merely necessary to "punish" the Armenian prime minister. Moreover, Azerbaijan currently possesses powerful army and weapons, which was not the case in the 1990s. At the same time, the Karabakh war could not have been resolved at the level of foreign ministers and it was an issue of a larger scale. In fact, Azerbaijan sat down at the negotiating table despite expecting Armenian ceasefire violations. According to Azerbaijani President Aliyev, it was a chance given to Armenia by Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, Armenia violated the ceasefire, attacking civilians, making it clear that it had no intention to pull out of the occupied Azerbaijani territory based on a negotiated solution of the conflict. After the OSCE Minsk Group mediators, in particular, France, stepped in, another ceasefire was declared on 18 October 2020. However, it was breached by Armenian armed forces just minutes thereafter.<sup>14</sup> In an effort to defuse tension, the United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo invited the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia to his country. Pompeo's separate meetings with the ministers took place on 23 October 2020.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, the US' attempt to rein in the situation was being expected. Following those discussions, a third ceasefire was further declared on 26 October. However, Armenia violated the truce again minutes thereafter.<sup>16</sup> Armenia, which was unable to resist Azerbaijani armed

14 "Azərbaycan və Ermənistan humanitar atəşkəs barədə razılığa gəldi", *Modern.az*, 17 Ekim 2020, <https://modern.az/az/news/260857>

15 "Pompeo Azərbaycan və Ermənistan Xarici İşlər nazirləri ilə görüşdü", *Amerika'nın Sesi*, 23 Ekim 2020, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.org/a/pompeo-az%99rbaycan-v%99erm%99nistan-xarici-i%99fl%99r-nazirl%99ri-il%99g%99-g%99bc%99bc%99f%99bc%99bc/5633126.html>

16 "Ermənistan-Azərbaycan arasında daimi atəşkəs yalnız BMT qətnamələrinin şərtləri daxilində mümkündür", *Fed.az*, 27 Ekim 2020, <https://fed.az/az/qarabag/turkiye-xin-ermenistan-azerbaycan-arasinda-daimi-ateskes-yalniz-bmt-qetnamelerinin-sertleri-daxilinde-mumkundur-91600>.

forces in the battlefield, targeted civilians again. On 28 October 2020, Armenian forces launched a strike on Barda using Smerch multiple rocket launchers, killing 21 people and severely wounding over 70 others. Despite repeated ceasefire violations, attacks on civilians, including children, with the use of ballistic missiles and mass killings, Armenia's criminal acts were not condemned by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, major world powers, or influential international organizations. Instead, conventional international calls were made to put an end to the war, lay down the weapons and immediately start talks. If international organizations and involved countries were indeed deeply concerned over the ongoing military action and human casualties and were seeking justice, they should have ensured an immediate pullout of the invading Armenian forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories in line with relevant UN resolutions. If necessary, they could have put pressure on Armenia in this regard. However, they failed to do so.

The Armenians' fate was determined in the early 20th century and a state called Armenia came into existence. Establishing a second Armenian state (the so-called Nagorno Karabakh Republic) in Azerbaijan's territory is impossible as it would be a flagrant violation of international law. Furthermore, such an attempt would risk starting another war with an Azerbaijan that has clearly become much more powerful than Armenia, as its victory in the Second War has shown. If ethnic Armenians try to promote the self-determination issue in every region they reside in, numerous Armenian states would emerge around the world, leading to a nonsensical international situation.

Failure of the mediators to fairly differentiate between an invading state and a country affected by occupation of its territory and their moves supporting the invader had resulted in further exacerbation of Armenia's aggressive policy. Regardless of the political convictions of any government that came to power in Armenia, including anti-Russian and anti-Western ones, Russia, France, and the US would never leave Armenia out of their policies. The interests of these states may confront on different geopolitical issues, but the Armenian issue and hostility against Turkic nations are the main factors uniting them. We will not touch again the problems related with the Armenian Question in this article, which was put forward by the Great Powers as an extension of the deep-rooted hatred against the Turks, as had been discussed in our article "The Armenian Question in the Context of the Clash of Civilization and Geopolitical Interests, Its Impact on Armenia-Azerbaijani Relations and Vision of the Near Future" published in *Review of Armenian Studies* in 2013.<sup>17</sup>

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17 For more detailed information, see: Emin Şihaliyev, "The Armenian Question in the Context of the Clash of Civilizations and Geopolitical Interests, Its Impact on Armenia-Azerbaijani Relations and Vision of the Near Future", *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 27 (2013): 89-129.

It is no coincidence that all three mediating states demonstrated their real position on this issue at a closed-door meeting of the UN Security Council on 19 October 2020. Following the meeting, Minsk Group co-chairs Russia and France drew up a draft statement. However, the circulated document, which was to be further agreed upon by the member states, had no reference to the four well-known UN resolutions. Thus, the statement disregarded territorial integrity, which is one of the most significant principles of international law, as well as UNSC decisions. The objective of this move was to leave behind and obfuscate UN Resolutions No. 822, 853, 874 and 884, pass new pro-Armenian decisions and derail efforts aimed at ending the occupation of Azerbaijani territory. However, seven Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) members represented in the UNSC, namely, **Indonesia, Niger, Vietnam, Tunisia, South Africa, the Dominican Republic and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, suggested that a reference to the UN resolutions be included in the statement draft. Though the co-chairing countries deemed the proposal as unacceptable, the statement was eventually withdrawn due to an insistent and principled stance of the Non-Aligned Movement member states.<sup>18</sup>

Apparently, the fact that the permanent UNSC members remain unchanged shows that this organization merely serves political interests and violates international law instead of enforcing it. As before, the co-chairing states set aside the impartiality principle and continued to take sides in conflicts, openly supporting Armenia. To the contrary, NAM member states displayed commitment to the organization's principles and values to the whole world, honoring international law. At the same time, this is a clear example of NAM being a major player in the system of international relations.

