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FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

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

As Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had to retract from or redefine some of his reformist proposals in face of an extremist and disruptive opposition inside the country, numerically limited but encouraged and abetted by the radical-militant groups in the Diaspora, as well as by the foreign parties siding with the previous administrations and the Church. His vacillating rhetoric on the need for change of the Constitution is one such case in point. The Constitutional Court, in a very expansive decision, confirming that the Declaration of Independence, an inseparable part of the Constitution, is not binding with regard to issues pertaining to Azerbaijan, yet valid for Türkiye. Harboring two such conflicting assessments has provided Pashinyan with the ground to change his discourse again. In the process of drafting the peace agreement, Armenia has adamantly insisted, with the backing of foreign, particularly Western countries and circles, on signing a partial agreement which did not take into consideration legitimate concerns or interests of Azerbaijan, thus not befitting the spirit of a lasting peace. The practice of running with the hare and hunting with the hound has

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continued as Armenia, while extending a hand to Azerbaijan for peace and reconciliation, on the other hand, with the connivance of Western partners, did not shy away from keeping the Karabagh issue alive in international agenda and waged a campaign of accusing Azerbaijan for preparing a military assault. The latest blow to bettering relations was the last minute refusal to be represented in the COP29 conference.

In foreign relations, Armenia's efforts to manage both Russia and the West, a policy of riding two horses or sitting on two chairs at the same time, has become all the more difficult to sustain. While openly siding with the West on security issues, deep rooted economic reliance on Russia has not changed. As a result of Western tolerance to Armenia in breaking the sanctions imposed on Russia, with collaboration of Iran, a significant leap, albeit temporary, in the GDP has been recorded. Armenia has not opted to stay away from the 3+3 Platform, a regional gathering that promotes the vision that regional issues can best be solved by the cooperation of the countries of the region, in spite of sharing a common understanding with the West that Russian influence in the region should be diminished. Nevertheless, Armenia has rejected the proposal to work out the peace agreement with Azerbaijan within that platform.

The process of normalization of relations between Türkiye and Armenia has kept its positive course. The increase in high level contacts and bilateral communications have demonstrated the mutually softening atmosphere. The developments in Iran and Georgia have made it imperative for Armenia to have the Turkish border open. A railway connection has also acquired priority in addition to the land crossing. Applying all means to press Türkiye to open the border in a dire situation, Armenia nevertheless has continued to totally ignore the need to take counter steps on issues of sensitivity and concern for Türkiye, well known by Armenia, under the guise of "no preconditions". Furthermore, Armenia's initiatives to side with countries entrenched in their anti-Türkiye positions or those with conjectural differences have also continued unabated.

Keywords: Pashinian, Mirzoyan, Rubinian, Diaspora, Galstanian, Putin, Lavrov, Zaharova, Biden, Blinken, Erdoğan, Fidan

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

Nikol Paşinyan yönetimi iç politikada; Diasporanın radikal-militan kanadının, eski yönetimden yana dış güçlerin ve Kilisenin desteğine sahip aşırı ve yıkıcı bir muhalefetin karşısında geri adımlar atmak, bazı ifadelerini tevil etmek

durumunda kalmıştır. Paşinyan'ın anayasa değişikliği konusundaki yaklaşımı bu bakımdan önemli bir gösterge olmuştur. Söylem değişikliğine gerekçe olan, Anayasa Mahkemesinin ayrıntılı kararında, Anayasa'nın ayrılmaz bir parçası olan Bağımsızlık Bildirgesi'nin bir yandan Azerbaycan bakımından bağlayıcı olmadığı ileri sürülürken, diğer taraftan Türkiye bakımından geçerli olduğu çelişkisine yer verilmiştir. Azerbaycan ile barış antlaşması sürecinde, Ermenistan, Azerbaycan'ın meşru endişelerini gidermeden, Azerbaycan'ın çıkarlarına ve kalıcı bir barışın ruhuna uymayan, sınırlı bir anlaşma imzalanması direktmesini özellikle Batılı ülkeler ve çevrelerden sağlamayı başardığı dış desteklerle sürdürmüştür. Bir yandan Azerbaycan'a barış ve uzlaşma elinin uzatılması diğer yandan, özellikle Batılı yandaşlar aracılığıyla, Karabağ konusunun gündemde tutulması, böylece Azerbaycan'ın saldırgan emellerle suçlanması, "tavşana kaç, taziya tut" politikasının devam ettiğini göstermiştir. İlişkilerin düzelmesine vurulan son darbe Baku'da yapılan COP29 uluslararası konferansına son anda verilen katılmama kararı olmuştur.

Dış ilişkilerde hem Rusya'yı, hem Batı'yı idare etme çabası, bu suretle aynı anda iki ata binme veya iki ayrı sandalyede oturma politikası zaman içinde giderek güçleşerek devam etmiştir. Ermenistan güvenlik alanında açık biçimde Batı'ya yanaşılırken, Rusya ile köklü ekonomik bağlarda değişiklik olmamıştır. Rusya'ya uygulanan yaptırımların, Ermenistan tarafından, İran ile iş birliği içinde, ihlaline göz yumulması sonucu geçici de olsa gayrisafi milli gelirden önemli bir sıçrama kaydedilmiştir. Bölgede Rusya'nın etkisini azaltma konusunda Batı'yla anlayış birliği içinde olmakla beraber, bölgenin sorunlarının ancak bölge ülkelerinin iş birliği ile çözülebileceğini öngören 3+3 Platformu'nun dışında da kalınmamıştır. Ermenistan, Azerbaycan ile anlaşma sürecinin bu platformda sonuçlandırılması önerisini ise reddetmiştir.

Türkiye ile ilişkilerde başlayan normalleşme süreci olumlu seyrini sürdürmüş, dönem içinde üst düzey temaslarda ve karşılıklı iletişimdeki artış karşılıklı yumuşamanın göstergesi olmuştur. Gürcistan'daki ve İran'daki gelişmeler Ermenistan bakımından Türkiye sınırının açılmasını acil zorunluluk haline getirmiş, kara ulaşımının yanı sıra demir yolu bağlantısı da öncelik kazanmıştır. Batı'nın da desteğiyle Türkiye üzerinde baskı oluşturma çabalarından geri durmayan Ermenistan, Türkiye'nin duyarlılığını bildiği konularda ise, ön koşul kavramına sığınarak, yapıcı bir adım atmaktan bu dönem içinde kaçınmıştır. Aynı şekilde, Türkiye karşıtlığı bilinen veya Türkiye ile ilişkileri gerginleşen ülkelere yanaşma ve karşı denge kurma girişimleri de devamlılık göstermiştir. İlâveten, Ermenistan'ın Türkiye'ye karşı kemikleşmiş tutumu olan veya Türkiye ile konjektürel anlaşmazlıkları olan ülkeler ile olan beraber hareket etme girişimleri aralıksız devam etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Paşinyan, Mirzoyan, Rubinyan, Diaspora, Galstanyan, Putin, Lavrov, Zaharova, Biden, Blinken, Erdoğan, Fidan

1. Domestic Developments in Armenia

Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, who assumed the leadership of the opposition against the Pashinyan government and who announced his candidacy for the prime minister's post on 26 May, organised a rally before the Republic Day on 28 May in order to draw attention to himself with provocative actions. He spent the night at the ceremony site with the intent of disrupting the anticipated ceremony. The administration monitored the situation and visited the memorial not in the morning, as was customary, but in the afternoon, when the demonstrators had dispersed. However, another unexpected event took place at the memorial site. Karekin II, the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, who arrived separately from the administration, was kept waiting at the entrance by the security forces within the framework of security measures.¹ "Stopping" the Catholicos from visiting the memorial site was heavily criticised by the opposition. This situation has been seen as a new indicator of the adversity between the Administration and the Church.

The militant and fanatical organizations of the Diaspora did not lose time in using this incident to express their opposition to the Pashinyan administration. For instance, the President of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), in a statement released on 3 June, described the lack of respect by state officials to the supreme representative of their national church as an act against all Armenians of faith and called on Armenians to reaffirm their loyalty to the Church. In a statement released on 4 June, the Dashnaktsutyun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation- ARF) Western US Central Committee argued that the Pashinyan administration has been pursuing a course that has been destroying the motherland and the nation for the last four years, and systematically insulting the fundamental values of the entire nation. The Federation also expressed its unconditional full support for Archbishop Galstanyan and the movement he has initiated.

At a regional convention of the Federation held on 2 July in California, USA, the Armenian government in office was accused and condemned for failing to protect the Armenian nation, surrendering Karabakh and hundreds of square kilometres of sovereign Armenian territory to the enemy, leaving the citizens of Armenia and the Armenians of Karabakh defenceless. Moreover, it declared its unwavering support for efforts to establish a national and pro-Armenian government in Armenia.²

1 "Police Attempt to Stop Catholicos Karekin II from Visiting Sardarabad Monument", *Asbarez*, May 28, 2024, <https://asbarez.com/police-attempt-to-stop-catholicos-karekin-ii-from-visiting-sardarabad-monument/>.

2 "ARF Western U.S.A. 58th Regional Convention Statement", *Asbarez*, July 2, 2024, <https://asbarez.com/arf-western-u-s-a-58th-regional-convention-statement/>.

Speaking at the street protests on 8 June, Archbishop Galstanyan announced that they would not leave the streets in the coming months, that the street movement would continue, and called on the OSCE Minsk Group to mediate in peace negotiations with Azerbaijan. On 9 June, he published a video in Russian, probably with a view to gaining the support of Russia and those in favour of Russia.

At a meeting with members of his party on 22 June, Prime Minister Pashinyan criticised the opposition movement, claiming that it fails to connect with the spirit and true sentiments of the Armenian populace and falls short in resonating with the essence of Armenia as perceived by its people. Galstanyan responded on 23 June that he was leading a national liberation struggle, and that the government was aiming to destabilise Armenia, while he was defending the interests and sovereignty of the Armenian people.³

There is no doubt that the escalating antagonism between the government and the Armenian Apostolic Church, represented by Catholicos Karekin II, and the government's refusal to attend religious services and the Church's refusal to attend official ceremonies have caused discomfort on both sides, while the opposition and the militant-radical Diaspora organizations were rubbing their hands. The first step to resolve this situation came from the Catholicos, who invited Pashinyan and the government officials to the reconsecration ceremony of the Etchmiadzin Cathedral on 29 September. As expected, Pashinyan accepted the invitation and attended the ceremony with government officials. The leading figures of the opposition, the two former Presidents R. Kocharyan and S. Sargsyan, despite their usual attentiveness to relations with the Church, did not attend the ceremony in protest against this development. In his speech, the Catholicos emphasised the importance of religion and the Church for national unity and the need to respect the Church, but did not target Pashinyan personally or by name.⁴ Thus, an important step was taken in improving the relations between religion and state.

The participation in the rally in Yerevan on 2 October, which was announced with great expectations by Archbishop Galstanyan, the leader of the opposition, was only around 1500. Recalling that the first rally in May was attended by 30-40 thousand people, this was undoubtedly a great disappointment. When the same situation occurred at Galstanyan's rally in front of the Presidential Palace in Yerevan on 25 October, he declared that his campaign for a new

3 Hoory Minoyan, "Armenian Prime Minister Criticizes Opposition as National Debates Intensify", *The Armenian Weekly*, June 25, 2024, <https://armenianweekly.com/2024/06/25/armenian-prime-ministercriticizes-opposition-as-national-debates-intensify/>.

4 Shoghik Galstian, "Garegin Warns Armenian Church's Detractors In Mass Attended By Pashinian", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, September 30, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/garegin-warns-armenian-churchs-detractors-in-mass-attended-by-pashinian/33140850.html>.

regime would continue, but did not give a date for future rallies. It is possible to speculate that the rapprochement between the government and the Church played a role in this development.

In his speech on 5 July at the celebration of the 29th anniversary of the adoption of their current constitution, which was adopted by referendum in 1995, Pashinyan stated that the current Constitution does not reflect their idea of “the rules of co-existence with their neighbors their community and other residents of their state” and therefore a new constitution, to be determined by the people, is needed.⁵ In fact, Pashinyan has recently announced that he has appointed a special commission to draft a new constitutional text. President Vahagn Khachaturyan also emphasised in his statement that the Constitution is not an unchangeable, one-time text; it is a flexible and comprehensive instrument.

The issue of constitutional amendments, in particular the contents of the Declaration of Independence, which is an integral part of the Constitution and was included in the preamble of the Constitution as a result of the referendum held in 1995, continued to be a controversial subject during the period and emerged as an important obstacle in relations with Azerbaijan and the signing of the peace treaty.

On 23 August, in his speech on the 34th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia, Pashinyan changed his narrative, arguing that not all the contents of the Declaration of Independence were included in the Constitution, that the two texts were not identical, and that the Constitution took into account only those parts of the Declaration of Independence adopted by the Supreme Council of Soviet Armenia on 23 August 1990, which are applicable in the present conditions.⁶ In his message, President Khachaturyan stated that the Declaration of Independence marked the beginning of a new cycle which started with the independence referendum held on 21 September 1991, but it was essentially a symbolic pillar.⁷

Pashinyan’s change of narrative to the effect that the Declaration of Independence, which is an integral part of the Constitution, is not binding was justified by a judgement of the Constitutional Court at the end of August which

5 Shoghik Galstian, “Pashinian Again Calls For New Armenian Constitution”, *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, July 5, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33023447.html>.

6 “Անկախության հռչակագրի և ՀՀ Սահմանադրության բովանդակությունները նույնական չեն Փաշինյան”, *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, August 23, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/ankakhoutyan-hrchakagri-ev-hh-sahmanadrutyanyan-bovandakutyunnerynynakan-chen-pashinyan/33089529.html>.

