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SPECIAL SECTION:

Conflict Narratives and Strategic Perceptions
in the Armenian Question

REVIEW OF ARMENIAN STUDIES

A Biannual Journal of History, Politics, and International Relations

Facts and Comments

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CRITICAL REVIEW

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Why the First World War Failed to End"

İlaha KHANTAMIROVA

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This 52nd issue of the *Review of Armenian Studies* appears at a time of renewed movement in the complex trajectory of Armenia's domestic and international orientation. The *Facts and Comments* section chronicles notable shifts of June–November 2025, highlighting the dynamic interplay between domestic contestation, diaspora engagement, and international diplomacy. The normalization efforts between Armenia and Türkiye, together with progress in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations, frame this edition's multidisciplinary contributions.

Building on the editorial innovations of previous volumes, we retain the **Commentary Section**, this time examining the perennial resonance of the Armenian issue within Turkish politics and diplomacy. **Prof. Dr. Ömer Turan's** essay explores the transition of the "Armenian question" from diplomacy to public debate, emphasizing the critical significance of normalization efforts in the aftermath of the Karabakh conflict.

The centerpiece of this volume is the special section "**Conflict Narratives and Strategic Perceptions in the Armenian Question.**" Here, contributors address the intersection of war, law, propaganda, and security:

Assist. Prof Dr. Zeynep Deniz Altınsoy evaluates the legal foundation and international implications of Azerbaijan's accusations regarding the use of child soldiers by Armenia in the Second Karabakh War, highlighting the nuances of international law and challenges of evidence.

Dr. Çağatay Balcı analyzes Iran's shifting defense industry strategy within the context of the Karabakh conflict, tracing an "exceptional approach" that signals broader regional transformation.

Assist. Prof. Yusuf Dinçel assesses the *Pro Armenia* newspaper's role as a tool of psychological warfare in the late Ottoman era, offering a revealing look at propaganda, perception management, and the international context shaping discourse on the Armenian question.

Complementing these studies, **PhD Candidate Minhazul Abedin's** article on the British naturalization of Turkish Armenians in Bengal highlights the

transnational legal and identity evolution of diaspora communities, broadening our understanding of citizenship and mobility beyond the immediate regional conflicts.

Finally, **Dr. İlaha Khantamirova's** critical review of Robert Gerwarth's, a commentary reviewing Robert Gerwarth's, "*The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End*" critiques the Eurocentric limitations of seminal postwar historiography, calling for greater engagement with Ottoman and Turkish sources to achieve balanced, multi-perspective analyses.

As regional actors explore normalization and peace, this issue remains committed to the rigorous, evidence-based scholarship and multidisciplinary analysis that have been core characteristics of the *Review of Armenian Studies* since its inception. We thank our contributors for deepening our insight into the region's enduring challenges and hope this edition inspires further informed dialogue and research.

FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

Alev KILIÇ*

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

Ahead of the elections to be held in June 2026, internal tensions have surged in Armenia and the accusations and adversity of the opposition towards Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan have intensified. The opposition has been led mainly by the Apostolic Church with the backing of Russia and the Diaspora, with the most prominent support coming from the Dashnak party's US-based lobby organization ANCA. As Pashinyan personally targeted the head of the Church and its hierarchy, Catholicos Karekin II has in return openly taken political initiative and introduced religion as a major force in politics, encouraged by the surge of Christian nationalism in the West.

Rapid and positive developments have taken place in the peace agreement negotiations process between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Following the highlevel talks in Abu Dhabi between the parties (one on one and with

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delegations), their first ever direct talks without an intermediary, the two sides met in Washington D.C. on 8 August with the participation of the US President, where it was pompously declared that the parties had agreed on the peace agenda. One of the two impediments to concluding the peace agreement, the Zangezur corridor issue, was overcome with the proposed formation of "TRIPP". As regards the change of Armenia's constitution, Pashinyan has promised to look into the matter after the elections.

In foreign relations, the adopted "balanced and balancing" as well as "multivector" foreign policy lines have provided the justification to expand ties in an extremely broad spectrum from the US to China, EU to SCO, to India, Russia, and Iran, conjuring the perception that foreign bonds are being put on auction.

Noteworthy, substantial developments have taken place in Türkiye-Armenia relations as well. Upon the invitation of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Pashinyan paid an official visit to Türkiye, the first of its kind. Special representatives of the normalization process met for the first time, in their sixth meeting, without an intermediary and in a capital city of their own, as the Turkish delegation crossed the closed border to reach Yerevan. The two sides acknowledged that they are ready to fully implement the normalization of their relations. It is understood that the timing is geared with the signing of the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Keywords: Pashinyan, Mirzoyan, Karekin II, Dashnaktsutyun (ARF), Diaspora, Erdogan, Azerbaijan.

Öz: Bu incelemede Haziran-Kasım 2025 tarihleri döneminde Ermenistan'daki iç gelişmeler, dış ilişkiler, Azerbaycan ile barış anlaşması imzalanması süreci ile devam eden normalleşme sürecinin ışığında Türkiye-Ermenistan arasındaki ilişkiler ele alınmaktadır. Ermenistan'da Haziran 2026'da yapılması öngörülen seçimlerin öncesinde iç politikada gerginlik artmış, muhalefetin Başbakan Nikol Paşinyan ve yönetimine yönelik suçlamaları ve karşıtlığı şiddetlenmiştir. Muhalefetin öncülüğünü Diasporanın (özellikle de Taşnak partisinin ABD merkezli lobi örgütü ANCA'nın) ve Rusya'nın desteğini alan Apostolik Kilise üstlenmiş, Paşinyan'ın Kilisenin üst düzey hiyerarşisini hedef alması sonucu Katolikos Karekin II öncülüğünde din, Hristiyan milliyetçiliğin Batı'da giderek ön plana çıkmasının da verdiği cesaretle, siyasette önemli bir unsur olarak ön plana çıkmıştır.

Azerbaycan ile barış anlaşması sürecinde hızlı ve olumlu gelişmeler yaşanmıştır. Tarafların bir aracı olmadan Abu Dabi 'de ilk kez üst düzey ikili ve heyetler arası doğrudan görüşmelerinin ardından, 8 Ağustos'ta Vaşington'da ABD Başkanının katılımıyla yaptıkları görüşme sonrası iddialı bir şekilde barış penceresinin açıldığı ilan edilmiştir. Anlaşmanın önündeki iki engelden biri olan Zengezur koridoru "TRIPP" adı ile giderilmiş, Ermenistan'da anayasa değişikliği konusunda ise Paşinyan seçimlerden sonra bu konuda adım atacağı vadinde bulunmuştur.

Dış ilişkilerde benimsenen "dengeli ve dengeleyici" ve "çok vektörlü" dış politika anlayışı ABD'den Çin'e, AB'den, ŞİÖ'ye Rusya'dan İran'a, Hindistan'a çok geniş bir yelpazeye yayılmış, adeta dış bağlantıların açık artırmaya çıkarıldığı görüntüsünü vermiştir.

Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkilerinde de dikkat çekici gelişmeler, ileri adımlar kaydedilmiştir. Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın daveti üzerine Paşinyan'ın Türkiye'ye yaptığı resmi ziyaret ile bir ilk yaşanmıştır. Normalleşme süreci özel temsilcileri de ilk kez ikili görüşmelerini aracısız ve kendi başkentlerinden birinde, Erivan'da yapmış, Türk heyeti kapalı olan kara sınırından geçiş yapmıştır. Tarafların ilişkilerin tam normalleşmeyi sağlamaya hazır oldukları kaydedilmiş, zamanlamanın Ermenistan-Azerbaycan barış anlaşmasının imzalanması ile bağlantılı olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Paşinyan, Mirzoyan, II. Karekin, Taşnaksutyun (EDF), Diaspora, Erdoğan, Azerbaycan.

1. Domestic Developments in Armenia

Small in numbers but well funded and vociferous opposition against Prime Minister Pashinyan and his administration has continued without losing pace or intensity. However, the traditional opposition, represented in parliament and led by the two former presidents, has lost credibility and trust among the public and has been unable to achieve unity among its own ranks. As a consequence, the opposition's leadership has been taken over by shady and extremist groups, fuelled by the support of radical and revanchist parties of the Diaspora, and the increasingly politicized Patriarchate-Apostolic Church. The Pashinyan-Church contention has reached extremes, with Catholicos Karekin II himself becoming a target.

Pashinyan's welcome by the Apostolic Archbishop during his visit to Estonia on 27 April and his statement "*Prime Minister, I pray for the success of your plans for peace and reconciliation with Armenia's neighbours*" was criticized by the Etchmiadzin, reminding the Archbishop that Catholicos Karekin II and the higher hierarchy opposed Pashinyan's policy.¹

During his term, Pashinyan has made serious accusations against senior clergy both on social media and in parliament. He has accused them of breaking their vows of chastity and of paedophilia. He has also claimed that the Catholicos has an illegitimate child and has called for him to resign.² On 2 June, the Catholicos called senior clergy to an emergency meeting. In a statement, the accusations against the senior clergy were vehemently condemned, and it was expressed that this shameful campaign was being carried out to silence the Church and reduce its influence on public opinion, and it was also alleged that this was being done in line with Azerbaijan's demands.³ During this period, when constitutional amendment debates were also ongoing, the Church's stance against the government appeared to be based on the suspicion that Pashinyan was engaged in a covert effort towards secularism by establishing a "coordination council" within the Church administration to keep the Church away from state affairs.

In response to reactions from the revanchist, radical, extremist sections of the

1 Gayane Saribekian, "Armenian Church Rebukes Pro-Pashinian Archbishop", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, April 29, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33400384.html>.

2 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Pashinyan Suggests that the head of the Armenian Church Has a Child", *OC Media*, June 2, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/pashinyan-suggests-that-the-head-of-the-armenian-church-has-a-child/>.

3 "Armenian Church Slams Pashinian's 'Shameful Campaign'", *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, June 2, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33432106.html>.

Diaspora in favour of the Church and against Pashinyan, High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Sinanyan stated on 5 June, *“Some fully agree with the Prime Minister’s statements, while others have expressed bewilderment. The Church is made up of its people, not just its hierarchy, and real harm comes from those within who violate its codes of conduct. It is a crucial stage in Armenia’s state-building process, where all institutions must be accountable to the people”*.⁴ During this period, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Dashnak Party and the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) have led the opposition against Pashinyan and support for the Church in the Diaspora.

Pashinyan outlined the principles of how he envisions the real Armenia, not the historical one, in his speech at the commemoration ceremony for the founding of the first republic on 28 May:

- Our identity is our state, our state is our identity.
- Armenia’s internationally recognized territory comprises 29,743 square kilometers territory.
- Let us not repeat the mistakes of the last 450 years in pursuing the ideal of historical Armenia.
- The security guaranteed by foreign forces is deceptive.⁵

In a speech delivered at Yerevan State University on 2 June, Pashinyan stated that Armenia had become more sovereign and strengthened its independence following the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh. In this context, he noted that, as of 1 March, border crossing points were now under the sole governance of Armenian forces.⁶

A Russian dimension has been added to Pashinyan’s conflict with the Church and the Catholicos. Samvel Karapetyan, a wealthy businessman with dual citizenship, visited Etchmiadzin on 17 June, accusing Pashinyan of attacking the Church and declaring his readiness to do what was necessary in the

4 “The Church is Not a Hierarchical Elite, The Church is The People. Everyone Needs a Report to the Armenian People in Respect of Their Responsibilities, Zareh Sinanyan”, *Tert*, June 5, 2025, <https://tert.am/en/news/2025/06/05/zareh-sinanyan/4233293>.

5 “‘Today We Are More Sovereign and Independent Than Ever Before,’ Pashinyan’s Address”, *ArmenPress*, May 28, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1220828>.

6 Shoghik Galstian, “Pashinian Said to Call Loss of Karabakh Blessing For Armenia”, *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, June 3, 2025, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33433114.html>.

Church's defense. He was arrested on 18 June on charges of conspiracy.⁷ The Church protested and condemned this arrest. Interestingly, the Patriarch of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church also criticized Karapetyan's arrest.⁸ In a statement made on this occasion, Pashinyan expressed that certain "Russian circles" could be behind the "hybrid war" being waged in Armenia and that he was fighting against the loss of the Church's sanctity.⁹ Kremlin spokesperson Peskov announced on 20 June that they were monitoring the situation, that Karapetyan was a Russian citizen from their point of view, that they had no intention of interfering in Armenia's internal affairs, but that they were, of course, closely monitoring any developments concerning a Russian citizen.¹⁰ On 27 June, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on Armenia to respect religious sentiment and the principles of religious freedom.¹¹ On 30 June, Mirzoyan responded to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov's statement that attacks against the Church in Armenia were alarming, accusing Moscow of interfering in Armenia's internal affairs.¹²

Karapetyan, has been compared to Vardanyan, also with dual citizenship, who was brought into power in Nagorno-Karabakh at the time and is currently detained in Azerbaijan. During his detention, Karapetyan has continued his discourse against Pashinyan and the government, distanced himself from former opposition leaders, and on 15 August announced through his nephew that he would establish a party called "Our Way" and participate in the 2026 elections.¹³

The Armenian Investigative Committee announced on 23 June that a movement called the "Holy Struggle" had been established with the aim of committing terrorist acts and forcibly overthrowing the government, and that Archbishop Galstanyan was leading it. Galstanyan and 14 of his associates were arrested

7 "Business Magnate Samvel Karapetyan Jailed", *ArmenPress*, June 19, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1222714>.

8 Shoghik Galstian, "Karabakh War Report Classified Without Parliament Debate", *The California Courier*, October 7, 2025, <https://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/karabakh-war-report-classified-without-parliament-debate/>.

9 "Pashinyan Doesn't Rule Out 'Some Circles' in Russia Could Be Behind 'Hybrid War'", *ArmenPress*, June 18, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1222633>.

10 "Russia 'Closely Monitoring' Tycoon Samvel Karapetyan's Case, Says Kremlin", *ArmenPress*, June 20, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1222878>.

11 "TASS: Russian Foreign Ministry Urges Armenia to Respect Religious Sentiments and Principles of Religious Freedom", *News.am*, June 27, 2025, <https://news.am/eng/news/891183.html>.

12 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Armenia Urges Russia not to Interfere in its Internal Affairs", *OC Media*, June 30, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/armenia-urges-russia-not-to-interfere-in-its-internal-affairs/>.

13 "New Opposition Group Forming in Armenia to Challenge Pashinyan in 2026 Elections; 'Our Way' Says It Will Not Work With Former Leaders", *The Armenian Report*, August 15, 2025, <https://www.thearmenianreport.com/post/new-opposition-group-forming-in-armenia-to-challenge-pashinyan-in-2026-elections-our-way-says-it>.

on 25 June.¹⁴ The Supreme Spiritual Council, chaired by the Catholicos, issued a statement on 25 June expressing deep concern regarding the proceedings against Galstanyan and his associates, noting that the government's stance to date did not guarantee a fair process and that this created a false pretext for the authorities' anti-Church campaign.¹⁵ Pashinyan stated on his social media account, "*Law enforcement prevented a major and despicable 'criminal-oligarchic-clerical' plan to destabilize the Republic of Armenia and usurp power.*"¹⁶

The World Council of Churches (WCC) expressed "deep concern" on 8 July over the Armenian government's campaign against the leadership of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the arrest of two archbishops. Aram I, the Catholicos of Antelias in Lebanon, stated, "*Its a shame. I will come to Armenia, meet with Karekin II and the Prime Minister to find solutions to the current situation.*", but no such visit took place during that period.¹⁷ The European Union has noted that the matter is an internal affair of Armenia.

On 26 June, a judicial investigation was launched against Archbishop Ajapahyan for stating in an interview that "A military coup d'état must be carried out in Armenia."¹⁸ Tensions arose when security forces attempted to arrest him at the Catholicosate in Etchmiadzin. The following day, Ajapahyan turned himself in and was arrested. On 3 October, he was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of attempting a coup.¹⁹

The 198th anniversary of the battle and victory, commemorated at the Monument to the "Heroes of Oshakan" near Etchmiadzin, where Russian troops and Armenian volunteers defeated the larger Iranian army on 17 August 1827 and liberated the "holy Etchmiadzin" from occupation, was reported in the press.²⁰

14 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Armenia Raids Opposition Homes and Detains Archbishop Galstanyan for 'Plotting Coup'", *OC Media*, June 25, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/armenia-raids-homes-of-opposition-figures-and-detains-archbishop-galstanyan-for-plotting-terrorist-attacks-and-coup/>.

15 "Supreme Spiritual Council Issued a Statement", *Armenian Apostolic Holy Church Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin*, June 25, 2025, <https://www.armenianchurch.org/en/news/supreme-spiritual-council-issued-a-statement/11864>.

16 "'Criminal-Oligarchic-Clerical' Coup Plot Thwarted, Says Pashinyan", *ArmenPress*, June 25, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1223240>.

17 "Aram I Calls for Ending 'Unhealthy Atmosphere' in Armenia", *ArmenPress*, July 9, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1224382>.

18 "Senior Clergyman Under Investigation for Advocating Overthrow of Government", *ArmenPress*, June 26, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1223395>.

19 "Archbishop Mikayel Ajapahyan Sentenced to Two Years in Prison", *ArmenPress*, October 3, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1231279>.

20 Marianna Mkrtchyan, "Tribute Paid to Memory of Oshakan Battle Heroes in Armenia", *Arminfo*, August 18, 2025, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=93925&lang=3.

Following a warning from the State Ethics Committee, Pashinyan apologized on 17 August for certain remarks he had made regarding the head and leaders of the Church.²¹ In a statement on 28 August, he reiterated that he had not abandoned his efforts to secure the resignation and removal from office of the head of the Church.²²

On 23 August, marking the 35th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, which is part of the Constitution and contains expansionist and revanchist statements, Armenia's President Khachaturyan published an emotional and laudatory congratulatory message.²³ The Dashnak Party also made a comprehensive statement defending the importance of the declaration and emphasizing that it should be preserved in its entirety.²⁴ On the other hand, Pashinyan once again criticized the declaration, which was adopted 35 years ago under Soviet rule, explaining that this document contained contradictions that threatened Armenia's sovereignty.²⁵

With the cabinet reshuffle on 27 August, Arsen Torosyan was appointed Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, replacing Narek Mkrtchyan, who was appointed ambassador to the United States.²⁶ On 17 July, Hambardzum Matevosyan was appointed Minister of Environment.²⁷ The new ministers took office on 16 September after being sworn in at the Presidential Palace.

When journalists asked Pashinyan for his opinion on Israel's Prime Minister recognizing the "Armenian genocide," he responded on 27 August: *"The recognition of the Armenian Genocide by other countries does not provide Armenia with any dividends and does not serve the interests of the country. The statement had nothing to do with the interests of Armenia or its people."*

21 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Pashinyan Apologises to the Public for Insulting Church and Opposition", *OC Media*, August 18, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/pashinyan-apologises-to-the-public-for-insulting-church-and-opposition/>.

22 "Pashinyan Demanded the Resignation of the Catholics of All Armenians from His Post", *Izvestia*, August 28, 2025, <https://en.iz.ru/en/1944450/2025-08-28/pashinyan-demanded-resignation-catholics-all-armenians-his-post>.

23 "President Khachaturyan Congratulates on 35th Anniversary of Declaration of Independence", *ArmenPress*, August 23, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1227904>.

24 "ARF of Armenia Statement on 35th Anniversary of Declaration of Independence", *Asbarez*, August 25, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/arf-of-armenia-statement-on-35th-anniversary-of-declaration-of-independence/>.

25 "Prime Minister Issues Statement on 35th Anniversary of Declaration of Independence", *ArmenPress*, August 23, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1227902>.

26 "The Prime Minister Introduces Newly Appointed Minister Arsen Torosyan to the Staff of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, August 28, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/08/28/Nikol-Pashinyan-28-08/>.

27 "The Prime Minister Introduces Newly Appointed Minister of Environment Hambardzum Matevosyan", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, July 17, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/07/17/Nikol-Pashinyan-Minister-of-Environment/>.

And, in general, we need to understand: do we want the recognition or non-recognition of the Armenian Genocide to be a geopolitical pawn in the hands of others, which has nothing to do with the interests of our state and the interests of the people? Do we want the Armenian Genocide to be something expressed in an interview as a result of coincidence or confusion? I do not want us to put our martyrs in such a status. We must focus on the interests of our state."²⁸

At the government's 11 September meeting, it was decided to remove the symbol of Mount Ararat from the stamps used for border crossings in passports, and it was announced that the new stamps would be issued on 1 November.²⁹ The opposition launched a campaign emphasizing the sanctity of Mount Ararat in Armenian identity and its place in Armenian consciousness, viewing and opposing the decision as a new concession to Türkiye.³⁰ In his statement on 18 September, Pashinyan denied that there was any connection between the change in passport stamps and the normalization process with Türkiye.³¹

In a speech at a security forum in Yerevan on 15 September, Pashinyan stated that the armed forces were a last resort for the country's security, that essentially maintaining a balance of power against a potential enemy was not the main issue, and that there were many other measures and precautions that could be taken before resorting to military action.³² This statement provoked a reaction from the opposition, and Pashinyan was accused of appeasement.

On 16 September, the opposition party led by former President Sargsyan made a second attempt to pass a vote of no confidence against Pashinyan's administration, which, like the previous one, was unsuccessful.³³

28 "Armenia Has Not Gained Any Dividends from International Recognition of Armenian Genocide, Pashinyan Says", *Asbarez*, August 28, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/armenia-has-not-gained-any-dividends-from-international-recognition-of-armenian-genocide-pashinyan-says/>.

29 "Ermenistan, Ağrı Dağı Simgesini Pasaportlardan Kaldırma Kararı Aldı", *Hürriyet*, September 15, 2025, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/ermenistan-agri-dagi-simgesini-pasaportlardan-kaldirma-karari-aldi-42949575>.

30 Ruzanna Stepanian, "Armenians In Uproar After Removal Of Mount Ararat From Passport Stamps", *Asbarez*, September 20, 2025, <https://www.rferl.org/a/mount-ararat-passport-stamp-removal-armenia-turkey/33533794.html>.

31 "Armenian PM Denies Link Between Border Stamp Change and Türkiye Normalization", *ArmenPress*, September 18, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1229974>.

32 "One of the Pillars of Security Should be Legitimacy: Prime Minister Participates in the "Comprehensive Security and Resilience 2025" International Conference", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, September 15, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/09/15/Nikol-Pashinyan/>.

33 "Opposition Faction Proposes No-Confidence Motion Targeting Pashinyan", *Civilnet*, September 16, 2025, <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/974652/opposition-faction-proposes-no-confidence-motion-targeting-pashinyan/>.

In a declaration released on 20 September at its seventh congress, Pashinyan's Civil Contract Party declared that establishing the Fourth Republic in Armenia was a strategic task. The declaration outlined the coalition government's program for the 2026 elections in nine articles. The second article stated that if they secured a majority in the elections, they would initiate the process of adopting a new constitution. During his speech at the congress, Pashinyan described the new constitution as "the reform of reforms," criticized Catholicos Karekin II once again, and insisted on his dismissal.³⁴ In a vote at the congress, Pashinyan was re-elected as party chairman, receiving 758 votes out of 917 delegates.³⁵

Pashinyan underlined his proposal for a "Fourth Republic" in his speech at the congress. In a video message released on 8 October, he explained the differences between the fourth republic and the current regime as follows: *"Many people ask what the difference is between the third republic and the fourth republic. The difference is this: the third republic was founded on the logic of conflict, while the fourth republic is founded on the logic of peace. In the third republic, the idea that the constitution was adopted through the free will and vote of the people is highly questionable. In the fourth republic, there should be no such doubt at all. In the third republic, the notion that power belongs to the people is relative and formal; in the fourth republic, it must be clear and indisputable. And finally, the third republic was about dreaming of a homeland, searching for a homeland — searching for the homeland of our dreams. The fourth republic is about recognizing that the Republic of Armenia is the homeland of our dreams — and that there is no need to search for another."*³⁶

On 21 September, the 34th anniversary of the Republic of Armenia's independence, Pashinyan issued a written message. Relevant sections of the message, which highlighted the need to establish the Fourth Republic, are the following:

"On September 21, 1991, the following question was put to a referendum: 'Do you agree that the Republic of Armenia should be an independent democratic state outside the USSR?' and 94 percent of our people, voters, answered 'yes' and thus the Third Republic of Armenia was founded. Unfortunately, the life

34 "Civil Contract Declares Establishment of 4th Republic of Armenia as an Upcoming Strategic Task", *ArmenPress*, September 20, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1230150>.

35 "Prime Minister Pashinyan Re-Elected Chairman of the Board of Civil Contract Party", *ArmenPress*, September 22, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1230222>.

36 "Pashinyan Outlines Ideological Vision for 'Fourth Republic'", *ArmenPress*, October 8, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1231567>.

of the Third Republic did not turn out like that with the peace established on August 8, 2025, that dream has once again filled the Republic of Armenia, Having gone through suffering and sacrifice, today, here we are, we have reached this point, and this is what the agenda for establishing the Fourth Republic is about, about never missing the opportunity to fulfill a dream again."³⁷

While Independence Day messages expressed confidence in the developments recorded at the governance level and for the future, former leaders and the opposition voiced grave concern regarding the country's current situation.

On 25 September, Parliament Speaker Simonyan was asked whether his Civil Contract Party would be able to secure a majority in the 2026 elections. Simonyan answered by saying: *"If I used to think in the past that we would definitely get 51%, now I am sure of it. Especially after the August 8 Washington agreement, and considering the steps that have been taken — and will be taken — before the election, we will garner far more votes than we did in the 2021 election."*³⁸ (In the 2021 elections, the Civil Contract received 54% of the votes and won 71 seats in the 107-member parliament.)

On 13 October, Pashinyan congratulated the Mayor of Yerevan on the celebrations organized to mark the 2807th anniversary of the founding of "Erebuni-Yerevan".³⁹

On 15 October six priests were detained with the accusation of plotting coups against the government in another episode of the adversity with the Apostolic Church hierarchy politically opposing the Pashinyan administration. Addressing journalists on 16 October, Pashinyan rejected the opposition allegations of constitutional amendments linked to foreign policy and any connection between the clergy arrests and the peace process with Azerbaijan.⁴⁰

37 "Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Congratulatory Message on the 34th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Armenia", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, September 21, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2025/09/21/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech/>.

38 "Speaker of Parliament Confident of Landslide Victory in Next Year's General Election", *ArmenPress*, September 26, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1230649>.

39 "'A Celebration of Life and Peace': Pashinyan Applauds Yerevan's 2807th Anniversary Events", *ArmenPress*, October 13, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1231947>.

40 "Six Priests Detained in Armenia as Investigation into Church Figures Widens," Reuters, October 15, 2025, ; PSCR team, "The Church, the Kremlin, and Armenia's Tug-of-War with the Past," BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 160, October 23, 2025, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, <https://besacenter.org/the-church-the-kremlin-and-armenias-tug-of-war-with-the-past/>

The Dasnaks (ARF), very much hand in hand with the Apostolic Church policies, made an announcement on 17 October accusing Aram I, the Catholicos of Antelias, for sending an emissary to Pashinyan, expressing strong indignation both in the homeland and in the Diaspora.⁴¹

The Mayor of Gyumri, known to be an ally of the pro-Russian opposition, was detained on 20 October on bribery charges. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized Armenia as the new accusations against the Mayor also included his calls for closer ties between Armenia and Russia, inquiring why no one has been charged for advocating Armenia's accession to the EU.⁴²

A priest favoured by Pashinyan was defrocked by the leadership of the Apostolic Church on 21 October.⁴³

The Supreme Spiritual Council of the Apostolic Church, meeting on 4-7 November in Etchmiadzin under the presidency of Catholicos Karekin II, condemned "illegal pressures" and "unlawful persecution" targeting the Church and its clergy. While the meeting was going on, Pashinyan again accused Karekin II of illegitimacy on 6 November and said "the Armenian Apostolic Church has no Catholicos".⁴⁴

On 7 November, American TV commentator T. Carlson hosted detained Russian-Armenian billionaire entrepreneur, fierce opponent of Pashinyan, Karapetyan's nephew and blasted Pashinyan's dispute with the head of the Apostolic Church and Karapetyan's imprisonment as a global assault on Christianity in line with the radical elements of the Armenian Diaspora, linking the surging Christian nationalism with Armenian internal political issues.