Azerbaijan continued a struggle for its cause in the war and diplomacy until the end and sought to avail of the emerging opportunities. Strides were taken in this direction. Azerbaijani President Aliyev demanded setting a timetable for an Armenian pullout from the occupied land. Until 10 November 2020, Armenia resisted its withdrawal and repeatedly sustained significant losses. On 8 November, the city of Shusha, which is of great symbolic importance for the Azerbaijani people as stated earlier, was liberated after 28 years of occupation. On 9 November, Aliyev informed the Azerbaijani people that the Azerbaijani forces had liberated 71 more villages, a settlement, and eight strategic hills from Armenian occupation. Surrendering was now the only way out for Armenia. On 10 November, the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia and Armenia's Prime Minister signed a trilateral statement on cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone. Armenia assumed a commitment to withdraw its troops from Azerbaijan's occupied Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachin districts

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18 Elçin Ehmedov, "Azərbaycanın diplomatik, hərbi uğurları və böyük güclərin ermənipərəst siyasəti", *NewTimes.az*, 25 Ekim 2020, <http://newtimes.az/az/organisations/6883/>

stage by stage by 1 December 2020.<sup>19</sup> According to the statement, a limited contingent of Russian peacekeepers was to be stationed in the region. Immediately after the statement was signed, a Russian peacekeeping force was sent to Karabakh. However, there has been deep concern in Azerbaijan over its pro-Armenian actions that cannot be explained as legitimate actions for a peacekeeping mission.

About two months after the ceasefire was reached, on 11 January 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who met in Moscow to discuss the Karabakh problem and other important issues, signed a statement. The document, signed behind closed doors, was of crucial importance for specifying the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement. However, there are some uncertain points in this regard. A decision was passed at the meeting to draw up specific outlines on the development of transport infrastructure and the regional economy and establish a trilateral taskforce comprised of deputy prime ministers and working groups consisting of experts for the purpose. The goal of these exchanges was to restore the deadlocked economic and transport relations. Moreover, Azerbaijan will be connected to its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through the transport links crossing Armenian territory, while Armenia, in turn, will have a railway link to Russia and Iran via Azerbaijani territory. In addition, Azerbaijan will gain access to the Turkish market through Nakhchivan, while the Turkish and Russian railway hubs will be connected. Another detail regarding the statement is that it has no reference to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Overall, there were not many points that would allow the Azerbaijani side to rest assured completely, but there was not a significant number of points of concern either. One of the most important outcomes of the 11 January meeting was that the mediating OSCE Minsk Group's activity in the peace process was essentially rendered useless.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the way further developments will unfold will be clear over the course of time.

### **Outcome: The Parties That Benefitted or Sustained Loss in The Second Karabakh War**

Overall, the following point may be made once the real situation in world politics has been studied: if a certain measure or move is in favor or harms major powers, the issue of its compliance with international law is placed on

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19 "İlham Əliyev xalqa müraciət edib", *Azərbaycan Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı*, 10 Kasım 2020, <https://president.az/articles/45924>.

20 Araz Aslanlı, "Moskva görüşünün neticesi: rahatlıq da var, narahatlıq da", *Ayna.az*, <https://ayna.az/news/23152>, erişim tarihi: 12 Ocak 2021; Kürşat Zorlu, "Karabağ zirvesinin en önemli neticesi ne oldu?", *HaberTürk*, 12 Ocak 2021, <https://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/prof-dr-kursad-zorlu/2934124-karabag-zirvesinin-en-onemli-neticesi-ne-oldu>.



the back burner and those powers act in accordance with their interests. In other words, major powers consider themselves “exceptional”. This is the “**world order**” of major powers and it is determined by a correlation of power capacities of major geopolitical players, not international law and institutions. Challenges facing the South Caucasus region, in particular, the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, should be considered in the same context. The Second Karabakh War, which ended in resounding victory for Azerbaijan and crushing defeat for Armenia, could be considered as an integral part of the conflicting or compliant issues related to the major powers’ geopolitical interests in the region. Therefore, the most significant matter in this regard that comes to the forefront concerns those who either benefitted or sustained loss because of the conflict.

**Russia:** An analysis of the developments that have occurred leads to a conclusion that a complete solution of the Karabakh issue is not in line with Russia’s current interests in the first place, given that Moscow’s main objective is to capitalize on the problem and keep international activities and regional policies of both countries involved under its influence. Russia’s disapproval of Nikol Pashinyan, who pursues a pro-Western policy, could be deemed normal. However, Russia defines its policy in the Caucasus in line with its geostrategic interests, not on the basis of certain governments. Just like in some other former Soviet states, an immediate solution to all outstanding differences and conflicts in the South Caucasus republics and restoring sustainable peace in the region contradicts the long-term goals of Russia’s regional security policy. In other words, Russia possesses significant leverage of influence upon both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Moreover, Russia bolstered its presence and gained geopolitical dominance in the region in the course of its rivalry with the West over the South Caucasus. At the same time, Russia demonstrated to Armenia the bitter consequences of a pro-Western political slant. On the other hand, Moscow’s using its weight in ending the war paved the way for sidelining France and the US, the other two Minsk Group co-chairs, from the political rivalry game.

**OSCE Minsk Group:** The Minsk Group’s mediating efforts have been essentially rendered null and void; and France and the US have been left outside the peace process at this stage.

**Turkey:** Turkey is one of the benefitting parties. First of all, this pertains to the training provided to the Azerbaijani armed forces by Turkey in the Second Karabakh War, along with military tactics and weaponry. Turkey also attained further recognition for its defense industry in world markets. At the same time, Turkey asserted its presence in the South Caucasus before the international community for decades to come. This should be considered a great benefit and success both for Azerbaijan and Turkey. The presence of the Turkish army in

Azerbaijan to offset Russian presence is a significant factor for ensuring stability. Russia has to admit Turkey's presence in Azerbaijan, but it actually opposes this country's playing a major role in the region. Azerbaijan, for its part, has always stressed the importance of Ankara's presence at the negotiating table.