7 “The Congratulatory Message of President Vahagn Khachaturyan on The Adoption of The Declaration of Independence of Armenia”, *The President of the Republic of Armenia*, August 23, 2024, <https://www.president.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2024/08/23/President-VahagnKhachaturyan/>.

reached this conclusion.⁸ In summary, the Constitutional Court, pointing out that it had approved the agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan determining the principles of border delimitation, stated that this provision of the Declaration of Independence, which envisaged the unification of Karabakh with Armenia, was therefore invalid and that there was no provision to this effect in the articles of the Constitution.

This decision of the Constitutional Court, on the one hand, makes a politically motivated judgement on the demand for the amendment of the Constitution, which is an obstacle to the peace agreement, in order to satisfy Azerbaijan, by arguing that some statements of the Declaration of Independence do not have absolute binding force. On the other hand, it contains the contradiction of stating in a part of the same decision that similar expressions in the Declaration of Independence towards Türkiye, which led to the rejection of the Zurich Protocols in 2009, are valid in terms of the timely decision regarding Türkiye, thus creates doubts about its credibility. As a matter of fact, Armenia's opposition parties strongly opposed the decision, arguing that the Declaration of Independence is a legal document that is not open to debate and that the Constitutional Court has made a decision that exceeds its authority.

On the other hand, the Minister of Justice, who is also the head of the Constitutional Reforms Council of Armenia, made a statement on 30 August and announced that amendments to the Constitution will be put to referendum in 2027, in line with the date envisaged by Prime Minister Pashinyan.⁹ Due to internal party conflicts, the Minister of Justice resigned on 1 October.¹⁰ On 5 November 2024, Srбуhi Galyan was appointed as Minister of Justice.

Upon the request of Prime Minister Pashinyan, on 18 November, Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure as well as Minister of Internal Affairs have tendered their resignation. Several high level judiciary and government officials also followed suit.

Another issue discussed during the period was changing the history book title “History of Armenians” to “History of Armenia” in the school curriculum. The

8 “2023 Թվականի Դեկտեմբերի 25-ին Սանկտ Պետերբուրգում, Ստորագրված «Եվրասիական Տնտեսական Միության Եվ Դրա Անդամ Պետությունների Մի Կողմից, Եվ Իրանի Իսլամական Հանրապետության Մյուս Կողմից, Միջեզ Ազատ Առեվտրի Մասին Համաձայնագրում Ամրագրված Պարտավորությունների՝ Սահմանադրությանը Համապատասխանության Հարցը Որոշելու Վերաբերյալ Գործով», *Հայաստանի Հանրապետության Սահմանադրական Դատարան*, 27

Eylül 2024, https://www.concourt.am/decision/decisions/66f6b93924413_sdv-1750.pdf.

9 “Constitutional Reforms Referendum Planned for 2027”, *ArmenPress*, August 29, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1198566>.

10 Gayane Saribekian, “Armenian Justice Minister Resigns Under Ruling Party Pressure”, *Azattyun Radiokayan*, October 1, 2024, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33142106.html>.

opposition strongly opposed this change, claiming that the thousands of years of history of Armenians was being disregarded and the Diaspora, which constitutes the majority of the Armenian population, was being excluded from the scope. Pashinyan, on the other hand, insisted on his view and emphasised that “History of Armenians” does not include or clearly represent the idea of statehood, whereas the “History of Armenia” is a state-based approach that includes the periods of non-existence of the state within this scope.¹¹

Relations with Azerbaijan and the content of the peace treaty continued to be the main issues that the opposition focused on and criticised the administration in domestic politics. The opposition increased its criticism especially regarding the territorial integrity of Armenia, claiming that two hundred square kilometres of land is under Azerbaijani occupation. In his statement on 31 August, Pashinyan emphasised that the Republic of Armenia has an area of 29,743 square kilometres, and not a single millimetre of this territory would be up for discussion.¹²

On 2 September, the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan stated that the communication with the Diaspora continues consistently and that the Diaspora commissioners in some countries in Europe will be expanded to the US, Canada and Latin American countries at the Armenian Global Summit to be held within the month. On 20 September, Prime Minister Pashinyan received Diaspora representatives from foreign countries and exchanged views with them. Pashinyan stated that his aim is to make relationship between Armenia and the Diaspora more institutional and state-oriented and that no matter how important and precious the Diaspora is, it is not an institution of governance for the Republic of Armenia.¹³

Speaking on 18 September at the Armenian Global Summit, organised for the second time to regulate the Diaspora-Armenia relations, Pashinyan criticised the current understanding of “patriotism”, stating that it does not benefit the motherland and that it is an imperialist model that excludes the existence of an independent and sovereign Armenian state.¹⁴ As expected, this approach, which emphasises state presence and responsibility, has led to criticism among the militant radical elements of the Diaspora.

11 “Pashinyan’s Proposal Came to Life: “History of Armenia” Instead of “History of Armenians””, *Media Max*, July 11, 2024, <https://mediamax.am/en/news/education/55246/>.

12 “Not A Single Millimeter of Armenian Territory is Up for Debate” - Pashinyan”, *JamNews*, September 16, 2024, <https://jam-news.net/not-a-single-millimeter-of-the-territory-of-armenia-is-up-for-debate-pashinyan/>.

13 “Our Goal is to Make Armenia-Diaspora Relations More Institutional and State-Oriented - PM”, *ArmenPress*, September 20, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1200375>.

14 Hoory Minoyan, “Pashinyan’s Remarks At Global Summit Question Armenian Patriotism”, *The Armenian Weekly*, September 18, 2024, <https://armenianweekly.com/2024/09/18/pashinyans-remarks-at-global-summit-question-armenian-patriotism/#:~:text=YEREVAN%E2%80%94During%20the%20second%20Armenian%20Global,superficial%20concept%20lacking%20true%20sovereignty>.

On 19 September, on the anniversary of the establishment of Azerbaijan's sovereignty in Karabakh, Pashinyan did not make any statement and did not raise the issue at the cabinet meeting. On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement accusing Azerbaijan, alleging military aggression and ethnic cleansing.¹⁵ The opposition in Armenia and the militant and fanatical organizations of the Diaspora abroad have continued to state with increasing boldness and audacity that the problem is not over and that the demands for independence remain. On 18 October, the Ministry of Interior announced that the refugee status of Armenians from Karabakh had been extended until 31 December 2025, with the possibility of further extension.¹⁶

The government has announced that it plans to boost its defence expenditure by 20% to \$1.7 billion in 2025.¹⁷

An important problem facing Armenia is the decline in birth rates. The reasons for this are emigration, declining birth rates and increasing mortality rates. In the first seven months of 2024, it was reported that this situation continued. According to statistical data, the birth rate decreased by 7.6% and the death rate increased by 6.3%. Accordingly, the vitality index (the ratio of births to deaths) dropped to 122.9% down from 141.2% during the same period of last year.¹⁸ On 17 October, the Cabinet approved the 2024-2040 Strategy for Improving the Demographic Situation. Four objectives were set in the strategy: First, to create an environment of welfare for the family. Second, to prevent premature deaths and provide the elderly with the opportunity to live longer. Third, to manage migration and create an environment that attracts foreigners to Armenia and fourth, to use Diaspora's capital.¹⁹

At a press conference on 30 July, the Governor of the Central Bank reported that individual remittances through banks amounted to \$2.52 billion in the first six months of the year, with about two-thirds originating from Russia. According to official data, remittances totalled \$2.1 billion in 2021, jumping to \$5.2 billion in 2022 and \$5.7 billion in 2023. Transfers originating from Russia accounted for about \$3.6 billion of the total in 2022. Another important

15 "Armenia Condemns Fresh 'Azerbaijani Aggression' Against Karabakh", *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, September 19, 2024, <https://www.azatoryun.am/a/32599494.html>.

16 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Armenia extends protection status for Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians", *OC Media*, October 18, 2024, <https://oc-media.org/armenia-extends-protection-status-for-nagorno-karabakharmenians/>.

17 "Armenia to Boost Defense Spending by 20% in 2025", *Report News Agency*, October 28, 2024, <https://report.az/en/region/armenia-to-boost-defense-spending-by-20-in-2025/>.

18 Arshaluis Mgdetsyan, Birth Rate in Armenia Drops by 7.6%, Mortality Rises by 6.3% in First Seven Months of 2024, *The California Courier*, September 6, 2024, <https://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/birthrate-in-armenia-drops-by-7-6-mortality-rises-by-6-3-in-first-seven-months-of-2024/>.

19 "Government Approves Strategy for Improving the Demographic Situation", *ArmenPress*, October 17, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1202496>.

source was the US. These two countries account for 78% of total transfers. In 2024, Russia's share decreased by 20% to \$1.4 billion in the first six months. The reasons for this were the return of temporary refugees from Russia or their departure to other countries, sanctions imposed on banks, and the fact that some workers made their transfers in cash rather than through banks. The Minister of Finance told parliament on 2 September that transfers decreased by 48.3% in the first six months, mainly due to a \$569.4 million decrease in transfers from Russia.²⁰

On 30 August, the Ministry of Economy published a foreign trade-focused economic situation report covering the first six months of the year. According to the report, exports increased 2.3 times compared to the same period in 2023, reaching \$7.9 billion. There was also a significant change in export items, with gold exports coming first with 14.7 times increase to \$4.1 billion. This was followed by \$709.6 million worth of jewellery exports with a 18.4 times increase. Diamond exports increased by 55.7% to \$397.3 million and copper exports by 517.1% to \$267.6 million. The fifth most important export item was telephones and their components, which increased by 55% to \$333 million. The Minister of Finance stated on 2 September that this increase in exports was not reflected in local goods, which decreased by 4%.

There were also significant changes in terms of export destinations. Exports to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Union, the traditional destinations of exports, fell by 19.5%, to the EU by 25.1%, while exports to "other countries" increased by 5.5 times. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), is the leading destination with exports of \$3.6 billion, an increase of 7.8 times. Hong Kong with \$1.32 billion, up 17.7 times, followed by the People's Republic of China (PRC) with \$714.3 million, up 3.4 times. Exports to Russia, which had ranked first until now, decreased by 21.1% to \$1.4 billion.²¹

In the same period, the volume of imports also increased significantly, reaching \$10.48 billion with an increase of 86.5%. Gold ranked first in imports with an increase of 21.3 times, amounting to \$5.24 billion. This was followed by telephones and their parts worth \$419.7 million with an increase of 26.8%, and diamonds worth \$399.6 million with an increase of 26.8%. Russia ranked first in imports with seven billion dollars with a 4.7 times increase. This was

20 "Armenia Faces 48% Drop in Remittances, Heavily Reliant on Russia and US", *Caucasus Watch*, September 4, 2024, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/news/armenia-faces-48-drop-in-remittances-heavily-relianton-russia-and-us.html>.

21 "Armenia's Trade Statistics for H1 2024: Export and Import Growth", *Arka News Agency*, September 2, 2024, [https://arka.am/en/news/economy/armenia_s_trade_statistics_for_h1_2024_export_and_import_growth/h#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Ministry%20of,included%20gold%20\(%244.12%20billion%2C%20a](https://arka.am/en/news/economy/armenia_s_trade_statistics_for_h1_2024_export_and_import_growth/h#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Ministry%20of,included%20gold%20(%244.12%20billion%2C%20a)

followed by the PRC with \$442.8 million with a decrease of 1%, Georgia with \$345.7 million with a decrease of 31.4% and Iran with \$273.2 million with a decrease of 7.1%. These four countries accounted for 77.4% of Armenia's total imports.

According to the data of the State Statistics Committee, the volume of trade between Türkiye and Armenia volume totalled \$131 million in the first five months of 2024. This is an increase of \$2 million compared to the same period of last year. Armenia's exports amounted to 225 thousand dollars in total. Since there is no border crossing, it is assumed that this trade is mainly carried out through Georgia.

As can be seen from the data above, Armenia has benefited from the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West (the US and the EU) and has made significant economic gains by importing goods from Russia for shipment to third countries and exporting goods shipped to Russia from third countries. As a result, Armenia's gross national income increased from \$13.9 billion in 2021 to \$27 billion in 2024. The West, known for its accusatory sensitivity towards violations of sanctions against Russia and Iran, has been indifferent towards Armenia. The reason for this is not difficult to guess. In order not to offend the Armenian government, which pursues a policy of distancing itself from Russia and getting closer to the West, and with the awareness that its economy is at the point of bankruptcy and that the West's aid cannot spin the wheel, it has been seen as a practical solution that can be tolerated.

It was announced that 946,162 tourists visited Armenia in the first half of the year. This shows a decrease of 6.1% compared to the same period of the previous year. The largest number of tourists came from Russia (42%), Georgia (13%) and Iran (8%).²²

2. Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Agreement Process

After the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the two countries hosted by Kazakhstan in Almaty on 10-11 May, optimistic expectations emerged in the peace agreement process. The Armenian side gave the impression that the end was almost reached. However, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan declared on 6 June that it was not possible to sign an agreement without the necessary amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, which rejects the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and that this was an indispensable precondition. In response to this, Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a statement on 7 June, stating that the

22 "946,162 Foreign Tourists Visited Armenia in First Half of 2024", *MassisPost*, August 7, 2024, <https://massispost.com/2024/08/946162-foreign-tourists-visited-armenia-in-first-half-of-2024/>.

provisions of the Constitution and the amendments to it were internal affairs of Armenia, that the demand of the Azerbaijani side constituted a grave interference in the internal affairs of Armenia, that the international treaty was above the domestic law, that as a matter of fact, such a record would be included in the envisaged treaty, that the treaty was ready and that they wished to sign it as soon as possible. This statement was far from satisfying Azerbaijan. When the instance of how the protocols signed between Türkiye and Armenia in front of high-level observers were blocked by the Armenian Constitutional Court in 2009 is remembered to this day, this statement of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs disregarding the legal procedures was not only unsatisfactory, but also unconvincing.