The Statistical Committee of Armenia reported that, as of 1 October 2025, the permanent population of Armenia, according to current estimates based on the 2022 census, was 3,090,500 people.⁴⁵

41 "The Church, the Kremlin, and Armenia's Tug-of-War with the Past."

42 Protests in Armenia's Second-Biggest City as Mayor Detained for Bribery," Reuters, October 20, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/armenian-opposition-mayor-detained-after-prime-minister-vows-crackdown-2025-10-20/> ; Russia Calls Gyumri Mayor's Arrest Internal Affair of Armenia," Caliber.Az, October 22, 2025, <https://caliber.az/en/post/russia-calls-gyumri-mayor-s-arrest-internal-affair-of-armenia>

43 Defrocked Priest at Center of Crackdown in Armenia's Apostolic Church," Caliber.Az, October 20, 2025, <https://caliber.az/en/post/defrocked-priest-at-center-of-crackdown-in-armenia-s-apostolic-church>

44 "Armenian Authorities Crack Down on the Church, Again," OC Media, October 15, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/armenian-authorities-crack-down-on-the-church-again/>

45 "Armenia's Permanent Population Increases by 14,300 in 2025," Armenpress, November 6, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1234715>

During this period, Armenia's economic difficulties and need for foreign aid have increased. With Russia cutting off diamond and gold exports, Armenia's foreign trade volume dropped by 53% in the first four months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, reaching \$6.3 billion. In 2024, Armenia imported \$7.4 billion worth of precious stones and jewellery and exported around \$8 billion. This accounted for almost half of the approximately \$30.2 billion foreign trade volume. Russia remained Armenia's largest export destination with \$1.3 billion worth of goods. The United Arab Emirates ranked second with \$1.1 billion in exports. China came third with \$288 million worth of goods. Precious and semi-precious stones and minerals ranked the highest among export goods with approximately \$1.3 billion. Machinery and equipment ranked second with \$551 million, followed by processed food with around \$550 million.⁴⁶

According to an agreement with the United Arab Emirates announced on 8 October, the "Emarat" oil company, in partnership with the Armenian company "Mega Trade", has acquired the concession to establish and operate petrol service stations throughout Armenia.⁴⁷

2. Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Agreement Process

During this period, the peace agreement process entered a positive phase with bilateral high-level talks and developing dialogue. The amendment of the Armenian Constitution remains as the only obstacle to its signing.

Armenia's Prime Minister Pashinyan held a bilateral meeting with the President of Azerbaijan Aliyev on 16 May at the sixth summit of the European Political Community held in Tirana.⁴⁸ The meeting, the details of which were not disclosed, signified the positive development of the bilateral dialogue. Pashinyan afterwards emphasized on various occasions that peace would now prevail in the region. On the other hand, in a speech to parliament on 5 June, Mirzoyan contradicted his Prime Minister, stating that there was still

46 "Armenia's Foreign Trade Turnover Decreased by 52.9% in 4 Months, to \$6.3 Billion. China Ahead of the UAE in the Top Three", *Arka News Agency*, June 5, 2025, <https://arka.am/en/news/economy/armenia-s-foreign-trade-turnover-decreased-by-52-9-in-4-months-to-6-3-billion-china-ahead-of-the-uae/>.

47 Justin Varghese, "Emarat Expands into Armenia Through Partnership with MegaTrade", *Gulf News*, October 8, 2025, <https://gulfnews.com/business/retail/emarat-expands-into-armenia-through-partnership-with-megatrade-1.500299188>.

48 "Nikol Pashinyan, Ilham Aliyev Meet in Tirana", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, May 16, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/05/16/Nikol-Pashinyan-meeting-ilham-aliyev/>.

a slight risk of a new military conflict with Azerbaijan and that the risk of escalation would always exist without a peace agreement with Azerbaijan.⁴⁹ The Armenian National Committee-International (ANC-I) also expressed in its 16 June action plan statement that Azerbaijan could invade Armenia to open a land corridor to Nakhchivan, taking advantage of the Iran-Israel conflict, citing opposition leaders in Armenia as a source.⁵⁰

As per a decision adopted by Switzerland's parliament, an international conference was held in Bern on 26 May, hosted by the Christian Solidarity International (CSI) and initiated by Swiss parliamentarians, with the aim of protecting the rights of the Karabakh Armenians. The statement issued at the end of the meeting, which was also attended by two Armenian Catholicos', Karekin II and Aram I, called for urgent coordinated international action to protect Armenian religious and cultural heritage and human rights, and to ensure the future security of the Armenian people.⁵¹ The Archbishop of York, head of the Church of England, also expressed his concerns about the Armenian-Christian historical heritage in Karabakh on 29 May.⁵²

At the 51st session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Istanbul on 21-22 June, five resolutions concerning Armenia and the peace process were adopted. The resolution entitled "The Right to Return of Azerbaijanis Forcibly and Systematically Expelled from Current Territory of Armenia" was brought to the agenda for the first time. The other resolutions adopted were titled: "Solidarity with the Victims of the Khojaly Massacre of 1992", "Elimination of the Consequences of the Aggression of the Republic of Armenia Against the Republic of Azerbaijan", "Economic Support to the Republic of Azerbaijan" and "Destruction and Desecration of Islamic Historical and Cultural Monuments and Traces in the Territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a Result of the Aggression of the Republic of Armenia". In addition to these resolutions, the "Istanbul Declaration" was published, which welcomed the progress made

49 Shoghik Galstian, "Armenian FM Won't Rule Out Fresh 'Escalation' With Azerbaijan", *Azattyun Radiokayan*, June 5, 2025, <https://www.azattyun.am/a/33435010.html>.

50 "Statement by the Armenian National Committee-International Concerning the Imminent Threat to Armenia's Syunik Province Amid Regional Escalation", *Horizon Weekly*, June 16, 2025, <https://horizonweekly.ca/en/statement-by-the-armenian-national-committee-international-concerning-the-imminent-threat-to-armenias-syunik-province-amid-regional-escalation/>.

51 "Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno Karabakh Launched in Bern", *Asbarez*, May 27, 2025, <https://asbarez.com/swiss-peace-initiative-for-nagorno-karabakh-launched-in-bern/>.

52 Francis Martin, "Armenian Christian Heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh is Under Threat, Conference Hears", *Church Times*, May 29, 2025, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2025/30-may/news/world/armenian-christian-heritage-in-nagorno-karabakh-is-under-threat-conference-hears>.

in the process of normalizing relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, called on Armenia to remove the political and legal obstacles to the signing of a peace treaty, and expressed support for Azerbaijan's efforts to demine the lands where the population forcibly expelled by the Armenian attack lives and make them habitable. It also deemed Armenia's refusal to engage in dialogue with the Western Azerbaijan community "worthy of condemnation".⁵³

In a statement issued by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "deep disappointment" was expressed at this approach, described as "extremely one-sided", and it was emphasized that there is no place called "Western Azerbaijan" within Armenian territory and that there cannot be.⁵⁴ The opposition press noted that the statement was published hours after the Erdoğan-Pashinyan meeting in Istanbul on the same day. Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson stated on 30 June that they did not approve Azerbaijan's claim to "Western Azerbaijan" as stated in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's statement.⁵⁵

On 4 July, Pashinyan sent a congratulatory message to US President Trump on the occasion of Independence Day, expressing his confidence that the US would play a decisive role in ending the conflicts in the South Caucasus.⁵⁶ President Khachaturyan also attended the celebration hosted at the residence of the US Ambassador. For some time, the US press and leading think tanks had been reporting that the Trump administration had proposed in May that border and customs controls for the transit of people and goods via the Nakhchivan route be handed over to an American company. The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had refrained from denying this. In an interview on 10 July, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs finally stated that Armenia was not opposed to appointing foreigners and an international company to ensure regional outreach.⁵⁷

53 "Istanbul Declaration Adopted by the 51st Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (Under the Theme: the OIC in a Transforming World) (21 – 22 June 2025) (25th – 26th Dhu'l-Hijjah 1446H)", *OIC 51st Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers*, Accessed: October 22, 2025, <https://cfm51.oic-oci.org/2025/06/23/istanbul-declaration-adopted-by-the-51st-session-of-oic-council-of-foreign-ministers-under-the-theme-the-oic-in-a-transforming-world-21-22-june-2025-25th-26th-dhu%-CA%BBI-hijjah-1446h/>.

54 "Armenia "Deeply Disappointed" with "Distorted" Formulations in OIC Declaration - Foreign Ministry", *ArmenPress*, June 23, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1223096>.

55 "Iran Rejects OIC Statement Criticizing Armenia, Denounces "Western Azerbaijan" Language as Inappropriate And Suggestive of Azerbaijani Territorial Claims", *Zartong*, June 30, 2025, <https://zartongmedia.com/2025/06/30/iran-rejects-oic-statement-criticizing-armenia-denounces-western-azerbaijan-language-as-inappropriate-and-suggestive-of-azerbaijani-territorial-claims/>.

56 "Prime Minister Pashinyan Sends Congratulatory Message to US President", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, July 4, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/congratulatory/item/2025/07/04/Nikol-Pashinyan-Congratulations/>.

57 Akbar Novruz, "Armenian Deputy FM: Yerevan Open to Outsourcing Zangazur Corridor's Control to int'l Organization", *Azernews*, July 10, 2025, <https://www.azernews.az/karabakh/244480.html?>.

News reports that the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan would meet soon had been circulating in the press for some time and were not officially denied. Pashinyan and Aliyev did meet in Abu Dhabi, a “neutral” location, on 10 July. Without a mediator, the first direct bilateral and delegation-level talks lasted about five hours, and after the meeting, the parties issued the same statement. The statement indicated that the parties discussed various aspects of the normalization agenda between them, agreed that bilateral negotiations were the most efficient method for addressing all issues related to the normalization process, and agreed to continue such productive dialogue. Moreover, the leaders noted the progress made in the border demarcation process, instructed officials to continue working in this direction, and stated that they agreed to continue bilateral negotiations and confidence-building measures.⁵⁸

The US Secretary of State announced on 9 July, one day before the meeting, that the two countries could reach a peace agreement “very soon.” After the meeting, Kremlin Spokesperson Peskov expressed that Moscow welcomed the establishment of direct dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁵⁹ The Western press headlined this first direct meeting as a new chapter in the Caucasus and a historic rapprochement. The Armenian opposition press interpreted the main message from Abu Dhabi as meaning that there would be no war at this stage.

The steps taken to bring the two countries closer yielded results on 8 August in Washington. Azerbaijan’s President Aliyev and Armenia’s Prime Minister Pashinyan met on 8 August at the invitation of US President Trump. Following a trilateral meeting, two documents were signed under Trump’s mediation:

- Aliyev and Pashinyan signed a joint declaration consisting of seven articles. Its essence is the confirmation of both countries’ commitment to peace in line with the spirit and understanding of the Washington meeting.
- The 17-article “Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations,” which the two countries agreed upon in March, was initialed by the parties for later ratification.

58 “Foreign Ministry Presents Details on Pashinyan-Aliyev Meeting”, *ArmenPress*, July 10, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1224523>.

59 “Russia Says it Welcomes Armenia-Azerbaijan Direct Talks”, *ArmenPress*, July 10, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1224519>.

- The meeting also approved an agreement on the transportation route known as the Zangezur Corridor, now called the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity” (TRIPP), which connects Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan, and on entrusting the route to a US company for 49 or 99 years, but no details were disclosed. Responding to questions in Parliament on 10 September, Pashinyan explained that the agreement provided Armenia with access to the latest border and customs technologies and that the TRIPP project was only a matter of discussion between Armenia and the US.⁶⁰
- At the meeting, the two countries agreed to submit a joint written request to the OSCE Secretariat for the dissolution of the Minsk Group.

Within the framework of this historic meeting, three memoranda of understanding (MoU) were signed between Armenia and the US:

- The first concerns Armenia’s “Crossroads of Peace” project. It states that the US, with full respect for Armenia’s independence, territorial integrity, and inviolability of its borders, is interested in investing in the Crossroads of Peace project. Pashinyan presents the TRIPP agreement in this context.
- The second is related to cooperation in technological developments and artificial intelligence.
- The third is titled “Energy Security Partnership” and covers nuclear energy and power plants, as well as electric battery technology.⁶¹

The Washington meeting and the agreements reached have been positively received worldwide. The contentment expressed by Türkiye’s President and Minister of Foreign Affairs has been conveyed. The statement published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is as follows:

60 Siranush Ghazanchyan, “Full Text of Armenia–Azerbaijan Joint Declaration Released”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, August 9, 2025, <https://en.armradio.am/2025/08/09/full-text-of-armenia-azerbaijan-joint-declaration-released/>.

61 “Memorandums of Understanding Signed Between the Republic of Armenia and the United States”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, August 29, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/08/29/Nikol-Pashinyan-memorandum-08-08-2025/>.

“We welcome the progress achieved towards establishing a lasting peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the commitment recorded in Washington today (8 August) in this regard.

At a time when international conflicts and crises are intensifying, this step constitutes a highly significant development for the promotion of regional peace and stability. We commend the contributions of the US Administration in this process.

A historic opportunity has emerged for the South Caucasus to attain peace and prosperity. As Türkiye, we will continue to contribute to the efforts aimed at realizing this opportunity and support the dedicated endeavors of our brotherly Azerbaijan.”⁶²

Russia’s balanced and positive approach, characterized by “cautious optimism”, has been particularly noteworthy. Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister Overchuk stated that Moscow supports Armenia’s agreement with Azerbaijan on TRIPP, saying that the agreement is “an important contribution to strengthening peace in our greater Eurasian region”. Additionally, he explained “We view this issue in the following context: Armenia is our strategic ally and if Armenia believes that something is good for them, then we, of course, support Armenia here.”⁶³ On the other hand, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov stated in an interview afterwards that the agreement does not necessarily mean that the long-standing conflict between the two South Caucasus states will be resolved. Lavrov expressed in his statement, “*We need to see how the agreements will work, because all the enthusiastic reviews that were heard in the first few days after the meeting in Washington then somehow changed to skeptical assessments when the document was published. It turns out, not everything has been agreed upon there.*”⁶⁴

Naturally, there have been exceptions to this. The most vocal objection came from Iran. In addition to the statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing concern, a prominent political advisor made threatening and harsh remarks. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Tashnaksutyun

62 No: 167, 8 August 2025, Regarding the Peace Process Between Azerbaijan and Armenia, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, Accessed: October 22, 2025, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-167_-azerbaycan-ve-ermenistan-arasindaki-baris-sureci-hk.en.mfa

63 “Russian Deputy PM: Initialled Azerbaijan-Armenia Agreement to Strengthen Regional Peace”, *Caliber*, September 4, 2025, <https://caliber.az/en/post/russian-deputy-pm-initialled-azerbaijan-armenia-agreement-to-strengthen-regional-peace>.

64 “Russia Says Implementation of Armenian-Azerbaijani Initialed Deal ‘Remains to be Seen’”, *ArmenPress*, September 8, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1229071>.

(ARF) issued a statement on 9 August, describing the agreement as a blow to Armenia's sovereignty and listing a series of criticisms in its familiar revanchist and destructive attitude.⁶⁵ Similarly, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) made a statement along the same lines and launched an initiative to influence the administration through its lobbyists and supporters in Congress.⁶⁶ Catholicos Aram I of Antelias also indirectly expressed his discontent, suggesting that the Washington Agreement be presented to the public.⁶⁷ The Lemkin Institute was quick to join the revanchist bandwagon.⁶⁸

O'Brien, who served as Special Representative for the South Caucasus under US President Biden, also shared in the press his claim that the agreement gained nothing for Armenia, could not resolve the conflict with Azerbaijan, and placed Armenia in a more vulnerable position. Pashinyan condemned these statements, declaring that the Biden administration was weak and that Biden had failed to achieve what Trump had accomplished.⁶⁹

On 1 September, the OSCE Secretariat announced that 57 member countries, including the US, Russia and France, had unanimously decided to terminate the "Minsk process and its related structures". The closure process will be completed on 1 December.⁷⁰ The statement issued by Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this matter is as follows:

"We welcome the decision on the closure of the OSCE Minsk Process and related structures, taken by the OSCE Ministerial Council on 1 September 2025.

65 "Statement from the ARF-Dashnaksutyun Bureau", *Armenian Weekly*, August 9, 2025, <https://armenianweekly.com/2025/08/09/statement-from-the-arf-dashnaksutyun-bureau-2/>.

66 "ARF Eastern Region Condemns August 8 Agreements as Historic Betrayal", August 10, 2025, *Armenian Weekly*, <https://armenianweekly.com/2025/08/10/arf-eastern-region-condemns-august-8-agreements-as-historic-betrayal/>.

67 "Washington Agreement Must be Presented to Public – Aram I", *Alpha News*, August 18, 2025, <https://alphanews.am/en/washington-agreement-must-be-presented-to-public-aram-i/>.

68 "Statement on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Joint Declaration: This is No 'Peace Deal'", *Lemkin Institute of Genocide Prevention and Human Security*, August 31, 2025, <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/statement-on-the-armenia-azerbaijan-joint-declaration-%3A-this-is-no-%E2%80%99Cpeace-deal%E2%80%9D>.

69 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Pashinyan Accuses Biden Administration of Failing to do What Trump Achieved", *OC Media*, August 28, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/pashinyan-accuses-biden-administration-of-failing-to-do-what-trump-achieved/>.

70 "OSCE Ministerial Council Ends Minsk Process Activities", *Caucasus Watch*, September 3, 2025, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/news/osce-ministerial-council-ends-minsk-process-activities.html>.

This historic decision, made possible through the joint efforts of Azerbaijan and Armenia, constitutes an important milestone in the peace process between the two countries.”⁷¹

The revanchist and radical elements of the Diaspora, ANCA and the Armenian National Council-International (ANC-I) have harshly condemned the dissolution of the Minsk Group. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Tashnaksutyun (ARF) also claimed that Armenia’s approval of this decision was invalid under international law.⁷²

A US State Department official visiting Armenia announced on 11 September that they would contribute \$145 million in the first phase for TRIPP.⁷³

Following the Washington Agreement, TRIPP terminology became a subject of ongoing debate between Aliyev and Pashinyan. Pashinyan strongly opposed Aliyev’s designation of this route as the Zangezur Corridor, emphasizing on various occasions that the corridor concept would be interpreted by Azerbaijan as being outside Armenia’s control and sovereignty, and that it was impossible for them to accept this. During his visit to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 29 September, Pashinyan responded to a press question about whether the EU could participate in the TRIPP project, stating, “*TRIPP is being discussed in an Armenia-U.S. bilateral format. Any third party around whom Armenia and the U.S. reach an agreement can be involved. The EU is a reliable partner for Armenia. And we are keen for more and more reliable partners to be involved.*”⁷⁴

In his speech at the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Council of Heads of State in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 10 October, Pashinyan stated that the peace achieved with Azerbaijan was based on the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration, which is also the founding document of the organization, but that establishing peace did not mean that all issues had been resolved. He stated that the parties still needed to establish mutual commercial, economic,

71 No: 180, 2 September 2025, Regarding the Closure of the OSCE Minsk Process and Related Structures, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, Accessed: October 22, 2025, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-180_-agit-minsk-sureci-ve-bagli-yapilarina-son-verilmesi-karari-hk.en.mfa

72 “ANCA Condemns Dissolution of OSCE Minsk Group; Urges U.S. Leadership to Hold Azerbaijan Accountable”, *Armenian National Committee of America*, September 1, 2025, <https://anca.org/press-release/anca-condemns-dissolution-of-osce-minsk-group-urges-u-s-leadership-to-hold-azerbaijan-accountable/>.

73 “Armenian Transit Corridor Gets Initial Financial Infusion”, *Eurasianet*, September 12, 2025, <https://eurasianet.org/armenian-transit-corridor-gets-initial-financial-infusion>.

74 “Discussions on Trump Route Project Have Already Begun – Pashinyan”, *Arka News*, September 29, 2025, <https://arka.am/en/news/politics/discussions-on-trump-route-project-have-already-begun-pashinyan/>.

political and cultural ties and resolve humanitarian issues. He expressed his belief that although these were not easy tasks, they could be resolved over time with the confidence that peace provided.⁷⁵

Pashinyan held bilateral talks with the President of Azerbaijan on the sidelines of the meeting. According to press reports, the two leaders had a very cordial meeting and discussed further steps on peace and security issues, as reported by the Secretary General of the Organization.⁷⁶

On 13 October, Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Aliyev had a short meeting during the Sharm el-Sheikh International Peace Summit in Egypt. Speaking back in Yerevan, Pashinyan said on 31 October that *"the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan are still trapped in mutual mistrust and 'eternal enemy' narratives that reflect outdated geopolitical constructs. We must free ourselves from a worldview imposed on us by Soviet KGB agents. We have lived too long inside the mental boundaries others drew for us. It is time to think freely and peacefully about our place in the region"*.⁷⁷

On 9 November, Pashinyan reflected on the 44 day war with Azerbaijan and stated "I made a mistake not to recognize Karabakh as belonging to Azerbaijan earlier. It was likely that war would not have broken out". Responding to criticism from his predecessors over his handling of the issue, Pashinyan announced on 10 November that documents related to negotiations over the "Nagorno-Karabakh" issue would be made public before the end of the year.⁷⁸

3. Armenia's Foreign Relations

During the period, Armenia appeared to widely implement a balanced and stabilizing, multi-vector foreign policy approach. While visibly leaning toward the West, it has sought to project an image of not neglecting its relations with the East, North, and South.

75 "TRIPP Project Opens New Export and Import Opportunities for CIS Countries as Well: Pashinyan's Speech at CIS Council Meeting", *First Channel News*, October 10, 2025, <https://www.1lurer.am/en/2025/10/10/TRIPP-project-opens-new-export-and-import-opportunities-for-CIS-countries-as-well-Pashinyan-s-speech/1395287>.

76 "Yerevan, Washington Start Work to Implement TRIPP Project in Armenia," *Interfax*, November 17, 2025, <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/114855/>

77 "Pashinyan blames Soviet KGB for shaping Armenians' view of Turks and Azerbaijanis," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, OC Media, November 3, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/pashinyan-blames-soviet-kgb-for-shaping-armenians-view-of-turks-and-azerbaijanis/>

78 Emil Avdaliani, "With the TRIPP Turkey Is Set to Benefit Most in the South Caucasus," *Turkey Analyst*, October 19, 2025, <https://turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/738-with-the-tripp-turkey-is-set-to-benefit-most-in-the-south-caucasus.html>

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan paid a working visit to Brussels on 14 May and met with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas. The parties discussed opportunities for developing and deepening EU-Armenia relations and enhancing cooperation in specific areas. In a statement issued by the EU, it was said that EU-Armenia relations are deepening at an “unprecedented pace”.⁷⁹

A delegation led by the Minister of Defense paid an official visit to Germany on 12 May and attended the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial meeting in Berlin.

Secretary of the Security Council Grigoryan visited Iran to attend the International Security Forum on 17 May. He met with his Iranian counterpart, as well as the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and visited the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS).⁸⁰

Pashinyan and Mirzoyan attended the sixth summit of the European Political Community held in Albania on 19 May in Tirana.

On the occasion of the decision by Armenia and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) to open resident embassies in each other's capitals, the Speaker of the GCASC House of Representatives paid a visit to Armenia on 18-21 May. During her meeting with Mirzoyan, the strengthening of mutual cooperation on international platforms was discussed. During his meeting with his Armenian counterpart Simonyan, they agreed to elevate relations to the level of a strategic partnership.⁸¹

One month after the first joint military exercise between the two countries, the Iranian Minister of Defense paid an official visit to Armenia on 20 May.

In response to Mirzoyan's visit to Moscow on 21 January, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov visited Yerevan on 20-21 May. On 21 May, the two ministers signed the 2025-2026 Program of Consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries.⁸² The Russian Ministry

79 “Foreign Minister Mirzoyan, EU Top Diplomat Discuss Deepening Armenia-EU Partnership” *ArmenPress*, May 15, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1219644>.

80 Armenian Security Council Secretary, Iran's Foreign Minister Discuss Bilateral and International Issues”, *ArmenPress*, May 17, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1219911>.

81 Deputies of Inter-Parliamentary Committee on Cooperation between RA National Assembly and House of Representatives of Cyprus meet with delegation led by Annita Demetriou”, *Aravot*, September 19, 2025, <https://en.aravot.am/2025/05/19/359853/>.

82 Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Russia”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, May 21, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/05/21/Mirzoyan_Lavrov/13240.

of Foreign Affairs issued a press release on 22 May summarizing Lavrov's visit to Armenia. After the meetings, the parties held a joint press conference and answered questions from the press. Both ministers noted that although disagreements on some important issues remain, Armenia and Russia are allies. Lavrov said, *"In accordance with the instructions of our leaders, we are discussing very openly not only the issues positively perceived by both capitals that contribute to building mutually beneficial projects, but also the topics on which we have differing views."* They did not hesitate to disclose some of the issues on which they disagreed in front of the press, but gave the impression that these did not pose an obstacle to relations. In this context, Lavrov recalled that efforts were also underway to open a consulate in Kapan, on the southern border with Iran. No progress has been made on this issue during this period. On the other hand, France opened its honorary consulate in Kapan on 2 June.

Lavrov emphasized regional integration, making a specific reference to the development of diplomatic relations, the importance of economic cooperation, and the 3+3 Platform. By mentioning the EU and France by name, he criticized the West's unconstructive interest and expressed the necessity of Russia's continued military presence in Armenia. It was remarkable that Lavrov did not directly criticize the US in his remarks.

Lavrov spoke and answered questions at a meeting on 21 May at the Armenian-Russian Slavic University, attended by numerous students, faculty members, representatives from various universities and NGO's. Within nearly three hours, in the context of a comprehensive discussion, Lavrov did not hesitate to express his views against the "Real Armenia" concept put forward by Pashinyan administration, and stated *"I am delighted that our meeting began with the national anthems of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia. It is really important for us to always feel an emotional connection to our roots and to what unites us. Motherland embodied in the national anthem and the coat of arms is not just a symbol. In fact, this is an important part of upbringing, particularly in younger generations. ... We have a saying: 'Let bygones be bygones.' The past never has the result that would be important today, but it should not be forgotten: not the history and the legacy of our ancestors, the feats they made for their homeland, their people, or their faith. This memory must live in our hearts and guide the way we raise our children and grandchildren."*⁸³ Lavrov went to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and

83 Russia Warns Against Western Hegemony, Reaffirms Support for Armenia", *Aravot*, May 23, 2025, <https://en.aravot.am/2025/05/23/359958/?s=Russia+Warns+Against+Western+Hegemony%2C+Reaffirms+Support+for+Armenia+>.

laid a wreath with a ceremony, while a wreath was sent to the “genocide” Memorial.

Lavrov’s visit to Yerevan marked the first occurrence of an anti-Russian protest, during which a pro-Western group of activists hung anti-Putin banners near the Russian Embassy and on a bridge at the city’s entrance. Underneath a picture of Putin in handcuffs, the word “murderer” was written in Armenian, Russian, and English. Russian officials immediately condemned the protest, calling it provocative and demanding that those responsible be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

In his speech briefing the parliament on 5 June, Mirzoyan emphasized that relations with Russia are healthy and partnership-oriented. He stated that, indeed, not everything is “smooth” and “cloudless,” but that there are many areas where agreement has been reached and normal cooperation is taking place despite some disagreements. The 10th Armenia-Russia Interregional Cooperation Forum was held in Yerevan on 6 June with the participation of the speakers of both countries’ parliaments.⁸⁴ At a press conference held on 11 June, Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the removal of the Russian military base in Armenia was not on the agenda. Pashinyan also confirmed this on 13 June.