**Azerbaijan:** Azerbaijan, which is the main winner in the mentioned war, used every opportunity at hand and appears that it will continue to do so. In addition, Azerbaijan proved to be the most powerful state in the South Caucasus militarily, politically, and economically through the Second Karabakh War. Undoubtedly, becoming a key transit state in the region will provide a considerable advantage to Azerbaijan in the future. The significant benefits include suitability of the land liberated from the Armenian occupation for agriculture, as well as gold mines and regained control over hydropower capacities. Moreover, regional rehabilitation efforts and infrastructure projects will give an impetus to economic development. On the other hand, launching a transport corridor between Nakhchivan and other western Azerbaijani regions following Armenia's formal surrender will provide for uninterrupted transportation capacities between Turkey and Azerbaijan. The success achieved by Turkey and Azerbaijan will give the Turkic world a psychological edge with the opening of the Nakhchivan corridor. Nevertheless, Russia's entry to the region, which occurred in the form of a peacekeeping mission, certainly poses a significant risk from Azerbaijan's viewpoint. Although the war ended in Azerbaijan's historic victory in the battlefield, it continues in the political, diplomatic, and information realm. From now onward, Azerbaijan should outline a new strategy to repel any potential attack. Turkey's stance on the issue will be crucial at this stage. Therefore, further strengthening of Azerbaijani-Turkish military cooperation, along with bilateral ties in other fields, will be pivotal in this period of history.

As a consequence of historical necessity, a joint declaration on allied relations was signed in Shusha on 15 June 2021, between Azerbaijan and Turkey. The Shusha Declaration outlines joint efforts to reorganize and modernize the Azerbaijani armed forces, and compels joint action in the event of third-party aggression against the independence or sovereignty of either of the parties. Another important item that will contribute to closer bilateral military cooperation is the pledge to hold regular joint meetings of the two countries' security councils. From Azerbaijan's perspective, the Shusha Declaration aims to foster relations with its natural ally Turkey, strengthen Baku's geopolitical position regionally, as well as ensure additional security guarantees in the volatile South Caucasus. As for Turkey, the outcome of the Second Karabakh War has contributed to Ankara assuming the role of one of the main stakeholders in the new regional order. Finally, strengthened relations with Baku are enabling Turkish private and state-owned companies to enter

Azerbaijan, mostly in the Karabakh region, thus creating an important counterbalance to the Russian presence in this war-ravaged part of the world.<sup>21</sup>

The Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 1 February 2022 and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on 3 February 2022 ratified the Shusha Declaration “On allied relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey”.<sup>22</sup> This has formally cemented the allied relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey, signaling the formation of an important Turkic bloc in the region.

**Armenia:** Armenia is the main defeated party in the Second Karabakh War. Armenia, which believed it was taking a prudent measure regarding the conflict, sought Russian and Western pressure against Azerbaijan. However, Armenia itself ultimately turned into an unwitting instrument in the hands of these powers and lost most of its support at a critical time. No matter how persistently Armenia attempted to pursue a Western-leaning policy under the Pashinyan administration, it fell under the Kremlin’s influence again following a bitter defeat and Russia’s interference with the conflict. At the same time, Yerevan had to admit Azerbaijan’s victory and the fact that it has very limited capabilities. Russia, for its part, showed Armenia that the West’s promises and guarantees had no merit and could not turn the tide in the war whatsoever.

Azerbaijan carried out a 44-day operation that was called the “Iron Fist” during the Second Karabakh War. It was not just a war fought between the two countries and lost by Armenia. The war served as a deciding factor for a new situation that has emerged in the South Caucasus. This new geopolitical reality in the region has been acknowledged by both regional and global actors, meriting detailed analyses of its outcomes.

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21 Fuad Shahbazov, “Shusha Declaration cements Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance”, *The Jamestown Foundation*, Publication: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 18, Issue: 100, <https://jamestown.org/program/shusha-declaration-cements-azerbaijani-turkish-alliance/>

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŐTIRMA MAKALESİ

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# COMMUNISM PROPAGANDA IN SOVIET ARMENIA

(SOVYET ERMENİSTAN'INDA KOMÜNİZM PROPAGANDASI)

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**Abstract:** *The Soviet Union brought communist regimes to power in the socialist republics affiliated to it and spread communist propaganda to ensure that the people embraced these regimes. The Soviet administration used discourses that glorified the ideology of communism through the mass media it dominated, and in this way, it aimed for the peoples of the Soviet Union to embrace communism and implement the decisions taken by the regime without question. The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was also one of the Soviet socialist republics of the Soviet Union where communist propaganda was implemented. The Soviet Union made effective use of various mass media for propaganda in the ASSR. One type of mass media used was propaganda posters. Propaganda posters in this study directly reflect the features of Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory. For this*

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*reason, the examination of the posters containing the communist propaganda is important in terms of revealing the Soviet Union's propaganda in the ASSR. Thus, this study aims to explain which messages the Soviet Union used in the communist propaganda in the ASSR through the visual and written indicators on the posters. For this purpose, the posters that include communist propaganda in the ASSR are analyzed using the semiotics method in the light of the semiotic concepts of the linguist Karl Bühler. How Soviet propaganda presented communist ideology in the ASSR and how it established a link between the Armenian people and communism are examined in the posters. In the light of the findings obtained in the study, it is revealed that the messages that communism played a leading role in the construction of contemporary and prosperous Armenia, and at the same time, that the Armenian people were loyal to the communist ideology are given in the posters. In this way, this study concludes that Soviet propaganda tried to legitimize the decisions taken by the communist regime in the ASSR in the Armenian public opinion.*