During the period, Azerbaijan claimed that Armenia had violated the border and opened fire, which the Armenian side denied each time. In order to find a solution to this issue, Armenia proposed the establishment of a mechanism for joint investigation of ceasefire violations at the border. The Head of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) deployed to the Armenian border expressed support for this proposal.²³ Azerbaijan, known for its negative attitude towards the presence and activities of the EUMM, did not respond to this proposal.

Invited to NATO's 75th anniversary celebrations, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan held a trilateral meeting with the US Secretary of State in Washington on 10 July. Before the meeting, the US Secretary of State stated that "we will take stock of where we are and see what more the United States can do to help the two sides reach an agreement". After the meeting, in a simple statement, the parties said, "The parties noted the progress Armenia and Azerbaijan have achieved towards the conclusion of a historic agreement on peace and establishment of interstate relations, and agreed to continue the work", yet did not elaborate. A spokesperson for the US State Department said after the meeting: "Secretary Blinken discussed the progress made toward a durable and dignified peace agreement and encouraged further steps to finalize a deal as soon as possible. The Secretary also emphasized the importance of peace in promoting regional connectivity, which would benefit the entire South Caucasus region."

Having the understanding that the continuation of the peace treaty process under its supervision would enable Russia to maintain its influence and dominance in the South Caucasus, Russia expressed at various levels during the period that the ceasefire agreement concluded in 2020 was the precursor and foundation of the peace treaty and emphasised the importance of Russia's

23 "Armenia Proposes Joint Investigations of Ceasefire Violations; Azerbaijan Unlikely to Accept", *The Armenian Report*, June 24, 2024, <https://www.thearmenianreport.com/post/armenia-proposes-jointinvestigations-of-ceasefire-violations-azerbaijan-unlikely-to-accept>.

mediation and supervision. During his official visit to Baku on 19 August, Russian President Vladimir Putin again called on Azerbaijan and Armenia to continue the process under Russia's mediation.²⁴ On his return from Azerbaijan, he immediately called Pashinyan and repeated this call over the phone. Pashinyan did not give a direct response, but in the statement made afterwards, he thanked Russia and stated that Armenia decided to continue the process bilaterally with Azerbaijan, without any intermediaries.

Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, who accompanied Putin during his visit to Baku, mentioned the "Zangezur Corridor" and stated that Armenia sabotaged the establishment of this communication and reminded Article 9 of the Ceasefire Agreement.²⁵ This statement drew the reaction of Iran as well as Armenia, and Iran once again officially announced its opposition to the "corridor" concept. The Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission described the Zangezur Corridor as a fake corridor,²⁶ and the Iranian Ambassador in Yerevan stated that the dreams of the Zangezur Corridor will never be realised. The statement issued by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran was even harsher: "Any intervention by Türkiye, Azerbaijan or Russia regarding the corridor will be met with strong diplomatic and military resistance." In his meeting with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran in Yerevan on 11 September, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs praised Iran's positive role in the South Caucasus and emphasized Iran's important place in his country's foreign policy.

In order to prevent the Zangezur Corridor turning from an issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan into a third-party rivalry and clash of influence, a high-ranking official of Azerbaijan announced on 7 August that the issue had been removed from the ongoing negotiations for further discussion.²⁷ However, this statement did not remove the issue from the agenda.

At a press conference held on 31 August, Prime Minister Pashinyan stated that a text of a 17 article treaty, including the preamble, had been negotiated, 13 of its articles had been agreed upon, Armenia had given Azerbaijan a text of the treaty covering the agreed points and that they were ready to sign it

24 "Moscow Is Ready To Get Involved In Azerbaijan-Armenia Peace Process, Putin Says", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 19, 2024, <https://www.rferl.org/a/putin-ilham-laiyev-armenia-azerbaijan-baku-talks/33084517.html>.

25 "'Zangezur Corridor': Details of the Negotiations Revealed", *AzeMedia*, August 29, 2024, <https://aze.media/zangezur-corridor-details-of-the-negotiations-revealed/>.

26 "'Zangezur Corridor' is a fake corridor - Ebrahim Azizi", *ArmenPress*, September 7, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1199273>.

27 "'If Borders Were Restored to The 1920 Map, The Zangezur Corridor Wouldn't Be Needed.' Comment from Baku", *JamNews*, August 16, 2024, <https://jam-news.net/zangezur-removed-from-the-peace-agreement/>.

immediately.²⁸ Pashinyan also called on Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev for bilateral talks at the border. Pashinyan emphasized that Armenia is interested in establishing a connection between Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan, but within the framework of territorial integrity and sovereignty. On this occasion, he expressed Armenia's commitment to the ceasefire agreement, but complained about the inconsistent statements of "some partners" in Russia, saying that he believes this hinders regional communication efforts. "The presence of third forces and control by third forces is excluded. It is unacceptable for us," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia said in a statement on 9 September. On the same day, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan announced that they had submitted to Azerbaijan the tenth draft text for a peace treaty.²⁹

Pashinyan developed a new discourse in response to Azerbaijan's claims that the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia contains objectionable expressions. He stated that the actual Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, by referring to Azerbaijan of 1918-1920, claims rights over Armenia's territory, but Armenia does not make this a problem and that the articles of the draft peace treaty resolve the issue of territorial integrity.³⁰ This new discourse was not convincing either.

The Azerbaijani President stated that a partial peace treaty could not be signed without agreement on all issues and reiterated the need to amend the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. The Armenian side, on the other hand, especially through its supporters in third countries, raised the issue of Azerbaijan's participation in the international COP29 environmental meeting to be held in November and tried to put pressure on the signing of the treaty before or during this meeting. The Chair of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations also expressed reservations regarding Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29, stating that Azerbaijan should recognize freedoms of speech and assembly, claiming that Azerbaijan was setting "ridiculous" conditions to avoid signing of a peace treaty, and arguing that the treaty would not be fair to Armenia. The Azerbaijani President criticized the request by more than 60 members of the House of Representatives to the US President to hold Azerbaijan responsible for the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of "Artsakh" (Karabakh) before the COP29 summit, claiming that Secretary of State Blinken

28 Büşranur Koca-Can Efesoş, "Armenia Proposes Peace Treaty to Azerbaijan that Already Has 13 Of 17 Agreed-Upon Articles", *Anadolu Agency*, September 1, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/armeniaproposes-peace-treaty-to-azerbaijan-that-already-has-13-of-17-agreed-upon-articles/3318171>.

29 "Latest Version of Draft Peace Treaty Contains Fully Agreed Upon Articles, Says Armenian FM", *ArmenPress*, September 9, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1199368>.

30 "Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijani Constitution Indeed Contains Territorial Claims – PM", *ArmenPress*, August 31, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1198730>.

was behind this move. The European Parliament, in its resolution adopted on 24 October, accused Azerbaijan of human rights violations and made its anti-Azerbaijani bias clear. US President Joe Biden, who seemed to be in a hurry to end his term successfully by concluding a peace treaty, sent a letter to the President of Azerbaijan³¹ and the Prime Minister of Armenia through his Special Representative M. Carpenter, which was delivered on 21-22 October, and called on the Azerbaijani side to sign a peace treaty with Armenia before the end of the year. In the letter sent to Pashinyan, it was emphasized that the US is ready to take “bold initiatives” for the peace treaty and stated “Finalizing the remaining articles of the peace agreement will require persistence, ingenuity and compromise. But putting patriotism above politics, you have courageously and consistently chosen the path of peace - and I encourage you to finalize an agreement this year.”³²

In response to the increasing statements of the opposition, militant and radical organizations of the Diaspora and pro-Armenian third parties that the Karabakh issue has not yet been resolved, that ethnic cleansing and genocide crimes have been committed in Karabakh, and that the OSCE Minsk Group should be reinstated, Azerbaijan asked Armenia to make a statement that the Minsk Group has ceased to function and therefore ceased to exist. Pashinyan’s response was that the Minsk Group will cease to exist only if a peace treaty is signed.³³

The most credible and convincing response to the allegations that Karabakh Armenians were forcibly displaced and subjected to ethnic cleansing came from Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson M. Zakharova. At a press conference on 16 October, the Russian spokesperson stated with clarity that the Armenians who left Karabakh did so of their own accord, that they were not forced, that they had the opportunity to return, that Baku was taking constructive steps to ensure the return of the population which had left their birthplaces, and that if there were those who wanted to return to the homes they had left, they could take advantage of this opportunity.³⁴ As expected, this statement caused great discomfort and even reaction in the circles exploiting the issue. The reaction of a Karabakh Armenian “parliamentarian” who fled Karabakh and condemned the Russian spokesperson explains a lot: “Of course,

31 Ali Gasimov, “President Joe Biden Sends Letter to President İlham Aliyev”, *Trend News Agency*, October 21, 2024, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3959437.html>.

32 “Biden Sends Letter to Pashinyan, Encouraging Finalization of Peace Agreement with Azerbaijan This Year”, *ArmenPress*, October 22, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1202956>.

33 Matanat Nasibova, “Azerbaijan’s Call for Minsk Group’s End Meets Armenian Defiance”, *Caliber*, August 16, 2024, <https://caliber.az/en/post/azerbaijan-s-call-for-minsk-group-s-end-meets-armenian-defiance>.

34 Elchin Mehdiyev, “Azerbaijan Provides Opportunity for Armenian Population of Karabakh to Return to Their Homes - Official”, *Trend News Agency*, October 16, 2024, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3957795.html>.

every Artsakh Armenian dreams about returning to Artsakh. But there is one important condition: that cannot happen in the presence or even in the vicinity of the Azerbaijanis.”

Another very revealing development took place on 25 November. A former Nagorno-Karabagh official, who opted to stay in Karabagh instead of leaving for Armenia was detained on espionage charges following his visit to Armenia months after the regions return to Azerbaijan sovereignty and then sentenced to 18 years of imprisonment.³⁵

The Armenian and Azerbaijani delegations completed in late August the work they had begun in April to establish the principles for delimitation of the border between the two countries, which they had promised to conclude by 1 July. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries announced that the domestic legal process had begun for the agreement to enter into force. In Armenia, the first step in this process, the Constitutional Court’s review of the constitutionality of the treaty before parliamentary ratification, was completed at the end of September with a positive decision. The treaty was ratified by the National Assembly’s Foreign Relations Committee on 21 October³⁶ and by the Plenary Session on 23 October³⁷. The final stage, presidential ratification, was carried out simultaneously by the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia on 25 October.³⁸

In a statement by the Office of the Armenian Prime Ministry Press Office, it was stated that on 13 September, US Secretary of State called PM Pashinyan and the two sides exchanged views on the peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.³⁹ On 14 September, the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia arrived in Yerevan and met with Pashinyan, reiterating that the opening of Russian transportation routes is possible within the framework of the 2020 Ceasefire Agreement. In a statement released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

35 Former Nagorno-Karabakh Official Sentenced to 18 Years in Jail for Espionage,” Public Radio of Armenia, last modified November 22, 2024, <https://en.armradio.am/2024/11/22/former-nagorno-karabakh-official-sentenced-to-18-years-in-jail-for-espionage/>.

36 “Armenian Parliament Approves Regulations of Commissions on Border Delimitation with Azerbaijan”, *Caliber*, October 21, 2024, <https://caliber.az/en/post/armenian-parliament-approves-regulations-ofcommissions-on-border-delimitation-with-azerbaijan?ysclid=m32pxrrqiz504881186>.

37 Hoory Minoryan, “Armenia’s National Assembly Ratifies Border Delimitation Bill”, *The Armenian Weekly*, October 23, 2024, <https://armenianweekly.com/2024/10/23/armenias-national-assembly-ratifiesborder-delimitation-bill/#:~:text=YEREVAN%E2%80%94The%20National%20Assembly%20of%20the,favor%20and%20no%20dissenting%20votes>.

38 Siranush Ghazanchyan, “Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan Confirm Ratification of The Regulation on Joint Activity of Border Commissions”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, October 25, 2024, <https://en.armradio.am/2024/10/25/presidents-of-armenia-and-azerbaijan-confirm-ratification-of-theregulation-on-joint-activity-of-border-commissions/>.

39 “Secretary Blinken’s Call with Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan”, *U.S. Department of State*, September 13, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-armenian-prime-minister-pashinyan-17/>.

Azerbaijan, it was stated that the US Secretary of State made a phone call to the President of Azerbaijan on 16 September.⁴⁰ According to the spokesperson, Blinken reaffirmed the importance of a lasting and honorable peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan and expressed satisfaction with recent developments between the parties, including the agreement on the principles of demarcation.

Armenia and Azerbaijan's Ministers of Foreign Affairs, who were in New York to attend the 79th session of the UN General Assembly, held another trilateral meeting on 26 September at the invitation of the US Secretary of State.⁴¹ In similar statements, it was noted that the parties agreed to make additional efforts to finalize the "Agreement on Peace and Establishment of Interstate Relations" as soon as possible. It appears that no concrete progress was achieved at the meeting. Indeed, a week after this meeting, Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that Azerbaijan lacked the "political will" to sign a peace deal with Armenia and may be planning further military action against it.⁴² The Azerbaijani side, on the other hand, continued to reiterate its assessment of Armenia's armament initiatives as attempts to avenge its defeat, arguing that foreign powers, particularly France, were provoking Armenia against Azerbaijan in line with their own geopolitical interests. An Armenian government statement noted that during Pashinyan's, visit to Paris together with Mirzoyan for the Francophonie Meeting, he met with the French President on 3 October where the peace process was discussed and France's constant support was confirmed. Pashinyan praised France's support for Armenia in the international arena.⁴³

The President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia, who attended the BRICS meeting hosted by Russia in Kazan, held a bilateral meeting on the margins of this meeting on 24 October. They discussed their common issues and asked their Foreign Ministers to conclude and sign the peace agreement as soon as possible.⁴⁴ Since the two leaders were sitting next to each other, they conversed with each other during the meeting.