At the beginning of July, a serious crisis erupted between the two countries due to Russian TV channels broadcasting against Armenian leadership. On 4 July, Armenia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Russian Ambassador and expressed strong dissatisfaction with “openly unfriendly and very often hostile propaganda aired on Russian state television channels against the Armenian government.” On 8 July, Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in turn, summoned the Ambassador of Armenia and stressed the need to prevent further escalation in relations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia held the second international Yerevan Dialogue meeting on 26-27 May. The Prime Minister of Slovakia and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro and France participated in the meeting.

The US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Nuclear Policy visited Armenia on 2 June with a delegation.⁸⁵

84 “10th Armenia-Russia Interregional Cooperation Forum Held in Yerevan”, *ArmenPress*, June 5, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1221562>.

85 “Armenia and US Discuss Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Nuclear Energy and Mining”, *Arka News*, June 5, 2025, <https://arka.am/en/news/economy/armenia-and-us-discuss-cooperati-on-in-the-field-of-peaceful-nuclear-energy-and-mining/>.

Mirzoyan went to Marseille on 12 June to attend the first “Raisina Mediterranean” meeting, which was held with participants from India and France. He participated in a panel titled “The Next Special Relationship: Deepening the Strategic Partnership between the Indo-Pacific and Europe” with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of India.

Mirzoyan paid an official visit to the People’s Republic of China from June 24 to 27.⁸⁶ The Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs warmly welcomed Mirzoyan on his first official visit, praised his active cooperation in relations between the two countries, and stated that both countries are ancient civilizations with rich history and deep cultural roots. He pointed to the partnership in the Belt and Road Initiative, saying, “*We are ready to work with Armenia to strengthen our friendship, deepen mutual trust, and expand cooperation for the benefit of both countries’ development.*” In an interview with CGTN television, Mirzoyan said his visit was “timely” in terms of assessing what had been achieved and determining the roadmap for the future, pointing to the increasing trade volume and the direct flights that had begun between Yerevan and Urumqi.

Mirzoyan also had a meeting with the Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and expressed his willingness to further develop relations with the organization under the status of dialogue partnership.⁸⁷ On 3 July, the Armenian Government announced that Armenia plans to apply for membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Pashinyan participated in the SCO summit held in the Chinese port city of Tianjin on 31 August. According to a report by Chinese state television CCTV, during the meeting between the leaders of the two countries, a strategic partnership was established between China and Armenia, and a joint statement was issued on this matter. China’s President Xi Jinping told Pashinyan that the two countries should strongly support each other and deepen cooperation in all areas.⁸⁸ It was also announced that a Confucius University would be opened in Yerevan. Pashinyan later attended the 80th anniversary celebrations of Victory Day in Beijing with 26 other heads of state. At a press conference

86 “Meeting of the Foreign Minister of Armenia with the Foreign Minister of China”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, June 26, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/06/26/Mirzoyan_Wang_Yi/13337

87 “Meeting of the Foreign Minister of Armenia with the Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, June 27, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/06/27/Armenia_SCO/13339.

88 “(SCO Tianjin Summit) China, Armenia Establish Strategic Partnership”, *The State Council The People’s Republic of China*, August 31, 2025, https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202508/31/content_WS-68b3ca13c6d0868f4e8f5330.html.

on 18 September, Pashinyan said that the most important outcome of his visit to China was the establishment of a strategic partnership between the two countries, adding that this provided a positive political signal for business circles to develop cooperation in the economy and all other areas.

The Armenian Minister of Defense visited China on 17–19 September to attend the “Xiangshan Forum” in Beijing. The forum, which was established in 2006, is envisaged as a subsidiary of the Asia-Pacific security dialogue.

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kallas visited Armenia on 30 June. Following the meeting, Mirzoyan announced that negotiations on a new partnership agenda with the EU had been successful and that a partnership agreement had been signed, stating that Armenia-EU relations had never been this close and comprehensive before.⁸⁹ Kallas used the same statement.

In a statement released on June 30, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Mirzoyan would not attend the upcoming meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Council of Ministers in Kyrgyzstan, and therefore, there was no change in Armenia’s decision to refrain from participating in the Organization’s meetings.

On 4 July, the Greek press raised the idea of establishing a “West Asian QUAD” involving Greece, the Greek Republic of Southern Cyprus, India, and Armenia as a counterbalance to Türkiye.

The “Eagle Partner-2025” joint military exercise between the United States and Armenia was held for the third time between August 12 and 20. At the opening ceremony of the exercise, Chief of the General Staff and First Deputy Minister of Defense Lieutenant General Asryan, and the Ambassador of the United States were present. The exercise was attended by units from the U.S. Army, Europe and Africa Command, as well as elements of the Kansas National Guard. Commentators noted that the exercise was driven more by political considerations than by its military nature. On 27 August, an Armenian unit was transferred to Kosovo aboard a U.S. military aircraft, accompanied by a U.S. Department of Defense official and the Embassy’s military attaché, to serve in the KFOR peacekeeping force.

89 “Meeting between Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, June 30, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/06/30/Mirzoyan_Kallas/13346?

Armenian officials engaged in intensive diplomatic contacts with Iran, which openly opposed the Washington Agreement and considered it as a threat, in order to alleviate its concerns. As a result, President Pezeshkian, accompanied by a high-level delegation, visited Armenia on 19 August to discuss the presence of the US in the region and to sign several fundamental agreements.⁹⁰ Prior to the visit, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the visit would focus on ensuring that no changes are made to the geopolitical map of the South Caucasus and emphasized that Iran firmly opposes any border changes or the presence of foreign military forces in the region.

Following the Pashinyan-Pezeshkian meeting, a comprehensive joint statement was issued. The statement, which addressed bilateral relations in a multidimensional manner, set a target of increasing mutual trade volume to \$3 billion, emphasized the corridor extending from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea and referred to the 3+3 Platform within the framework of developing regional cooperation mechanisms. Ten agreements covering a wide range of issues were signed by high-level officials in the delegations. The Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that Armenia had assured Iran it would never allow any threat to be directed towards Iran from its territory. At a joint press conference following the meetings, Pezeshkian highlighted that peace and stability in the Caucasus is a strategic priority for Iran and stressed that the region should not be an arena for geopolitical competition. Comments on the extent to which Iran's concerns were alleviated after the visit were generally not optimistic. After returning from Armenia, Pezeshkian held a phone call with Putin, expressing the Iranian government's discomfort with Armenia's decision to open a US-managed transit corridor on the Iranian-Azerbaijan border, reiterating that the 3+3 Regional Platform would be a more appropriate mechanism.⁹¹

On 29 August, Secretary of the Armenian Security Council Grigoryan visited Iran, where he met with Iran's new Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Larjani. Grigoryan stated that the signing of a comprehensive strategic partnership document between the two countries was a necessary step for strengthening peace in the region.⁹² He was also received by the

90 "Armenia Reassures Visiting Iran Leader it Will Control Azerbaijan Corridor", *Al Jazeera*, August 19, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/19/armenia-reassures-visiting-iran-leader-it-will-control-azerbaijan-corridor>.

91 "Ermenistan Başbakanı ile İran Cumhurbaşkanı'nın Ortak Bildirisi Yayımlandı", *Armenian Public Radio*, August 20, 2025, <https://tr.armradio.am/2025/08/20/ermenistan-basbakani-ile-iran-cumhur-baskaninin-ortak-bildirisi-yayimlandi/>.

92 "Larjani: Iran-Armenia Strategic Ties Agreement 'Vital and Necessary'", *Press Tv*, August 31, 2025, <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2025/08/31/754096/Supreme-National-Security-Council-Ali-Larjani-strategic-partnership-document-Armenia-Armen-Grigoryan->.

President, during which Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of ensuring that no foreign power is allowed to undermine the friendly and strategic relations between Iran and Armenia. Pezeshkian also addressed the subject of not having foreign forces in the region, stating that his concerns on this matter had been largely alleviated by the information and assurances provided by Armenian officials.

At the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit held in Tianjin on 31 August, the leaders of Armenia and Pakistan agreed to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries.

On 5 September, Pashinyan visited Japan to attend the “Expo 2025” exhibition in Osaka.⁹³

Mirzoyan paid a working visit to the Netherlands on 17-18 September. On this occasion, he also attended Armenia’s accession session to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.⁹⁴ On 22 September, he went to New York for the 80th session of the UN General Assembly and delivered a speech at the G-20 Ministerial Meeting, where he introduced the Crossroads of Peace project and the opportunities offered by TRIPP.

In the second week of September, a delegation headed by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs visited Armenia to discuss the implementation of the Washington Agreement, with a particular focus on the realization of the TRIPP Project.⁹⁵

Pashinyan went to Moscow on 24 September to attend the World Atomic Week Forum. When asked who would build the new nuclear power plant in Armenia, he avoided giving a clear answer and made no commitments.⁹⁶ After the forum, he held a bilateral meeting with Putin on 25 September. This meeting was the second between the two leaders within a short period,

93 “Prime Minister Pashinyan to Leave For Japan on a Working Visit”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, August 29, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/08/29/Nikol-Pashinyan-will-leave-for-Japan>.

94 “Remarks by Foreign Minister of Armenia at the Event Marking Armenia’s Accession to the PCA”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, September 18, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/09/18/Mirzoyan_PCA/13457.

95 “US Delegation Discusses Key Transit Route in Yerevan”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, September 14, 2025, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/us-delegation-discusses-key-transit-route-in-yerevan-213573>.

96 “The Safe Operation of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant is a Strategic Priority for the Government of the Republic of Armenia. Prime Minister”, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, September 25, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/09/25/Nikol-Pashinyan-conference-World-Atomic-Week>.

following their talks at the SCO Summit in Tianjin on 31 August. Although Putin spoke positively about bilateral relations and ties, it is known that there are several points of disagreement, particularly Armenia's attempts to join the EU and its stance on the Collective Security Treaty Organization. One indication of this was the Russian authorities' decision to allow a protest by around 100 Armenians, including priests, in front of the Embassy of Armenia, voicing anti-Pashinyan slogans.

In his remote address to the UN General Assembly on 27 September, Pashinyan emphasized that peace had been established with Azerbaijan and devoted considerable attention to the developing relations with Türkiye. He harshly criticized the President of Azerbaijan's discourse on the Zangezur Corridor, announced that Armenia would host the 8th Summit of the European Political Community in May 2026, and also referred to the 3+3 Platform in his speech.⁹⁷

On 30 September, Mirzoyan attended the Warsaw Security Forum and delivered a speech at the session titled "From Lisbon to Yerevan: Envisioning Europe's Strategy for the Wider Neighborhood". In his remarks, he emphasized the significance of peace with Azerbaijan for the broader region, including the EU.⁹⁸

On 10 October, Pashinyan attended the Commonwealth of Independent States summit held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Afterwards, upon the invitation of the President of the United States, he participated in the Sharm el-Sheikh Peace Summit in Egypt on 13 October, which was organized to end the Israel-Palestine (Gaza) war.⁹⁹

Pashinyan paid a working visit to Belgium on 8-9 October and also participated in the second "World Gateways" international conference. He said Armenia's Crossroads of Peace Project had the potential to change the dynamics of not only the South Caucasus but the broader region and claimed that Armenia was ready to bridge South Caucasus and Europe.¹⁰⁰

97 "Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan's speech at the 80th session of the UN General Assembly", *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, September 27, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2025/09/27/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech>.

98 "Remarks by the Foreign Minister of Armenia at the Warsaw Security Forum", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, September 29, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2025/09/29/Mirzo-yan_WSF/13516.

99 "Meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of State," press release, Commonwealth of Independent States, Dushanbe, October 10, 2025, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/78183>

100 "Armenian premier heads to Brussels for Global Gateway Forum," *Calibre*, October 9, 2025, <https://caliber.az/en/post/armenian-premier-heads-to-brussels-for-global-gateway-forum?ysclid=mi8lvr-rp1x299015932>

On 14 October, the Minister of Defense Papikyan went to Washington D.C. to discuss issues within the framework of the US-Armenia defense partnership.

The Queen of Belgium arrived in Armenia on 14 October as an advocate for the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Pashinyan visited the Vatican on October 18-20 to attend a mass for the canonization of an Armenian Catholic Archbishop. On this occasion, he met with Pope Leo XIV. The Prime Minister's Office stated in a press release that "*His Holiness warmly welcomed Prime Minister Pashinyan*".

On 20 October, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan attended the ministerial meeting on Cross-Regional Security and Connectivity organized by the EU in Luxembourg and also met with EU Foreign Affairs chief to discuss issues related to the finalization and adoption of the new Armenia-EU Partnership Agenda.¹⁰¹

Pashinyan went to Tbilisi on 21 October to attend the Silk Road Forum where he also held a bilateral meeting with his Georgian counterpart.

Mirzoyan visited Paris on 22 October to attend the 4th Ministerial Conference on Feminist Foreign Policy. Pashinyan visited France on 29-30 October to attend the Paris Peace Forum and also met with the President of France.

A delegation of NGO's and think-tanks from Azerbaijan visited Yerevan on 23 October, which was the first of such an encounter.

Bilateral defense consultations between Armenia and Germany were held on 28-29 October in Yerevan.

Speaking at the "Orbeli Forum 2025" in Yerevan on 5 November, Mirzoyan made the following remarks: "*We have a strategic partnership with the United States, a strategic dialogue with the United Kingdom, we are working to elevate the level of our partnership with the UK and with several EU member states as well. We are significantly deepening our relations with the EU and we have a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation. We have repeatedly emphasized the great importance we attach to our relations with immediate neighbors. We have excellent relations with Georgia and Iran, peace with*

101 "Cross-Regional Security and Connectivity Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg – Remarks and Readouts," European External Action Service, October 20, 2025, <https://newsroom.consilium.europa.eu/events/20251020-cross-regional-security-and-connectivity-ministerial-meeting-october-2025>

Azerbaijan has been established and we are working to further detail it. We have very intensive dialogue with Türkiye and I am very optimistic that we can gradually achieve tangible results there. We have also declared a strategic partnership with China". He also stated that there was no contradiction in Armenia's efforts to deepen ties simultaneously with both the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the European Union.¹⁰²

The 11th round of the India-Armenia Foreign Office Consultations was held in Yerevan on 7 November.

Amid growing estrangement between the two countries, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson expressed in a press interview on 10 November that Russia was ready to discuss Armenia's possible concerns regarding bilateral relations in various formats.

4. Relations with Türkiye

Tangible and positive outcomes of the normalization process have been observed during this period, and notable developments have given momentum to the process.

In his comprehensive speech on Armenia's foreign policy delivered on 20 May at a seminar organized for the EU ambassadors accredited to Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Mirzoyan stated the following regarding relations with Türkiye: *"Armenia's commitment to peace and stability in the region is further demonstrated by the steps our country has taken in the normalization process with Türkiye. High-level dialogue continues, including meetings between the Prime Minister of Armenia and the Turkish President, as well as my discussions with the country's Foreign Minister. We firmly believe that full normalization — establishing diplomatic relations and opening borders — would unlock significant opportunities for both our countries and the wider region."*¹⁰³

102 "Armenia's Multi-Vector Foreign Policy after the Washington Agreement," Caspian Post Policy Brief, November 8, 2025, <https://caspianpost.com/armenia/mirzoyan-armenia-azerbaijan-and-georgia-can-collaborate-on-various-platforms>

103 "Keynote Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Regional Seminar of The European Union Ambassadors to the Countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia", *Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the European Union*, May 20, 2025, <https://eu.mfa.am/en/news/2025/05/20/keynote-speech-by-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-armenia-regional-seminar-of-the-european-union/14418>.

At the “Yerevan Dialogue” forum on 26 May, Mirzoyan participated in a panel where he was asked whether a possible peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan could serve as a stepping stone for the development of Armenia-Türkiye relations. In response, he said: *“To put a long story, yes. We have launched our dialogue with Türkiye, having in mind and publicly saying, both we and our Turkish colleagues, that this process should take place without any precondition. Now, I want to say that we are happy to see that the Turkish-Armenian dialogue is not that problematic as one could assume”*. He also stated that the only obstacle remaining to the establishment of diplomatic relations, the opening of the border, and the resolution of transportation issues is the fact that negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan have not yet been concluded.¹⁰⁴

The Armenian press prominently featured and provided detailed coverage of President Erdoğan’s remarks to the media on 29 May, made aboard his return flight from Azerbaijan. It was particularly noted that he emphasized the importance Türkiye’s attached to ensuring stability, peace, and prosperity in the South Caucasus, underlined the necessity of signing a lasting peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia as soon as possible, and stated that Türkiye and Armenia are pursuing a careful normalization process, which serves the interests of all countries in the region. That he also referred to the Zangezur Corridor, noting that it would serve as a bridge not only between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan but also for the entire Turkic world.¹⁰⁵

On 5 June, Prime Minister Pashinyan called on President Erdoğan to extend his greetings on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. Erdoğan, in turn, congratulated Pashinyan on Armenia’s upcoming hosting of the European Political Community Summit in the spring of 2026. During the conversation, bilateral relations, as well as regional and global issues, were discussed, and both sides agreed on the importance of continuing the positive dialogue between their two countries.¹⁰⁶

On 5 June, Mirzoyan stated in his speech at the parliament, *“While not having official diplomatic relations with Türkiye, we have far more active and effective dialogue than many other countries who do have diplomatic ties. Of*

104 “Speech by the Foreign Minister of Armenia at the Panel Discussion within the Framework of the “Yerevan Dialogue” International Forum”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, May 26, 2025, https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2025/05/26/Mirzoyan_YD_Panel/13246.

105 “Erdogan Calls for Swift Signing of Armenian-Azeri Peace Treaty”, *ArmenPress*, May 29, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1220936>.

106 “Pashinyan, Erdogan Discuss Armenia-Turkiye Relations and Regional Developments”, *ArmenPress*, June 5, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1221484>.

course, anyone who'd say it's time for that dialogue to have its tangible results on the ground would be right. If someone were to say this, I would agree."¹⁰⁷

Speaking at the GLOBSEC 2025 Forum on 13 June, Prime Minister Pashinyan stated that in recent years they have developed an active dialogue with Türkiye, noting that while they previously needed the mediation of a third party, they can now establish direct contact. He said, *"We've had several meetings with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and those meetings were constructive. True, we don't have tangible results on the ground yet, but we do have important progress. Three years ago, for example, when Armenia wanted to find out Türkiye's stance about any issue, it had to ask for a third country's mediation. Today we have a direct communication with our neighbors and even daily contact."*¹⁰⁸ Pashinyan expressed hope that this development would lead to the establishment of diplomatic relations, the opening of borders, and the strengthening of economic ties, emphasizing that it is only a matter of time. He concluded his speech by saying, *"This is linked with the broader economic agenda of the region, but as I already said we are consistently moving forward with the agenda of establishing peace. This is our duty, and we are determined to achieve this. We also see Türkiye's readiness, as well as Azerbaijan's desire to achieve peace. Of course there are some nuances that need to be addressed, but I am sure we will succeed."*

Speaking at the APRI 2025 Forum on 13 June, Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Grigoryan said, *"Normalization of relations with Türkiye is among our agenda priorities, and we continue to work to normalize relations and achieve opening of borders. Although not everything is ideal, progress is visible in the normalization process."*¹⁰⁹

In a statement released by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16 June, it was reported that Deputy Minister Kostanyan met with his counterpart Ekinci in Ankara, and the parties discussed bilateral and regional issues.¹¹⁰

Prime Minister Pashinyan visited Istanbul on 20 June at the invitation of President Erdoğan. His delegation included Minister of Foreign Affairs

107 "Mirzoyan: Ermenistan ve Türkiye Aktif Bir Diyalog İçinde", *Armenian Public Radio*, June 6, 2025, <https://tr.armradio.am/2025/06/06/mirzoyan-ermenistan-ve-turkiye-aktif-bir-diyalog-icinde/>.

108 "Pashinyan Highlights Direct Contact, Active Dialogue with Türkiye", *ArmenPress*, June 13, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1222263>.

109 "Armenian Official Sees Progress in Normalization with Türkiye", *ArmenPress*, June 13, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1222217>.

110 "Armenian, Turkish Deputy Foreign Ministers Meet in Ankara", *ArmenPress*, June 16, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1222443>.

Mirzoyan, Deputy Minister Kostanyan, Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Special Representative for the Normalization Process Rubinyan. This was the first official visit from Armenia at this level and was described as a historic one. In addition to official meetings, Pashinyan met with representatives of the Armenian community and visited the Armenian Patriarchate Church, an Armenian school, and the Sultanahmet Mosque.

During the meeting held at the Presidential Working Office in Dolmabahçe Palace, the parties discussed bilateral relations, the normalization process, Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty negotiations, and regional developments.¹¹¹ President Erdoğan underlined the importance of concluding the ongoing peace talks and stated that Türkiye would continue to provide full support for regional development efforts based on a win-win approach. No joint statement was issued after the meeting, the parties made their own statements. In line with Pashinyan's pre-meeting statement that "I think our expectations should be aligned with reality," there were no unexpected developments, but the visit itself represented a significant milestone in the normalization process. In a message later posted on his social media account, Pashinyan stated that he had held "in-depth" exchange of views with President Erdoğan, that they had discussed "the process of normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations, emphasized the importance of continuing a constructive dialogue and achieving concrete results," and reaffirmed Armenia's commitment to building peace and stability in the region.

During his meeting with representatives of the Armenian community, Pashinyan stated that the two countries' views on regional issues are quite similar. He noted that, unfortunately, tensions still exist in the region, and that the main purpose of such visits and contacts is to discuss how the region can become more stable, peaceful, and secure. Pashinyan also mentioned that he would personally invite President Erdoğan to the 8th Summit of the European Political Community, which will be held in Armenia in the spring of 2026.

While representatives of the Armenian Catholic and Armenian Protestant communities were present, no clergy from the Armenian Patriarchate attended the Prime Minister's meeting with the community. Pashinyan stated, "*If they didn't come to me, I'll go to them.*" However, when he visited the church, no clergy members greeted him. Patriarch Sahak II Mashalian cited his

111 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan ve Ermenistan Başbakanı Paşinyan Görüşmesine İlişkin Açıklama", *Directorate of Communications of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*, June 20, 2025, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ermenistan-basbakani-pasinyani-kabul-etti-20-06-25>.

absence by saying that he was abroad, in the US.¹¹² (During his visit to the US, the Patriarch also met with the Greek Orthodox Archbishop. His Greek counterpart spoke highly of the brotherly relations between the Greek and Armenian churches and emphasized that solidarity among the Orthodox Armenian, Syriac, and Coptic churches under attack in the Middle East is more vital than ever.)

The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul clearly took a stance against Prime Minister Pashinyan, who was in Türkiye as an official guest. This attitude undoubtedly stemmed from the Etchmiadzin's conflict with Pashinyan. The condemnation of the Archbishop who had welcomed Pashinyan during his visit to Estonia is remembered. The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul appeared to face a difficult dilemma, on one hand adhering to the protocol requirements of the country to which it belongs and of which it is a citizen, and on the other taking sides in the political conflict of a spiritual center. The choice became evident. In response to the reactions, the Patriarchate released a statement on 25 June, recalling, "the incidents between Prime Minister Pashinyan and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, the spiritual leader of Armenians worldwide," and stated, "*The Patriarchal Throne has deemed it appropriate to demonstrate its fair reaction to the Prime Minister and note that the current tense situation has given created a negative atmosphere and a stream of discontent not only in Armenia, but also in the Diaspora.*"¹¹³

Patriarch Mashalian held a meeting with the Armenian press in the Patriarchate Hall on 3 July, where he reiterated in detail the reasons for his actions from his own perspective, saying, "...Already, Mr. Pashinyan is smarter than the Armenians of Istanbul and understands very well what is happening". Regarding his visit to the US, he said "My observation is that Christian communities in the Middle East are shrinking, but they are growing in the United States. The U.S. is the center of the diaspora, and about one and a half million Armenians live there. However, they also face the problem of dispersion. The United States is a vast continent, and Armenians who move there have limited opportunities to gather together. This opens the doors to assimilation. In the third generation, they struggle to form a strong Armenian identity. They are opening new churches and schools in Los Angeles and California. The bishops there are working hard and actively; they present a

112 "Türkiye Ermenileri Patrikliği'nden Paşinyan'ın İstanbul ziyaretinde Patrikhane'nin Kapalı Olmasıyla İlgili Açıklama", *AGOS*, June 25, 2025, <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/34013/turkiye-ermenile-ri-patrikligi-nden-pasinyan-in-istanbul-ziyaretinde-patrikhane-nin-kapali-olmasiyla-ilgili-aciklama>.

113 "Pashinyan Plans to Invite Erdogan To European Political Community Summit in Yerevan", *ArmenPress*, June 21, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1222981>.

positive image. Here, Armenians are evaporating — they turn into clouds, go to America, and bring blessings there. They are doing significant work over there."¹¹⁴

On 14 October, Patriarch Mashalian also gave an interview to the Armenian Press Agency on behalf of the Turkish Armenian community. The news was published under the title "The Turkish-Armenian Community Supports Normalization with Armenia." In the interview, the Patriarch stated that *"Our community supports the process of normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations. We want these relations to become closer. This should also ease the burden placed on our shoulders. Over the past 100 years, Armenian-Turkish relations have been so strained that here, the word 'Armenian' is practically considered an insult. And in Armenia, the word 'Turk' has the same connotation. Therefore, if these relations improve, the heaviest burden will be lifted from our shoulders. We need to be able to breathe in a more friendly atmosphere. If today we are 35,000–40,000, in 25 years we will be down to 10,000–15,000. Our community's institutions were built for 125,000 people. We have 50 churches in this city — 33 Apostolic, 12 Catholic, and 4 Protestant. But we can no longer fill them. Once, we had 50 Armenian schools; now only 17 remain.*"¹¹⁵

On 27 June, the Armenian Minister of Regional Administration and Infrastructure met with the Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources in Istanbul. The Armenian press reported on the meeting by citing Minister Alparslan Bayraktar's social media post: *"We met with Armenia's Minister of Regional Administration and Infrastructure, Mr. Davit Khudatyan, in Istanbul. During the meeting, we assessed the potential for cooperation between Türkiye and Armenia in the energy sector"*.¹¹⁶

On 5 July, in response to a question about President Erdoğan's remarks made during his interview with journalists on his return flight from Azerbaijan, in which he stated that Armenia had adopted a more flexible stance on transport corridors, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson stated that Armenia has always supported the expansion of regional connectivity and the promotion of economic development. Referring to the Crossroads of Peace

114 "Patrik Maşalyan: "Başbakan Paşinyan'a Sessiz Protestomuzu Gösterdik"", *HyeTert*, July 3, 2025, <https://hyetert.org/2025/07/03/patrik-masalyan-basbakan-pasinyana-sessiz-protestomuzu-gosterdik/>.

115 Araks Kasyan, "Turkish-Armenian Community Supports Normalization with Armenia, Says Sahak II", *ArmenPress*, October 14, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1232012>.