**Keywords:** *Propaganda, Communism, Armenia, Soviet Union, Ideology*

**Öz:** *Sovyetler Birliği, kendisine bağlı sosyalist cumhuriyetlerde komünist rejimleri iktidara getirmiş ve iktidara getirdiği bu rejimlerin halk tarafından benimsenmesini sağlamak için komünizm propagandasına yönelmiştir. Sovyet yönetimi, egemen olduğu kitle iletişim araçları üzerinden komünist ideolojisini yücelten söylemlere yer vermiş, bu şekilde Sovyetler Birliği halklarının komünizmin sahiplenmesini ve rejimin aldığı kararların Sovyetler Birliği halkı tarafından sorgulanmadan uygulanmasını amaçlamıştır. Ermenistan Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti (ESSC) de, Sovyetler Birliği'nin komünizm propagandasının uygulandığı Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetleri'nden biri olmuştur. Sovyetler Birliği, ESSC'de propaganda yaparken çeşitli kitle iletişim araçlarından etkin bir şekilde yararlanmıştır. Bu kitle iletişim araçlarından biri de propaganda posterleri olmuştur. İncelenen propaganda posterleri, Sovyet Totaliter Medya Kuramı özelliklerini de doğrudan yansıtmaktadır. Bu nedenle ESSC'deki komünizm propagandasını içeren posterlerin incelenmesi, Sovyetler Birliği'nin ESSC'deki komünizm propagandasının ortaya koyulması bakımından önem taşımaktadır. Böylece çalışmada propaganda posterlerinde yer alan görsel ve yazılı göstergeler üzerinden Sovyetler Birliği'nin ESSC'de komünizm propagandasında hangi mesajlara yer verdiğinin açıklanması amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla ESSC'deki komünizm propagandasına yer veren posterler, dilbilimci Karl Bühler'in göstergebilim kavramları ışığında göstergebilim yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Posterlerde Sovyet propagandasının ESSC'deki komünizm ideolojini ne şekilde sunduğu ve Ermeni halkı ve komünizm arasında nasıl bir bağ kurduğu incelenmiştir. Çalışmada elde edilen bulgular ışığında posterler üzerinden komünizmin,*

*çağdaş ve refah içinde bir Ermenistan 'ın inşasında öncü rol oynadığı ve aynı zamanda Ermeni halkının komünizme bağlı olduğu mesajlarının verildiği ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Bu şekilde çalışmada Sovyet propagandasının, ESSC'de komünist rejiminin aldığı kararları Ermeni kamuoyunda meşrulaştırmaya çalıştığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Propaganda, Komünizm, Ermenistan, Sovyetler Birliği, İdeoloji*

## Introduction

After the 1917 October Revolution, the communist administration in Russia assumed power and efforts were made to make the Russian people adopt the communist ideology throughout the country. The Russian Civil War between the Red Army and the White Army also became a struggle for the survival of communism in Russia. After the Russian Civil War ended with the victory of the Red Army, communism came to the fore as the dominant ideology in Russia. When the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – USSR) was founded on 30 December 1922, an attempt was made to make the communist ideology prevail not only in Russia but also in other states forming the union. In this way, it was aimed to bring the Soviet Union together within the framework of a single ideology. In the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), a part of the Soviet Union, those in power tried to legitimize the communist regime in the Armenian public opinion and to implement the political decisions taken in the country. At this stage, propaganda promoting communist ideology was carried in the ASSR to convince the Armenian people to embrace communism.

The purpose of the propaganda system and mass media used by the Soviet Union in Armenia was to contribute to the continuity and success of the communist system. As a softened version of the authoritarian systems<sup>1</sup> applied in the 20th century, after the 1917 October Revolution, this situation was organized in line with the principles of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin. The hegemonic structuring that emerged in the mass media is called the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory<sup>2</sup>.

According to the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory, mass media (newspapers, radio broadcasts, posters, books, etc.) acts as an organ of the state and every element transmitted to the public is used as a propaganda tool of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The aim of the theory<sup>3</sup> is to reconcile the masses outside the CPSU's views by including discourses that glorify the communist ideology, and to reach a Marxist classless society ideology by dissolving them in the general mass. Therefore, this study is also important in terms of showing how the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory works.

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1 Mehmet Sezai Türk, "Katılımcı Demokratik Medya Kuramı Çerçevesinde Yeni Medyayı Anlamak." *ICT Media Dergisi*, Issue 75 (2016): 58.

2 Fredrick S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

3 Metin Işık, "İletişim Sistemleri-Siyasal Sistem İlişkileri Bağlamında İletişim Alanının Düzenlenmesi ve Medya-Devlet İlişkilerinin Değerlendirilmesi." *Selçuk İletişim 2*, Issue 2 (2002): 27.

This study aims to shed light on the propaganda of the communist ideology in the Soviet Union by revealing the communist propaganda carried out in the ASSR. For this purpose, the propaganda posters used for communist propaganda in the ASSR are examined using the semiotics method. The study tries to explain how communism was presented to the Armenian people through the visual and written indicators on the posters. In the light of the findings obtained in the study, the study aims to answer the following questions:

- What messages were given to the Armenian people in the communist propaganda carried out in the ASSR?
- What kind of a connection was established between the communist ideology and the Armenian people in the propaganda carried out in the ASSR?

The findings obtained in the study are important in terms of shedding light on the history of the ASSR and the communist propaganda of the Soviet Union. In this respect, it is aimed that the present study will be a resource for researchers who study Armenian politics, history, and propaganda in general.

### 1. An Overview of Communist Rule in Armenia

At the beginning of the 20th century, Armenia was located on the borders of the Russian Empire. After the October Revolution in 1917, the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR) was formed in 1918 with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. In the same year, the Democratic Republic of Armenia (DRA) was established independently of the TDFR. The republic came to an end with the occupation of Yerevan by the Red Army in 1920. Then, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was established on 2 December 1920. With the establishment of the Soviet Union on 30 December 1922, the ASSR became one of the Soviet socialist countries that formed the union.

Communism came to the fore as the dominant ideology in the ASSR and the Armenian Communist Party was influential in the political arena in the country. Opposition to the Communist regime was tried to be prevented with the ASSR under the influence of communist ideology. At this stage, the Soviet Union considered the Armenian nationalists as a threat to communism. The Soviet Union targeted Armenian nationalists as “anti-Communists” and aimed to liquidate the nationalists within the administration. In addition, a strict police control was established to gain influence throughout society and

increase the power of the central authority<sup>4</sup>. In this process, communist ideology strengthened its effectiveness in ASSR.