40 "U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made a phone call to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev", *President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, September 16, 2024, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/66844>.

41 "U.S. Hosts Key Meeting Between Armenia and Azerbaijan in New York", *The Armenian Report*, September 26, 2024, <https://en.armradio.am/2024/10/25/presidents-of-armenia-and-azerbaijan-confirmratification-of-the-regulation-on-joint-activity-of-border-commissions/>.

42 "Armenia's Foreign Minister Says Azerbaijan Lacks "Political Will" to Sign Peace Deal, Warns of Possible Military Action", *Zartok*, October 2, 2024, <https://zartokmedia.com/2024/10/02/armeniasforeign-minister-says-azerbaijan-lacks-political-will-to-sign-peace-deal-warns-of-possible-military-action/>.

43 "French President Reaffirms Unconditional Support to Armenia During Meeting with Pashinyan", *ArmenPress*, October 3, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1201440>.

44 Burc Eruygur, "Azerbaijani President, Armenian Premier Meet on Sidelines of BRICS Summit", *Anadolu Agency*, October 24, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/azerbaijani-president-armenianpremier-meet-on-sidelines-of-brics-summit/3373258>.

In his speech at the BRICS conference, Pashinyan stated that 80-90% of the draft peace treaty had been agreed upon with Azerbaijan, provided information on the agreed articles, reiterated their readiness to sign a treaty covering them. He criticized Azerbaijan's linking the signing of the treaty to the amendment of the Constitution, and stated that the recent ruling of the Constitutional Court proved that the allegations of territorial claims in the Constitution were invalid.⁴⁵

Armenia's participation to COP29 in Baku was expected to provide not only further international cooperation on climate change but also to build peace in South Caucasus. However, Armenia chose to exploit this event to further its demands and ambitions with the backing and pressure of third parties. For instance, ahead of COP29, World Council of Churches (WCC) based in Geneva, where Aram I, Catholicos of Antelias serves as president of the WCC for the Oriental Orthodox churches, urged Azerbaijan to release prisoners of Karabagh background and declared a world wide day of prayer for Armenia on Sunday, 10 November, one day before COP29 started. The radical ARF declared its support on 9 November. Freedom House issued a press release on 11 November accusing Azerbaijan of ethnic cleansing. Support was also expressed in the US Congress and EU Parliament. Armenia's last minute refusal to participate in the conference was the final blow to relations and cooperation.⁴⁶

According to Azerbaijan sources, the three impediments to finalize the agreement are, territorial claims in the Armenian Constitution, ongoing 'international legal warfare' and the presence of the EU monitoring mission at the common border. On 22 November, in a TV interview, Pashinyan said that Armenia offered to withdraw EU monitoring mission from sections of the border that have been delimited. An official from the EU mission said on 25 November that their mandate expires on 19 February next year and that there is still no decision to extend the term of the mission.⁴⁷

At the same interview Pashinyan also criticized again the 1990 declaration of independence, which is part of the constitution, which also calls for international recognition of "genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia". He drew parallels between that reference and Azerbaijan's claims

45 "The Prime Minister again Offered Azerbaijan to Sign The Peace Treaty", *Radar Armenia*, October 24, 2024, <https://radar.am/en/news/politics-2659552253/#:~:text=RA%20Prime%20Minister%20Nikol%20Pashinyan,each%20other%20in%20the%20future>.

46 "Joint Statement: COP29 is Being Used as a Cover for Ethnic Cleansing," World Council of Churches, last modified November 11, 2024, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/joint-statement-cop29-is-being-used-as-a-cover-for-ethnic-cleansing>.

47 "Azerbaijani FM Comments on Armenia's Non-Participation in COP29," Trend News Agency, last modified November 12, 2024, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3968699.html>.

of “Western Azerbaijan”. He said: “But when we say ‘Western Armenia’, don’t we think it irritates some people? Just like they irritate us by saying ‘Western Azerbaijan’”.⁴⁸

3. Armenia’s Foreign Relations

Since Armenia is dependent on Russia in many ways and has needs, primarily economic ones, which cannot be substituted from other sources in the short term, Armenia’s attempts to cautiously maintain its relations with Russia, which has traditionally been its main foreign policy compass, yet to break out of Russia’s control and to seek new alternatives with the assurance of the West, which encourages and supports Armenia in this regard, continued during this period with the assessment that Russia is no longer the guarantee of its future. In this search for a new balance, contacts and initiatives that could provide a favorable solution to its relations with Azerbaijan and Türkiye were at the forefront.

Armenia’s stance towards the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which constitutes the first step in loosening its ties with Russia, based on its own justifiable and defensible arguments, continued to increase during the period. On 31 May, it was announced that the Armenian Minister of Defense would not attend the meeting of the Council of Defense Ministers in Almaty.⁴⁹ On 11 June, Russia criticized Armenia for cutting off its contribution to the budget of the organization. Pashinyan’s non-attendance at the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) meeting in Turkmenistan in May caused additional unease in Russia. The Russian Ambassador to Yerevan was summoned to Moscow for consultations on 24 May, as a diplomatic warning to Armenia.⁵⁰ On 1 September, Pashinyan officially announced the freeze of his country’s participation in the CSTO meetings “at all levels”.⁵¹ On the other hand, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs announced on 4 September that Pashinyan would attend the CIS summit in Moscow.⁵²

On 18 September, Pashinyan said in a statement: “We have suspended our membership in the CSTO not only because the CSTO does not fulfill its

48 “Pashinian Blasts Armenia’s Independence Declaration,” Azatutyun, last modified November 14, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33202094.html>.

49 “Armenia Skips CSTO Defense Ministers’ Meeting in Almaty”, *ArmenPress*, May 31, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1138417>.

50 “Russian Envoy to Armenia Summoned to Moscow for Consultations — Foreign Ministry”, *TASS*, May 24, 2024, <https://tass.com/politics/1792949>.

51 “Armenia’s Decision to Freeze Participation in CSTO Sufficient for Now, PM Pashinyan Says”, *APA*, August 31, 2024, <https://en.apa.az/cis-countries/armenias-decision-to-freeze-participation-in-cstosufficient-for-now-pm-pashinyan-says-446794>

52 “Armenia to Participate in CIS Informal Summit”, *ArmenPress*, September 4, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1199014>.

security obligations towards Armenia, but also because, in our opinion, the CSTO creates threats to Armenia's security and Armenia's continued existence, sovereignty and statehood."⁵³ Russia immediately rejected these statements and Kremlin spokesman Peskov said: "We must categorically disagree with Mr. Pashinyan. The CSTO cannot and does not pose any threat to Armenia's sovereignty. On the contrary, this organization guards the sovereignty of its member states. We will patiently convey this position to the Armenian leadership. Armenia remains a 'close partner' of Russia and 'contacts' between the two nations will continue."⁵⁴ Armenia did not participate in the CSTO joint military exercises that began in Almaty on 26 September.⁵⁵ Armenia once again boycotted another CSTO Summit held in Astana the last week of November. On 25 November Mirzoyan announced that he too would not be taking part.⁵⁶

In a speech in Kazakhstan on 5 October, the head of Russia's Federal Security Service argued that Western powers are pressuring Armenia to leave the CSTO in order to secure a military position. He stated "In exchange for preferential arms supplies and security guarantees, the West is seeking to get the Armenian government to withdraw from the CSTO, which would make Yerevan even more dependent on NATO in its future relations with Baku. The EU monitoring mission along Armenia's border with Azerbaijan is conducting intelligence activities against Russia and our partners in the interests of a specific NATO country".⁵⁷ The European External Action Service spokesperson immediately responded to these statements and called them nonsense.⁵⁸

On 3 October, Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs congratulated the new NATO Secretary General and expressed Armenia's expectation for closer cooperation with NATO.⁵⁹

53 Shoghik Galstian, "Pashinian Calls Russian-Led Alliance Security Threat to Armenia", *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, September 18, 2024, <https://www.azatoryun.am/a/33124969.html>.

54 "Moscow Categorically Disagrees with Armenian PM's Criticism of CSTO — Kremlin", *TASS*, September 18, 2024, <https://tass.com/politics/1844713>.

55 "Armenia Skips CSTO Drills In Kazakhstan", *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, September 26, 2024, <https://www.azatoryun.am/a/32053026.html>.

56 Armenia's Premier Not to Participate in CSTO Summit in Astana," *ArmInfo*, last modified November 27, 2024, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=87400&lang=3.

57 "Director of The Russian FSB: The West is Putting Pressure on Armenia, Forcing it to Leave The CSTO", *TopWar*, October 4, 2024, <https://en.topwar.ru/251343-direktor-fsb-zapad-okazyvaet-davlenie-naarmeniju-prinuzhdaja-ee-vyjti-iz-odkb.html>.

58 "Exclusive: EU Slams 'Nonsense' Comments by Russian FSB Chief about Armenia", *ArmenPress*, October 4, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1201510>.

59 "Armenian Foreign Minister Expressed His Hope for A Strong Partnership with The New NATO Secretary General", *ARKA News Agency*, October 10, 2024, https://arka.am/en/news/politics/armenian_foreign_minister_expressed_his_hope_for_a_strong_partnership_with_the_new_nato_secretary_ge/

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting was held on 7 October and the summit meeting was held on 8 October in Moscow.⁶⁰ Mirzoyan, who attended the meeting of the Foreign Ministers, did not participate in and did not sign the two resolutions adopted at the meeting: “Principles Of Cooperation In Ensuring Security In Eurasia” and “Inadmissibility Of The Use Of Unilateral Restrictive Measures In International Relations”.⁶¹

Pashinyan, who attended the summit, also held a bilateral meeting with the President of Russia on this occasion. The spokesperson of the Prime Minister’s Office said in a statement that during this meeting it was agreed that the Armenian border crossing with Iran will be under the sole and complete control of the Armenian border security forces, and that the Russian troops guarding the border with Iran and Türkiye will be joined by the Armenian border security forces, starting from the new year. This development has led to media speculation regarding the status and future of Russian military bases in Armenia and the troops stationed there. Russian sources emphasized that the issue is determined by bilateral agreements and cannot be changed by unilateral declarations of intention.⁶² Pashinyan also stated that such an issue is not on the agenda.

It was reported in the press that on the occasion of the CIS Moscow summit, which was also attended by the President of Azerbaijan, the Russian President wanted to organize a trilateral meeting, but Armenia refused to do so. The Russian President held bilateral talks with the parties, thus Russia was denied the opportunity to take the initiative in the peace agreement process.⁶³

In his speech at the summit, Pashinyan made a detailed statement focusing on the “Crossroads of Peace” project, “The essence of this project is as follows: Armenia is ready to ensure the passage of vehicles, cargo, passengers, pipelines, cables through its territory: from Georgia to Iran and vice versa, from Turkey to Azerbaijan and vice versa. We are ready to ensure the passage of vehicles, cargo, passengers, pipelines and cables from the main part of Azerbaijan and the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchevan. Responding to our

60 Catherine Putz, “Commonwealth of Independent States Gathers in Moscow for Annual Heads of State Meeting”, *The Diplomat*, October 9, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/10/commonwealth-of-independent-states-gathers-in-moscow-for-annual-heads-of-state-meeting/>.

61 “Armenia Didn’t Join Two Statements at CIS Council of Foreign Ministers Meeting”, *ArmenPress*, October 7, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1201731>.

62 Catherine Putz, “Commonwealth of Independent States Gathers in Moscow for Annual Heads of State Meeting”, *The Diplomat*, October 9, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/10/commonwealth-of-independent-states-gathers-in-moscow-for-annual-heads-of-state-meeting/>.

63 “Armenia-Russia-Azerbaijan Trilateral Meeting Not Planned, Says Kremlin”, *ArmenPress*, October 8, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1201765>.

proposals, Azerbaijan emphasizes that if Armenia does not want to open regional communications, Azerbaijan will use the opportunities provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran to connect with Nakhichevan. Of course, we do not object, because this is a matter of relations between the two sovereign countries. But I want to emphasize once again that Armenia wants the opening of regional channels and that we are ready to provide transport communications through our territory on the same terms as provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moreover, we are ready to make certain simplifications in border control procedures within the framework of respect for the principles of reciprocity, equality, sovereignty and jurisdiction of the parties.”⁶⁴

In an interview with Russian television on 9 October, Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the issue suggested that the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan could be opened for trade and travel only with Russia’s participation, referring to Article 9 of the ceasefire agreement and that Armenia has not rejected the agreement.⁶⁵ On 12 October, Pashinyan reiterated that it is unacceptable to focus only on Article 9 of the 9 November 2020 Trilateral Ceasefire Agreement while the provisions of other articles are not being fulfilled.⁶⁶

On 15 August, the Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized that history books in Armenia’s school curriculum, in contradiction to the 2022 agreement between the parties to preserve historical memories, distorted the history of the South Caucasus in the 18th and 19th centuries to the detriment of Russia, and claimed forced annexation of Eastern Armenia under the Turkmenchay Treaty of 1827. In this context, the Russian Ministry accused the West of “rewriting” history.⁶⁷ The Armenian Ministry of Education immediately announced that the necessary corrections would be made. This is undoubtedly an example of how history can be manipulated for political purposes.⁶⁸

The close relations with Iran remained active during the period. On 30 May, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was temporarily appointed to replace the Iranian Foreign Minister who died in a helicopter crash, emphasized to his Armenian counterpart the importance of the implementation of the Supreme Leader’s statements on the realization of strategic goals between Iran and

64 “Armenia Never Agreed to the Involvement of Third Countries in Ensuring the Security of Communications - PM”, *ArmenPress*, October 8, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1201804>.