116 "Türkiye ve Ermenistan Enerji İş Birliği Görüşüldü", *HyeTert*, June 26, 2025, <https://hyetert.org/2025/06/27/turkiye-ve-ermenistan-enerji-is-birligi-gorusuldu/>.

project, the Spokesperson emphasized that all roads within Armenia would remain under the full control of the Republic of Armenia.¹¹⁷

On 11 August, Pashinyan called on President Erdoğan to inform about the Washington Agreement. President Erdoğan congratulated Pashinyan on the agreement reached with Azerbaijan, stating that peace is essential for regional stability and that this step must be transformed into concrete actions. On that occasion, President Erdoğan also noted that technical-level talks would continue to develop the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process and that efforts in that direction would be pursued persistently.¹¹⁸

On 22 August, the Armenian press gave extensive coverage to the groundbreaking ceremony for the 224-kilometer Kars-Dilucu railway construction, with comments linked to TRIPP. President Erdoğan's statement on this matter also stood out: *"The 224 km Kars-Igdir-Aralik-Dilucu railway line will become the backbone of the Zangezur Corridor. It will be double-tracked, electrified and equipped with signalling. This line will transport 5.5 million passengers and 15 million tons of cargo per year. With the commissioning of this project worth €2.4 billion, the international trade route from China to Great Britain will become more efficient."*

On 28 August, in an interview, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan stated that the agreements reached in Washington have created a very positive outlook for the region, that Azerbaijan has consulted with Türkiye regarding the Washington meeting and the agreements, that Türkiye's stance on the Zangezur Corridor is based on mutual trust and involves close cooperation with Azerbaijan, and that there is nothing concrete yet regarding the Zangezur Corridor, with the parties set to discuss how the situation will develop.¹¹⁹

On 1 September, President Erdoğan held a meeting with Prime Minister Pashinyan on the occasion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Tianjin.¹²⁰ In the meeting, which Pashinyan also shared on his social media with a video, the two leaders discussed steps to promote peace in the region,

117 "Armenia's Vision of Unblocking Anchored on Sovereignty and National Jurisdiction: Foreign Ministry Responds to Erdogan", *ArmenPress*, July 5, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1224157>.

118 "Ermenistan Başbakanı, Türkiye Cumhurbaşkanı ile Telefonda Görüştü", *ArmenPress*, August 11, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/tr/article/1226970>.

119 "Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Hakan Fidan'ın TGRT Haber'e Verdiği Mülakat, 28 Ağustos 2025", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, August 28, 2025, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakanı-sayın-hakan-fidan-ın-tgrt-haber-e-verdiği-mulakat--28-ağustos-2025.tr.mfa>.

120 "Erdoğan, Şanghay İşbirliği Örgütü Zirvesi'nde Ermenistan Başbakanı Paşinyan ile Görüştü", *Son Dakika*, September 1, 2025, <https://www.sondakika.com/dunya/haber-erdogan-sanghay-isbirligi-organizu-zirvesi-nde-ermen-19001006/>.

emphasized the importance of maintaining a constructive approach, and agreed to continue bilateral dialogue. Afterwards, in an interview with the press, President Erdoğan stated that he had discussed with both leaders about the Zangezur Corridor, that there was no disagreement between them, and that both sides shared a common vision.

As part of the normalization process, Türkiye's Special Representative Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and his delegation went to Armenia by land on 12 September. They were welcomed at the Alican Border Gate by the Special Representative of Armenia and Deputy Speaker of Parliament Ruben Rubinyan, and together they reached Yerevan. This sixth meeting of the process carried particular significance and importance as it was the first time that it was held in the capital of one of the parties, crossing a closed border, and conducted without an intermediary. No joint statement was issued at the end of the meeting, but similar announcements were released by both Ministries of Foreign Affairs.¹²¹ A group from the ARF, known for its record of revanchist and dark acts, protested the arrival of the Turkish delegation and the ongoing process in front of the government building and issued a protest statement on behalf of the party.¹²²

At the meeting, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to continue the normalization process "without pre-conditions" and agreed to accelerate the implementation of the previously reached agreement on border crossings. The special representatives reviewed the issues they had previously agreed upon to achieve full normalization, discussed the implementation of the July 2022 Agreement on border crossings, and emphasized the importance of technical work by the relevant authorities of both countries on the renewal and reactivation of the Kars-Gyumri railway line as well as on the electricity connection. Among other agreed points were the enhancement of cooperation in cultural and academic fields, including scholarship programs for higher education students and the joint restoration of the historical Ani Bridge on the Silk Road. The parties also agreed to facilitate air travel and increase flight frequency between Türkiye and Armenia, enabling multiple airlines to operate routes starting from the next summer season.¹²³

121 "No: 186, 12 September 2025, Regarding the Sixth Meeting of the Special Representatives for the Normalization Process between Türkiye and Armenia", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*, September 12, 2025, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-186_-turkiye-ermenistan-normallesme-su-reci-ozel-temsilcilerinin-altinci-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa.

122 Arshaluys Barseghyan, "Armenian and Turkish Special Envoys Hold Talks in Yerevan", *MirrorSpectator*, September 16, 2025, <https://mirrorspectator.com/2025/09/16/armenian-and-turkish-special-envoys-hold-talks-in-yerevan/>.

123 "Rubinyan ve Kılıç Hangi Antlaşmalara Vardı?", *HyeTert*, September 12, 2025, <https://hyetert.org/2025/09/12/rubinyan-ve-kilic-hangi-anlasmalara-vardi/#>.

Armenian press highlighted the statement made by Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan during his speech at the Institute of International Affairs in Rome on the same day, where he noted that the final steps on the peace agreement had not yet been taken and that the signing of the agreement was expected to take place in the first half of next year. His remark, *“As soon as the agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan is finalized, we will quickly normalize relations with Armenia,”* was particularly emphasized.¹²⁴

On 18 September, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia responded to a question regarding the normalization of relations between Türkiye and Armenia, stating, *“Russia firmly supports prompt reconciliation of Armenia and Türkiye. You recall how many times our nation, along with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov personally, has engaged in international discussions focused on this matter. It is not by chance that the first round of negotiations between Armenia and Türkiye in recent years occurred on January 14, 2021, in Moscow. The normalization of relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Türkiye is viewed as a fundamental requirement for establishing enduring peace and facilitating sustainable development in the South Caucasus. We are prepared to continue supporting the endeavours of our Armenian and Turkish partners in this regard, including through the 3+3 regional cooperation platform. We anticipate that the realities on the ground and the long-term interests of our neighbours in the South Caucasus will be appropriately considered when formulating agreements between Ankara and Yerevan. To achieve this, it is crucial to avert destructive interference from external regional influences in the already challenging negotiation process.”*

Speaking at his party congress on 19 September, Pashinyan also addressed relations with Türkiye, stating that he expects the border, which has been closed since 1993, to be opened and that a road connection will be established in the near future.¹²⁵

In his speech at the UN General Assembly on 23 September, President Erdoğan stated that process of normalizing relations between Türkiye and Armenia is progressing. He also spoke highly of the Washington Agreement of 8 August,

124 “Fidan: Normalleşme, Ermenistan ile Azerbaycan Antlaşmasına Son İmzalar Konulur Konulmaz”, *Armenian Public Radio*, September 15, 2025, <https://tr.armradio.am/2025/09/15/fidan-normallesme-ermenistan-ile-azerbaycan-anlasmasına-son-imzalar-konulur-konulmaz/>.

125 “Paşinyan ‘Diyalog’ Sürecinden Umutlu: Türkiye Üzerinden Avrupa’ya Açılacağız”, *Türkiye Gazetesi*, September 20, 2025, <https://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/dunya/pasinyan-diyalog-surecinden-umutlu-turkiye-uzerinden-avrupaya-acilacagiz-1147353>.

congratulated the parties, and stated that this would establish stable peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia.¹²⁶

At the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September, Pashinyan spoke positively about the developing relations with Türkiye, saying, *“I am pleased to note that in recent years, an unprecedented positive dialogue has been established between Armenia and Türkiye. My meetings with President Erdoğan are regular, with a continuously growing level of trust. This is an achievement that I highly value and am confident will bring positive results in the foreseeable future, namely the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Türkiye and the full opening of the interstate border.”* Pashinyan also noted that, in addition to Azerbaijan and Türkiye, Armenia’s relations with Iran and Georgia have become increasingly visible, and that these relations are of great importance for ensuring the South Caucasus becomes a peaceful, stable, and prosperous region. In this context, he emphasized the value of the 3+3 Platform, which is crucial for establishing dialogue with regional countries and for strengthening Armenia’s traditional dialogue with Russia.¹²⁷

The Minister of Family and Social Policies Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş held a bilateral meeting with Armenia’s newly appointed Minister of Labor and Social Affairs in the margins of a meeting they attended in Belgrade on 30 September, and exchanged views on matters within the scope of their ministries.¹²⁸

Armenia’s Minister of Economy Papoyan expressed strong support on 13 October for Turkish investments in Armenia, highlighting their potential to foster sustainable peace between the neighboring countries.

Speaking at the Tbilisi Silk Road Forum on 22 October, Pashinyan talked about the Türkiye-Armenia normalization and stated the following: *“The positive dialogue between Armenia and Türkiye gives hope that the parties may open the borders in the near future. We are ready, not only politically but also technically, starting today, to ensure the transit of freight trucks through Armenian territory from Türkiye to Azerbaijan and from Azerbaijan to Türkiye. Both the roads and border infrastructure within Armenia are*

126 “Erdogan Says Process of Normalizing Relations with Armenia Continues”, *ArmenPress*, September 23, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1230410>.

127 ““Long Live Diplomacy, Long Live Peace”: Full Text of PM Nikol Pashinyan’s UNGA Speech”, *ArmenPress*, September 27, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1230757>.

128 “Armenian, Turkish Ministers Hold Meeting”, *ArmenPress*, September 30, 2025, <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1230960>.

*prepared for this. We are also politically prepared to enable railway transit between Türkiye and the Nachivan Autonomous Republic and the main part of Azerbaijan in both directions. However, technically, we are not yet ready due to the lack of infrastructure”.*¹²⁹

On 30 October, on the sidelines of the 8th Paris Peace Forum, Pashinyan expressed *“We have a very constructive dialogue with Türkiye. I believe the establishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of the border are just a matter of time, since there are no significant obstacles now”.*¹³⁰

In his address to the parliament on 31 October where he remarked that Armenia’s relations with Azerbaijan and Türkiye were undermined by the Soviet KGB, he also criticized the one sided approach and said, *“When we say ‘a Turk remains a Turk’, Turks can also say ‘Armenians remain Armenians’. Listen, we must get rid of the stereotype”.*

Answering questions at the Orbeli Forum in Yerevan on 4 November, Pashinyan announced that he has officially invited Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to attend the European Community Summit to be held in Yerevan in May 2026 and said *“I hope the invitation will be accepted. President Erdoğan and I have met frequently in recent years. During my last visit to Türkiye I invited President Erdoğan to attend the European Community Summit in Yerevan in May 2026. It would be wrong to comment on the possibility of President Erdoğan’s visit”.*

At the same forum, Mirzoyan announced that Türkiye and Armenia agreed to increase the number of mutual flights connecting the two countries. He added: *“For decades, with the borders closed, people have traveled and visited each other and trade was quite significant-the problem was that this trade went through third countries. Flights have existed and still do. There is an agreement to increase flights to Yerevan, Gyumri and Turkish cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and others. The issue with Türkiye is that the border is closed and there are no diplomatic relations”.* He further noted that political dialogue with Türkiye is very intensive and substantive and other confidence-building measures are also being discussed to compensate for the lack of diplomatic relations and closed border. He also called on a Turkish reporter

129 Assel Satubaldina, “How Armenia–Azerbaijan Deal Reconfigures Eurasia’s Connectivity Balance of Power,” The Astana Times, October 7, 2025, <https://astanatimes.com/2025/10/how-armenia-azerbaijan-deal-reconfigures-eurasias-connectivity-balance-of-power/>.

130 “Armenia Balances Between the TRIPP and Zangezur Corridor,” Eurasia Daily Monitor (Jamestown Foundation), November 4, 2025, <https://jamestown.org/armenia-balances-between-the-tripp-and-zangezur-corridor/>

attending the forum to refrain from using the term “corridor” while referring to the Trump Road for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) because the term “corridor” could imply extraterritoriality, while the project envisages no such thing.

Armenian press reported widely on 8 November that President Erdoğan praised Pashinyan’s “courageous steps” toward Armenia-Azerbaijan reconciliation.

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BE READY FOR WAR IF YOU WANT PEACE AND SECURITY

(HAZIR OL CENGE İSTER İSEN SULH U SALÂH)

Prof. Dr. Ömer TURAN*

Abstract: *The historical and contemporary evolution of the Armenian issue within Turkish politics and international relations, tracing its transformation from a diplomatic affair to an ongoing public and academic debate. It analyzes state and societal responses to the Armenian question, the propagation of genocide claims, and recent normalization initiatives between Türkiye and Armenia following the Karabakh conflict. The research highlights the role of publications, public opinion formation, and bilateral diplomatic developments while addressing persistent challenges in regional reconciliation. It concludes that the normalization process remains fragile, influenced by historical grievances and external actors, necessitating a continued and pragmatic approach to maintain peace and stability.*

Keyword: *Armenian Issue, Türkiye-Armenia Relations, Genocide Claims, Karabakh Conflict, Normalization Process*

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Öz: *Türk siyasetinde ve uluslararası ilişkilerde Ermeni meselesinin tarihsel ve çağdaş evrimine odaklanarak, meselenin diplomatik bir boyuttan günümüzdeki kamuoyu ve akademik tartışmalara dönüşümünü incelemektedir. Araştırma, devlet ve toplumun Ermeni meselesine verdiği tepkileri, soykırım iddialarının yayılımını ve Karabağ çatışması sonrasında Türkiye-Ermenistan arasındaki normalleşme girişimlerini analiz etmektedir. Yayınların, kamuoyu oluşumunun ve ikili diplomatik gelişmelerin rolüne dikkat çeken bu çalışma, bölgesel uzlaşmadaki süregelen zorlukları da tartışmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, normalleşme sürecinin tarihi anlaşmazlıklar ve dış aktörlerin etkisiyle kırılğan olduğu; barış ve istikrarın sürdürülmesi için sürekli ve gerçekçi bir yaklaşım gerektirdiği ortaya konmaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelime: *Ermeni Meselesi, Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkileri, Soykırım İddiaları, Karabağ Çatışması, Normalleşme Süreci*

This phrase is not a call to war. It implies that peace can only be achieved by being prepared for battle, or, more accurately, by being ready. It says that if you do not have the power to fight, you cannot survive by relying on the mercy and understanding of others. With this understanding, states allocate the largest share of their budgets to defense.

The Armenian issue has been before the Turkish nation for a century and a half. It became an international issue with the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano and the Treaty of Berlin at the end of the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War. Since then, it has hung over the heads of Turks like the sword of Damocles, in different forms and with varying content. For nearly 40 years, it was perceived only as a political and diplomatic issue, and no publication activity aimed at informing the public on this subject was deemed necessary. When it became apparent during World War I that the Armenian relocation was being used as a means of propaganda against the Turkish nation and state, *“The Armenian Committees’ Revolutionary Activities and Operations”* was published in 1916 to show the reasons for the relocation.¹ Besides, *“Documents sur les Atrocités Armeno-Russes,”* showing the atrocities committed by Armenian committee members against the Muslim population, was published in 1917.² *“Information Based on Documents About the Atrocities Suffered by the Islamic Population”* was published in 1918 in different languages. Even amid the chaos of the armistice period following the defeat in World War I—particularly in 1918 and 1919—publications aimed at enlightening the domestic and international public continued.³ Almost all of these publications consist of documents compiled from the field and eyewitness accounts relating to the Armenian events that occurred during those years. The Commission prepared them. Some books written by commanders and diplomats, such as Kazım Karabekir and Ahmet Rustem Bey, were also compiled by the authors, adding their personal experiences and observations to the documents above.

With the successful outcome of the National Struggle and the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, the Armenian issue was considered resolved. Şinasi Orel, a former Minister of National Education, described the situation as follows: “We assumed that this issue was now closed and did not concern ourselves with it. Although we sometimes heard about Armenian activities,

1 The Armenian Committees’ Revolutionary Activities and Operations (Constantinople: [Publisher], 1916).

2 Documents sur les Atrocités Arméno-Russes. Constantinople: Société anonyme de papeterie et d’imprimerie, 1917.

3 Information Based on Documents About the Atrocities Suffered by the Islamic Population. Constantinople, 1918.

we did not take them seriously because we believed that history would decide. We assumed that history could not be distorted by propaganda and political maneuvers in line with Armenian claims.”⁴ Acting on this understanding, no publications were made, nor were any experts trained. In the early years of the Republic, writings in this field remained at the level of chapters in books and memoirs.

While Türkiye thought the Armenian issue had been closed in this way, Armenian institutions and organizations developed new strategies. They tried to resolve their conflicts of interest and differences in religious beliefs and political views. They kept the Armenian issue alive. They established parties, foundations, associations, and research centers in the countries where they lived. They published books and magazines. They published articles in newspapers. They made films and staged plays. They organized Armenian memorial days and meetings, and erected monuments. They aimed to establish the Armenia promised in the invalid Treaty of Sèvres. To this end, they appealed to the Potsdam Conference and the United Nations, demanding their imaginary ancestral lands. They harbored hostility toward Türkiye and the Turkish people. They collaborated with states and groups hostile to-Türkiye. They shaped international public opinion in this direction and conditioned Armenians worldwide to adopt these views.

Türkiye’s approach mentioned above continued until 1950, when Esat Uras’s book, *Armenians in History and the Armenian Question*, was published.⁵ The book is a first in Türkiye. Unlike previous works, it does not merely list documents related to events. Using Armenian sources, it examines the history, identity, language, and culture of Armenians in Anatolia; it reveals the Armenian reforms, organizations, and rebellions in the late Ottoman period and the role of the great powers; it recounts the Armenian relocations during World War I and how the issue was addressed at Lausanne. This research work, based on solid sources, is not only the first of its kind but also the last. There has been no follow-up, nor could there be. Ahmet Esat Uras served as the city’s governor when the Treaty of Kars, which defined Türkiye’s eastern borders, was signed in October 1921. In subsequent years, he worked on these issues as a bureaucrat in the Ministry of the Interior. In other words, he was a civil servant who was directly involved in the events of World War I and the

4 Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *The Talat Pasha Telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?* (Nicosia: K. Rüstem & Brother, 1986).

5 Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question*, trans. Süheyla Artemel, ed. Tülay Duran (Istanbul: Documentary Publications, 1988).

years of the National Struggle. He is the last example of a generation that both lived through and wrote about these events.

On the 50th anniversary of the events of 1915, meetings and demonstrations against Türkiye were held in many parts of the world. Conferences and panels were held at prestigious universities worldwide. No work was written that addressed the allegations made and explained the subject in scientific terms. When our first diplomats were martyred in 1973, the assistant district attorney in Santa Barbara, who was handling the case, requested a publication from our Los Angeles Consulate General to learn the Turkish perspective after the killer stated that he had killed our diplomat to take revenge for the Armenians. A conference text by one of our ambassadors in Ankara was found and sent. That was what was available.

In January 1973, the murder of our Los Angeles Consul General, Mehmet Baydar, and Consul Bahadır Demir by an Armenian named Mıgırdıç Gorgan Yanıkyan, a former member of the Hınçak Committee and the new Armenian Secret Army, was the flare-up of a fire that had been burning for half a century without being extinguished. The murder was presented as an act of heroism. And it was accepted as such. Thus, a new era began. Numerous acts of terror were carried out, ranging from hijacking planes to taking people hostage, bombing, and occupying Turkish diplomatic missions abroad. Dozens of Turkish diplomats were martyred. As we have previously stated, the public opinion formed tolerated these activities as a means of “making its voice heard.” The perpetrators of these acts and the killers of our martyrs were either not punished or were practically encouraged with the lightest of sentences.

Under these circumstances, Kamuran Gürün’s *Armenian File* was finally published in 1983. This book is also a first in its own way. It was written by another bureaucrat, or rather diplomat, based on documents and literature compiled from various archives. It was written to inform the public, especially our diplomats who had to explain the problematic period of Turkish-Armenian relations to their foreign counterparts. It covers Armenian history, Turkish-Armenian ties during the late Ottoman period, and the years of the National Struggle, including Armenian organizations, uprisings, and deportations. It focuses on the role of imperialist states in these developments. In the following years, French and English editions of the book were published.

The 1980s saw significant activity on this subject. Conferences were held one after another at universities, and papers were published. Documents in

the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives relating to the Armenian uprisings and relocations in the late Ottoman period were classified and made available to readers. A significant portion of these documents was published. The publication of some documents from the Military History Archive followed this. Documents selected from British and French archives were even published with Turkish summaries. In the 2000s, institutes were established and journals were published to research these topics. The journal you hold in your hands and the publishing organization are the products of these efforts. Master's and doctoral theses are written at universities. As of October 2025, their number has reached 725. Naturally, many books are also published within this framework. The content and quality of the theses and books are a separate subject of evaluation. It would be painful to say "Ba'del harabel Basra" (after the ruins of Basra), but it would not be wrong. To date, all Western European countries except Spain, the vast majority of states in South America, the Russian Federation, Canada, and almost all US states have recognized the Armenian genocide. One or two countries are added to the list every year.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, developments in Karabakh played a key role in Turkish-Armenian relations. After the occupation of Karabakh, Türkiye severed diplomatic ties with Armenia. Azerbaijan's recapture of Karabakh in 2020 changed the balance of power in the region. A normalization process began in Türkiye-Armenia relations. Retired Ambassador Serdar Kılıç was appointed on behalf of Türkiye, and Parliamentary Deputy Speaker Ruben Rubinyan on behalf of Armenia to carry out the process. The parties held their first meeting in Moscow in January 2022. At the sixth meeting held in Yerevan in September 2025, they agreed to accelerate the previously reached agreements on border crossings, the rehabilitation of the Kars-Gyumri railway and the electricity interconnector, the renovation of the historic Ani Bridge, and the provision of scholarships to university students. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's remarks in January 2025 questioning the genocide were welcomed in Türkiye. Some interpret the decision to open the Zangezur Corridor connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan and to have it operated by United States companies as a sign that peace has come to the region and that the Turkish-Armenian conflict has ended.⁶

The end of Armenia's occupation of Karabakh, the return of Azerbaijani Turks from Karabakh to their homes after 30 years of exile, the opening of the

6 "Türkiye, Armenia Vow to Pursue Normalization without Preconditions," Daily Sabah, September 11, 2025, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkiye-armenia-vow-to-pursue-normalization-without-preconditions>.

Zangezur corridor, and thus the establishment of an uninterrupted highway between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan, as well as between Türkiye and the Turkic world, is a cause for celebration for all of us. However, there is still a long way to go. Five years have passed since the Second Karabakh War, yet a peace agreement has not been signed. It is unclear when the Zangezur corridor will open and how it will be operated. Iran is not enthusiastic about this route. Russia's discomfort at being left out of the process is no secret. There is serious opposition to the Pashinyan government in Armenia. Diaspora Armenians are known to be hardline. Even Armenia's decision to send a relief team to the earthquake that struck southeastern Anatolia two years ago was met with opposition both in Armenia and among the diaspora. In the United States, an Armenian-American professor's attempt to explain the situation by stating that aid was provided to Alevis, Arabs, and Kurds who were under pressure from the Turkish state in the earthquake zone was met with astonishment.⁷

The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul is at a critical juncture in this process. Patriarch Sahak II told journalists from Armenia that he desired the normalization of relations between the two countries and supported this process. However, when Pashinyan, who is working towards normalization, came to Istanbul, the Patriarchate's doors remained closed, giving the impression that it was opposed to the process. The Patriarch's closeness to Catholicos II Karekin of Echmiadzin, who is hostile to Pashinyan and opposed to the process, reinforced this perception.

As can be seen, Pashinyan's government faces a long and challenging road ahead. The recent decision to remove Mount Ararat from the stamp on the Republic of Armenia passport was described as an effort to rid itself of emotional symbols and avoid sending dangerous messages to neighboring states. This is noteworthy. We hope that the removal of the genocide allegations from the Armenian constitution will follow this. Armenian textbooks contain "information" that harbors hostility towards Turks, such as the claim that Turks committed genocide not only against Armenians but also against other nations. Removing such statements from textbooks is essential for raising new generations with pure feelings and for peace to take root in their minds.

We cannot say that all of this will put an end to the accusations of genocide against Türkiye. Even if Armenia withdraws from this case, it is clear that

7 AVİM, "Racism and Bigotry in Academia: The Elyse Semerdjian Case," 2023, accessed November 21, 2025, <https://www.avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/RACISM-AND-BIGOTRY-IN-ACADEMIA-THE-ELYSE-SEMERDJIAN-CASE>

people, forces, and states will continue to make claims of genocide against Türkiye against the Turkish state and nation, and will not refrain from poisoning innocent masses with false, distorted, and misleading information. This is because they are waging their struggle against Türkiye not for the Armenians, but for themselves. Appearing to defend the Armenians is a means to an end for them. In this way, during the final period of the Ottoman Empire and the years of the National Struggle, they incited the Armenians against the Turks, attempting to weaken the Turkish state and plunging the region into bloodshed. In subsequent years, they continued to vilify Turks by appearing to defend Armenians. They have made significant progress in this regard. The claim of Armenian genocide has been included in textbooks in almost all states in the United States. In Europe, some parties do not include Turkish-origin candidates who do not accept the Armenian genocide on their lists. The situation in academia is no different.⁸ Those who oppose these claims lose their positions, while those who defend them in some way are given platforms. Even in Türkiye, some have been influenced by this propaganda and those who write and publish in this vein.

We support the normalization process in Türkiye-Armenia relations. While hoping for the success of this slow-and-steady process, we do not forget that only six meetings have been held over three years, that diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Armenia have not been established, and that no peace agreement has been signed, even though five years have passed since the Second Karabakh War.⁹ Optimism is good. Realism is better. The allegations of Armenian genocide are not just a matter between Turks and Armenians. Even if the Armenians give up, many will continue. Türkiye must never forget this reality, evaluate what has been done and what will be done periodically, and continue its efforts uninterrupted to thwart these moves against our existence and unity.

8 "A Deceitful Attempt to Tarnish Atatürk's Legacy at Princeton University," Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM), accessed November 21, 2025, <https://avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/A-DECEITFUL-AT-TEMPT-TO-TARNISH-ATATURK-S-LEGACY-AT-PRINCETON-UNIVERSITY>.

9 "No: 186, 12 September 2025, Regarding the Sixth Meeting of Special Representatives for the Türkiye-Armenia Normalization Process," Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 12, 2025, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-186_-turkiye-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilciler-inin-altinci-toplantisi-hk.en.mfa.

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LEGAL ASSESSMENT OF ALLEGATIONS OF ARMENIA'S CHILD SOLDIER USE IN SECOND KARABAKH WAR

(ERMENİSTAN'IN 2. KARABAĞ SAVAŞI'NDA ÇOCUK ASKER
KULLANIMI İDDİALARININ HUKUKİ DEĞERLENDİRMESİ)

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Abstract: *During the Second Karabakh War (September 27 – November 10, 2020), Azerbaijani authorities accused Armenia of using child soldiers in the conflict. However, current international reports do not corroborate these allegations. UNICEF and other UN agencies, as well as leading human rights organizations (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch), documented numerous serious violations during the war, particularly the targeting of civilian settlements, indiscriminate bombardments, and the use of prohibited munitions; however, they did not provide any verified findings regarding the use of child soldiers. Armenia has described Azerbaijan's allegations in this regard as “baseless” and rejected them in official letters sent to the UN Secretary-General.*

Legally, Article 8/2(d)(vii) of the Rome Statute defines the direct or indirect involvement of children under the age of 15 in armed conflicts as a war crime. As Armenia is not a party to the Rome Statute, the International Criminal Court does not have direct jurisdiction. However, international mechanisms such as the UN Human Rights Council or the European Court of Human Rights could theoretically examine such allegations.

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Currently, the lack of evidence verified by independent and reliable institutions prevents the establishment of legal responsibility. In order to substantiate the allegations, audiovisual evidence, witness statements, and official records must be collected and then examined by independent experts. Until this process is completed, the allegations remain merely political rhetoric and do not produce any binding results under international law.