During the Second World War, German armies attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941<sup>5</sup>. During the war, the ASSR provided significant support to the Red Army, which fought against the German army. While Nazi Germany left the Second World War with defeat, the Soviet Union became one of the two superpowers of the world together with the United States. During the Cold War, the ASSR constituted a part of the Eastern Bloc, as it was a republic that formed the Soviet Union.

Armenia declared its independence in 1991 from the Soviet Union, which entered the process of disintegration towards the end of the 1980s. Thus, the ASSR was dismantled, and the Republic of Armenia was established in its place.

## 2. Communism Propaganda of the Soviet Union During the Cold War

During the Second World War, part of the territory of the Soviet Union was occupied by Nazi Germany. As a result of the war, the Soviet Union succeeded in defeating the German army and influencing Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. Communist regimes were established in the Eastern Bloc countries under the influence of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Soviet Union entered an intense competition in the fields of politics, military, economy, and technology against the Western Bloc countries, where the US was at the forefront during the Cold War that started after the Second World War. In this process, the Soviet administration tried to maintain its influence in the Eastern Bloc countries as well as remain in competition with the Western Bloc countries. In this process, the Soviet Union carried out communism propaganda to ensure the continuation of communist regimes in both the Soviet socialist republics and the Eastern Bloc countries. While communism was glorified by the propaganda of the Soviet Union<sup>6</sup>, capitalism was harshly criticized. Soviet propaganda specifically targeted the US, and the US government was presented to the masses as an important threat to in opposition to communism.

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4 Sadık Çalışkan and Mehmet Barış Yılmaz, "The cult of leadership construction of Vladimir Lenin through propaganda posters in media in Armenia Soviet Socialist Republic," *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Issue 65 (2020): 81.

5 Elif Hatun Kılıçbeyli, "Red Army Propaganda in The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic: An Investigation on Posters," *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 43 (2021): 117.

6 Süleyman Şahan, "The Criticism of the Radio Broadcasting of the West Block on Caricatures of the Soviet Union," *TRT Akademi* 5, Issue 9 (2020): 275.

The essential aspect in the communist lifestyle of the Soviet Union was the consciousness of “us”. Unlike the capitalist lifestyle, it was necessary to bring socialism and communism to the fore, to spread communist propaganda and to have it take root ideologically. An understanding of “they” was created in the communist lifestyle, where anti-Westernism was justified by pointing to the perils of capitalism and imperialism and anti-Nazism was explained in the context of fascism<sup>7</sup>. In addition, the dominance of the state over the media in the Soviet Union also led to the effective presentation of communist propaganda to the masses. In this whole process, various mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, cinema, and posters played an important role in the communist lifestyle in the Soviet Union.

During the Second World War, the Soviet Union had heavily turned to communist propaganda, and the struggle of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany came to the fore as the struggle for the survival of communism against Nazism. The US intervention in Korea and Vietnam during the Cold War was also harshly criticized, and Soviet propaganda sided with the communist regimes there during this process. Apart from this, propaganda promoting communism was made within the framework of the five-year plans of the Soviet Union<sup>8</sup>. The Soviet Union tried to mobilize the people of the Soviet Union within the framework of communism during these five-year plans.

During the Cold War, the Eastern Bloc countries and the Soviet socialist republics were continuously subjected to anti-communist propaganda by the US. The aim was to end the domination of the Soviet Union in the Eastern Bloc countries. For this purpose, Radio Free Europe (RFE) was established with the support of the US government to broadcast alternative views to the Eastern Bloc in opposition to the radio broadcasts of the Soviet Union. As such, RFE’s main purpose to make anti-communist radio broadcasts to the Eastern Bloc countries and to ignite anti-Soviet sentiment among the Eastern Bloc peoples. After its establishment, RFE’s radio broadcasts emerged as an important threat to the Soviet Union<sup>9</sup>. Despite its efforts, the Soviet Union failed to prevent the broadcasts of the RFE, leading to the continuation of anti-communist propaganda in the Eastern Bloc countries. Looking deeper into the Cold War rhetoric, it was apparent that the US was not in truth trying to “save” the Eastern Bloc countries, but rather trying to weaken its Soviet adversary.

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7 Koray Sevindi, *Sovyet Propaganda Animasyonları* (İstanbul: Urzeni Yayınevi, 2021), 285.

8 Tuğba Baytimur, Caner Çakı, and Ferit Arda Arıca, “The Propaganda in Armenia of The Five-Year Development Plans Implemented in The Soviet Union,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 42 (2020): 97.

9 Hakan Aşkan and Aytuğ Mermer Üzümlü, “The Examination on the Short Film “The Towers of Truth” Regarding Free European Radio in the Cold War,” *Anadolu Akademi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 2, Issue 1 (2020): 72.

### 3. The Academic Studies in the Field of Ideology and Propaganda

Propaganda is the deliberate or official dissemination of often false and exaggerated information, especially by ideological groups, to influence public opinion<sup>10</sup>. Propaganda aims to ensure the interests of certain individuals, institutions, or communities unilaterally by trying to reach emotional processes and the subconscious rather than reasoning<sup>11</sup>. Various academic studies have been conducted on propaganda and ideology. These studies include:

- Bolsover: Soviet ideology and propaganda<sup>12</sup>;
- Cassinelli: Ideology, totalitarianism, and propaganda<sup>13</sup>;
- Eckhardt: Political ideologies and war propaganda<sup>14</sup>;
- Splichal ve Ferligoj: Ideology in international propaganda<sup>15</sup>;
- Peirce: Propaganda and ideology in late Roman art<sup>16</sup>;
- MacLennan: Propaganda, reality, and ideology<sup>17</sup>;
- Shagan: Ideology, propaganda, and English responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641<sup>18</sup>;
- Lee and Pang: Public spaces, propaganda, and ideology<sup>19</sup>;
- Payne: Ideology, terrorism, and propaganda<sup>20</sup>;

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- Eatwell: Propaganda, ideology, violence and the rise of fascism<sup>21</sup>;
- May González: Ideology and propaganda in the press<sup>22</sup>;
- Kershaw: The rise of the Nazi party, ideology, and propaganda<sup>23</sup>;
- Min: Ideology, propaganda, and democracy<sup>24</sup>;
- Gheorghîță: Ideology, music, and propaganda<sup>25</sup>;
- Hanh et al.: Ho Chi Minh's ideas on public propaganda<sup>26</sup>.