65 “Russia Insists On Key Role In Armenian-Azeri Transport Links”, *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, October 9, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33152459.html>.

66 “Unacceptable to Single Out One Article When Others Are Unfulfilled, PM Pashinyan Says on 2020 Trilateral Statement”, *ArmenPress*, October 12, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1202121>.

67 Fatima Latifova, “Armenian Education Ministry Rewriting History: Claim Filed against Russia”, *AzerNews*, August 16, 2024, <https://www.azernews.az/nation/229956.html>.

68 “After Stern Criticism from Russia, Armenia Amends History Textbook”, *Asbarez*, August 16, 2024, <https://www.asbarez.com/after-stern-criticism-from-russia-armenia-amends-history-textbook/>.

Armenia.⁶⁹ Pashinyan visited Tehran to attend the inauguration ceremony of the 9th President of Iran and met with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on this occasion.⁷⁰ The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the new cabinet, Mr. Abbas Araghchi, also stated that under President Masoud Pezeshkian, Iran will continue to seek closer ties with Armenia and support its territorial integrity. The new minister highlighted the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Caucasus region for Iran.⁷¹

Pashinyan, who went to Kazan as an invitee to the BRICS summit, held a bilateral meeting with the Iranian President on 24 October. He declared that forging closer ties with Iran remains a priority for Armenia.⁷²

Iran was invited for the first time to attend the meeting of the Intergovernmental Council of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Eurasian Economic Forum held in Yerevan in early October. Iran participated at the level of the First Vice President of the Republic.⁷³ During the high-level talks with the Vice-President, it was stated that Armenia could be a bridge and gateway for Iran to Europe and Eurasia. The goal was set to increase the trade volume, which was \$100-150 million in 2014-2015 and increased to \$232 million in 2017, to \$3 billion.⁷⁴

On 7 June, the Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) paid a first official visit to Armenia. A statement issued after his meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed the hope that the discussions during the visit would contribute to expanding the possibilities for cooperation between Armenia and the SCO.⁷⁵

US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs O'Brien, accompanied by an inter-ministerial government delegation, visited Armenia

69 "Iranian, Armenian Officials Pledge Continued Collaboration", *Tasnim News Agency*, May 30, 2024, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2024/05/30/3095715/iranian-armenian-officials-pledgecontinued-collaboration#:~:text=Baqeri%20highlighted%20the%20significance%20of,and%20stability%20in%20the%20Caucasus>.

70 "Pashinyan Meets with Iran's Khamenei in Tehran", *ArmenPress*, July 30, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1196706>.

71 "Iran's Policy On Armenia Unchanged, Says New FM", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, August 23, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33090278.html>.

72 "PM Pashinyan Holds Meeting with Iranian President" *ArmenPress*, October 24, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1203086>.

73 "Iran's Veep in Armenia for Eurasian Economic Forum", *Tasnim News Agency*, October 1, 2024, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2024/10/01/3169214/iran-s-veep-in-armenia-for-eurasianeconomic-forum>.

74 "Armenia Could Act As Bridge Connecting Iran with Europe And Eurasia to Expand Iran's Trade in the Region", *Tabnak*, October 2, 2024, [https://www.tabnak.ir/en/news/5188/%C2%A0-armeniairan%E2%80%99s-gateway-to-eurasia-tehran-yerevan-seek-expanding-bilateral-trade-to-us\\$-3-blm-%C2%A0%C2%A0](https://www.tabnak.ir/en/news/5188/%C2%A0-armeniairan%E2%80%99s-gateway-to-eurasia-tehran-yerevan-seek-expanding-bilateral-trade-to-us$-3-blm-%C2%A0%C2%A0)

75 "SCO Secretary-General Meets with Foreign Minister of Armenia", *The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*, June 8, 2024, <https://eng.sectso.org/20240608/1388471.html>.

on 10-12 June and held high-level talks.⁷⁶ During the meeting with the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, a detailed and multidimensional statement was issued, outlining the roadmap for the future close relations between the parties. The parties set out a vision for deepening relations in the coming year, which concretely envisaged a Memorandum of Understanding and a transition from bilateral dialogue status to a Strategic Partnership Commission. O'Brien also emphasized the importance of a trade route linking Central Asia to the Mediterranean and Europe, stressed the need to establish this connection as soon as possible, and expressed the importance of this project to the US, excluding Russia, without using the term Zangezur corridor. During the visit, a customs agreement was signed⁷⁷ and closer defense and security ties were promised.

Armenia's Chief of the General Staff attended the European Military Commanders' Conference in Germany and held a bilateral meeting with the French general on 10 June.⁷⁸ During the meeting, it was agreed to further enhance military cooperation. On 18 June, the French Minister of Defense announced the decision to sell 36 CAESAR self-propelled cannons to Armenia.⁷⁹ The French Minister of Foreign Affairs paid his departing visit to Armenia on 15-16 September, reaffirming his country's strong support for Armenia, stating that the "defence" issue was on his agenda, emphasizing France's deepening military ties with Armenia and claiming that the shipment of military equipment was not aimed at escalation but to ensure stability.⁸⁰ In his speech to the UN General Assembly on 26 September, the French President stated that "France stands firmly with Armenia in the face of pressure from Azerbaijan".⁸¹

On 9-10 October, bilateral defense consultations were held in Berlin between the delegations of the Ministries of Defense of Armenia and Germany. In a statement, the sides expressed satisfaction with bilateral defense cooperation in 2024, noted the great potential for further development of these relations, and agreed on a cooperation program for 2025.⁸²

76 "Assistant Secretary O'Brien's Travel to Armenia", *U.S. Department of State*, June 7, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/assistant-secretary-obriens-travel-to-armenia/>.

77 "Agreement on Mutual Assistance of Customs Authorities Signed Between Armenia and The USA", *ArmenPress*, June 11, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1139307>.

78 "Chief of Armenian Armed Forces General Staff meets with France's Chief of Army Staff", *ArmenPress*, June 11, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1139319>.

79 "France Hails Deal To Provide Armenia with Howitzers As 'New Important Milestone'", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 18, 2024, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-france-defense-russia-azerbaijan-howitzer/32997862.html>.

80 "The Start of The Two-Day Visit of The Foreign Minister of France to Armenia", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, September 15, 2024, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/09/15/sejourne_armenia_visit/12825.

81 "France's Macron Deplores 'Azeri Pressure on Armenia'", *Azattyun Radiokayan*, September 26, 2024, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33136150.html>.

82 "Bilateral Defence Consultations Between Armenia and Germany Held in Berlin", *ArmenPress*, October 11, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1202082>.

On 31 May, following Pashinyan's accusation that the two so-called allies were acting against Armenia's sovereignty, in early June, the Belarusian President Lukashenko made a statement accusing Armenia of its relations with Azerbaijan and its attitude towards the CSTO, which caused great reaction in Armenia. Both sides recalled their ambassadors⁸³ and Pashinyan stated that neither he, nor his government officials would travel to Belarus while Lukashenko was in office. On 12 June he announced in the Parliament that he had decided to withdraw from the Russian-led security organization and that the timing of the withdrawal would be decided afterwards.⁸⁴ On 13 June, the Russian President's press spokesperson stated that Russia expects the alliance relations between the two countries to continue and that contacts with the Armenian side will continue. On 25 October, the President of Belarus and the Armenian Prime Minister, who were in Kazan for the BRICS summit, met briefly on this occasion and posed for the press.⁸⁵

On 9 June, Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested with a diplomatic note against the visit of an Armenian delegation to Bucha, the symbolic victim city of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, in early June.⁸⁶ On 15 June, Armenian Security Council Secretary A. Grigoryan participated in the "Ukraine Peace Formula" summit in Switzerland. On 17 June, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Armenia and Ukraine held political consultations in Kiev.⁸⁷ On 28-29 June, Mirzoyan attended the Dubrovnik forum in Croatia, where he also held a bilateral meeting with the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁸⁸ This demonstrated that Armenia can act independently against Russia.

On 17 June, the US announced that it has established a new department to help establish direct contacts with local and regional governments in Armenia, and for this purpose a forum was being organized in Armenia, which would bring

83 Ani Avetisyan, "Armenia Recalls Ambassador from Belarus Amid Rising Tension with Russia", *Eurasianet*, June 14, 2024,

<https://eurasianet.org/armenia-recalls-ambassador-from-belarus-amidrising-tension-with-russia>.

84 "Tensions Continue to Rise Between Armenia, Belarus", *Azattyun Radiokayan*, June 14, 2024,

<https://www.azattyun.am/a/32993532.html>.

85 "Pashinyan, Lukashenko Meet During BRICS Summit", *ArmenPress*, October 25, 2024,

<https://armenpress.am/en/article/1203185>.

86 Elsa Court, "Moscow Issues Protest Note to Yerevan after Armenian Delegation Visits Bucha", *The Kyiv Independent*, June 9, 2024,

<https://kyivindependent.com/moscow-issues-protest-note-toyerevan-after-armenian-delegation-visits-bucha/>.

87 "Political Consultations between The Foreign Ministries of Armenia And Ukraine", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Armenia*, June 17, 2024,

https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/06/17/arm_ua_politicalconsultation/12697.

88 "The meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Ukraine", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Armenia*, June 29, 2024,

https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/06/29/Mirzoyan_Kuleba/12721.

together mayors and local officials from both countries for a two-day event.⁸⁹ On this occasion, it was reported that the US Assistant Secretary of State R. Verma would visit Armenia on 17 June with a delegation of US local officials.⁹⁰

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan visited Lithuania⁹¹ on 20 June and Estonia on 26-27 June. President of the National Assembly of Armenia Alen Simonyan also paid an official visit to Latvia on 26 June.⁹² Armenia's close ties with the Baltic states which are known to be anti-Russian have been criticized by Russia.

In 2019, after Pashinyan's meeting with the India's Prime Minister on the margins of the UN General Assembly meetings, Armenia-India relations have undergone a significant revitalization in the political, economic and military spheres. The official visit of India's Minister of Foreign Affairs to Armenia in October 2021, which was the first of its kind, and Mirzoyan's subsequent visit to India to attend a conference, led to the multidimensional development of these relations. During the period, this relationship developed especially in the field of defense, with almost 90% of Armenia's total arms purchases coming from India.⁹³ Armenia was able to utilize the India card to establish a front against Türkiye, convincing India that it could create a counterbalance against the Pakistan-Azerbaijan-Türkiye cooperation. This relationship has gained a political and economic dimension with the envisaged project of a "North-South Trade Corridor Project" through India-Iran-Armenia-Georgia.

The Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation visited Armenia on 1 July on the occasion of Armenia assuming the Organization's Chairmanship-in-Office.⁹⁴

Delegations of the Armenian and Georgian foreign ministries met in Tbilisi on 2 July under the chairmanship of the two ministers. During the talks, bilateral and multilateral cooperation was discussed and issues on the agenda of the

89 "U.S. Launches New Department to Liaise with Local Governments in Armenia", *Asbarez*, June 17, 2024, <https://www.asbarez.com/u-s-launches-new-department-to-liaise-with-local-governments-in-armenia/>.

90 "US First Deputy Secretary of State to Visit Armenia", *Caliber*, June 14, 2024, <https://caliber.az/en/post/us-first-deputy-secretary-of-state-to-visit-armenia>.

91 "Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Lithuania" ", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Armenia*, June 20, 2024, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/06/20/Mirzoyan_Landsbergis/12704.

92 "Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Estonia", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Armenia*, June 27, 2024, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/06/27/Mirzoyan_Tsahkna/12715.

93 "Armenia Becomes Largest Importer of Weapons from India", *MassisPost*, July 24, 2024, <https://massispost.com/2024/07/armenia-becomes-largest-importer-of-weapons-from-india/>.

94 "Armenian Parliament Speaker Receives Secretary General of Black Sea Economic Cooperation", *ArmenPress*, July 1, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1194838>.

strategic partnership established between the two countries were also included. Comments in the press indicated that the transportation of military equipment to be purchased from France through Georgia was also an important issue.

The Armenian Ministry of Defense announced on 6 July that the joint Armenia-US military exercise “Eagle Partner 2024” would be held in Armenia on 15-24 July in the framework of preparation for international peacekeeping missions, and would be attended by members of the peacekeeping brigade of the Armenian Armed Forces, the US, European and African armies and the Kansas National Guard.⁹⁵ Three US generals participated in the joint exercise and a joint peacekeeping exercise was held on these dates.⁹⁶

From 13 to 16 October, Armenia’s Chief of Staff visited the US for talks on the occasion of an exhibition in Washington. On 16 October, he met with the US Chief of Staff, who praised the growing US-Armenia military ties and called for countering Russia’s “malign influence in the region”.⁹⁷

S. Power, the head of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), visited Armenia on 8-11 July.⁹⁸ Power expressed that it was being investigated whether the exodus of Karabakh constituted ethnic cleansing or not, that the return of Karabakh Armenians should be ensured, and announced that her office was providing an additional \$2.4 million to support the personal data protection program.⁹⁹ On 5 September, USAID announced that aid to Armenia had been increased by \$130 million, bringing the total amount of aid to \$250 million.¹⁰⁰

Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan visited Washington on 9-10 July as an invitee to NATO’s 75th anniversary summit.¹⁰¹ Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Galuzin made a statement on the issue, saying that “Russia deeply regrets Armenia’s participation in the NATO summit”. Criticizing Armenia’s position, Galuzin also warned that “by deepening

95 “Armenia-U.S. Joint Exercise “EAGLE PARTNER 2024” Will Be Held in Armenia, *ArmenPress*, July 6, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1195178>.