Keywords: *Child Soldiers, Armenia, Second Karabakh War, Human Rights, Law of Armed Conflict*

Öz: *İkinci Karabağ Savaşı (27 Eylül – 10 Kasım 2020) sırasında, Azerbaycan makamları Ermenistan'ı çatışmalarda çocuk asker kullanmakla suçlamıştır. Ancak mevcut uluslararası raporlar bu iddiaları doğrulamamaktadır. UNICEF ve diğer BM kuruluşlarının yanı sıra, önde gelen insan hakları örgütleri (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch), savaş süresince çok sayıda ciddi ihlali, özellikle sivil yerleşim yerlerinin hedef alınması, ayırım gözetmeden gerçekleştirilen bombardımanlar ve yasaklı savaş malzemeleri kullanımı belgelemiş; ancak çocuk asker kullanımı konusunda herhangi bir doğrulanmış tespit sunmamıştır. Ermenistan, BM Genel Sekreterliği'ne ilettiği resmi yazılarda, Azerbaycan'ın bu yöndeki suçlamalarını “asılsız” olarak nitelendirmiş ve reddetmiştir.*

Hukuki açıdan, Roma Statüsü'nün 8/2(d)(vii) maddesi, 15 yaşın altındaki çocukların silahlı çatışmalara doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak dâhil edilmesini savaş suçu olarak tanımlamaktadır. Ermenistan Roma Statüsü'ne taraf olmadığı için/olmaması dolayısıyla, Uluslararası Ceza Mahkemesi'nin doğrudan yargı yetkisi bulunmamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, BM İnsan Hakları Konseyi veya Avrupa İnsan Hakları Mahkemesi gibi uluslararası mekanizmalar açısından bu tür iddiaları incelemesi mümkündür.

Mevcut durumda, bağımsız ve güvenilir kurumlarca doğrulanmış delil eksikliği, hukuki sorumluluğun tesis edilmesini engellemektedir. İddiaların somutlaştırılması için görsel-işitsel kanıtların, tanık beyanlarının ve resmi kayıtların toplanması, ardından bunların bağımsız uzmanlarca incelenmesi gereklidir. Bu süreç tamamlanmadan, iddialar yalnızca siyasi söylem düzeyinde kalmakta ve uluslararası hukuk bakımından bağlayıcı bir sonuç doğurmamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Çocuk Asker, Ermenistan, İkinci Karabağ Savaşı, İnsan Hakları, Silahlı Çatışma Hukuku*

Introduction

The Second Karabakh War (2020) between Azerbaijan and Armenia partially paved the way for a solution to the Karabakh Conflict, which is considered a “frozen conflict” in international relations and international law. While many low-intensity conflicts exist in the region, similar to the Karabakh Conflict, the Second Karabakh War represented the peak of these long-standing conflicts. The war, which lasted six weeks and involved heavy armed clashes at the end of a 30-year process in Karabakh, preoccupied the agenda of actors in the immediate region. The security of the region, human rights violations during the conflict, and the legal consequences of these violations became a global agenda item immediately after the war. Despite the prohibition of the use of “child soldiers” under international law, allegations that Armenia used “child soldiers” in the armed conflict led to questions about the effectiveness of the Law of Armed Conflict and Human Rights Law. Human Rights Law is a field of law that has its roots in the doctrine of natural law and should be made an ideal part of positive law. In this context, the shortcomings of this branch of law were felt immediately after the two major wars experienced by the world public. The reality that human rights must be protected not only in times of peace but also in times of war has been incorporated into the application of the Law of Armed Conflict and has therefore exerted its influence here as an important element of legal regulations. The use of child soldiers is considered a serious violation of human rights under international law and is a phenomenon that has irreversible consequences, especially in war zones. The use of children as combatants or support personnel in armed conflicts is a practice that negatively affects their physical, mental, and emotional development and has long-term consequences on their bodies and minds. The “child,” defined by society as a group in need of protection in terms of physical, mental, and many other aspects, has thus been granted international legal regulations that protect their rights. International law, taking into account the reality that these vulnerable groups cannot be protected on their own, has insisted that states make the necessary adjustments in their domestic laws. Despite all these efforts, it is also a fact that effective protection for children cannot be ensured even in times of peace, let alone during armed conflicts.

In light of the legal texts that international law has regulated and implemented to protect children, this study will conduct a legal assessment of the use of “child soldiers” in the 2020 armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan () using qualitative research methods. Quantitative data on the subject will be used where appropriate and to a limited extent. As this is a legal text study, the subject will be kept as far as possible from the fields of security and

international relations and will be shaped in terms of the consequences of violating the legal regulations on the subject.

1. The Process Leading to the Second Karabakh War and the Background of the War

The issue of Karabakh, referred to until recently as “Nagorno-Karabakh,” became an increasingly prominent problem during the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The political and governmental vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union became a means for Armenia to gain territorial gains in the region. In this sense, Armenia, which already considered Karabakh a part of its own territory, embarked on an effort to define it as part of its territory without room for doubt or objection. This dispute between the two countries defined the region as one of the frozen conflict zones. It is well known that a ceasefire was achieved with the Protocol signed in Bishkek in 1994 after the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, and that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)¹ regarding the regional issue, and despite this decision, the occupation of Karabakh and seven regions continued. Armenia’s insistence on maintaining these occupations formed the scope of the Karabakh Issue, the last thirty years of conflict between the two countries. The armed clashes that resumed on September 27, 2020, and Azerbaijan’s establishment of control in the region on November 10, 2020, produced a solution to the Karabakh Problem. (Ataman & Pirinççi, 2021, pp. 17-35).

Although the events that have taken place in Karabakh from yesterday to today are associated with the start of the First Karabakh War, the beginning

1 See: United Nations General Assembly Resolution 62/243 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 62/243, entitled “The Situation in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan,” is a resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on March 14, 2008, during its 62nd session, regarding the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. UN Security Council Resolution 822 of April 30, 1993, calling for the cessation and withdrawal of attacks by Armenian forces from Kelbecer and other remaining occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan following the occupation on April 3, 1993, UN Security Council Resolution 853 of July 28, 1993: “Demands the immediate cessation of all hostilities, calls for the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Agdam and other recently occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and reaffirms UN Resolution 822,” UN Security Council Resolution 874 dated October 14, 1993: “Calls for the preservation of the ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities, and the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the recently occupied districts of Fuzuli (August 23, 1993), Jabrayil (August 26, 1993), Kubadli (September 31, 1993), and other recently occupied territories,” and reaffirms UN Resolutions 822 and 853,” UN Security Council Resolution 884 dated November 12 “Condemns the recent violations of the ceasefire established between the parties, which led to the resumption of hostilities; Calls upon the Government of Armenia to exert influence on the Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan to comply with Resolutions 822, 853, and 874; calls on the parties to immediately cease armed attacks; calls on Armenia to withdraw from the Zangilan district of Azerbaijan and reaffirms UN Resolutions 822, 853, and 874.”

of the regional problem cannot, of course, be limited to this process. The necessity to limit the subject for a more original approach forces us to explain this historical process not from beginning to end, but in a limited way. Therefore, it is essential to convey the recent historical process here. The most important factor leading to the First Karabakh War was, of course, the efforts of the Armenian Lobby. These efforts were not actually an approach that was widely accepted by "Moscow." However, with Mikhail Gorbachev's appointment as Secretary of the Politburo of the USSR in 1985, the policies of Perestroika (restructuring) and Glasnost (openness) led to the development of more flexible ideas about the nations within the USSR (Akman, 2005, p. 61). The changes made in USSR policy during this process paved the way for Armenia to reconsider its political approach to Karabakh. In Azerbaijan, the USSR's aforementioned policies resulted in the resurgence of nationalism. The most notable development was the departure of Haydar Aliyev, former head of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, from the Politburo in 1987. All these developments, coupled with the open support given to Armenia by Gorbachev's advisors, led to an increase in Armenian actions in Karabakh (Garibov, 2017, pp. 255-266).

In 1988, the Armenian Parliament and the Parliament of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Republic passed a resolution to "separate the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Republic, which is part of Azerbaijan, from Azerbaijan and unite it with Armenia" (İsmayilov, 2010, p. 117). (Garibov, 2017, p. 273). The political structures of the Azerbaijan SSR and the USSR also stated that the decision taken by Armenia and the Karabakh Administration was legally impossible, referring to the provision that "borders cannot be changed" in the 1936 and 1977 USSR Constitutions (Yıldırım, 2018, pp. 186-188), (İşyar, 2020, pp. 388-389). These developments increased tensions between the two countries. The USSR's response to the rising tension was to annex Nagorno-Karabakh to Moscow on January 12, 1989 (Yıldırım, 2018, pp. 189-199), (İşyar, 2004, pp. 383-384). On November 28, 1989, the USSR again ceded the Nagorno-Karabakh Administration to Azerbaijan. Following this decision by the USSR, the Armenian National Movement was established in Armenia, and the United Armenian Republic was declared in Nagorno-Karabakh on December 1, 1990 (İşyar, 2004, p. 387). The tension heightened by all these developments resulted in clashes between the two countries on January 12, 1990, known as the Sumgayt Incident. The USSR administration declared a state of emergency in Karabakh and many other places, aiming to end the clashes (Yıldırım, 2018, pp. 191-192). The Red Army carried out arrests in Azerbaijan, leading to events that became known in history as the "January Massacre" (İşyar, 2004, p. 387). The collapse of the USSR in 1991 also created a regional political vacuum (Garibov, 2017, p. 294).

Today, the decision dated November 26, 1991, is legally valid, and there is no autonomy in the legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Within the scope of the region's legal status, it must be considered part of Azerbaijan and accepted as Azerbaijani territory (Garibov, 2017, p. 359). After the collapse of the USSR, the Russian Federation was established, and Russia signed a "Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Security Agreement" with Armenia, supporting Armenia against Azerbaijan within the scope of the "Near Abroad Doctrine" (Salamov, 2021, p. 81). With this move, the Russian Federation sought to maintain the influence of the policy it had pursued since the Tsarist era over the newly established states that had seceded from the USSR. When viewed from its own perspective, the Russian Federation's political policies in question are a "rational policy," as the state deemed it appropriate to create a sphere of influence in terms of the country's supreme interests. However, it should be noted that the supreme interests of the state were to support Armenia with the 366th Motorized Brigade of the Red Army in its occupation and genocide actions in the town of Khojaly on February 25-26, 1991, and, as a result of this support, to occupy the regions of Shusha, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Lachin in 1992 (Çora, 2000). and supporting Armenia with the 366th Motorized Brigade of the Red Army, and that this support paved the way for the occupation of the regions of Shusha, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Lachin in 1992 (Çora, 2018, p. 68; Derin, 2023, 24-28) in 1992. Indeed, the Russian Federation's support has been part of a historical process that continues to this day, and this policy of support has actually become a tool for inflaming hostility between the peoples of the region. Empowered by the same political platform, Armenia opened fire on military base positions in Azerbaijan's Tovuz District between July 12 and 16, 2020 (Derin, 2023, 81). The attacks continued, encompassing the villages of Agdam, Dondar Kushchu, and Vahitli. The process lasted four days and went down in history as the "Tovuz Conflict." (İşyar, 2020, p. 289). Armenia's attacks were not limited to the Tovuz District; they also took place in the Shahbuz and Culfa provinces of Nakhchivan from July 12, 2020, to July 13, 2020. According to the Azerbaijani Army Newspaper, "*As a result of Azerbaijan's response to the Armenian attack, more than twenty pieces of military equipment belonging to the Armenian army were destroyed*" (Azerbaijani Army Newspaper, 2020). Armenia continued its attacks on September 27, 2020, in Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been a disputed region since 1994. Azerbaijan was forced to exercise its "right to self-defense" under the provisions of the UN Charter in response to Armenia's attacks (Aslan, 2021, p. 245).

As a result of all these events, it is a fact that both countries suffered heavy losses during the renewed clashes in 2020. The parties to the conflict have

been accused of violations of international law, including targeting civilians, human rights violations, and war crimes. In particular, allegations that Armenia used child soldiers became one of the most controversial issues of the conflict.

The concept of child soldiers is not legally acceptable, but the reality of children being used in armed conflict is undeniable. No other concept can be used to describe this reality. The very juxtaposition of the concepts of “child” and “armed conflict” is unreasonable. For this reason, international law has acted with an awareness of the magnitude of the problem and has endeavored to make the necessary regulations. Although all regulations created by law are binding on every state, the regulations in the domestic laws of states and the practice of “compulsory military service” under the citizenship law of the nation-state, the involvement of non-state actors in armed conflicts, and the ease with which children can be recruited into armed conflict are causing the problem of child soldiers to increase day by day.

2. Definition of the Use of Child Soldiers and International Law

At this point in the world, it is thought that many habits have changed. In fact, it is not only the habits of societies that have changed. The system is changing, and the technology and behaviors that develop alongside this system present “change” by creating the necessity to adapt everything that has been applied throughout history to the conditions of the time. The concept of war is also like this. The methods of warfare used centuries ago are not actually different today; what has changed are the conditions of the times. These conditions are generally parallel to the stage of technological development that has been reached. The limits of technological development three centuries ago determined the conditions of warfare at that time. Today’s technological conditions have determined today’s form of warfare. This is why Kaldor spoke of new generation warfare methods (Kaldor; 2012, 2-4), and every form of warfare appropriate to the conditions of the day was referred to under a larger umbrella concept such as “armed conflict,” stemming from this new understanding of warfare. In general, the most important indicators for labeling these conflicts as new are how and where they are financed, the identities of the warring parties, their tactics, and their objectives. The law, which changes and develops according to the needs of society, had already established the rules of war with the emergence of society and norms, but like everything else that develops, human rights also had to evolve. The fact that a person is born simply as a human being implies that they are entitled to many rights. Along with the right to life, the identity of the child became clear. Ultimately,

the law accepted that children should be protected and, in this sense, should not be involved in violent events such as armed conflict. It should be noted that children are not involved in today's wars or armed conflicts. Children have always been present in war (Altinsoy; 2022, 150-152). While the modern legal system refers to children as individuals under the age of eighteen within the scope of international human rights law, such a distinction did not exist in earlier periods. In this context, participation in war was either voluntary or forced. Children had no say in whether or not they participated in war. Today, the concept of "child soldier" still defines children who are involved in armed conflict, either voluntarily or by force. Legally, regardless of whether a child directly participates in combat, even their involvement in supporting roles (as a messenger, spy, carrier, etc.) in armed conflict requires them to be defined as combatants. The use of children in armed conflicts concerns both humanitarian law and human rights law as a "lex specialis" because of the existence of armed conflict (Henckarerts and Doswald-Beck, 2009, 235-278). Article 2 common to the 1949 Geneva Conventions also states that the rules of humanitarian law covered by the Convention shall apply in all types of armed conflict between states (Pazarci, 529). The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Additional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which entered into force in 2000², strictly prohibit the use of child soldiers. On the other hand, the Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute or ICC) considers the use of children under the age of fifteen in armed conflicts, even within the armed forces of states, to be a "war crime." Despite this legal recognition, there are reports compiled by the United Nations (UN) on the use of child soldiers in armed conflict zones around the world (Human Rights Watch, 2008; Brett and Specht, 2004, 34-78; Machel, 1996).

Articles 38(2) and (3) of the CRC, recognized as the first international treaty protecting children's rights internationally, specifically address the issue of

2 CRC Article 32; —States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to ensure the implementation of this article. With a view to achieving these objectives and taking into account the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall, in particular, take the following measures: establish one or more minimum age limits for admission to employment; establish appropriate regulations concerning the duration and conditions of work. They shall provide for penalties or other appropriate sanctions to ensure the effective implementation of this article. CRC Article 33; States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legal, social, and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in international agreements, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.

“child soldiers.” The relevant articles of the CRC contain a view parallel to that of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. Although the Committee on the Rights of the Child has imposed an obligation on states to ensure that persons under the age of fifteen do not participate directly in armed conflicts and to prevent their participation in hostilities under the Right of the Child to Freedom from All Forms of Violence, this does not narrow the protection afforded to children by the Additional Protocols. In other words, the use of the term “under fifteen years of age” does not exclude the group between fifteen and eighteen years of age from the scope of protection. Therefore, children over the age of fifteen may participate in war or armed conflict within the armed forces of the state in cases of necessity, but legally, the involvement of children under the age of eighteen in armed conflict by the state is considered a war crime. Children under the age of fifteen, on the other hand, cannot be involved in armed conflict under any circumstances. Armed conflict is a form of violence, and the aim of the CRC here is to protect children from all forms of violence. The CRC has moved away from a narrow interpretation of “violence” as “physical harm or harm caused intentionally.” In its General Comment No. 13, the CRC stated that the term “violence” should in no way be understood as referring solely to physical harm, and that the psychological effects of harm are also taken into account by the Commission. Thus, the Commission found that Article 19 is also directly related to the optional protocols concerning the sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography, and the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC/GC/14, 2013, 12; GC/13, CRC/C/GC/13, 2011, para. 7).

3. Allegations of Child Soldier Use in Armenia

In January 2004, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) conducted a visit throughout the country to prepare its second periodic report on Armenia's compliance with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CRC made recommendations to prevent the employment of children at a young age and the increase in child labor throughout the country. In fact, in the report's conclusion, it stated that Armenia had paid close attention to the issue and made great efforts to prevent it from remaining a problem. Aghvan Vardanyan, Armenia's Minister of Social Security at the time, who presented the report, said that since the evaluation of the first report, Armenia had continued to comply with the provisions of the Convention by implementing legal and administrative measures (UN Human Rights 2004, 1). Most of the activities related to the protection of children's rights in the country focused on social activities aimed at improving children's rights in the

country. The development of these activities by the country can be considered an important step in supporting the child's adaptation to the social environment and psychological and spiritual development. Joyce Aluoch, the country rapporteur responsible for drafting and following up on Armenia's report, said in her speech on the report that "the State party needs to take further steps to ratify the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography" (UN Human Rights 2004,1). The Rapporteur's statements certainly indicate that Armenia is expected to make further progress in demonstrating the necessary sensitivity to the issue, while also showing that the main focus is expected to be on "children in armed conflict."

The Rapporteur also noted that he had invited Armenia to ratify International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions Nos. 182 and 138 without waiting for the adoption of the new labor code. The Rapporteur stressed that Armenia's insistence on becoming a party to the relevant ILO Conventions in taking the necessary steps regarding child labor in harmful environments was likely, given that it recognized the exploitation of children in armed conflict as harmful work ⁽³⁾ and that it must refrain from exploiting children in such situations.

Allegations that Armenia used child soldiers in the Second Karabakh War have been raised by Azerbaijan and some international observers. News that commanders in the Armenian army were gathering child rebels in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh began to spread immediately after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan refused to accept diplomatic efforts to resolve the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Pashinyan's speech calling on all Armenians to take up arms (İbrahimov, 2020, 1) also led to the development of ideas that actually paved the way for the use of child soldiers. In other words, allegations that the Armenian armed forces had involved children under the age of 18 in the conflict, either "by force or voluntarily" (Azerbaijan 24 TV), began to gain significant traction in the international public sphere. This action, prohibited by international law, was also carried out in 2000 by the FPLC, —Union des Patriotes Congolais (UPC) (The Prosecutor v Thomas Lubanga Dyilo ICC-01/04-01/06) (Altinsoy, 2019,206). In this context, *Article 8(2) (d) of the Rome Statute states: "Other serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in armed conflict, not of an international character under existing international law; namely, any of the following acts: i) Deliberately directing attacks against civilians who are not taking direct part in hostilities*

3 Further detailed explanations are provided in the continuation of the work on the relevant ILO Conventions.

or against the civilian population...vii) The recruitment, enlistment, or active use in hostilities of children under the age of 15; viii) The displacement of civilians for reasons other than those necessitated by the security of civilians or military reasons, unless required by the circumstances of the conflict...” All these discussions served as a reminder that international law had been violated, regardless of how children were used on the front lines. Even if children are assigned tasks such as fighting on the front lines, carrying ammunition, delivering messages, or spying, or even “peeling potatoes” for combatants within the warring parties, this means that the law’s efforts to protect children are disregarded (Altinsoy, 2022, 94; Brett, Speckh, 2004, 122). In this context, it has been reported that Armenia sent Armenian youths to the front during the war in the Karabakh region, where the Armenian population is sufficiently large, and forced them to perform military service in the midst of the conflict (İbrahimov, 2020, 2-8). From the perspective of international law, the fact that these youths are Armenian citizens does not mean that they can be conscripted. Even if a person is bound to the country by citizenship, this does not grant the freedom to involve their child in the conflict. As stated above, Article 8(2)(d)(vii) of the Rome Statute prohibits *the recruitment, enlistment, or active use of children under the age of 15 in national armed forces or in hostilities*. Although Armenia denies all allegations on this matter, images of children have been widely circulated in the media, and because it has been difficult for international observers to enter the area, the allegations cannot be conclusively proven. The International Criminal Court has conducted serious war crimes investigations related to the use of child soldiers in many regions and incidents. In the Karabakh region, Armenia must accept the Rome Statute for a full investigation to be conducted. As of now, there is no question of accepting the Statute, and Armenia has even recently accepted the secondary jurisdiction of the Statute and the Court as a result of tensions with Russia and security concerns related to these tensions. Otherwise, the acceptance of the Statute is not a prerequisite when serious international crimes are involved. The ICC Prosecutor can act on his own initiative, but the ICC has chosen to remain indifferent to the allegations. Therefore, a full-fledged trial process has not been initiated in Karabakh, nor has it even been considered. Given the geopolitical tensions in the region and the fact that it is difficult to even consider initiating a peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the reality is that it is difficult to ensure justice, especially for Armenian children. On the other hand, as with every child caught up in armed conflict, the rehabilitation of Armenian children is also a significant problem due to the situations they experience in the conflict that violate human rights and children’s rights.

4. International Reactions to the Use of Child Soldiers and Human Rights Violations

The use of child soldiers leaves deep psychological and social scars on individuals and communities. Children experience serious trauma during armed conflicts, and this trauma leads to lifelong psychological problems. General Comment No. 13 of the CRC states that children must be protected from violence for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development. The Committee has stated that any situation in which a child is exposed to violence will result in serious injuries and fatal disabilities, primarily psychological and cognitive developmental deficiencies, in the long or short term (CRC/C/GY/13, para:15).

In its 2008 “Child Soldiers Report 2008” on child soldiers, the United Nations Human Rights Commission stated that Armenia subjects schoolchildren aged 16-18 to military training and that this training is part of compulsory education. In addition, it reported that girls in grades 8 and 9 received training on how to use automatic weapons during weekly classes. In this regard, the point highlighted by the Commission is that Armenian youth are radicalized at a young age. The same report states that even 11-year-old children receive weapons training at school through a pilot program implemented by Armenia (UNHR, REFWORL 2008). On the other hand, the most important finding mentioned in the report is that it is very similar to the model of using child soldiers implemented by the Houthis, a separatist group in Yemen, which is known to have been in a civil war for many years (UNHRC, Refworld, 2008). The significance of this finding is that children will be instrumentalized to a considerable extent in situations involving internal armed conflict, which is thought-provoking for the future of Armenia, which is still dependent on Russia and other Western countries under all circumstances. From the children’s perspective, it is stated that children trained as “killing machines” under this model are not taught to develop the ability to protect themselves from armed conflict. This situation also makes the child a direct target, as they do not know how to defend themselves against military attacks in the conflict (UNHRC, Refworld, 2008).

Beyond all these consequences, there are justifications for the use of child soldiers in many internal conflicts occurring regionally. One of the most important reasons is that children are not seen as a threat by the parties to the conflict because they are individuals who have not yet completed their physical, mental, and psychological development, and because they are actually faster in many counterattacks and intelligence operations and are unaware of the

consequences of their actions, they can be ruthless and unrestrained (Altinsoy, 2022, 34).

The fact that children are seen as such a useful tool has been recognized as a problem of concern to the international system, and efforts have been made to take measures to prevent children from being involved in conflict. Despite numerous international agreements and coercive rules, children are still not saved from being involved in armed conflict today. However, in today's conflicts, children are actually more victims of "human trafficking" than combatants, and considering that their will is not accepted, they are also subject to practices that fill the concept of "modern slavery," even if it is incorrectly defined.

5. Efforts to Prevent the Use of Child Soldiers

The international community has made numerous efforts to prevent the use of child soldiers. As stated in relevant United Nations reports, the longer the armed conflict lasts, the more these children suffer psychologically and physically due to the actions they witness in their situation. In addition, the difficulties they experience in adapting to social order cause serious trauma in later stages of their lives (A/75/873– S/2021/437, para. 4). International initiatives exist to eliminate or minimize these traumas. Educational programs aimed at protecting children from armed conflict, encouraging peaceful solutions, and awareness-raising efforts by civil society organizations are recognized as initiatives that can minimize the harm caused to children by conflict. Rehabilitation centers have been established, particularly in post-conflict situations, to reintegrate children into society, providing them with education and psychological support (Brett, Specht; 2004: 122). The legal regulations that shed light on these efforts constitute many texts of international law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the most fundamental international documents on the protection of children from armed conflict. Adopted in 1989, this convention broadly guarantees children's rights and aims to prevent their participation in armed conflicts. Article 38 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges states to prevent the direct use of children under the age of 15 in armed conflicts. However, this age limit has been deemed insufficient by many human rights advocates, and subsequent regulations have set the age limit at 18. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, adopted in 2000, are documents that strengthen the Convention and prohibit the use of children in armed

conflicts more strictly. According to this protocol, the forced recruitment of individuals under the age of 18 into armed forces is prohibited, and states are obliged to restrict voluntary recruitment as well. The use of child soldiers by non-state armed groups is completely prohibited.

The Geneva Conventions, which form the basis of International Humanitarian Law, and their additional protocols contain provisions for the protection of civilians in war and indirectly prohibit the use of child soldiers. Additional Protocol I and Additional Protocol II of 1977 prohibit the use of children under the age of 15 in conflicts and require states to take the necessary measures to comply with this obligation. However, there are also views that this age limit should be set at 18. One of the most important regulations on the use of child soldiers in the context of international criminal law is the Rome Statute, the founding document of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Adopted in 1998, the Rome Statute defines the use of child soldiers as a “war crime.” According to this definition, the use of children under the age of 15 in conflicts by national armed forces or armed groups is considered a war crime, and those who commit this crime can be tried in international criminal courts. On the other hand, the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) Convention No. 182 of 1999 prohibits the worst forms of child labor and, in this context, also addresses the use of child soldiers. This convention considers the forced involvement of children in armed conflicts as one of the worst forms of child labor and prohibits this practice.

The criminal laws of many states contain provisions prohibiting the use of children in armed conflicts. However, some states tolerate the use of child soldiers or use children in their own armed forces despite their laws. Some African and Middle Eastern countries, particularly those in conflict zones (Brett, Specht; 2004: 34-42), face serious problems in this regard due to weak legal enforcement and inadequate oversight mechanisms concerning the use of child soldiers.

According to the Armenian Constitution, these efforts have already been made through constitutional regulations. According to the constitutional regulation, which ostensibly contains many humanitarian provisions, “Every citizen shall participate in the defense of the Republic of Armenia in the manner prescribed by law. Article 47” (Constitution, at National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia). Military service and voluntary military service are regulated by the Military Service Act, amended in 2002, and the 1998 Military Act (UN Doc. CRC/C/93.Add 6, 17 July 2003). In July 2003, Armenia informed the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that boys are registered for military

service at the age of 16 and that men between the ages of 18 and 27 who meet the necessary health standards are subject to military service in accordance with the Military Service Act (Articles 5 and 11). The minimum age for voluntary military service is 18. Men and women who have completed compulsory military service may apply to serve voluntarily. According to Armenia's UN Report, it is stated that there has been no recruitment of underage soldiers since the end of the First Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1994 (UN Doc. CRC/C/93.Add 6, 17 July 2003). However, the Report also states that the conscription of ethnic Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan continues in violation of the 1999 Refugees Act, which exempts them from military service. The Report states that the parents of such refugees are reluctant to complain due to their concern about the ill-treatment their sons are likely to suffer while under arms. The report also cites an example of a 15- or 16-year-old child being conscripted while in the company of another student in the tenth grade (UN Doc. CRC/C/93.Add 6, July 17, 2003).

Conclusion

The Second Karabakh War has gone down in history as a conflict that was not limited to a struggle over territory and political power, but also involved human rights violations. Allegations that Armenia used child soldiers are among the most serious accusations against this war and constitute a clear violation of international law. The use of children in conflicts causes irreversible damage at both the individual and societal levels; therefore, stronger mechanisms must be established to prevent such practices.