There are many studies conducted on Soviet propaganda and ideology as well. These include:

- Luehrmann: Soviet propaganda and ideology<sup>27</sup>;
- Mini: Propaganda and ideology in Soviet cinema<sup>28</sup>;
- Gavrilova and Bogolyubov: The theoretical and practical interaction between legal ideology and legal propaganda in Soviet society<sup>29</sup>;
- Gülada: Propaganda posters in the Soviet Union<sup>30</sup>.

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21 Roger Eatwell, "Ideology, propaganda, violence and the rise of fascism," *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 165-185.

22 Ángel Omar May González, "Propaganda and ideology in the press: The case of the Rojo Amanecer in Campeche, 1921-1924," *Signos históricos* 14, Issue 27 (2012): 64-103.

23 Ian Kershaw, "Ideology, propaganda, and the rise of the Nazi party," in *The Nazi Machtergreifung (RLE Nazi Germany & Holocaust)*, ed. Peter D. Stachura (Routledge, 2014), 176-195.

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27 Sonja Luehrmann, "The modernity of manual reproduction: Soviet propaganda and the creative life of ideology," *Cultural Anthropology* 26, Issue 3 (2011): 363-388.

28 Panayiota Mini, "Striving for the maximum appeal: ideology and propaganda in the Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s," in *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Politics*, eds. Yannis Tzioumakis and Claire Molloy (London: Routledge, 2016): 183-196.

29 Anzhelika V. Gavrilova and Egor A. Bogolyubov, "Theoretical and practical interaction between legal ideology and legal propaganda in the Soviet society," *RUDN Journal of Law* 22, Issue 3 (2018): 346-369.

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There are still many aspects left to be discovered about propaganda in the Soviet Union in general and Soviet Armenia in specific, and this study aims to play its part by making a contribution to the literature by focusing on communist propaganda.

#### 4. Method

In the study, the propaganda posters containing communist propaganda in the ASSR were accessed from the digital archive of the University of California library<sup>31</sup>. The images in the archive are presented within the scope of the “International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)”, which emerged as a result of the agreement between the UCLA Library and the National Library of Armenia (NLA) to protect archival materials of importance for Armenian history and culture. The project’s website states that “IDEP collections represent significant content that was used during political movements, but that is ephemeral in nature and likely to be lost without proactive curation”<sup>32</sup>. In the literature, it can be seen that IDEP project has played an important role by providing relevant images for the study of subjects such as election propaganda in communist Armenia<sup>33</sup>.

A total of 616 contents related to the ASSR were accessed in the digital archive, and 6 propaganda posters that directly included communist propaganda were determined as the sample of the study by using the purposeful sampling method within the reached content. Purposeful sampling<sup>34</sup> enabled in-depth research by selecting information-rich images depending on the purpose of the study.

In the study, propaganda posters were examined using semiotics as one of the qualitative research methods. The Organon Model of the German linguist Karl Bühler was used to reveal the propaganda messages given in the posters and also to explain the thoughts, attitudes or behaviors that were intended to be formed in the Armenian people through the propaganda messages given. Propaganda posters were analyzed through the expression function, representation function, and conative (or appeal) function in Bühler’s model.

31 “The Soviet Armenia Propaganda Posters,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP) – UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/collection=Soviet+Armenian+Posters>.

32 “About,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP) – UCLA Library*, accessed June 3, 2022, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/about>.

33 Metin Işık, Mustafa Karaca and Caner Çakı, “The election propaganda in Armenia under the rule of the communist party of Armenia,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 44 (2021): 53-82.

34 Şener Büyüköztürk, Ebru Kılıç Çakmak, Özcan Erkan Akgün, Şirin Karadeniz and Funda Demirel, *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2018), 92.

The expression function is the use of signs to convey a certain meaning. The representation function is the message given over the indicators. The appeal function is the state of mind intended to be created through the message given over the indicators<sup>35</sup>. Each of these concepts, which are included as three functions of language in the Organon Model, has its own semantic function and defines a specific area of linguistic phenomena<sup>36</sup>.

### 5. Findings and Analysis

In this part of the study, six posters about the communist propaganda in ASSR will be semiotically analyzed.

#### 5.1. The First Poster – “The reconstruction of Yerevan at the beginning of the century”

The first poster was prepared by Vasily Avetiki Vardanyan in 1938. The poster reads “Yerevan, during the 17 years of Soviet authority (*Խորհրդային իշխանության 17 տարիների ընթացքում Յերևանը*)”. When examined in terms of its expression function, the propaganda poster includes a statue, a car, a tram, and a construction site with a red flag flying in a square. Grapes adorn edges of the poster. The poster depicts a group of people looking at the square from a balcony.

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35 Ebru Gülbuğ Erol, “The Publishing in Nazi Germany, The Construction of Anti-Semitist Discourses Spread by the Nazism Ideology and the Use of Books for the Purpose of Propaganda,” *Türk Kütüphaneciliği* 34, Issue 4 (2020): 702.

36 Karl Bühler, *Theory of Language: The representational function of language*, translated by Donald Fraser Goodwin in collaboration with Achim Eschbach (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011), 39.



Poster 1. The First Poster<sup>37</sup>

When analyzed in terms of the representation function, the red flag in the propaganda poster is used as the symbol of Armenia’s communist ideology and the communist regime. When the visual indicators on the propaganda poster are handled through the written indicator on the poster, the message is given that Armenia has become a modern country under communism. In the poster, the people on the balcony are used as the visual metaphor of the Armenian people. Through the visual indicators, the perception is formed that the Armenian people live in a modern and prosperous country.