96 “The Joint Armenia-U.S. Military Exercise “EAGLE PARTNER 2024””, *Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia*, July 15, 2024, <https://mil.am/en/news/12290>.

97 “Top U.S., Armenian Generals Meet in Washington”, *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, October 17, 2024, <https://www.azatoryun.am/a/33162699.html>.

98 “USAID Head to Visit Armenia”, *ED News*, July 8, 2024, <https://ednews.net/en/news/world/669040-usaid-head-to-visit-armenia>.

99 “U.S. ‘Investigates’ Karabakh Exodus to Decide if it’s Ethnic Cleansing”, *The California Courier*, July 11, 2024, <https://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/u-s-investigates-karabakh-exodus-to-decide-if-its-ethnic-cleansing/>.

100 “USAID to Increase Assistance to Armenia to \$250 Million”, *Report News Agency*, September 11, 2024, <https://report.az/en/region/usaid-to-increase-assistance-to-armenia-to-250-million/>.

101 “Armenian Foreign Minister Takes Part in an Official Reception in Washington”, *ArmenPress*, July 10, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1195405>.

cooperation at such a pace with those whose goal is the ‘strategic defeat’ of Russia, Yerevan risks seriously destabilising the situation in the South Caucasus, to the detriment, including its own security.”¹⁰²

After Georgia, U. Zeya, US Under Secretary, visited Armenia on 17 July and discussed the democratic process of governance and the fight against corruption.¹⁰³ Another US Deputy Secretary of State, J. Huck, met with Mirzoyan on 19 September, and the two sides emphasized the importance of joint efforts to develop strategic partnership relations.¹⁰⁴ Accompanied by L. Bono, the US special envoy to the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace talks, Huck was received by Pashinyan and briefed on the status of the peace talks and the opening of transportation routes.¹⁰⁵

The campaign process for the presidential elections to be held in the US in November 2024, like in to every campaign period, prompted Armenian organizations and lobbies to intensify the pressure, even blackmail, on the candidates. The presidential candidate of the Democratic Party has experienced her share of this. It has been expressed in written statements that she will not be voted for unless she takes a more explicit pro-Armenian stance.¹⁰⁶ As a result, the presidential candidate, Vice President Harris, echoing President Biden’s earlier statement, issued the following message on 23 September to mark Armenia’s national day:

“To the Armenian American community:

I send my best wishes to you as you celebrate Armenian Independence Day, which marks the day that the Armenian people voted to secede from the Soviet Union to be a free, independent nation.

While we celebrate, we must also never forget the Armenian Genocide, when an estimated 1.5 million Armenians were deported, massacred, and marched to their deaths. It is a tragedy that continues to shape the identity of the Armenian people. The Armenian American community’s

102 “Galuzin: Russia Extremely Regrets Armenia’s Participation in Nato Summit in Washington”, *News.am*, July 11, 2024, <https://news.am/eng/news/833511.html>.

103 “Under Secretary Zeya’s Travel to Georgia and Armenia”, *U.S. Department of State*, July 10, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/under-secretary-zeyas-travel-to-georgia-and-armenia/>.

104 “Mirzoyan and US Deputy Secretary of State Huck Discuss Regulation of Armenian-Azerbaijani Relations”, *News.am*, September 19, 2024, <https://news.am/eng/news/843355.html>.

105 “Prime Minister Pashinyan Receives the Delegation Led by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Joshua Huck”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, September 20, 2024, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2024/09/20/Nikol-Pashinyan-meeting-20-09>.

106 Alex Manoukian, “Kamala Harris: A Disappointing Partner for the Armenian Community”, *The Armenian Weekly*, August 27, 2024, <https://armenianweekly.com/2024/08/27/kamala-harris-adisappointing-partner-for-the-armenian-community/>.

resilience remains a source of inspiration in our collective American story.

I remain committed to a lasting peace between Armenia and its neighbors that respects sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity.

The right for Armenians displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh to return safely to their homes is vital to restoring dignity to the Armenian people and stability to the region.

I will continue to support Armenia in its efforts to strengthen democracy and foster stability in the region.

Armenia and its people have a rich history that inspires us all to strive for liberty and justice. I remain committed to deepening the bonds between our nations and fostering a partnership that uplifts our shared values and aspirations. Together, we can build a more secure, just and free world.

Warmly,¹⁰⁷

In the run-up to an election where every vote counts, the other presidential candidate Trump did not hold back. The radical-militant Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), a radical-militant Armenian organization, announced the following social post by Trump on 23 October:

“Kamala Harris did NOTHING as 120,000 Armenian Christians were horrifically persecuted and forcibly displaced in Artsakh. Christians around the World will not be safe if Kamala Harris is President of the United States. When I am President, I will protect persecuted Christians, I will work to stop the violence and ethnic cleansing, and we will restore PEACE between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”¹⁰⁸

ANCA’s Executive Director, who knows from experience that such rhetoric is politically motivated in order to win votes, stated that “While we are gratified to see that our community’s sustained engagement has forced ‘Artsakh’ [Karabakh] and Armenia into the national electoral discourse, we expect and

107 “Vice President Kamala Harris Commemorates Armenian Independence Day”, *The Armenian Weekly*, September 24 2024, <https://armenianweekly.com/2024/09/24/vice-president-kamala-harris-commemorates-armenian-independence-day/>.

108 “Trump Vows to Restore Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace if Elected, Slams Harris For Doing ‘Nothing’ During NK Ethnic Cleansing”, *ArmenPress*, October 24, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1203077>.

deserve more than words” and listed some concrete expectations from Trump before the election. Shortly before the election, it was observed that the Armenian lobbies in the US sensing a Trump victory, were generally pro-Trump in their approach and called on voters to vote for Trump.

The future of the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant has gained political and symbolic as well as technical significance in terms of Armenia’s relations with Russia and the US and its energy dependence. While the current plant, which is operated by the Russian state company Rosatom and whose lifespan has been extended until 2036, is to be refurbished by Rosatom,¹⁰⁹ the Pashinyan administration has shown interest in smaller modular units built by the US, signed a memorandum of understanding on civil nuclear cooperation with the US in 2022 and started negotiations with the US.¹¹⁰ A US State Department spokesperson confirmed in August that the US was reviewing Armenia’s request for civil nuclear technology transfer.¹¹¹

According to a report from the American University of Armenia, USAID has provided the university with \$1.8 million for the establishment of a new advanced biology and environmental sciences laboratory. On this occasion, the media reported that there are 13 biological laboratories in Armenia belonging to the Pentagon, where only Americans work.

On 10 July, Armenia announced the International Airports Association statement that China’s Southern Airlines will launch direct flights from Urumchi-Yerevan-Urumchi twice a week starting 3 September. This will be the first direct connection with China.¹¹² The Chinese Ambassador to Armenia also confirmed the news.

The Armenian Minister of Defense visited China in September, and during his meeting with his Chinese counterpart on 10 September, the two countries discussed closer military ties. The two countries have an “Agreement On

109 “A Joint Armenian-Russian Contract Has Been Signed”, *Armenian Nuclear Power Plant*, December 15, 2023,

<https://armeniannpp.am/en/info/noroutyouunner/storagrvel-e-hay-rousakan-hamatex-paymanagir.html>.

110 “The United States of America and the Republic of Armenia Sign a Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Civil Nuclear Cooperation”, *U.S. Department of State*, May 2, 2022,

<https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-of-america-and-the-republic-of-armenia-sign-a-memorandum-of-understanding-concerning-strategic-civil-nuclear-cooperation/>.

111 Siranush Ghazanchyan, “US Confirms Nuclear Pact with Armenia ‘Under Consideration’”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, August 22, 2024,

<https://en.armradio.am/2024/08/22/us-confirms-nuclear-pact-witharmenia-under-consideration-civilnet/#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20has%20confirmed,written%20comments%20to%20CivilNet%20Tuesday>.

112 “For the First Time Flights to be Operated from Yerevan to China’s Urumqi City”, *ArmenPress*, July 10, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1195404>.

Military And Military-Technical Cooperation” signed in 2012. Armenia has not announced any arms purchases from China.¹¹³

The British Foreign Secretary’s statement in a message posted on social media on 23 September that Azerbaijan had “liberated” the occupied territories of Azerbaijan created negative reactions in Armenia. The Armenian Ambassador to the UK contacted the British Foreign Office and asked whether there was a change in the UK’s policy on “ethnic cleansing”.¹¹⁴ The Armenian press also called the British minister “treacherous”.

Mirzoyan attended the Warsaw Security Forum on 1 October.¹¹⁵ This was a first for an Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Heads of government of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) member states met in Yerevan on 1 October to attend the organization’s Intergovernmental Council Session and the Plenary Session of the Eurasian Economic Forum.¹¹⁶

On 3 October, Prime Minister Pashinyan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan visited Paris to attend the Meeting of French Speaking Countries (Francophonie).¹¹⁷ When French President Emmanuel Macron’s previously promised visit to Yerevan did not materialize, this was the occasion for the meeting Pashinyan had hoped for.

On 12 October, the EU Delegation in Yerevan announced that the EU would now provide €30 million to bolster Armenia’s budget, following €10 million in defense aid.¹¹⁸

113 “Armenian Defense Minister Visits China”, *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, September 12, 2024, <https://www.azatoryun.am/a/33117715.html>.

114 “UK Foreign Secretary Says Azerbaijan ‘Liberated’ Nagorno-Karabakh; Yerevan Reportedly Seeks Clarification from Foreign Office”, *Asbarez*, September 20, 2024, <https://www.asbarez.com/uk-foreign-secretary-says-azerbaijan-liberated-nagorno-karabakh-yerevan-reportedly-seeks-clarification-from-foreign-office/>.

115 “Participation of the Foreign Minister of Armenia in the Warsaw Security Forum”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Armenia*, October 2, 2024, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/10/02/Mirzoyan_WSF/12879.

116 “Armenia Hosts EEU Prime Ministerial Meeting”, *ArmenPress*, October 1, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1201110>.

117 “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Working Visit to the French Republic”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, October 3, 2024, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2024/10/03/Nikol-Pashinyan-visiting-France/>.

118 “Head Of EU Delegation to RA: We Will Unlock The Full Potential of Armenia-EU Relations”, *News.am*, October 12, 2024, <https://news.am/eng/news/847010.html>.

President Khachaturian visited Turkmenistan on 10 October to attend an international forum in memory of Makhtumkuli Fragi.¹¹⁹ Khachaturian then paid an official visit to Kazakhstan on 14 October.¹²⁰

On 7 November Pashinian attended the fifth summit of the European Political Community held in Budapest. Pashinian paid a visit to Vatican on 18 November and praised Armenia's "special" relationship with the Vatican as he was received by Pope Francis. Germany's Foreign Minister paid a days visit to Armenia on 19 November on her way to COP29 meeting in Baku. President of Poland paid a state visit to Armenia on 25 November.¹²¹

4. Relations with Türkiye

The ongoing normalization process continued to have an impact during the period, with high-level contacts and mutual media reports reflecting the softening atmosphere. On 31 May, Armenian media reported that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said the following at the Efes-2024 exercise: "Armenia must get rid of the pernicious influence of third countries and its diaspora abroad, which will bring it closer to peace. The Armenian people must realize that their future is tied to the countries of the region, neighbors with whom they have coexisted for centuries. So it will be in the future. Armenia must also have the courage to do what is necessary."¹²²

Supported by the West, Armenia continued to demand the immediate opening of the border crossing, even in a limited manner, as a concrete step in the normalization process at all levels throughout the period. In an interview with the press on 11 June, Ruben Rubinyan, the Armenian special envoy for the normalization process, complained that despite the agreement reached in July 2022, the Turkish side had not taken steps to open the border crossing with Armenia.¹²³

119 "Working visit of the President Vahagn Khachaturyan to Turkmenistan", *The President of the Republic of Armenia*, October 10, 2024, <https://www.president.am/en/foreign-visits/item/2024/10/10/President-Vahagn-Khachaturyans-working-visit-to-Turkmenistan/>.

120 Adlet Seilkhanov, "Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan to Pay Official Visit to Kazakhstan", *"Kazinform" International News Agency*, October 12, 2024, <https://en.inform.kz/news/armenian-presidentvahagn-khachaturyan-to-pay-official-visit-to-kazakhstan-9f2ef9/>.

121 Polish President Arrives in Armenia for Meetings with Top Officials," *Caliber.Az*, last modified November 25, 2024, <https://caliber.az/en/post/polish-president-arrives-in-armenia-for-meetings-with-top-officials>.

122 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Efes-2024 Tatbikatı'nın Seçkin Gözlemci Gününde Konuştu", *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı*, May 30, 2024, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-efes-2024-tatbikatinin-seckin-gozlemci-gununde-konustu>.

123 "Turkey Not Implementing Agreement on Border Opening with Armenia", *Asbarez*, June 11, 2024, <https://asbarez.com/turkey-not-implementing-agreement-on-border-opening-with-armenia/>.

On 18 June, President Erdoğan and Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan held a telephone conversation. They congratulated each other on Eid al-Adha and Vardavar feast and reaffirmed their political will to normalize relations without preconditions. The two leaders also emphasized the importance of the continuation of the talks between the two countries' special representatives and confirmed the agreements reached.¹²⁴ Three days after this call, Armenia announced that it officially recognized the independent State of Palestine¹²⁵ and this development was praised by Türkiye.