Resolving the conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan through peaceful means will be a crucial step towards ending such human rights violations. However, unless a lasting peace agreement is reached, the risks to children in the region will continue.

According to information obtained from Armenian social networks, children are serving as soldiers in the armed conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh against Azerbaijan. Some of these boys and girls, as young as 8 years old, are serving in the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian government forces and armed separatist groups, acting as spies, messengers, or observers. Many are kidnapped or forcibly recruited, while others join out of desperation, believing the Armenian government offers their best chance of survival.

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IRAN'S EXCEPTIONAL APPROACH IN ITS DEFENCE INDUSTRY STRATEGY: ARMENIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR

(İRAN'IN SAVUNMA SANAYİİ STRATEJİSİNDE İSTİSNAİ YAKLAŞIMI:
İKİNCİ KARABAĞ SAVAŞI BAĞLAMINDA ERMENİSTAN)

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Abstract: *Iran's defence industry strategy is based on a synthesis of functions aimed at countering objective threats, projecting a deterrent image and fostering political and military rapprochement with other countries. The defence institutions established under the Shah prior to the Islamic Revolution, with the goal of becoming a 'regional leader,' remained effective after the revolution. The Iran-Iraq War that followed the 1979 Revolution was the most important process shaping Iran's defence strategy. During this period, divisions and purges within the military structure led to institutional weaknesses and technological deficiencies. The narrative of success necessary for post-revolutionary consolidation, geopolitical realities (threats from Iraq, Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia, and Israel), the motivation for 'self-sufficiency' that developed as a result of the arms embargoes imposed on Iran, and the search for new alliances*

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shaped Iran's defence doctrine. Starting in the second half of the 1980s, Iran established defence relations with Russia, North Korea, Libya, Ukraine, Belarus, and China, achieving significant developments in air power and missile technology. With the 2011 Syrian crisis, UAV and UCAV technologies and ballistic missile programmes accelerated. Iran's defence industry strategy is based on the motivation to build its own deterrence capacity and to support and equip its proxy forces, and 2020 has been a transformative year in this context. The Second Karabakh War this year has led Iran to adopt an exceptional approach beyond the aforementioned motivations.

Key Words: Iran, Defence, Industry, Strategy, Armenia.

Öz: İran'ın savunma sanayii stratejisi, objektif tehditlere karşı koyma, caydırıcılık imajı oluşturma ve diğer ülkelerle siyasi-askeri yakınlaşma işlevlerinin sentezi üzerine kuruludur. İslam Devrimi öncesinde Şah'ın "bölgesel lider güç" hedefi doğrultusunda kurulan savunma kurumları, devrim sonrasında da etkili olmuştur. 1979 Devrimi'ni takip eden İran-İrak Savaşı, İran'ın savunma stratejisini şekillendiren en önemli süreç olmuştur. Bu dönemde askeri yapıdaki ayrışmalar ve tasfiyeler, kurumsal zaafiyetlerin ve teknolojik eksikliklerin ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Devrim sonrası konsolidasyon için gerekli başarı anlatısı, jeopolitik gerçeklikler (İrak, Körfez ülkeleri, Suudi Arabistan ve İsrail tehditleri), uygulanan silah ambargoları sonucu gelişen "kendine yeterlilik" motivasyonu ve yeni ittifak arayışları, İran'ın savunma anlayışını şekillendirmiştir. 1980'lerin ikinci yarısından itibaren Rusya, Kuzey Kore, Libya, Ukrayna, Belarus ve Çin ile savunma ilişkileri kurulmuş, özellikle hava gücü ve füze teknolojilerinde gelişmeler sağlanmıştır. 2011 Suriye krizi ile birlikte İHA-SİHA teknolojileri ve balistik füze programları hızlanmıştır. İran'ın savunma sanayii stratejisi, kendi caydırıcılık kapasitesini inşa etmek ve vekil güçlerini desteklemek ve teçhiz etme motivasyonuna dayanırken 2020 yılı bu bağlamda dönüştürücü olmuştur. Bu yıl yaşanan 2. Karabağ Savaşı İran'ı söz konusu motivasyonların dışında istisnai bir yaklaşıma yönlendirmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İran, Savunma, Sanayii, Strateji, Ermenistan.

Introduction

The defence industry of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a complex structure shaped by the country's geopolitical position, regional threat perceptions and strategic objectives. This structure is evident in the synthesis of three functions: the development of the capacity to counter objective threats, the creation of a deterrent image, and the establishment of political and military rapprochement with other countries. Historically, Iran's defence industry has undergone a transformation from the 'regional power' goal of the Shah era to the principle of 'self-sufficiency' after the Islamic Revolution. Prior to the Islamic Revolution, Iran had maintained cooperative relations with numerous countries, including the United States, West Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Israel. However, in the aftermath of 1979, the country found itself subject to international sanctions and geopolitical challenges. This situation prompted the country to seek alternative strategies to develop its defence capabilities. The Iran-Iraq War exposed significant military vulnerabilities in Iran and precipitated a fundamental re-evaluation of the nation's defence industry strategy. In this context, Iran has developed a unique defence industry strategy based on reverse engineering, technology transfer and dual-use methods. The country has concentrated on air power and missile technology in order to overcome its limitations in conventional capabilities, and has prioritised the development of asymmetric warfare capabilities. This strategic choice has resulted in close cooperation with countries such as Russia, North Korea, and China, thereby establishing the foundation for Iran's regional deterrence capacity. The institutional structure of Iran's defence industry is overseen collectively by the Ministry of Defence and the Khatam al Anbiya Headquarters. This collaborative management approach addresses the nation's defence requirements through the coordinated efforts of various subordinate organisations and industrial complexes. This ecosystem, which is supported by universities and research institutions, plays a critical role in Iran's adaptation to the changing security environment and the development of defence technologies. The present study seeks to elucidate the primary dynamics of Iran's defence industry strategy within the context of its historical background, strategic vision and institutional structure. In this context, the historical stages and transformations of Iran's defence industry have been outlined, as have the main outlines of the new strategic vision adopted after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Finally, the effects of the 2020 Second Karabakh War, which brought about an exceptional transformation in Iran's industrial strategy, have been highlighted.

1. Historical Background

When analysing the assessments made regarding Iran's defence industry, the post-Islamic Revolution development processes are largely emphasised. This has resulted in assessments that predominantly disregard the pre-Islamic Revolution context, thereby overlooking the concept of historical continuity. However, an analysis of the main characteristics of Iran's defence industry prior to the Islamic Revolution provides a valuable perspective on the post-Islamic Revolution period¹. In this regard, it is important to examine the Iranian defence industry of the Shah era, which influenced the post-Islamic Revolution period in terms of institutional level, strategic understanding and functions².

The strategic understanding that informed Iran's defence industry prior to the Islamic Revolution was predicated on the Shah's objective of establishing the country as a 'leading power' in the region. This understanding was predicated on the existence of a competitive dynamic with Iraq within the regional context, with a view to averting geopolitical threats. In accordance with this objective, the Shah regime, which from the 1960s onwards concentrated on the development of the defence industry due to the rise in oil revenues, accorded particular significance to air power and aviation technology³. These would subsequently become a pivotal component of the defence doctrine following the Islamic Revolution. During this process, the Shah's administration cooperated with various countries, primarily the United States, West Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Israel, in the defence industry⁴. The initial and pivotal concrete measures in this process were the formation of the Iranian Aviation Industry Organisation (IAIO) in 1966 and the Iranian Helicopter Maintenance and Repair Industry Organisation (PANHA) in 1969.

Following these developments, the Shah administration, which was focused on the aviation industry, initiated various production processes in addition to these applications in the early 1970s by collaborating with other countries and companies. Consequently, in 1970, the Iranian Aircraft Industry Corporation (IACI) was established, followed by the Iranian Electronics Industry Corporation (IEI) in 1973⁵. Contracts were subsequently signed with British

1 Hesam Forozan, 2016. *The Military in Post-Revolutionary Iran*. London: Routledge, 70

2 Sepehr Zabih, 1988. *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*. London: Routledge, 96

3 Zabih, 1988, *ibid.*, 100

4 Steven R. Ward, 2009. *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 78

5 Ward, 2009, *ibid.*, 80

Aerospace in Shiraz for the local production of the Rapier surface-to-air missile system and with Hughes Missile System Company for the local maintenance and joint production of anti-tank missiles and air-to-ground missile systems. Furthermore, the period saw the emergence of activities such as the production of Heckler & Koch G-3 7.52 mm assault rifles, Heckler & Koch MP5 9 mm light machine guns, and Rheinmetall MG 3 7.62 machine guns.

From the early 1970s onwards, the Shah regime initiated an escalation in its investments and international collaborations, with the objective of augmenting the scale and calibre of defence industry initiatives. In 1976, a collaboration was initiated with the US-based corporation Textron (Bell Helicopter Textron), with Northrop acting as a partner, to produce local-purpose helicopters at production facilities in proximity to Shahin Shahr, in the vicinity of Isfahan. The objective of the collaboration was to establish revision lines for Boeing 747 and F-14 aircraft, in addition to the production and assembly of parts for F-16A/B jets.

In 1977, the 'Flower Project' – one of the most significant defence industry projects of the Shah's regime – was initiated. The Flower Project, which sought to develop long- and medium-range missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads in collaboration with Israel, continued until 1979. During this period, tests and trials were conducted in the Sirjan and Rafsanjan regions of Iran. As with numerous other defence industry collaboration initiatives, the Flower Project was terminated and forsaken in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, there was a proliferation of strategic understanding and institutional transformation processes within Iran's defence industry. However, it is important to note that the geopolitical codes and institutional memory of the Shah era also exerted their influence during this period.

2. The Islamic Revolution and the Changing Strategic Vision

The Iran-Iraq War, which commenced in the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, represented the most significant process that shaped Iran's post-revolution defence industry strategy and guided this sector. The Iran-Iraq War, which erupted during the process of division and purges in the military structure due to the revolution, marked the beginning of a period in which institutional weaknesses, as well as deficiencies in military capacity and

technology, became most evident from Iran's perspective⁶. During this period, Iran experienced the repercussions of deficiencies in its land, air, and naval forces throughout the war. In particular, the suspension of defence industry projects with other countries following the revolution, along with issues in procurement and logistics, difficulties in securing spare parts and repairs, and challenges in military consultancy, have been the most significant factors shaping Iran's approach to the defence industry post-revolution⁷.

Prior to the revolution, during the Shah period, Iran developed its conventional capabilities to procure military equipment, primarily from the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union/Russia, and China. However, in the post-revolutionary period, there has been a shift towards developing asymmetric capabilities through domestic solutions⁸. In this context, reverse engineering capabilities play a significant role in the development of domestic solutions. It is evident that Iran has successfully employed the expertise it has acquired through reverse engineering and technology transfers to develop military capabilities that are relatively autonomous from foreign sources. This situation has had a particularly significant impact on the development of asymmetric military capabilities. Conversely, technology transfers and dual-use products for both military and civilian purposes have enabled international sanctions to be circumvented to a certain extent, thereby generating significant momentum in the development of the defence industry. In recent years, Russia and China have played a notable role as external suppliers in the development of Iran's defence industry.

Recent years have seen significant advancements in Iran's asymmetric military capabilities, with technology transfers from Russia and China playing a pivotal role in this development. These transfers, particularly in the domains of satellite technology, guidance systems, navigation systems, communications, command and control, and communications and information systems, along with technical support, have been instrumental in shaping the country's military modernisation efforts⁹. In contrast, conventional military assets within Iran's arsenal are both outdated and non-functional. Despite being regarded as a vulnerability, this approach is regarded as a deliberate strategic decision,

6 Hesam Forozan, 2016. *The Military in Post-Revolutionary Iran*. London: Routledge, 82

7 Behnam Abdi and Alireza Naderi. 2019. "Clarifying the Characteristics of the Iranian Islamic Model of Development in Defense Sector According to Imam Khamenei's Intentions and Policies (His Majesty)." *Defense Strategy Quarterly* 17 (4): 68, 15

8 Ofira Seliktar and Farhad Rezaei. 2020. *Iran, Revolution and Proxy Wars*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 49

9 Harris, Kevan. 2013. "The Rise of the Subcontractor State: Politics of Pseudo-Privatization in the Islamic Republic of Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (1): 52

inextricably linked to Iran's military doctrine and prevailing circumstances. In other words, due to the impact of sanctions, Iran is unable to procure advanced conventional forces¹⁰. In order to address this identified weakness, the focus is now being directed towards asymmetric capabilities. The progress made in asymmetric capabilities is based on Iran's regional military doctrine and aims to address existing conventional weaknesses. In this regard, it is evident that these two significant motivations are instrumental in shaping the defence industry strategies adopted for the development of Iran's defence industry.

In addition to these factors, the narrative of success required for the consolidation process following the revolution, geopolitical realities and necessities (Iraq, Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia, threats posed by Israel), arms embargoes imposed on Iran after the revolution, and the resulting 'self-help/self-sufficiency' and, finally, the orientation towards new military-political alliances have shaped the framework of the defence industry approach¹¹. Nevertheless, deficiencies in land and sea power, compounded by historical legacy and infrastructure, have led Iran to focus more on developing its air power capabilities¹². In this manner, Iran seeks to bridge the perceived gap in deterrence within its land and sea forces through the deployment of long-range missiles and advanced aerial capabilities. Conversely, the military equipping of Iran-backed proxy forces through this advanced air capacity has also been perceived as an opportunity for Iran's regional deterrence.

Motivated by these factors, Iran's defence industry is structured to maximise the use of domestic capabilities, effectively utilise dual-use materials, and rely on reverse engineering and technology transfer methods. In the post-revolution period, Iran's defence industry has demonstrated a set of characteristics that merit attention. These include, but are not limited to, the following: agility, speed, mobility, ease of access, and cost-effectiveness. At this juncture, these primary characteristics manifest distinctly in capabilities such as cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, satellites and space rockets, UAVs and military speedboats¹³. It is evident that these products are in direct alignment with Iran's regional 'Axis of Resistance' policy. Indeed, the evolution of Iran's

10 Massoud Karshenas 1990. *Oil, State and Industrialization in Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 167

11 Farzanegan, Mohammed Reza. 2014. "Military Spending and Economic Growth: The Case of Iran." *Defence and Peace Economics* 25 (3), 252

12 Gawdat Bahgat and Anoushiravan Ehteshami. 2021. "Iran's Military-Industrial Complex." In *Defending Iran from Revolutionary Guards to Ballistic Missiles*, 72-97. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 74

13 Payman Kharazian and Mohammadi Ardhasir. 2018. "The Role of Air Defense in Strengthening the National Power of the Islamic Republic of Iran." *Defense Strategy Quarterly* 16 (73), 66

post-revolutionary defence industry has been meticulously tailored to address the tactical military requirements of Iran-backed militia groups.

In this context, the defence industry strategy that took shape in the early years of the Islamic Revolution and during the Iran-Iraq war began to manifest itself in concrete institutional transformations and contacts established with different countries. Within this framework, the duties and areas of activity of the Ministry of Defence and its affiliated units, which were established in the post-revolutionary period, were defined; while the Iranian Aviation Industry Organisation, the Iranian Electronics Industry Organisation and the Iranian Aircraft Industry Organisation, which were established during the reign of the Shah, entered a process of transformation in line with the vision of the revolution.

Concurrent with this transformation process, defence industry relations were established with Russia, North Korea, Libya, Ukraine, Belarus and China, particularly in the second half of the 1980s. These relations were cultivated especially in the domains of air power and missile technologies. In this context, the talks held in Libya, North Korea, Syria, and China in 1985 by a high-level delegation led by then-Speaker of Parliament Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on the procurement of missiles and technology transfer played an important role in the establishment of Iran's missile and space programme¹⁴. Conversely, it has been documented that missile specialists from these countries, notably North Korea and Libya, were involved in missile development tests conducted in Iran. Indeed, it has been documented that North Korean specialists have provided training to Iranian officials on the reproduction of SCUD missiles. During the course of its negotiations with North Korea, Iran proposed to provide financial backing for North Korea's long-range missile programme, in addition to the procurement of 100 Scud-B missiles, contingent upon the transfer of technological expertise. North Korea accepted the offer and delivered the first Scud-B missiles to Iran in July 1987.

In 1990, reports from US intelligence agencies revealed that Iran had procured Scud-C missiles, with a range of 500 kilometres and a warhead capacity of 700 kilograms, from North Korea. During this period, Iran's defence industry, which had been concentrating extensively on missile technology, also directed significant efforts towards supplying weapons and transferring know-how to various non-state armed actors, particularly Hezbollah.

14 A. Bagheri Dolatabad 2022. "Ontological Security and Iran's Missile Program." *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 11 (2), 240

By the 2000s, a shift in focus within Iran's defence industry strategy was evident, with the emphasis shifting towards missile and air power as the primary domains of concern. Concurrently, the modernisation of land and sea vehicles emerged as a pivotal area of investment. However, the Syrian crisis that began in 2011 and the emergence of a climate of regional conflict prompted Iran to focus more on air power¹⁵. During this period, there was a notable acceleration in the development of both UAV-UCAV technologies and ballistic missile production programmes. Concurrently, the escalating significance of cyber security from the second decade of the 2000s onward prompted the Iranian defence industry to prioritise the development of information systems and information security¹⁶.

Following the Islamic Revolution, the Ministry of Defence and the Khatam al Anbiya Headquarters have been charged with the implementation of Iran's defence industry vision. The latter's mission is defined by the constitution. The Iranian Defence Industry Organisation, an entity affiliated with both the Ministry and the Khatam al Anbiya Headquarters, bears the responsibility of identifying the resources required by the Iranian armed forces, encompassing both the Army and the Revolutionary Guards¹⁷. The organisation is tasked with the planning and coordination of production activities to meet these needs, in addition to conducting research and development activities. The organisational framework of Iran's defence industry is currently composed of units and sub-units that are affiliated with the Iranian Defence Industry Organisation¹⁸. Accordingly, the defence industry production activities are carried out through four different affiliated units: the Iranian Aerospace Industry Organisation (AIO), the Iranian Aviation Industry Organisation (IAIO), the Iranian Electronics Industry Organisation (IEI), and the Naval Industry Organisation. These affiliated units are responsible for the planning and production functions in the defence industry, which are executed through their subordinate units, companies, and production facilities¹⁹.

15 Tavakoli, Gholamreza Tavakoli and Mehdi Eliasi, Meysam Shafiei Roudposhti, and Ali Asghar Heydari. 2011. "Pathology of Iran's Defense Products Exports." *Improvement and Transformation Management Studies* 21 (64): 55-88.

16 Abbas Rezaei. 2018. "Military Expenditures and Its Impact on Development of Defense Economy in I.R. Iran." *Journal of Defense Economics and Sustainable Development* 3 (8), 61

17 Robert Czulda 2020. "Defence Industry in Iran: Between Needs and Real Capabilities." *Defense & Security Analysis* 36 (2), 209

18 J. Matthew McInnis 2017. *Understanding Iran's Defense Industrial Base and Acquisition*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute.

19 Kevan Harris. 2013. "The Rise of the Subcontractor State: Politics of Pseudo-Privatization in the Islamic Republic of Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (1), 51

It is evident that the Iran Defence Industries Organisation is distinguished from other sub-units and structures within the defence industry. The Iran Defence Industries Organisation is an institution that is responsible for general coordination and planning. The organisation is responsible for the production of ammunition, land vehicles, tanks, rockets and explosives, which is undertaken by numerous sub-units and production facilities under its control. A plethora of companies are engaged in production under the auspices of the organisation, which maintains close ties with Chinese defence industry companies. Of these, the group of arms industry companies is the first to be considered. The products of the arms industry company, which includes subcontractors such as the Hadid Group, the Isfahan Metal Alloy Complex, the Fecr-Shiraz, and the Imam Ali Group, include infantry rifles, heavy machine guns, sniper rifles, anti-tank weapons, rockets, and mortars.

Secondly, the Iran Aviation Industry Corporation, one of the institutions established during the Shah's regime in the Iranian defence industry, is engaged in identifying, planning and meeting the needs of the Revolutionary Guards Air Force²⁰. The organisation is also involved in the design and production of training aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and civil aviation-related production activities. Additionally, it is responsible for the maintenance and export planning of aircraft and aerial vehicles. Among the vehicles produced by companies and organisations affiliated with the organisation are the Shahid helicopter, Hamase UAV, Qasef-Ababil-Shahid-Kerrar UAVs, Kowsar jet and training aircraft, Qahir 313 jet and Yasin training aircraft. The subsidiary companies and complexes affiliated with the organisation include Fecr Aviation-Composite Industry, Iran Aircraft Industry, Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industry, Iran Helicopter Maintenance-Repair Industry, and Quds Aviation Industry.

Conversely, the Iran Aerospace Industries Organisation, established in 1998 and representing one of the most recent developments in the Iranian defence industry, is among the structures with the most affiliated units, institutions and companies. The Iran Aerospace Organisation is a key player in the Iranian defence industry, with a focus on the design and production of air power, missile, UAV-UCAV technologies, satellites, and optical systems. The organisation has gained prominence for the missiles it has produced to date. The range of missiles includes the Shahab ballistic missiles, Sayyed missiles,

20 Ahmad Molabahrani and Iman Moradian. 2022. "Appropriate Financing Methods for Iran's Aviation Industry: A Comparative Study." *Journal of Defense Economics and Sustainable Development* 7 (24), 79

Misak missiles, and Fateh-Nour-Zelzal rockets. The following organisations and production facilities are affiliated with the organisation: The following facilities have been identified: Shahid Muthaharri Facility, Shahid Shahabadi Facility, Senem Defence Industry, Ya Mehdi Industry and Research Complex, Shahid Bagheri Companies Group, Shahid Himmeti Companies Group, Bagshiyani Facility, Bagheri-1/2/3 Facilities, Sultanabad Missile Production Facility, Mustafa Humeyni Facility, Qadiri Facility, Tabriz Facility, and Vanak Missile Production Facilities.

Thirdly, the Iran Electronics Industries Corporation is responsible for producing the electronic systems required by Iran's air, land and sea forces. In addition to its core functions, the corporation is also involved in the design and production of avionics systems for military and civil aviation, as well as the production of optical devices and information systems. The organisation also provides communication equipment, electro-optical and laser devices, telecommunications security and electronic warfare equipment, radar tubes, missile launchers, military tactical communication systems, night vision systems, laser rangefinders, binoculars and periscopes; components and services related to jamming, tracking and covert listening. The organisation's subsidiaries comprise the following:

- Shiraz Electronics Industry, which specialises in the repair of TOW missile launchers and radar systems, the production of radar, military communication systems, combat systems, control and automation systems, laser systems, consumer electronics, satellites, and sonar and underwater communication equipment;
- Iran Communication Industry, which focuses on the production of cryptographic systems and communication security infrastructure; and
- the Iran Information Systems Organisation, which oversees data automation and processing, network design and installation, LAN development and software activities.

Finally, the Naval Industries Organisation, which is responsible for meeting Iran's naval power and navy needs, operates in areas where Iran's naval field commands are located, through companies and complexes. The organisation's primary function is the production of naval vessels commissioned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy Command. The organisation's manufacturing operations, conducted through its subsidiaries, are

predominantly situated in the Bender Abbas and Bandar Anzali regions. The production portfolio encompasses radar systems, sonar devices, submarine systems, ships, anti-ship missiles.

Conversely, educational institutions assume a pivotal role within the institutional framework of Iran's defence industry. Collaborations between Iranian defence industry institutions and specific universities encompass various domains, including education, R&D, and professional development. These universities ensure the provision of human resources required by Iran's defence industry through their relevant faculties and institutes, while also playing an active role in institutional planning and R&D activities. Prominent among these institutions are Shahid Beheshti University and Malek Ashtar University, as well as Amir Kabir University of Technology, Iran University of Science and Technology, Shahid Settari Air Force Academy, Imam Hussein University, and Imam Khomeini Naval Academy. These institutions collaborate closely with the Defence Industry Organisation and the Defence Industry R&D Directorate.

In this context, it is evident that Shahid Behesti University is a partner institution of the Iranian Defence Industry R&D Presidency. Furthermore, the university has cultivated close ties with the Iranian Aerospace Organisation. With its academic departments offering education in engineering fields such as the Cyber-Space Institute, the Electronic Systems Institute, and the Laser and Plasma Institute, Shahid Beheshti University contributes to identifying, meeting, and developing projects related to the needs of the Iranian defence industry. Secondly, Malek Ashtar University, which has a close structural relationship with the Iranian Defence Industry R&D Presidency, also has a significant impact in this context²¹. Malik Ashtar University, which houses an Explosives Research Institute, has been found to offer greater support to Iranian defence industry institutions in this field. Within this framework, Malek Ashtar University plays an important role in the development and procurement of explosives, systems and vehicles required by land, air and sea forces. In addition, Amir Kabir University of Technology, also known as Tehran Polytechnic University, and Iran University of Science and Technology contribute to Iranian defence industry projects in the fields of petrochemicals, naval vessels and critical infrastructure. Conversely, the Shahid Settari Air Force Academy, Imam Hussein University, and Imam Khomeini Naval Academy are responsible for the identification of the inventory and capacity

21 Alma Keshavarz. 2023. *The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps: Defining Iran's Military Doctrine*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 143

requirements of the relevant command units within the Iranian armed forces, and the development of projects to meet these requirements²².

In the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has undergone a substantial paradigm shift in its defence industry, a development that has been compounded by mounting international pressure and sanctions. This shift has been driven by the country's strategic priorities and long-term security objectives²³. In this context, Iran's advancement in the domain of defence manufacturing can be attributed to its pursuit of strategic autonomy²⁴. The nation's advancements in missile systems and UAV-UCAV technologies are a consequence of this transition. These systems constitute the fundamental components of Iran's asymmetric warfare doctrine.

3. Iran's Exceptional Approach in its Defence Industry Strategy: Armenia in the Context of the Second Karabakh War

One of the two main strands of Iran's defence industry strategy, the approach of providing military capabilities to non-state armed actors, has been implemented in Lebanon and Iraq since the 1980s as part of the Axis of Resistance strategy. Military support was provided to Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Badr Organisation in Iraq. The extent and nature of this military support consisted of light and heavy weapons, rockets and missiles. In subsequent years, however, Iran shifted its focus to exporting knowledge and technology in the field of military industry and production to these groups, with the aim of enabling them to establish units that would allow them to meet their own military needs.

By the 2000s, this process had reached a stage of consolidation in Lebanon and Iraq, with Hezbollah and Iraqi militias significantly improving their military capabilities. The first signs of this were seen during the US intervention in Iraq in 2003. During this process, the resistance of the Iranian-backed groups to the US presence in Iraq was an important reflection of their military capacity. On the other hand, the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel clearly demonstrated the level Hezbollah had reached in terms of ground operations

22 Alma Keshavarz, 2023, *ibid.*, 157

23 Gholamreza Tavakoli Mehdi Eliasi, Meysam Shafiei Roudposhti and Ali Asghar Heydari. 2011. "Pathology of Iran's Defense Products Exports." *Improvement and Transformation Management Studies* 21 (64), 62

24 Mohammad Taghi Khobroo 2021. "Agility of Economic Activities of Defense Industries." *Journal of Defense Economics and Sustainable Development* 6 (19), 107

and rocket and missile capacities and capabilities²⁵. However, the extent of the military capabilities achieved by Iran-backed armed groups and the impact of Iran's strategy at this point were most clearly observed during the Syrian revolution that began in 2011 and the subsequent regional developments.