When examined in terms of conative function, the poster gives the message that Armenia is a modern and prosperous country with the dominance of communist ideology in Armenia, therefore forming the perception that the Armenian people should support the communist regime in Armenia for the continuation of the current order. In this way, the poster aims to glorify the communist regime in the Armenian public opinion and to strengthen the support of the Armenian people for the regime.

37 “Yerevan, during the 17 years of Soviet authority,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)* – *UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:98>

<b>Expression Function</b>	A statue, a car, a tram, and a construction site with a red flag flying in a square
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that communist ideology forms a modern and prosperous Armenia
<b>Conative Function</b>	The Armenian people should support the communist regime for a modern and prosperous Armenia

**Table 1.** The First Poster

### 5.2. The Second Poster – “The Soviet youth is guided by party slogans”

The second poster was prepared by Khachatur Hovhannesi Gyulamiryan in 1958. The poster reads “We are ruled by the Party (*Պարտիան է մեզ առաջնորդում*)”. The poster has the title “The Soviet youth is guided by party slogans (*Սովետական երիտասարդությունը առաջնորդվում է պարտիայի լոզունգներով*)”. When analyzed in terms of expression, the propaganda poster depicts a young man holding a red flag.



**Poster 2.** The Second Poster<sup>38</sup>

38 “We are led by the party,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP) – UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:137>

When examined in terms of its representational function, the young man in the propaganda poster is used as the visual metaphor of the Armenian people. The red flag on the poster symbolizes the ideology of communism and the communist regime in the ASSR. With the man in the poster holding the red flag, the message is given that the Armenian people have adopted the ideology of communism and supported the communist regime.

When analyzed in terms of conative function, it is revealed that the poster utilizes the “bandwagon effect propaganda”. This type of propaganda gives the message that people in general are connected to a certain thought or ideology. This message attempts to form the perception that the propagandized idea or ideology is a dominant view in society. Through this perception, this type of propaganda aims for the people to adopt a certain thought or ideology and to marginalize and eliminate criticisms that may arise against such thought or ideology. The poster tries to legitimize communist ideology in the ASSR by forming the perception that a significant part of the Armenian people have adopted communism.

<b>Expression Function</b>	A young man holding a red flag
<b>Representation Function</b>	The opinion that the Armenian people support the communist regime in the ASSR
<b>Conative Function</b>	Forming the image of strong popular support for the communist regime in Armenia

**Table 2.** The Second Poster

### 5.3. The Third Poster – “At the Soviet capitol, achievements of the sixth plan are summarized”

The third poster was prepared by Hrachyia Senekerim Vardanyan in 1958. The poster reads “For the sake of the socialist fatherland’s power (*Հանուն սոցիալիստական հայրենիքի հզորության*)”. When examined in terms of its expression function, a satellite and a space shuttle, both with red stars, are depicted on the propaganda poster. The Kremlin representation is featured in the background of the poster.



Poster 3. The Third Poster<sup>39</sup>

When analyzed in terms of the representation function, the image of the Kremlin is used as a visual metaphor of the Soviet Union administration, and the satellite and space shuttle are used as a metonym for the groundbreaking and ambitious space program of the Soviet Union.

When examined in terms of conative function, it is revealed that the Soviet Union's space race with the United States is the subject of the propaganda poster. At the time the poster was published, the Soviet Union had succeeded in sending spacecrafts into space and achieved a significant advantage over the US in the space race. The Soviet Union used this success in the space race as a propaganda tool to portray communism itself as a source of success. The poster examined in the study aims to form a positive perception towards the communist regime in the ASSR through the success of the Soviet Union in the space race. At this stage, the poster tries to form a connection between communism and technological development in the Armenian public opinion by giving the message that the Soviet Union is more successful in terms of technology than the Western Bloc countries.

39 "For the sake of the socialist fatherland's power;" *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)* – *UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:173>

<b>Expression Function</b>	A spacecraft and a satellite with a red star
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that the ASSR was technologically empowered under the ideology of communism
<b>Conative Function</b>	For the technological development in the ASSR to continue, the Armenian people should support the communist regime

**Table 3.** The Third Poster

#### 5.4. The Fourth Poster – “The young contribute to new developments in communism”

The fourth propaganda poster was prepared by M. Mandakuni in 1959. The poster reads “Glory to the builders of communism (*Փառք կոմունիզմի կառուցողներին*)”. The poster has the title “The young contribute to new developments in communism (*Երիտասարդությունը գնում է կոմունիզմի նոր զարգացումներին*)”. When analyzed in terms of the expression function, the propaganda poster features a young woman holding a ribbon in the colors of the Armenian flag with one hand and pointing to the electricity pole and production facility behind her with the other.



**Poster 4.** The Fourth Poster<sup>40</sup>

40 “Glory to the builders of communism,” International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP) – UCLA Library, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:101>

When it is examined in terms of its representational function, it is revealed that the young woman on the poster with ribbons in the colors of the Armenian flag in her hand is used as the visual metaphor of the Armenian people. The electricity pole and the production facility, which the woman in the poster points with one hand, are used as metonyms of the production facilities in ASSR.

When analyzed in terms of conative function, the poster tries to form the perception that communism was the basis of the development in the ASSR. As a matter of fact, communist ideology is directly referred to through the written indicator on the poster. In the poster, by establishing a link between the economic development in the ASSR and communism, an attempt is made for the Armenian people to develop a positive perception about communism due to the economic development in Armenia.

<b>Expression Function</b>	A young woman holding a ribbon with the colors of the Armenian flag
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that the ASSR developed economically under the ideology of communism
<b>Conative Function</b>	For the ASSR to continue its economic development, the Armenian people should support the Communist regime

Table 4. The Fourth Poster

### 5.5. The Fifth Poster – “Vladimir Ilyich Lenin’s portrait”

The fifth poster was prepared by Vladimir Arkadi Beglaryan in 1965. The poster reads “All nations will make their way towards socialism... (*все нации придут к социализму...*)”. When examined in terms of expression, only Lenin’s confident face is included in the poster.