On 25 June, this time Foreign Ministers Hakan Fidan and Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation.¹²⁶ In a brief statement released by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was noted that the Ministers discussed the ongoing dialogue and regional developments and touched upon the issue of opening the border to Turkish and Armenian diplomatic passport holders and third country citizens within the framework of the normalization process.

In a joint press conference with the Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs in Tbilisi on 3 July, following his visit to and meetings in Georgia, Mirzoyan stated that there was a healthy dialogue between Yerevan and Ankara on relations with Türkiye, that Armenia wanted to fully restore its relations with Türkiye, and that it was time to implement the agreements reached earlier.¹²⁷

In an extensive interview with a magazine in early July, President Khachaturyan responded to questions about relations with regional countries and made the following statements about Türkiye:

“We have continuously pursued the normalisation of relations with Ankara. There have been some positive developments in this regard. Following the devastating earthquake in Turkey, Armenia was among the countries that provided humanitarian assistance, sending aid and rescue workers. Subsequently, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan visited Ankara.

124 “President Erdoğan, Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia Talk Over Phone”, *Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications*, June 19, 2024, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/englisshaberler/detay/president-erdogan-prime-minister-pashinyan-of-armenia-talk-over-phone>.

125 “Armenia says recognises State of Palestine”, *RFI*, June 21, 2024, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/middleeast/20240621-armenia-says-recognises-state-of-palestine?ysclid=m32zdr5u61271709>.

126 “Telephone Conversation between The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia And Türkiye”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Armenia*, June 25, 2024, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/06/25/mirzoyan_fidan/12712.

127 “Statement by The Foreign Minister of Armenia for The Press Following The Meeting with The Foreign Minister of Georgia”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, July 3, 2024, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-conference/2024/07/03/fms_armenia_georgia/12729.

There have been multiple exchanges at the level of Foreign Ministers, as well as between the Prime Ministers and Presidents, and meetings between special representatives. We have agreed on some relatively small measures and are committed to improving relations.

However, we often feel that these relations are overtly dependent on our talks with Azerbaijan, which remains a significant obstacle.

From our side, we have made substantial efforts to demonstrate our commitment to normalising relations. Given that Turkey is our largest neighbor, normalising relations without preconditions is crucial.

We hope to have better opportunities now for establishing peace and accelerating this process, particularly in implementing agreements such as opening the borders for citizens of third countries, and ultimately, fully opening the borders.

Our common border, one of the few remaining closed borders from the Cold War era, has been shut since 1993, with brief openings on February 11st and 14th for earthquake relief delivery. However, it remains closed, reflecting a relic of the past that we hope to change.”

On 10 July, Armenian media reported that Türkiye’s Minister of Foreign Affairs H. Fidan, who attended the Shusha Summit of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) on behalf of the President of the Republic, expressed concern over the perceived unbalanced attitude of some Western countries in the efforts to improve Azerbaijan-Armenia relations.

When asked about President Erdoğan’s statement “just as we entered Karabakh and Libya” regarding Israeli aggression during a party meeting in Rize on 28 February, Pashinyan said on 31 August that he did not want to comment on this issue at a time when there is some positive, albeit slow progress in Armenian-Turkish relations, but that he could say the following in order not to appear to be avoiding the issue:

“We had said in the past officially too, during the 44-day war our military and intelligence saw Turkish flags, Turkish servicemen, Turkish commandos, high-ranking officers in multiple locations, and let’s not forget that the large-scale Azerbaijani-Turkish military exercises took place before the 44-day war, and Turkish F-16s and pilots were airborne during the entire war, they were serviced by Turkish personnel”¹²⁸

128 “Prime Minister on Erdogan’s Statement Regarding Turkey’s Participation in 44-day War”, *Lurer*, August 31, 2024, <https://www.1lurer.am/en/2024/08/31/Prime-Minister-on-Erdogan-s-statement-regarding-Turkey-s-participation-in-44-day-war/1180037>.

The Armenian Bar Association submitted a formal complaint with the US administration under the “Magnitsky Sanctions” against the SADAT (International Defense Consultancy Construction Industry and Trade Inc.) organization in Türkiye and its Chairman.¹²⁹

In early August, Minister of Foreign Affairs Fidan’s interview¹³⁰ published in the *Sabah* newspaper, in which he stated that the border with Armenia could be opened if Azerbaijan and Armenia normalize their relations, was covered in the Armenian press.

The Special Representatives of Türkiye and Armenia held their fifth meeting on 30 July, for the first time without a third party, at the joint border crossing of Alishan-Margara. Below is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement regarding this meeting:

“On July 30, Special Representatives for the Normalization Process between Türkiye and Armenia, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia Ruben Rubinyan held their fifth meeting on the Alishan-Margara crossing on the border of the two countries.

They reconfirmed the agreements reached at their previous meetings.

Furthermore, they agreed to assess the technical requirements to enable functioning of Akyaka/Akhurik railroad border gate in line with the regional developments as well as to simplify their mutual visa procedures for diplomatic/official passport holders.

Finally, they reemphasized their agreement to continue the normalization process without any preconditions towards achieving the ultimate goal of full normalization between their respective countries”¹³¹

It was reported in the Armenian press that the 12th annual religious service was held at the Akdamar Church on 8 September, that the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul presided over the service, and that many Armenians from Türkiye and abroad attended the service.¹³²

129 “Armenian Bar Association Files Global Magnitsky Sanctions Complaint Against Turkey’s SADAT”, *Armenian Bar Association*, September 23, 2024, <https://armenianbar.org/2024/09/23/armenian-bar-association-files-global-magnitsky-sanctions-complaint-against-turkeys-sadat/>.

130 “Dışişleri Bakanı Fidan, Sabah’a Konuştu: İsrail, Maliyet Ödemeden Durmayacak”, *Sabah*, August 1, 2024, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/galeri/gundem/disisleri-bakani-fidan-sabaha-konustu-israil-maliyet-odemeden-durmayacak/20>.

131 “No: 152, 30 July 2024, Regarding the Fifth Meeting of the Special Representatives for the Normalization Process between Türkiye and Armenia”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, July 30, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-152_-turkiye-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcilerinin-besinci-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa

132 “The 12th Liturgy Was Held in the Armenian Holy Cross Church of Aghtamar Island, in Which the Delegation of Western Armenia also Participated”, *Western Armenia TV*, September 10, 2024, https://westernarmeniatv.com/en/society_en/the-12th-liturgy-was-held-in-the-armenian-holy-cross-church-of-aghtamar-island-in-which-the-delegation-of-western-armenia-also-participated/.

In an interview with a Greek Cypriot newspaper on 28 September, the Armenian Ambassador to Greece accredited to the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC) stated that it is important to settle Armenia-Türkiye relations as part of the settlement of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and that this would contribute to the establishment of a stable peace in the region.¹³³

Speaking on 10 September at the “Yerevan Dialogue Forum”, Special Representative Rubinyan said:

“There is a misunderstanding about the state of Armenia-Turkey relations in the outside world. Many people think that the reason for the lack of normal diplomatic relations between the two countries is the historical problems, but this is not the case. Armenia has always been ready and is ready to have regular relations with Turkey, to establish diplomatic relations, to open the border. If our Turkish neighbors have political will, we can have regular relations even tomorrow.”¹³⁴

Speaking at the same forum, former Grand National Assembly of Türkiye deputy G. Paylan argued that “The Turkish cities and settlements near the border of Turkey and Armenia are very poor. Therefore, these cities are waiting for the Armenian-Turkish border to open, because it would be beneficial for them.”¹³⁵ On 20 September, Rubinyan met with US Deputy Secretary of State J. Huck, accompanied by L. Bono and C. Prince, during their visit to Armenia. The statement said that regional security issues and the Armenia-Türkiye normalization process were discussed.¹³⁶

In a speech on 23 September, Rubinyan stated that the EU Ambassadors accredited in Armenia conducted a fact-finding visit to the Armenia-Türkiye border, that a senior Armenian official briefed them on the border crossing works, that the border crossing was ready on the Armenian side, but that no steps had been taken by the Turkish side to implement the agreement reached. He added:

“The Armenian side is ready for open borders if Turkey shows political will.¹³⁷ The reason for this is definitely not the lack of political will on

133 “Turkey’s Normalization of Relations with Armenia Will Contribute to Azerbaijan Acting More Constructively in Negotiations: Ambassador Mkrtychyan’s Interview with Financial Mirror”, *ArmenPress*, June 28, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1194704>.

134 “If Turkey Shows Political Will, We Can Have Normalized Relations Even Tomorrow: Rubinyan”, *Lurer*, September 10, 2024, <https://www.1lurer.am/en/2024/09/10/If-Turkey-shows-political-will-we-can-have-normalized-relations-even-tomorrow-Rubinyan/1185210>.

135 “Garó Paylan Weighs in on Aliyev’s ‘Biggest Fear’ And Erdogan’s Deliberations Regarding Armenian Border Opening”, *ArmenPress*, September 11, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1199587>.

136 “Ruben Rubinyan meets with U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Joshua Huck”, *Lurer*, September 20, 2024, <https://lurer.com/article/596455/en?ysclid=m330n7a4nn40087561>.

137 “EU Ambassadors Visit ‘Margara’ Checkpoint on Armenian-Turkish Border”, *Arka News Agency*, September 23, 2024, https://arka.am/en/news/politics/eu_ambassadors_visit_margara_checkpoint_on_armenian_turkish_border/.

the Armenian side. The Armenian side has that political will, and we are ready to have established diplomatic relations tomorrow, to have open borders, and we hope that we will see a similar position and appropriate action from Turkey.”

It has once again been observed that the Special Envoy did not take into account the steps that the Turkish side has stated in the most authoritative terms which Armenia is expected to take for of peace and stability that he attempts to seek support for pressure against Türkiye from third parties.

Rubinyan reiterated these allegations with more accusatory statements on 12 October, saying, “The lack of political will in Ankara is preventing the normalization of relations.” Speaking at a conference in Yerevan, he stated:

“There is a misperception in Turkey that the Armenian Diaspora’s stance has been or remains an obstruction on the path of the Armenia-Turkey normalization. On numerous occasions it has been proven that that it is not the case. It wasn’t that way in the early 2010s, when the so-called football diplomacy was underway, when the protocols were signed. At that time the Armenian government was ready to immediately normalize relations with Turkey without preconditions. The only obstruction in the Armenia-Turkey normalization is the lack of political will in Turkey itself.”¹³⁸

These were unfortunate statements coming from a special representative. It gives the impression that he is relying on distorted interpretations of facts and propaganda discourse. These statements undoubtedly reflect the eagerness to open the border with Türkiye as soon as possible in the troubled situation in Iran and Georgia.

Rubinyan, in his statement on the same issue published in the press on 27 October, used more moderate language, stating that all preparations on their side of the border had been completed, that he could not speak about the reason for Türkiye’s inaction, that although the normalization process with Türkiye was linked to the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations, it was being carried out through two separate diplomatic channels, and that the progress to be achieved with Türkiye could make a great contribution to the peace process with Azerbaijan.

138 “Ankara’s Lack of Political Will Obstructing Armenia-Turkey Normalization, Yerevan Says”, *Asbarez*, October 12, 2024, <https://asbarez.com/ankaras-lack-of-political-will-obstructing-armenia-turkey-normalization-yerevan-says/>.

Speaking at the Baku Security Conference held on September 14-15, İbrahim Kalın, Chief of the National Intelligence Organization, emphasized that a lasting peace in the region would contribute to the opening of the Zangezur Corridor, which would provide a direct transport link along the Azerbaijan-Armenia-Nakhichevan-Türkiye-Europe route.¹³⁹

In a speech on 18 September, Pashinyan stated that Armenia should establish diplomatic relations with Türkiye and open the border:

“If I were to put myself in the role of an observer following the discussions in Türkiye, I wouldn’t say that there’ve been very big changes in perceptions, but there have been changes in some perceptions in Türkiye, it is obvious. And I can’t underestimate the discussions and negotiations taking place between the special representatives of Armenia and Türkiye, which don’t have big results practically but it is very important that the two countries are communicating. And the things that were being discussed through public statements in the past, now we have the opportunity to discuss, clarify and receive clarifications also through diplomatic channels.”¹⁴⁰

On 24 September, President Erdoğan, who was in the US for the UN General Assembly, met with Pashinyan, who was also in the US to attend the UN General Assembly, at the Turkish House in New York.¹⁴¹ According to the information provided by Armenia on the meeting, the two leaders reviewed in detail the agreements reached between Ankara and Yerevan since 2022 and agreed to create a new impetus to the normalization process. Pashinyan informed President Erdoğan regarding the current situation in the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiation process and said that Azerbaijan had rejected his several proposals to sign a partial peace agreement. In an English statement issued by the Presidency, it was stated that significant progress has been made towards an unconditional normalization between Türkiye and Armenia, that President Erdoğan expressed sincere support for the continuation of the dialogue process, and that the President emphasized that Ankara supports the establishment of a lasting peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia and lasting neighborliness between the two countries in the coming period. In his speech at the UN General Assembly, President Erdoğan also stated that the developments in the

139 Tuğba Altun, “Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Crucial for Caucasus Stability, Says Turkish Intelligence Chief”, *Anadolu Agency*, September 17, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/armenia-azerbaijan-peace-crucial-for-caucasus-stability-says-turkish-intelligence-chief/3332315>.

140 “Armenia PM: Not Big but Certain Change of Perceptions Taking Place in Turkey”, *News.am*, September 18, 2024, https://news.am/eng/news/843027.html#google_vignette.

141 “President Erdoğan Meets with PM Pashinyan of Armenia”, *Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*, September 24, 2024, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/153707/president-erdogan-meets-with-pm-pashinyan-of-armenia>.