With the beginning of the Syrian revolution, Iran took the position of supporting and protecting the Assad regime. To this end, it ensured that armed groups it had formed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, notably Hezbollah, were sent to Syria. This process was given a much broader framework in 2014 with the formation of the Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq to fight Daesh. Since 2014, Iran has mobilised numerous militias based in Iraq, as well as Lebanese Hezbollah, to protect the Assad regime and fight ISIS in Syria and Iraq. In the same year, the Ansarullah movement, which seized the Yemeni capital Sana'a, received intensive military support from Iran and continued to gain ground. The picture that emerged after 2014, particularly in the period leading up to 2024, revealed the extent of the militia network that Iran has established in the regional arena, as well as the scale of its defence industrial strategy and military support capabilities.

Iran's approach to arming militias in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen has met with a consistent response, while also revealing certain exceptional patterns of behaviour. The factors that make these patterns exceptional are the differences in Iran's defence industry strategy, which is based on supporting non-state armed actors that are ideologically close to or affiliated with it. In contrast to this approach, Iran is also capable of providing military support to non-state armed actors that are not ideologically close to or affiliated with it. Armenia is a concrete example of this exceptional situation. Armenia is exceptional because it does not qualify as a non-state armed actor in Iran's defence industry and military assistance strategy, and it does not demonstrate ideological affinity or allegiance to Iran. These characteristics have become more evident since 2020, especially during and after the Second Karabakh War.

The Republic of Armenia, which gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has had to address national security concerns since its inception. As a relatively small state within the geopolitical dynamics of the South Caucasus, Armenia has focused on developing and building its military capacity since the early years of its independence²⁶. The main reason for

25 Ofira Seliktar and Farhad Rezaei. 2020. *Iran, Revolution and Proxy Wars*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 87

26 Armine Iskhaniyan, 2008. *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia*. London: Routledge, 58

this focus was the country's perceived external threats and, in particular, its territorial disputes with Azerbaijan. Particularly during the First Karabakh War, which began in 1988 and ended with a ceasefire in 1994, Armenia's primary goal was to develop its military capabilities. During this period, Armenia sought to make strategic use of the military capacity and capabilities it had acquired under Soviet rule²⁷.

In the post-Soviet era, the equipment and training of the Soviet army formed the basis of Armenia's military capacity. However, Armenia faced significant challenges in maintaining, renewing and upgrading this equipment. In this respect, Armenia has remained militarily dependent on the Russian Federation. Since the renewal of Armenia's military equipment and the acquisition of new equipment can only be achieved through Russia, the country has not been able to achieve full military independence despite its political independence²⁸. In particular, due to the perceived threat of Azerbaijan in the region, Armenia has remained militarily dependent on Russia. This situation continued until the early 2000s, as Armenia always needed Russia's protection to ensure its existence and security.

In the early 2000s, Armenia began to adopt a strategic approach aimed at reducing its dependence on Russia in terms of military capacity and capabilities²⁹. During this period, the government in Yerevan, which pursued a policy of diversification in its national security strategy, sought to turn to different sources to meet its military needs. As part of this diversification policy, Armenia sought to balance its dependence on Russia while also seeking defence cooperation with other actors in the region.

In this process, contacts between Armenia and Iran on defence cooperation has began. Iran, with its strategic location and claim to regional power, was perceived as an important partner for Armenia in terms of defence and military capacity development. Geographical proximity, shared threat perceptions and overlapping geopolitical interests have played an important role in the rapprochement between Iran and Armenia³⁰. During this period, Iran was seen

27 National Academies Press. 2004. *Science and Technology in Armenia: Toward a Knowledge-Based Economy*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

28 Armine Iskhaniyan, 2008. *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia*. London: Routledge, 64

29 Harutyunyan, Gayane. 2023. "The Impact of Military Expenditure on External Debt in Armenia." *Journal of International Studies* 16 (2), 147

30 Azimov, Aliyar. 2019. "An Overview of the Relations Between the Republic of Armenia and the Islamic Republic of Iran." *Review of Armenian Studies*, no. 40, 94

as an alternative strategic partner that could reduce Armenia's dependence on Russia³¹.

Simultaneously, commencing in the second decade of the 21st century, Azerbaijan's advancement in military capabilities, facilitated by Türkiye's assistance, has attained a stage that will impact regional dynamics. The development of Azerbaijan-Israel relations during this period has also been observed with concern by both Armenia and Iran. Armenia has expressed concerns that the militarily advanced state of Azerbaijan could pose a serious threat to the country's own security, and that the region of Karabakh could be regained by Azerbaijan. Conversely, Iran has anticipated that an Azerbaijan cooperating with Israel could pose a significant geopolitical risk to itself along its northern border. This common perception of threat has been a contributing factor in fostering closer ties between Armenia and Iran in the domains of defence industry and military cooperation³².

The armed conflict that transpired in April 2016 between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and which is referred to in academic discourse as the 'Four-Day War', represented a significant turning point in the deepening of Armenian-Iranian defence cooperation³³. This brief military engagement served to underscore two key points. Firstly, it highlighted the growing military capabilities of Azerbaijan, and secondly, it demonstrated the country's determination to effect a change in the status quo with regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. During the clashes, Armenia was able to observe more clearly the shortcomings in its military capabilities.

During this process, high-level negotiations between Iranian and Armenian defence industry delegations culminated in an agreement to provide mutual support in the defence industry. In accordance with the terms of the agreement, the Islamic Republic of Iran has initiated the provision of technology transfer and expertise in the defence industry to the Republic of Armenia³⁴. It is evident that Iran's provision of support has been instrumental in facilitating Armenia's

31 Nouraleh Qeysari and Mahnaz Goodarzi. 2009. "Iran-Armenia Relations: Opportunities and Obstacles." *Journal: Central Eurasian Studies* 3 (2): 121-144.

32 Farzin Nadimi 2020. "The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh from Iran's perspective." Washington Institute, January 10, 2020. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fa/policy-analysis/drgvry-dr-nagwr-nw-qrhbagh-az-mnzt-ayran>.

33 Elahe Kolaye and Seyed Mehdi Hosseini Taghi Abad. 2019. "Iran's Scientific Diplomacy in Relations with Armenia." *Central Asian and Caucasus Studies* 25 (108), 177

34 ANCA. 2016. "Armenia, Iran Agree to Strengthen Defense Ties." April 11, 2016. <https://anca.org/armenia-iran-agree-to-strengthen-defense-ties/>.

identification of a dependable collaborator within the defence sector, one situated beyond the geographical confines of Russia³⁵.

The Iran-Armenia defence cooperation, which has intensified since 2016, has manifested itself in various areas. A number of concrete steps have been taken between the two countries in a number of areas, including military personnel training, planning joint exercises, and sharing defence industry technologies. During this period, Iran shared its expertise in missile technology, electronic warfare systems and armoured vehicles with Armenia.

The Second Karabakh War of 2020 represented a critical juncture in the evolution of defence cooperation between Iran and Armenia. The military engagement, which transpired between 27 September and 10 November 2020 and culminated in a decisive victory for Azerbaijan, exerted a profound strategic impact on both Armenia and Iran³⁶. During the 44-day war, Armenia suffered significant losses to Azerbaijan's advanced weapon systems, particularly unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which were supplied by Israel and Türkiye.

The second Karabakh war has led to a marked escalation in the threat perception of both Armenia and Iran, with these countries now viewing the situation as the most perilous it has ever been. It is evident that during this process, Armenia has discerned its own military capacity limitations when confronted with Azerbaijan, thereby acquiring a more profound comprehension of the pivotal significance of military modernisation in ensuring national security³⁷. It is evident that, consequent to the war, the enhancement of Armenia's military capacity has become imperative for the nation's existential security, particularly in light of the substantial territorial losses experienced in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

In contrast, Iran has demonstrated a more acute understanding of the significance of providing military and defence industry support to Armenia in opposition to Azerbaijan. This is due to the fact that Iran has concluded that, in order to prevent geopolitical change in the region and, in particular, the strengthening of the Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Israel axis, it is essential that Armenia

35 Sergei Melkonian. 2024. "Iran's Role in Armenia's Foreign Policy Diversification." ArmenPress, March 4, 2024. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1131846>.

36 Can Kasapoğlu, 2021. "Hard Fighting in the Caucasus: The Azerbaijani Armed Forces' Combat Performance and Military Strategy in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War." SAM Papers.

37 Nazrin Alizada, 2024. "Iran and the South Caucasus: The 44-Day Karabakh War in the Changing Geopolitical Equation." Review of Armenian Studies, no. 50 (December), 152

remain militarily strong and capable of balancing Azerbaijan³⁸. Following a strategic assessment, Iran has commenced the provision of increased military and defence industry-related support to Armenia.

In the period following the Second Karabakh War, Iran has intensified its defence industry support for Armenia in various areas. In particular, Iran has initiated the sharing of its capabilities, capacities, and resources with Armenia in the areas of missile power, air defence systems, and unmanned aerial vehicle technologies³⁹. During this process, Iran has initiated the transfer of its expertise in ballistic missile technologies, medium-range air defence systems, and electronic warfare systems to Armenia.

Furthermore, joint military exercises have been initiated between the two nations. The objective of these exercises is twofold: firstly, to cultivate cooperation and coordination between the armed forces of the two countries, and secondly, to transmit a deterrent message to regional rivals⁴⁰. The military exercises conducted by Iran and Armenia demonstrate that the collaboration between these two nations in the domain of defence has transcended mere symbolism and has acquired an operational character⁴¹.

In the aftermath of the Second Karabakh War, the ‘Three Brothers’ military exercise, conducted by Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Pakistan in 2021, marked a notable development that gave rise to concerns for Armenia and Iran⁴². This trilateral military exercise has given rise to concerns regarding the formation of a new alliance bloc in the regional power balance. This situation has become a factor bringing Iran and Armenia closer together in the context of defence industry cooperation.

38 Euronews Persian. 2022. “Concerns about the involvement of Iranian military equipment in regional conflicts; is Tehran providing weapons to Armenia?” December 19, 2022. <https://parsi.euronews.com/2022/12/19/concern-about-iranian-military-equipment-in-regional-conflicts-is-tehran-giving-weapons-t>.

39 BBC Persian. 2022. “Yerevan seeks new allies; will Iran deploy military forces in Armenia?” September 26, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/persian/world-features-63089337>.

40 Ebrahimi, Amirhossein. 2024. “Iran-Armenia Relations: Strategic Partnership Amid Regional Transformations.” *SpecialEurasia*, February 11, 2024. <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2024/12/10/iran-armenia-relations-caucasus/>.

41 JAMNews. 2024. “‘Mass production of weapons established’: Armenia’s defense industry in focus.” March 15, 2024. <https://jam-news.net/mass-production-of-weapons-established-armenias-defense-industry-in-focus/>.

42 Nazrin Alizada and Damla Kocatepe. 2024. “Karşılaştırmalı Analiz Bağlamında İran ve Hindistan’ın Karabağ Meselesine Yönelik Tutumu.” *Anadolu Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 25 (4), 121

The participation of Pakistan in the 'Three Brothers' exercise has prompted India to adopt a position in the regional dynamics. The military cooperation between Pakistan and Türkiye, as well as between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, has encouraged India to consider indirectly joining the defence cooperation alliance between Iran and Armenia. During this process, India began supplying military equipment to Armenia via Iran⁴³. Consequently, Iran assumed the dual roles of both supplier and intermediary country in order to meet Armenia's defence industry needs.

During the 2023-2024 period, there was a notable escalation in the extent to which Iran provided support to the Armenian defence industry. Iran's assistance to Armenia has been documented as including the transfer of missile technologies, air defence systems and unmanned aerial vehicle technologies. As of 2024, this cooperation continues to deepen.

It is anticipated that Iran-Armenia defence cooperation will undergo further development in the future. Azerbaijan's deepening strategic relations with Türkiye and Israel are considered a factor that will strengthen defence cooperation between Iran and Armenia. Furthermore, India's indirect involvement in this cooperation signals the emergence of a new power balance in the region⁴⁴.

In conclusion, it can be posited that Armenia's endeavours to develop and strengthen its military capacity since gaining independence have, over time, evolved into a search for alternatives to reduce its reliance on Russia. It is evident that, in the course of this process, Iran has assumed the role of a significant strategic partner for Armenia. The Iran-Armenia defence cooperation, which deepened after the 2016 clashes and the 2020 Second Karabakh War, has emerged as an important factor in regional power balances. The areas in which this cooperation will deepen in the coming period and how it will affect regional security dynamics will play an important role in shaping regional and global power balances.

43 Rufat Ahmadzada 2024. "Armenia-Iran Strategic Agreement & Maximum Pressure Policy." *The Geopolitics*, February 18, 2024. <https://thegeopolitics.com/armenia-iran-strategic-agreement-maximum-pressure-policy/>.

44 Sayeh, Janatan. 2024. "Iran reestablishes its presence in the Caucasus with Armenian arms deal." *Long War Journal*, March 24, 2024. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2024/07/analysis-iran-reestablishes-its-presence-in-the-caucasus-with-armenian-arms-deal.php>.

Conclusion

Large-scale disruptions in the regional and global geopolitical order have the potential to engender significant transformations in states' defence industry strategies. These transformations emerge as a result of changes in states' security perceptions and shifts in regional power balances. The geopolitical rupture in the South Caucasus in 2020 provides a salient illustration of such strategic transformations. The Karabakh issue has been characterised as a 'frozen conflict' for decades, resulting in the establishment of a certain status quo in the region. This status quo is characterised by the fact that territories belonging to Azerbaijan are under Armenian control, a situation that has become increasingly accepted in the international arena. The Islamic Republic of Iran has pursued a strategy of regional influence by leveraging the geopolitical advantages afforded by the prevailing circumstances, adopting a position that is favourable to the preservation of the existing order.

However, the Second Karabakh War, which erupted in 2020, has profoundly disrupted the regional balance that had previously appeared stable for many years. The military successes of Azerbaijan and the subsequent recapture of occupied territories have resulted in the establishment of a new geopolitical order in the region. This development has had a significant impact on Iran's traditional regional perceptions and security calculations. This geopolitical rupture has precipitated an exceptional change in Iran's defence industry strategy. It is evident that Iran has assumed a disadvantageous position in the new equation, and as such, it has significantly increased its defence industry support for Armenia. This strategic orientation can be regarded as a defensive response on the part of Iran to the shift in the regional power balance.

The South Caucasus case study exemplifies the direct correlation between geopolitical fractures and the strategic decisions of states in regard to their defence industries. The alteration in the regional status quo has compelled regional actors, such as Iran, to undertake a comprehensive reassessment of their defence plans and strategic priorities. In this context, cooperation and support in the defence industry emerge as efforts to adapt to changing geopolitical realities. In conclusion, the geopolitical transformation in the South Caucasus and Iran's strategic response to it are important indicators of how shifts in regional power balances can shape states' defence industry policies. This state of affairs provides a valuable case study for understanding the mutual interaction between geopolitical dynamics and defence industry strategies in international relations.

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A PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE TOOL AGAINST THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: THE PRO ARMENIA NEWSPAPER (1900-1908)

(OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU KARŞITI BİR PSİKOLOJİK HARP ARACI:
PRO ARMENİA GAZETESİ (1900-1908))

Yusuf DİNÇEL *

Abstract: *This article examines the black propaganda activities carried out by the Pro Armenia newspaper, published in French in Paris during the final years of Sultan Abdülhamid II's reign, against the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire had been the scene of internal turmoil for many years, particularly due to separatist uprisings in regions inhabited by Armenians. The Pro Armenia newspaper added false reports to these internal conflicts, deliberately exaggerating events and aiming to attract the attention of the European public. The article examines the news published in the Pro Armenia newspaper by comparing it with Ottoman archive documents. This reveals how the newspaper used psychological warfare techniques. The fact that the newspaper's authors included influential actors in European politics demonstrates the international significance of its propaganda activities. It was determined that the events covered in the newspaper were presented one-sidedly and that there was no mention of the massacres committed by Armenians against Muslims. Furthermore, the newspaper made serious*

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accusations against Sultan Abdülhamid's personality and policies, aiming to undermine the Ottoman Sultan's influence in European public opinion.

Keywords: *Armenians, Muslims, Sultan Abdülhamid, Black Propaganda, Massacres, Europe.*

Öz: *Bu makalede, Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in tahttaki son yıllarını kapsayan dönemde, Paris'te Fransızca yayımlanan Pro Armenia gazetesinin Osmanlı Devleti aleyhine yürüttüğü kara propaganda faaliyetleri ele alınmıştır. Osmanlı Devleti, özellikle Ermenilerin yaşadığı bölgelerde çıkan ayrılıkçı ayaklanmalar sebebiyle uzun yıllar iç karışıklıklara sahne olmuştur. Pro Armenia gazetesi, bu iç karışıklıklara yalan haberler ekleyerek, olayları kasten abartmış ve bu yolla Avrupa kamuoyunun dikkatini çekmeyi amaçlamıştır. Makalede, Pro Armenia gazetesinde yayımlanan haberler, Osmanlı arşiv belgeleriyle karşılaştırılmak suretiyle ele alınmıştır. Böylece, gazetenin psikolojik harp tekniklerini nasıl kullandığı gözler önüne serilmiştir. Gazetenin yazarları arasında Avrupa siyasetinde etkili aktörlerin bulunması, propaganda faaliyetlerinin uluslararası düzeydeki önemini göstermektedir. Gazetede yer verilen hadiselerin tek taraflı ele alındığı ve Ermenilerin Müslümanlara yönelik katliamlarına hiç yer verilmediği tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca Sultan Abdülhamid'in kişiliği ve politikaları ile ilgili ağır ithamlarda bulunan gazete, bu şekilde Osmanlı Sultanı'nın Avrupa kamuoyundaki ağırlığını sarsmayı hedeflemiştir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ermeniler, Müslümanlar, Sultan Abdülhamid, Kara Propaganda, Katliamlar, Avrupa.*

INTRODUCTION

From the late 19th century onwards, the Ottoman Empire faced increasing ethnic, political, and ideological tensions due to its multi-ethnic structure and the interventions carried out by Western states through various nations. During this period, developments were disseminated to a wide audience through the press. It was particularly common during this period for events occurring within the Ottoman Empire to be conveyed to the international public through newspapers. In this context, the *Pro Armenia* newspaper, one of the leading publications of the Armenian diaspora in Europe, became an important part of both the propaganda activities against the Ottoman administration and the discursive construction process of the Armenian nationalist movement.

This article examines the anti-Ottoman propaganda activities of the Pro Armenia newspaper, published in Paris between 1900 and 1908, within the political and social conditions of the period. The research question of the article is how the Pro Armenia newspaper functioned as an instrument of psychological warfare and propaganda in the Armenian issue. The article's hypothesis is that the newspaper systematically used "black propaganda" techniques, mostly aimed at swaying Western public opinion against the Ottoman Empire in line with the goals of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaksutyun*) in the international political atmosphere of the time.

The article adopts a qualitative methodology based on discourse and content analysis of the newspaper. Within this scope, news articles and opinion pieces published in various issues of Pro Armenia newspaper were comprehensively examined, and the language used, the political figures targeted, how events were evaluated, and the propaganda methods employed were analyzed. In addition, the Pro Armenia newspaper frequently compiled information about the situation of Armenians in Anatolia. Claims made in the newspaper regarding this issue were examined by comparing them with documents from the Presidential Ottoman Archives, revealing the extent to which the events corresponded with official documents. Thus, the differences between the reports in the Ottoman archive documents and the events claimed by the newspaper were identified, and basic comparative data was produced. The data set used in the article consists mainly of the issues of the Pro Armenia newspaper from 1900 to 1908 and the Presidential Ottoman Archive documents. Secondary sources related to this period were also included. Thanks to this diverse data, the newspaper's approach to evaluating events, its target audience, its rhetorical purpose, and its role in influencing international public opinion were comprehensively analyzed.

This article not only reveals how the Armenian issue was addressed through the press during that period, but also clearly evaluates the relationship between propaganda and international diplomacy.

Conceptual Framework: Psychological Warfare and Propaganda

Psychological warfare and propaganda are two important concepts as old as human history. The Chinese, Greeks, and Romans effectively used deception, intimidation, and propaganda methods to gain superiority over their adversaries. In his important work titled *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu emphasized that deception is an important defense tool in military conflicts and stated that states can develop psychological manipulation as a strategy before direct conflict occurs. Sun Tzu emphasizes that the essence of all warfare is actually based on deception. Throughout history, the weak have always strived to appear stronger than they actually are. Psychological warfare emerges more frequently when war or conflict processes are on the agenda, but it is also actively addressed in periods without conflict. In addition, the concepts of psychological warfare and psychological operations are often used interchangeably in security studies literature. British military historian J. F. C. Fuller first used the term “psychological warfare” in 1920 when analyzing World War I in the context of military elements. In a study he wrote on tanks, J. F. C. Fuller stated that in the future, weapons would not be used, and a psychological warfare process would take place in which the moral and spiritual life of a nation would be destroyed by targeting the human mind.¹ Psychological warfare was used by states as an effective strategy, especially at the beginning of the Cold War, with the aim of assisting military operations.²

Psychological warfare is conducted before, during, and after war. Furthermore, psychological warfare cannot be governed by the rules established by war. Preparations for psychological warfare against a target country begin long before a declaration of war. Enemy elements conceal their true identities while conducting psychological warfare and usually express their ideas through the press.³ The most important goal of psychological warfare is to demoralize the

- 1 Sunil Narula, “Psychological operations (PSYOPs): A conceptual overview,” *Strategic Analysis* 28, no. 1 (2004): 178, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160408450124>; Hina Saeed, “Minds at War: The Evolution of Psychological Tactics in Conflict Scenarios,” *Journal of Future Building* 1, no. 3 (2025): 32, <https://researchcorridor.org/index.php/jfb/article/view/304>; Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, (2004), 31.
- 2 Huw Bennett, “‘Words are cheaper than bullets’: Britain’s psychological warfare in the Middle East, 1945-60,” *Intelligence and National Security* 34, no. 7 (2019): 925, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2019.1628454>.
- 3 Paul M. A. Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, (Infantry Journal Press, 1948), 1.

target element, weaken its faith, and initiate a process of indoctrination within the framework of the views of the actor applying this method. These elements represent the three stages of psychological warfare.⁴

When examined etymologically, propaganda is known to be derived from the Latin verb *propagare*, meaning to expand or spread over time. Edward Louis Bernays, considered to be the founder of modern propaganda, claimed in his 1928 book titled *Propaganda* that he developed a concept of propaganda that did not involve social responsibility. However, E. L. Bernays' views inspired people like Goebbels, who used propaganda for political agitation.⁵ From this perspective, the word propaganda has negative connotations in people's minds.⁶ Ultimately, propaganda has a bad reputation because it is generally used in conjunction with the concepts of distortion and manipulation. However, it is known that there are also examples of propaganda carried out by the state to protect society from disease risks.⁷

Propaganda is a planned communication element designed to influence the minds, emotions, and activities of a target group for a specific purpose. When states engage in propaganda, they carry out activities in military, economic, or political fields for a specific public purpose. Propaganda must have a specific purpose. In psychological warfare, it is essential to use not only propaganda elements directed at enemy forces, but also other necessary military, economic, or political operational elements.⁸ There is a view in the literature that the modern state is inevitably propagandistic. The nation-state argues that total mobilization is a prerequisite for total war and applies methods of mass persuasion on society.⁹ Propaganda can also be active in religious or commercial areas. The reason for the spread of propaganda into political areas is the visible increase in public opinion power. Since states resort to war as a last resort, propaganda wars between states are a very common phenomenon.¹⁰

4 R. H. S. Crossman, "Psychological Warfare," *The Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 97, no. 587 (1952): 320, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071845209434087>.

5 Haavard Koppang, "Social Influence by Manipulation: A Definition and Case of Propaganda," *Middle East Critique* 18, no. 2 (2009): 117-118, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436140902989472>.

6 Douglas Walton, "What Is Propaganda, and What Exactly Is Wrong with It?," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1997): 384, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40435999>.

7 Garth S. Jowetta and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion*, 6th ed. (Sage Publications, 2015), 3.

8 Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 38-40.

9 Nicholas Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *Politics and Propaganda: Weapons of Mass Seduction*, (Manchester University Press, 2004), 38.

10 Raymond Dodge, "The Psychology of Propaganda," *Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association* 15, no. 5 (1920): 241, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408200150502>.

Another important feature of propaganda is that it conceals its activities in terms of purpose, source, and method. According to Crane, propaganda always acts to hide its true nature. The person or group targeted by propaganda is unable to see the big picture.¹¹ By its very nature, it can be said that all propaganda content is manipulative. Furthermore, the propaganda created is always designed to benefit the propagandist and aims to deliberately influence human behavior. In order to maintain the power structures that have been built, the propagandist attaches importance to the element of ideology. In this way, the propagandist can more easily manage the attitudes and behaviors of the target audience.¹² There are three different types of propaganda in the literature. One of these, white propaganda, emerges as a result of the use of information that has been correctly identified and conveyed. Black propaganda, on the other hand, is a type of propaganda that contains false, fabricated, and deceptive information obtained by referring to a false source. Finally, gray propaganda emerges in situations where it is not possible to clearly define whether the source of information is true or false.¹³

Historical and Political Background of the Armenian Issue

Following the conquest of Istanbul by Fatih Sultan Mehmet in 1453, the Millet System was established in the context of the institutional organization of non-Muslims. Thanks to this system, non-Muslim elements living within the Ottoman Empire were able to act autonomously in matters such as religion, language, and education. In addition, when Hovakim, the Metropolitan of Bursa, was proclaimed the first Armenian Patriarch in 1461, the Armenian Millet within the Millet System began to be established. Armenians lived peacefully within the Ottoman Empire for many years. However, by the 19th century, Armenians had gained power in their internal and external relations, parallel to economic and social changes. As a result, with the support of Western states, Armenians embraced the idea of rebelling against the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴

11 Edgar H. Henderson, "Toward a Definition of Propaganda," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 18, no. 1 (1943): 73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1943.9921701>.

12 Douglas S. Wilbur, "Propaganda or Not: Examining the Claims of Extensive Russian Information Operations within the United States," *Journal of Information Warfare* 20, no. 3 (2021): 147-148, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/27125004>.

13 David W. Guth, "Black, White, and Shades of Gray: The Sixty-Year Debate Over Propaganda versus Public Diplomacy," *Journal of Promotion Management* 14, no. 3-4 (2009): 311, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10496490802624083>.

14 Özcan Mert, "Osmanlı Türkleri İdaresinde Ermeniler," *Yakın Dönem Türkiye Araştırmaları*, no. 3 (2003): 144-150. <https://www.acarindex.com/pdfs/973581>.

Before World War I (1914-1918), powerful states such as England, France, Russia, and Germany were competing with each other to establish permanent power in the Near and Middle East. The main target in the region during this period was the Ottoman Empire. These states were engaged in a colonial race to exploit the resources in the geography where the Ottoman Empire was spread. For this purpose, from the 18th and 19th centuries onward, many intelligence agents disguised as travelers, missionaries, and diplomats established relations with Armenians, Syriacs, and other communities in order to operate actively within the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ Following the Crimean War of 1856, European states claimed the right to “collective protection” over Christians within the Ottoman Empire under the Paris Treaty.¹⁶

From the second half of the 19th century onwards, Western states began to address developments within the Ottoman Empire as the “Eastern Question”. They also took action to incite the Armenians, who lived scattered across the eastern regions of Anatolia. During this period, numerous propaganda-filled publications with political aims were produced by Armenians, claiming that eastern Anatolia belonged to them. The Treaty of San Stefano and the Treaty of Berlin, signed after the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War, emphasized that reforms would be made for the Armenians. Following these new developments, with the support of Western states, efforts to Armenianize Eastern Anatolia continued to increase.¹⁷ After this date, Armenians, relying on the guarantees of Western states, pressured the Ottoman Empire to implement reforms.¹⁸ In addition, Armenians began to establish committees and societies with the aim of creating an independent Armenian state. The society called Kara Haç was founded in Marseille in 1882, and the party called Armenekan was founded in Van in 1885. Furthermore, the Hunchak committee was established in 1887 and the Tashnak committee in 1890. The aim of these societies and committees was to engage in terrorist activities within the borders of the Ottoman Empire

15 Salâhi R. Sonyel, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Son Dönemi ve Türkiye’yi Bölme Çabaları (1908-1918),” *BELLETEREN* 61, no: 231 (1997): 387-388, <https://doi.org/10.37879/belleyen.1997.387>.