Poster 5. The Fifth Poster<sup>41</sup>

When analyzed in terms of the representation function, Lenin is featured as a symbol of communist ideology in the poster. Through the written indicator on the poster, the message is given that the communism is effective not only in the Soviet Union, but also in other countries.

When examined in terms of conative function, the poster refers to the propaganda involving Lenin's cult of personality. Soviet propaganda tried to build the cult of Lenin by presenting him as a loved and respected leader in Soviet society. On the other hand, the Soviet propaganda identified Lenin with the ideology of communism and aimed to make the people of the Soviet Union adopt the various policies of the communist regime through the love and devotion to Lenin. By emphasizing Lenin as a glorious leader who adopted communism and influenced the whole world, an attempt is made to form loyalty to the communism in the Armenian public opinion through Lenin's cult of personality.

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41 "All nations will make their way towards socialism..." *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)* – *UCLA Library*, accessed October 12, 2021.  
<https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:200>

<b>Expression Function</b>	Lenin’s face
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that the ideology of communism continues to spread throughout the world
<b>Conative Function</b>	The continuation of the Armenian people’s commitment to communism based on the idea that the ideology of communism is adopted in various countries of the world

Table 5. The Fifth Propaganda Poster

**5.6. The Sixth Poster – “A portrait of Lenin and the 1920 -1970 period showing an increase in electrical output”**

The sixth and last poster was prepared by Sergei Aveti Arutchyan in 1970. The poster reads: “Lenin: ‘To the Communists of Armenia... Begin the large-scale work of electrification.’ (Հայաստանի կոմունիստներին... Սկսել էլեկտրոֆիկացման խոշոր աշխատանքներ Լենին)”. When analyzed in terms of expression, the image of a proud and assuring Lenin is depicted on the left of the propaganda poster, and a large lamppost on a hill on the right.



Poster 6. The Sixth Poster<sup>42</sup>

42 “Lenin: To the Communists of Armenia... Begin the large-scale work of electrification,” *International Digital Ephemera Project (IDEP)* – UCLA Library, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/search#!/document/armeniaposters:190>

When examined in terms of its representational function, Lenin symbolizes the ideology of communism in the propaganda poster. The lamppost in the poster represents electricity generation in ASSR. The increase in electricity generation in ASSR is emphasized through the written indicator on the poster.

When analyzed in terms of conative function, it is revealed that the poster refers to the cult of personality of Lenin, just like the fifth poster examined within the scope of the study. By referring to the “communists of Armenia” in the poster, a direct call is made to people who adopted the ideology of communism in Armenia. At this stage, the link between Lenin and the communism is brought to the fore, through Lenin’s emphasis on Armenians who adopted the ideology of communism. Thus, it can be stated that a positive perception towards communism was tried to be formed in the Armenian public opinion based on the value that Lenin attributed to the ideology of communism.

<b>Expression Function</b>	The image of Lenin
<b>Representation Function</b>	The idea that electricity production continues in the ASSR with the communist regime
<b>Conative Function</b>	For the energy production in the ASSR to continue, the Armenian people should support the communist regime

**Table 6.** The Sixth Poster

## Conclusion

In the propaganda posters examined in the study, it is revealed that Marxist propaganda messages were given in the context of politics, economy, and technology in accordance with the basic functioning of the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory to make the Armenian people in the ASSR adopt communist ideology. In this process, the perception that communism played an important role in the economic development of the ASSR was formed, and the message was given that the Armenian people should support the communist regime for the economic development in Armenia to continue. On the other hand, technological developments in the Soviet Union were also attributed to communism, and another perception was tried to be formed that the Soviet Union became a modern and prosperous country under the communist regime. In addition, it can be said that an attempt was made for the Armenians in ASSR to adopt the communist ideology by making use of Lenin’s cult of personality in the propaganda posters. It can be stated that a sympathy for the regime was

tried to be formed in the Armenian public opinion through the cult of Lenin built in the ASSR in this process.

It is revealed that the posters tried to form the idea that the Armenian people adopted the communist ideology and supported the communist regime by making use of the bandwagon effect propaganda. In this way, it can be argued that Soviet propaganda tried to legitimize the communism in the Soviet Union and to eliminate any opposition to the regime by marginalizing alternative views. In addition, posters can be interpreted as a pressure tool designed to convince the people of the correctness of communist ideology. However, if attempts at convincing did not work, dissenting individuals would surely be faced with the full force of the repressive Soviet state apparatus. In other words, the communist regime had a highly repressive state apparatus that did not tolerate dissent or alternative views to the state ideology. This situation is also important in terms of showing the functioning of the Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory.

It can be stated that it was important for the Soviet propaganda to try to make the Armenian people adopt the communist ideology, especially by emphasizing the technological developments in the Soviet Union. Emphasizing the successes achieved in the competition between the Western and the Eastern Blocs in various fields through the domination of ideological discourses during the Cold War can be considered as effective propaganda materials. It can be said that the Armenian people could develop a positive perception towards communist ideology by buying into the image that the Soviet Union was superior to the Western Bloc in economic and technological spheres through utilization of communism.

As a result, it can be stated that the tendency of the Soviet Union to propagate the communist ideology in the ASSR could have played an important role in preventing opposition that could have risen against the regime in the Armenian society in the future. As a matter of fact, the intervention of the Soviet Union in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 led to the questioning of loyalty to the ideology of communism in the Eastern Bloc countries and Soviet socialist countries in general. In this respect, it can be argued that communist propaganda played a certain role in preventing possible anti-communist uprisings in these countries.

This study tried to shed light on the communist propaganda of the Soviet Union in the Soviet socialist republics through the example of ASSR. It can be argued that future studies will provide a more comprehensive presentation of communist propaganda in the Soviet Union by examining the various aspects of such propaganda in different Soviet socialist republics in the context of Soviet Totalitarian Media Theory.

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