Azerbaijan-Armenia peace process would have a positive impact on the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process.¹⁴²

The anti-Pashinyan opposition in Armenia and their supporters in the Diaspora heavily criticized Pashinyan's visit to the Turkish House and his posing with the President's book.

In a statement to *Anadolu Agency* on 30 September, Armenian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vahan Kostanyan expressed Armenia's satisfaction with the "positive dynamics" in the normalization process with Türkiye following the two leaders' meeting in New York. He reiterated Armenia's readiness for "full normalization" of relations, and said that the opening of the Kars-Gyumri railway could be a new gateway for Armenia to Europe and for Türkiye to Central Asia and China.¹⁴³

Asked by a member of the parliament what measures the government is taking in a situation where Iran is drawn into a war in the Middle East and Georgia's relations with the West are deteriorating, Pashinyan replied on 2 October that the Armenian government has a balanced approach in its foreign policy. For example, its participation in the 3+3 Platform was initially criticized, but it was the right decision and fits into the logic of regional cooperation. He further noted that the Armenia-Iran neighbor relations are natural, not a political choice, and stem from the natural ties between the two neighboring states, the same can be said about the relations with Georgia, and that currently Armenia's efforts are focused on improving its relations with Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and that the only goal of all these efforts is to ensure the security of the country.¹⁴⁴ He concluded his remarks by saying "Throughout our history of independence, we have placed all our hopes for the security of the state on the soldier. However, this approach is wrong, it does not happen. The only guarantee of the security of our state is peace and the presence of normal relations with neighbors, there are simply no other guarantees."

In an interview with the press on 12 October in Turkmenistan, where he was attending an international forum, Armenian President Khachaturian focused on Türkiye-Armenia relations, stating that both countries share the same perception that a new phase in relations is developing with the normalization process. Khachaturian noted with satisfaction that he had a brief meeting with

142 "‘Gazze’de Sadece Çocuklar Değil, Aynı Zamanda Birleşmiş Milletler Sistemi Ölüyor”, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı*, September 24, 2024, <https://www.tcgb.gov.tr/haberler/410/153686/-gazze-de-sadece-cocuklar-degil-ayni-zamanda-birlesmis-milletler-sistemi-oluyor->

143 Rabia İclal Turan, "Armenia Ready for 'Full Normalization' with Türkiye, Welcomes 'Positive Dynamics'", *Anadolu Agency*, September 28, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/armenia-ready-for-full-normalization-with-turkiye-welcomes-positive-dynamics-/3344531#>.

144 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "Armenia's Foreign Policy 'on The Right Track' – PM", *Public Radio of Armenia*, October 2, 2024, <https://en.armradio.am/2024/10/02/armenias-foreign-policy-on-the-right-track-pm/>.

the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly who attended the meeting and that they discussed common issues such as peaceful coexistence, the opening of borders and the establishment of diplomatic relations, and that the aspirations and perceptions of both sides were the same. Khachaturian also emphasized the importance and urgency of opening the borders of the two countries to third country citizens and holders of diplomatic passports, and reiterated the known position on the opening of transport routes with Azerbaijan within the framework of the “Crossroads of Peace” project.¹⁴⁵

The Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly met with his Armenian counterpart in Geneva on 14 October and emphasized the importance Ankara attributes to the corridor linking Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan and Türkiye via Armenia.¹⁴⁶

The Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, who attended the International Road Federation World Congress in Istanbul, held a bilateral meeting with the Turkish Minister of Transport and Infrastructure on 15 October.¹⁴⁷ The Armenian press gave wide coverage to this meeting, stating that although the content of the meeting was not disclosed, it was important that the two ministers met.

In a brief statement released by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 17 October, it was announced that the third meeting of the 3+3 South Caucasus Regional Cooperation Platform will be held in Istanbul on 18 October, and that the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iran and Russia will participate in the meeting hosted by the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In his opening speech on 18 October, Minister of Foreign Affairs Fidan stated that the third meeting of the South Caucasus Regional Cooperation Platform was based on regional ownership, that the countries of the region were in the best position to solve the problems they faced, and that the main purpose of the platform was to meet the need for a forum where all issues of concern to the South Caucasus could be discussed. Minister Fidan added that at the end of the meeting, they envisioned the publication of a joint statement reflecting Türkiye’s vision and covering the main issues discussed at the meeting.¹⁴⁸

145 “Armenia-Türkiye Normalization Could Become Reality in Foreseeable Future, Says President Khachaturyan”, *ArmenPress*, October 12, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1202129>.

146 Astghik Bedevian, “Turkey Insists on Azeri Corridor Through Armenia”, *Azatoryun Radiokayan*, October 15, 2024, <https://www.azatoryun.am/a/33159524.html>.

147 Aline Grigoryan, “Armenia’s Minister of Territorial Administration Meets With Turkish Minister of Transport and Infrastructure”, *Finport*, October 16, 2024, https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=51388&lang=3&ysclid=m3318981he60903565.

148 Muhammet Tarhan, Sümeyye Dilara Dinçer, “Bakan Fidan: Güney Kafkasya’ya Bakışımızın Temelinde Bölgesel Sahiplenme Anlayışımız Bulunmakta”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, October 18, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/bakan-fidan-guney-kafkasyaya-bakismizinin-temelinde-bolgesel-sahiplenme-anlayisimiz-bulunmakta/3366083>.

Following the conclusion of the meeting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the following statement on 18 October:

H.E. Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, hosted the third meeting of the 3+3 Regional Cooperation Platform, held in İstanbul on 18 October 2024.

The Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iran, and the Russian Federation participated in the meeting.

The primary objective of this platform is to enhance multilateral cooperation in the South Caucasus, based on mutual benefit and guided by the principle of regional ownership.

The meeting addressed matters regarding the establishment of lasting peace and stability, as well as regional development in the South Caucasus. An exchange of views was held on deepening regional cooperation through concrete projects.

A Joint Declaration was adopted at the end of the meeting.

The Joint Declaration emphasized the contributions of regional economic cooperation to confidence building between countries, as well as to prosperity and stability. It was agreed to explore cooperation opportunities in the fields of transport, communication, trade, energy, investment, and connectivity.

The Declaration also underscored the importance of promoting peace and stability in the region through dialogue.

Following the meeting, the Ministers were received by President Erdoğan.

Türkiye will continue to collaborate with the countries of the region to promote lasting peace and strengthen cooperation in the South Caucasus.¹⁴⁹

Below is the text of the joint statement issued at the end of the meeting:

149 “No: 216, 18 October 2024, Regarding the Third Meeting of the 3+3 Regional Cooperation Platform in İstanbul”, *Ministry Of Foreign Affairs of the Republic Of Türkiye*, October 18, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_216_istanbul-da-duzenlenen-3-3-guney-kafkasya-bolgesel-isbirligi-platformunun-ucuncu-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa

In the Meeting, the Ministers:

- 1- Recalled the previous meetings of the 3+3 format held in Moscow and Tehran.
- 2- Emphasized the significance of reconvening the 3+3 Regional Cooperation Platform amidst the current complex developments that endanger regional and international peace and stability and agreed to further enhance cooperation within the 3+3 format.
- 3- In light of the crucial necessity for having good neighborly relations that stem from joint endeavors to realize mutual interests, reaffirmed the importance of the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, inviolability of internationally recognized borders, non-interference in internal affairs, prohibition of the threat or use of force and respect for human rights, based on all the principles of the United Nations Charter.
- 4- In line with the primary role of the Regional Countries and highlighting the importance of dialogue, seizing regional cooperation opportunities, and the ability to frankly converse on prominent international issues, discussed the outstanding issues that concern the region.
- 5- Commended the positive dynamics in normalization and development of relations between all the countries of the region.
- 6- Stating the constructive role regional economic cooperation plays in regional confidence building, prosperity, and stability, which in turn benefits all the peoples of the region by providing economic and commercial development opportunities by transforming conflictual topics; agreed to further explore opportunities of cooperation in the fields of transport, communication, trade, energy, investment and connectivity.
- 7- Underscored the importance of cultural cooperation and people-to-people contacts with a view to encouraging joint projects in education, science, tourism, culture, and sports.
- 8- Concurred that bilateral talks will complement multilateral consultations towards sustainable regional peace and economic development.
- 9- Reiterated that the doors of the 3+3 Platform will always be open for Georgia to join.

- 10- Exchanged views on the escalating situation in the Middle East and strongly condemned grave breaches of the principles of the UN Charter and international humanitarian law that could jeopardize regional peace and security, and urged for respect for international law, end to all aggressions and atrocities through immediate ceasefire, and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those affected.
- 11- Acknowledging the increase in terrorist and criminal activity in areas close to our region, expressed their commitment to cooperate against all forms and manifestations of terrorism in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions.
- 12- Underlined the importance of the regular ministerial meetings of the “3+3” Regional Cooperation Platform, as well as consultations in the areas of common interest towards enhancing and solidifying an environment of trust and cooperation in the region.
- 13- Agreed that the venue and the date of the next meeting will be agreed through diplomatic channels.

The Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation thanked the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye for the good reception and successful holding of this meeting.”¹⁵⁰

The Ministers participating in the meeting were also received by President Erdoğan.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for bilateral meetings between the participating ministers. In a brief statement released by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the 55-minute meeting of the Azerbaijani-Armenian Foreign Ministers, the parties “agreed to continue their efforts to finalize and conclude the agreement in the shortest possible period.”¹⁵¹

The statement issued by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the meeting of the Turkish-Armenian Foreign Ministers indicated that the parties

150 “The Third Meeting of the “3+3” Regional Cooperation Platform Joint Communique, 18 October 2024”, *Ministry Of Foreign Affairs of the Republic Of Türkiye*, October 18, 2024, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-third-meeting-of-the-3-3-regional-cooperation-platform-joint-communique-18-october-2024.en.mfa>

151 “Azerbaijani and Armenian Foreign Ministers Agreed to Continue Negotiations on Peace Agreement”, *Azertag*, October 18, 2024, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/azerbaijani_and_armenian_foreign_ministers_agreed_to_continue_negotiations_on_peace_agreement-3236218.

discussed the issues on the bilateral agenda and the ongoing Armenia-Türkiye dialogue with the goal of fully normalizing the relations, and that Mirzoyan confirmed the importance of implementing the agreements reached in this process.¹⁵² Mirzoyan, in his speech earlier in the meeting, also expressed his satisfaction with the completion of the border crossing works on his side and the developments on the Gyumri-Kars railway.

Mirzoyan also held a bilateral meeting with the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, the principled approach of opening regional economic and transportation links within the framework of respect for sovereignty and authority was reaffirmed.¹⁵³

“We have proposed to our Turkish and Iranian colleagues that Yerevan and Baku use the 3+3 platform to complete the work on a peace treaty,” the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs told the press. Answering a question on the issue in the Parliament on 23 October, Mirzoyan explained: “There is no proposal on the table to use the 3+3 format as a platform for Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations. Even if such a proposal existed, Armenia does not consider it appropriate.”¹⁵⁴

Regarding the attack on Turkish Aerospace Industries headquarters in Ankara, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated on 23 October that Armenia opposes all forms of terrorism and such violent acts.¹⁵⁵

During the discussions of the 2025 budget in the parliament, on 31 October, FM Mirzoyan said, in response to a question, “International recognition of the Armenian genocide is not our number one priority. Studying the tragic holes in history, the Armenian genocide, or making it the number one priority is certainly not in the agenda of the Foreign Ministry”.¹⁵⁶

Armenian media reflected on the 6 November statement of FM H. Fidan that Türkiye’s relations with Armenia would only improve after the signing of a

152 “The Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Türkiye”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, October 18, 2024, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2024/10/18/Mirzoyan_Fidan/12898.

153 “Armenia, Iran FMs Meet in Istanbul on Sidelines of 3+3 Platform”, *News.am*, October 18, 2024, <https://news.am/eng/news/848001.html>.

154 Nigar Abbasova, “Lavrov: Russia, Türkiye, Iran Offered Baku, Yerevan to Use 3+3 Platform to Complete Work on Peace Treaty”, *Report News Agency*, October 18, 2024, <https://report.az/en/foreignpolitics/lavrov-russia-turkiye-iran-offered-baku-yerevan-to-use-3-3-platform-to-complete-work-on-peace-treaty/?ysclid=m331kkym55869640423>.

155 “Armenian Foreign Ministry Condemns Armed Attack in Ankara”, *ArmenPress*, October 23, 2024, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1203065>.

156 “International Recognition of Armenian Genocide Not Number One Priority of the Government: FM,” Public Radio of Armenia, last modified October 31, 2024, <https://en.armradio.am/2024/10/31/international-recognition-of-armenian-genocide-not-number-one-priority-of-the-government-fm/>.

treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan as a shift from the commitment to hold talks without preconditions. In this context, President Erdogan's statement at the 11th summit of the Organization of Turkic States: "we hope and want that Azerbaijan's historic achievements, which were realized by the lives of martyrs, to be underscored around the negotiations table through the signing of the peace treaty" was quoted.¹⁵⁷

At an interview with an Azerbaijani TV channel on 25 November, PM Pashinian called for stronger ties with Türkiye, emphasizing that improving relations with neighboring countries was crucial for Armenia's stability, independence and economic development.¹⁵⁸

157 "South Caucasus Opens Doors to Peace - Turkish President," Trend News Agency, last modified November 6, 2024, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3965919.html>.

158 "FM Fidan, Aliyev Discuss Türkiye, Azerbaijan's Relations with Armenia," Daily Sabah, last modified July 5, 2024, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/fm-fidan-aliyev-discuss-turkiye-azerbajians-relations-with-armenia>.

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