16 Jeremy Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism, and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896*, (Frank Cass, 1993), 44.

17 Bayram Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri Doğu Anadolu Politikası*, (Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1987), 5-6; Cengiz Çakaloğlu, “Erzincan ve Çevresinde Ermeni Olayları (1890-1896),” *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* no. 13 (1999): 299, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/ataunited/issue/2847/39032>.

18 Seçil Karal Akgün, “Ottoman Armenian Intricate Relations with Western Powers Before and During the Peace Settlements of the First World War,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, no. 18 (2008): 43, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ras/issue/47577/600886>.

and to gain the support of European states through the press.¹⁹ Between 1890 and 1894, Armenians attempted to revolt in Erzurum, Kumkapı, Merzifon, Kayseri, Yozgat, and Samsun, but they were unsuccessful.²⁰

Armenian committees increased their disruptive activities in areas with large Armenian populations.²¹ Armenian committees systematically carried out massacres against Muslims in different regions of Anatolia.²² In this context, in 1895, members of the Hunchak Committee rebelled against the Ottoman Empire in the Zeytun district of the Maraş province. One of the most important reasons why Armenians living in Zeytun acted in accordance with the Hunchak Committee's suggestions was the spread of the falsehood in Zeytun that Muslims were persecuting Armenians in other regions. At this point, members of the Hunchak Committee attempted to draw Armenians in Zeytun to their side through black propaganda. During this uprising, one of the leaders of the rebellion, a committee member named Agasi, stated that the necessary weapons and financial support were provided by the Hunchak Committee and that Britain would send military forces to the port of Iskenderun for assistance. Britain considered sending its warships to the port of Iskenderun. During the Armenian uprising, many Muslim villages were raided and Muslims were massacred. Ultimately, due to the involvement of Western powers, the rebelling Armenians were not punished by the Ottoman Empire.²³ During the Armenian uprisings, Armenian Patriarch Matheos İzmirliyan was exiled to Jerusalem by Sultan Abdülhamid due to his relations with Britain and on the grounds that he directed the terrorist activities of the Armenian rebels.²⁴ The Ottoman Empire made considerable efforts to end the Armenian uprisings. At this point, it is evident that the Armenians were acting in accordance with

19 Selçuk Kılınç and Metin Kopar, "Develi Ermeni Ayaklanmaları ve 1905 Ayaklanması Lideri: 'Madam Serupi,'" *Tarih Okulu Dergisi (TOD)*, no. 73 (2024): 3838, <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/joh.76033>; Bülent Cırık, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan Önce Hınçak Partisi'nin İki Kongresi ve Savaş Kararı," *BELLETEN* 86, no. 307 (2022): 1010, <http://dx.doi.org/10.37879/belleten.2022.1007>.

20 Sadi Çaycı, "Terrorism and Asymmetric Threat: Activities Against Turkey, From the Beginning of the 20th Century to the Present (Armenian Terror Activities and PKK Terror Organization Activities since 1915)," *Review of Armenian Studies*, no. 18 (2008): 92, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ras/issue/47577/600889>.

21 Nurettin Birol, "1890-1900 Ermeni Ayaklanmalarının Erzincan'a Yansımaları ve İlk Ermeni İsyanları," *Erzincan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 10, no. 1 (2017): 24, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/erzisosbil/issue/29974/323990>.

22 Ahmet Eyicil, "I. Dünya Savaşı ve Kurtuluş Mücadelesi Sırasında Maraş'ta Ermeni Mezalimi," *BELLETEN* 67, no. 250 (2003): 912, <http://dx.doi.org/10.37879/belleten.2003.911>.

23 Yahya Bağçeci, "1895 Zeytun Ermeni İsyanı," *Turkish Studies* 3, no. 2 (2008): 123-147, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.291>.

24 Salâhi R. Sonyel, "İngiliz Gizli Belgelerine Göre Adana'da Vuku Bulan Türk-Ermeni Olayları (Temmuz 1908-Aralık 1909)," *BELLETEN* 51, no. 201 (1987): 1252. <https://doi.org/10.37879/belleten.1987.1241>.

the instructions of European states. Propaganda, an important component of psychological warfare, was effectively used by Armenian committees.

Sultan Abdülhamid closely monitored the activities of the Armenians and maintained a resolute stance on the Armenian issue. In this context, he never complied with the demands for reforms for the Armenians made at the Berlin Congress during his reign. Because of this stance, Sultan Abdülhamid became a target of Armenian terrorist organizations. However, the Armenians had primarily planned to blow up critical areas such as foreign institutions, banks, stations, and bridges. In this way, they aimed to create chaos within society and make it easier to assassinate Sultan Abdülhamid. While Armenian terrorist organizations were instigating rebellions in various regions of Anatolia, they were also planning assassinations against Sultan Abdülhamid. Armenian committee members, who were trying to follow the Sultan's routine, decided to carry out the assassination when the Sultan came to the Yıldız Mosque for Friday prayers. The assassins attempted to assassinate Sultan Abdülhamid using a timed bomb on 21 July 1905, but failed.²⁵

With the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, many Armenians who had previously been identified as committee members by the Ottoman Empire began to return to the country. The Hunchak and Tashnak committees, considered terrorist organizations, transformed into political parties after the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy. In addition, through the branches they opened in various parts of Anatolia, they were spreading propaganda among the Armenian community. These developments were causing unrest among Muslims. Furthermore, due to the government lifting restrictions on arms exports and imports, Armenians began to arm themselves rapidly. Armenians, incited by Western powers, were convinced that they would establish an Armenian state in Çukurova. At the same time, the Armenian committees saw the uprisings of the Bulgarians and Serbs and the unrest in Crete as an opportunity for themselves. When the Armenians began their uprising in the Cilicia region, they did not expect European states to send their fleets to Mersin. At this time, Armenian committees settled large numbers of Armenians from eastern provinces in Adana to achieve their goals. Through newspapers, the Armenians spread the falsehood that the Ottoman Government was oppressing and using violence against Armenians while

25 İhsan Burak Birecikli and Fahri Maden, "Yıldız Suikastı: Ermenilerin Abdülhamid'e Karşı Son Teşebbüsleri Bombalı Saldırı," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 23, no. 67-68-69 (2007): 403, <https://atamdergi.gov.tr/tam-metin/136/tur>; Vahdettin Engin, "Sultan II. Abdülhamid'e Düzenlenen Ermeni Suikastı ve Bu Sebeple Belçika ile Yaşanan Diplomatik Kriz," *BELLETEREN* 59, no. 225 (1995): 415-417, <https://doi.org/10.37879/belleten.1995.413>.

collecting taxes. Aware of the events that would unfold in the coming days, the Ottoman administration published texts refuting these newspaper reports and enlightening the public.²⁶

The Ottoman Empire's efforts failed to prevent the Armenian uprising in Adana on 14 April 1909. During the uprising, the city of Adana suffered considerable damage, and the Armenians, emboldened by Western powers, continued their rebellion. The Ottoman Empire sent the armored ships Hamidiye and Mecidiye to the ports of Mersin and Iskenderun to suppress the unrest. Control was established in Adana on 25 April 1909. After these events, the Armenians tried to spread the lie that they had been massacred by the Turks to the world public opinion in order to enable foreign intervention in the region.²⁷ It should not be overlooked that propaganda was an effective weapon in these events. One of the most important reasons for the Armenians' rapid mobilization was the false news they spread through the press.

Pro Armenia Newspaper

The Pro Armenia newspaper began publication in Paris in November 1900, led by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaksutyun*), in French. Pierre Quillard served as the newspaper's editor-in-chief, and other prominent figures in French political and cultural life, such as Georges Clemenceau, Jean Longuet, Victor Berard, Urbain Gohier, and Jean Jaurès, also served as editors. The newspaper continued to be published until October 1908 (the last available issue is dated 20 September 1908).²⁸ Contributors to the newspaper included James Bryce from Britain and Enrico Ferri and Chibriani from Italy.²⁹ The newspaper was published on the 10th and 25th of each month.³⁰

26 Nejla Günay, "Activities of Organizations and Committees Established by Armenians in Maraş and Its Surroundings," *Review of Armenian Studies*, no. 32 (2015): 133-135, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ras/issue/47562/600740>.

27 Ümmügülüm Gülekoğlu and Ahmet Eyicil, "Adana'da Ermeni Olayları (1909-1921)," *Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 21, no. 1 (2024): 193-195, <https://doi.org/10.33437/ksusb.1326664>.

28 "1er novembre 1900 – Publication du journal 'Pro Armenia.'" Haïstan. April 30, 2024, https://haistan.org/encyclopedie/1er-novembre-1900-publication-du-journal-pro-armenia/?fbclid=IwY2x-jawMAMv5leHRuA2FlbQlXMAABHjrK6YJqsws9r58JDhJfdnsLMT0zEaiMbtSFXAQCB9G-V-YZmHFHcpxyGirLz_aem_LZexThwmm_TMfz1A89Fymw.

29 "ArmenianDiaspora: Unprecedented Conference 'Pro-Armenia' in Paris," *HyeTert*. January 20, 2003, <https://hyetert.org/2003/01/21/armeniandiaspora-unprecedented-conference-pro-armenia-in-paris/>.

30 Jean-Louis Mattei, "Mkrtich Portukalian and the 'Armenia' Journal (From Terrorism to Skeptical Modesty)," *Review of Armenian Studies*, no. 24 (2011): 82, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ras/issue/47572/600844>.

The main purpose of the newspaper's publication was to inform the world public about the so-called policy of violence that the Ottoman Empire had been implementing against Armenians since the 1880s and 1890s. Armenian figures such as Christapor Mikaëlian, Archag Tchobanian, and Hovannés Loris-Melikian played an important role in propaganda activities to raise awareness of the Pro Armenia newspaper in the European public sphere. In this context, they made representations to the parliaments of France, Italy, Belgium, Britain, and the Netherlands, demanding that Western states intervene militarily in Anatolia. In addition, demonstrations were organized by Armenians in Paris and other European capitals.³¹

Another feature of the Pro Armenia newspaper was its active role in organizing political congresses and meetings. For example, the International Congress of Friends of Armenia, held in Brussels in 1902, took place as a result of the newspaper's efforts. Furthermore, due to the newspaper's initiatives, Armenians in Denmark, Germany, Austria-Hungary, England, and Russia came together and began to act collectively.³² The writers of the Pro Armenia newspaper wrote their articles based on their limited knowledge of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, looking at the newspaper's articles, Armenians were generally described as "progressive" and Turks as "mass murderers". In addition, the Pro Armenia newspaper was seen as a continuation of the Droshak newspaper, but unlike Droshak, Pro Armenia did not openly support terrorist acts, even though it sympathized with them.³³

Pro Armenia's Anti-Ottoman Empire Propaganda and Discourse Analysis

In the November 25 1900 issue of the newspaper, an article titled "Pro Armenia" by Pierre Quillard stated that Armenians in Sason had been massacred by order of Sultan Abdülhamid. The events that took place in Sason in 1894 had been discussed in detail in the French Parliament. The only point on which everyone in the European public agreed was that not a single drop of blood should be shed anymore. Quillard claimed that, in addition to the mass killings, many Armenians were tortured in Ottoman prisons. Furthermore, the Ottoman Sultan had even prohibited Armenians from moving from one village to another. It

31 "Pro Armenia," Aram. <https://webaram.com/biblio/presse/pro-armenia>.

32 Raymond H. Kévorkian, "Friends in High Places: French defenders of the Armenian Cause," AGBU Magazine, August 2018, <https://agbu.org/peoples-victory/friends-high-places>.

33 Ahmet Can Öktem, "Co-founder of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and one of the Precursors of Armenian Terrorism: Kristapor Mikaelyan," AVİM, April 20, 2021, <https://avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/CO-FOUNDER-OF-THE-ARMENIAN-REVOLUTIONARY-FEDERATION-AND-ONE-OF-THE-PRECURSORS-OF-ARMENIAN-TERRORISM-KRISTAPOR-MIKAELYAN>.

was emphasized that Armenians suffered most from Sultan Abdülhamid's despotism and that if the civilized world turned a deaf ear to these calls, the Armenian race would soon be extinct. According to Quillard, 22 villages were destroyed and 6.000 Armenians lost their lives during the Sason events in 1894. Quillard stated that in 1895, Ottoman tax collectors and police officers who came to the Muş plain beat and imprisoned Armenian men. In response to these incidents, it was stated that the objections raised by Armenian Patriarch Ormanyan against arbitrary arrests were in vain, and that, in reaction to these objections, the security forces conducted searches in Kumkapı, the seat of the Patriarchate. It was further noted that the former Patriarch, Matheos İzmirliyan, had been confined to a monastery in Jerusalem for sharing with the international public the hardships endured by the Armenian population. Quillard emphasized that Armenian Patriarch Ormanyan should have taken a more proactive stance. Finally, Sultan Abdülhamid was held responsible for these events, and the famous Turkish proverb, "*The fish stinks from the head,*" was used to describe him. The real culprits responsible for the suffering of the Armenians are those who obeyed the Sultan; they are also the ones who should be punished or neutralized. It was stated that European governments had not the slightest doubt about the events that had taken place and that no diplomatic trickery could cover them up. It is thought-provoking why all statesmen who maintained relations with Sultan Abdülhamid continued to meet with him, even though they knew he was the chief assassin.³⁴ Looking at the language used in the Pro Armenia newspaper's report, it creates the impression that the Armenians did not engage in any kind of rebellion and that the security forces loyal to the Ottoman Empire arbitrarily attempted to massacre the Armenians. Furthermore, a dictating tone is used, directly targeting Sultan Abdülhamid and calling on the international community to sever all communication with the Sultan.

When the Ottoman archive documents mentioned above are examined regarding the aspects presented above, the propaganda activities that the Armenians wanted to implement through Pro Armenia are clearly visible. It has been understood that a letter prepared by an American missionary living in Harput, containing the allegation that Ottoman Empire officials massacred and tortured Armenians in Sason, was sent anonymously to newspapers published in Western countries.³⁵ Thus, it can be seen that Western missionaries attempted to influence public perception through the press by interfering in the internal

34 Pierre Quillard, "Pro Armenia," *Pro Armenia*, No. 1, November 25, 1900, pp. 1-4.

35 *Presidential Ottoman Archive (COA)*, Y. A. HUS., 327-29, H. 12.11.1312. The Presidential Ottoman Archive will be referred to as COA from here on.

affairs of the Ottoman Empire. In response, the Ottoman Empire stated in a letter sent to its embassies that Armenians who had attempted to massacre Muslims in Sason and the surrounding area, encouraged by an Armenian rebel named Hamparsum, had been captured and sent to the court in Muş to be tried.³⁶ Another document states that the Armenians rebelled at the instigation of the British.³⁷ According to this, it is known that the Armenians were the first to use weapons before the events in Sason and that the British promised the Armenians independence.³⁸

In the 25 December 1900 issue of the Pro Armenia newspaper, it was stated that Armenians did not aim to incite a crusader spirit against any religion or race living in Ottoman territories. It was stated that Sultan Abdülhamid lived in fear of death, that he was the murderer of his own brother and Mithat Pasha, that he killed Turks, Druze, Arabs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians, and Yazidis, and finally that he carried out the Armenian genocide. It was emphasized that Armenians lost their lives in the events in Diyarbakır in 1895. Furthermore, the events in Adana are mentioned, noting that excessive taxes were collected from the Armenians in the region, but that the authorities took no action regarding the issue of the bad smell in the city. In a letter sent by British Consul General Gerald Henry Fitzmaurice to Sir Ph. Currie on 16 March 1896, regarding the events that took place in Urfa in October and December 1895, it was claimed that Armenian neighborhoods in Urfa had been destroyed and that no Armenian men were to be found in the region. Fitzmaurice stated that the massacres would continue because no Muslims had been punished for the massacres committed against Armenians. However, he emphasized that as a result of the Armenians developing relations with foreign states, Muslims felt threatened. Fitzmaurice stated that secret Armenian organizations from Europe were attempting to smuggle explosives, weapons, and revolutionary publications into the Aleppo region, and that a similar process was taking place in Urfa. He emphasized that violent clashes had taken place between Armenians and Muslims in Urfa and that the Armenian bishop had wanted to report the situation to His Majesty the Sultan, but Turkish authorities had not taken the initiative in this regard. While Muslims were performing Friday prayers, Armenians carried out armed attacks on mosques. Muslims reported that Armenians had opened fire on them, and as the clashes intensified, Governor Hasan Pasha arrived in the region from Suruç. The Ottoman government declared that Armenians must surrender the

36 COA, HR. TH., 148-101, M. 04. 11. 1894.

37 COA, Y. EE., 160-23, H. 25. 05. 1312.

38 COA, Y. EE., 159-43, H. 05. 06. 1312.

1.800 weapons they had procured from abroad. In response, Armenians stated that they did not possess weapons and that Muslims should be disarmed first. Armenians refused to hand over their weapons to the Ottoman administration for weeks. Ultimately, Armenians surrendered part of their weapons to Turkish authorities.³⁹ Looking at Fitzmaurice's letter, it is clear that the events in Urfa began when the Armenians obtained large quantities of weapons through Western states. When the Armenians used these weapons to attack Muslims, the Muslims' right to legitimate self-defense arose. The Armenians, who persistently claimed that they did not have weapons, were eventually forced to surrender their weapons to the Ottoman administration.

During this period, primarily in Erzurum, Armenians were carrying out activities in the provinces of Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, and Mamuretülaziz that were intended to intimidate and provoke the Muslim population. The Ottoman Empire dispatched more security forces to the region in order to prevent potential conflict.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it was common for Armenians to attack Muslims, especially during Friday prayers. In 1895, Muslims in Diyarbakır were attacked by Armenians with weapons during Friday prayers. As a result of these incidents, many Muslims were killed and wounded.⁴¹ Another method used by provocative Armenians was for approximately 200 Armenians to dress up as Circassians and attack Muslim villages.⁴² In addition, Armenians were walking around the streets of Diyarbakır dressed in Laz and Georgian clothing.⁴³ Ultimately, after restoring order in Diyarbakır, the Ottoman administration established a commission to compensate those whose property had been damaged.⁴⁴ As claimed in the Pro Armenia newspaper, the information that Muslims committed massacres against Armenians is false. According to official documents, Muslims were caught defenseless and subjected to systematic attacks.

The interception by Ottoman security forces of a letter sent by the Armenian Bishop of Aleppo to the Armenian Bishop of Urfa revealed that Armenians in Anatolia were in alliance with the aim of revolting and that more weapons and ammunition needed to be sent to the Zeytun region.⁴⁵ Ottoman archival documents show that, contrary to the claims made in the Pro Armenia

39 "La Quinzaine, Lettres de Diarbékir et d'Adana," *Pro Armenia*, No. 3, December 25, 1900, pp. 17-23.

40 COA, A. MKT. MHM., 721-4, H. 02. 05. 1313.

41 COA, Y. PRK. ZB., 16-77, H. 14. 05. 1313.

42 COA, HR. SFR. 3., 438-33, M. 11. 11. 1895.

43 COA, Y. PRK. UM., 33-107, H. 28. 05. 1313.

44 COA, Y. PRK. UM., 33-57, H. 19. 05. 1313.

45 COA, HR. SYS., 2790-43, M. 17. 11. 1895.

newspaper, the internal unrest in the areas where Armenians lived in Anatolia was not orchestrated by Muslims.

The newspaper's 25 January 1901 issue featured an article titled "Abdülhamid and Europe" by Francis de Pressensé, which emphasized that politicians, judges, and members of parliament in Paris paid their respects to Sultan Abdülhamid and that officers raised their glasses to the Sultan at cocktail parties. This was France's stance towards Sultan Abdülhamid, despite its rebukes of the Armenians. According to Pressensé, this despicable attitude was not unique to France; similar attitudes towards the Sultan were adopted throughout Europe. In his article, Pressensé expressed his resentment, stating that they were aware that there was no European power left that did not flatter Sultan Abdülhamid, bow down before him, and shower him with cowardly praise. The article goes on to state that the concept of morality has completely disappeared from international relations today and that humanitarian issues have no say in the field of diplomacy. At the end of the article, referring to Sultan Abdülhamid, it is emphasized that it is unacceptable to celebrate with music the birthday of one of the greatest catastrophes to befall the human race.⁴⁶ The Pro Armenia newspaper attempts to discredit Sultan Abdülhamid in the eyes of European states through slanderous and insulting news reports.

In the same issue, Jean Longuet's article titled "The United States of America (USA) and the Armenians" states that after the events of 1895, many Armenians emigrated to the USA, emphasizing that Armenians held their annual congresses in Boston. The Armenians wrote a letter to US President William McKinley, describing the suffering of the Armenian people. It was stated that if the Armenians in Anatolia were not helped, this people would be completely wiped out. It was unacceptable that a country that Washington and Lincoln had struggled to build would not help the Armenians. It was noted that the USA was more effective in diplomatic activities than European states.⁴⁷ The Pro Armenia newspaper harshly stated that European states had abandoned the Armenians to their fate during and after the uprisings. Furthermore, the Armenians criticized the course of relations between European states and Sultan Abdülhamid, trying to gauge whether they could develop a new policy with the USA.

In its 25 February 1901 issue, under the headline "Russification of Armenians in the Caucasus", the Pro Armenia newspaper stated that the Armenian

46 Francis de Pressensé, "Abd-ul-Hamid et L'Europe," *Pro Armenia*, No. 5, January 25, 1901, pp. 33-34.

47 Jean Longuet, "Les Etats-Unis et Les Arméniens," *Pro Armenia*, No. 5, January 25, 1901, p. 36.

race was seriously threatened by Russian administrative despotism and that approximately 2 million Armenians in the Caucasus were being oppressed. It was emphasized that 50.000 Armenians served in the Russian army and that the best generals in the Turkish-Russian wars were Armenians.⁴⁸ However, Russian officials stated that Armenian schools, printing houses, and libraries had to be kept under control. It was also reported that Armenian charitable associations were more interested in politics than in mutual aid.⁴⁹ Russia sought to restrain the Armenians since they were approaching the idea of establishing an independent Armenian state outside of Russian control.

In the 25 August 1901 issue of the newspaper, an article titled “The Anniversary of the Attack on the Ottoman Bank” provides a detailed account of the bank attack carried out by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaksutyun*) on 26 August 1896. The article states that this attack was intended to send a message to the “Red Beast” residing in the Yıldız Palace that the Armenian people would resist and survive. Alongside the bank attack, the simultaneous burning of Istanbul and its subsequent transformation into a city reduced to ashes within a short period of time were also aimed. Thus, the Sultan would see with his own bloodshot eyes what his reign had led to. The Ottoman police had obtained intelligence that the Armenians were planning an attack, but they did not have all the details. A clash occurred between the Armenians who entered the Ottoman Bank and the security forces. During the clashes, some police officers lost their lives. An official named Maksimov from the Russian consulate stated that the Armenians’ demands had been taken into consideration but that they must end their attack. He said that if they continued their attack and blew up the bank, they would lose the sympathy of European states. The activists who ended the attack boarded the French Messagerie Maritime ship and set sail for Marseille. The rebels, who were taken to the Saint-Pierre prison in Marseille, responded to the question “What is your profession?” during interrogation by stating that they were revolutionaries and that their action was an act of national revenge.⁵⁰ The Armenians who were injured during the bank attack were visited by the Russian ambassador at the Russian hospital where they were taken. The ambassador promised that everything necessary for their treatment would be done and that they would subsequently be sent to Malta.⁵¹ In the Pro Armenia newspaper, the Armenians who attacked the Ottoman Bank were declared heroes. This article

48 “La russification des Arméniens au Caucase,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 7, February 25, 1901, pp. 54-55.

49 “La russification des Arméniens au Caucase,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 8, March 10, 1901, p. 61.

50 “L’anniversaire de l’attaque de la Banque Ottomane,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 19, August 25, 1901, pp. 146-148.

51 COA, Y. PRK. ZB., 18-10, H. 02. 04. 1314.

also contained insulting remarks about Sultan Abdülhamid. It is evident that such language was used deliberately throughout the newspaper.

The Pro Armenia newspaper also monitored the activities of Jews as well as Armenians. In this context, in the 10 January 1902 issue, in an article titled “The Zionist Congress and the Sultan” written by Bernard Lazare, it was emphasized that at the Zionist Congress held in Basel in 1897, a clear show of respect was paid to Sultan Abdülhamid and that it was shameful for Jews to salute murderers. The descendants of Moses today see no harm in showing respect to a man like the Sultan. Zionist leaders laid Jews at the feet of Wilhelm II yesterday, and today they make them kneel before the Red Sultan. This attitude is called *realpolitik* in the international system, but it is nothing more than a policy of lies. Moreover, it is no feat to be able to meet with Abdülhamid because anyone who wants to can meet with him by bribing people close to the Sultan at Yıldız Palace. However, Sultan Abdülhamid does not want to give the Jews land in Palestine. The Jewish people must first renew themselves intellectually and morally.⁵² The Armenians viewed the Zionists’ efforts to develop relations with the Ottoman Empire with suspicion. Furthermore, the Armenians believed that Sultan Abdülhamid would not negotiate on the issue of Palestinian land under any circumstances.

The Armenians attempted to expose the activities of any movement or individual opposed to Sultan Abdülhamid through the Pro Armenia newspaper. In this context, in the issue dated 25 February 1902, an article titled “Congress of Ottoman Liberals” written by Pierre Quillard stated that the Young Turks Congress meeting in Paris on 4 February 1902, was significant and that everyone attending the meeting harbored hatred toward the Hashashin (referring to Sultan Abdülhamid) and that he must be removed from the throne as soon as possible. The majority of the Young Turks agreed that the Armenians’ demands were legitimate, but they argued that the constitution must first be enacted in order to reestablish justice in Türkiye. Furthermore, the Young Turks wanted to establish true equality between Muslims and Christians.⁵³

In an article titled “Letters from Erzincan and Ahlat” in the 1 September 1903 issue of the newspaper, it was alleged that an Ottoman Empire official in Erzincan crushed an Armenian woman and her child under his horse’s

52 Bernard Lazare, “Les Congrès Sioniste et Le Sultan,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 4, January 10, 1902, pp. 29-30.

53 Pierre Quillard, “Les Congrès des Libéraux ottomans,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 7, February 25, 1902, pp. 49-50.

hooves. It was also stated that Armenians who surrendered to the security forces were executed within a few days. For this reason, it was emphasized that Armenians should not surrender to Ottoman rule under any circumstances and that they must always fight. It was noted that Armenians were subjected to insults by Turks because of the clothes they wore. Among the information conveyed was that an Armenian youth who wanted to bring firewood from the mountains with an axe in his hand was detained by security forces. The article claimed that Armenians were under pressure from barbaric Kurds and that Kurds attacked Armenians like bloodthirsty wolves. It also stated that Turks attacked Armenian places of worship.⁵⁴ Looking at Ottoman archive documents, it is stated that the claim that Muslims attacked the Armenian Monastery in Erzincan is false and that this was also confirmed by the French and British consulates.⁵⁵ In the villages of Pasinler and Komazor, affiliated with Erzurum, Armenian gangs martyred Muslims by cutting off their ears, noses, lips, arms, and legs.⁵⁶ This document shows that Armenians behaved savagely towards Muslims. Ottoman documents also show that the claim that Armenians' places of worship were destroyed, spread through propaganda, was refuted by Western states. Due to the Armenians' disruptive activities in the region, Ottoman security forces were constantly on alert.

An article titled "The Patriarch and the Sultan" published in the newspaper on 15 April 1904, stated that the declaration prepared by the Patriarch was read in all Armenian churches, and that the declaration stated that Armenians were satisfied with the Sultan's protection and that they should never rebel against the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁷ The respect and gratitude shown by the Armenian Patriarch to the Sultan was a subject of criticism among Armenian separatists. As mentioned earlier, the Armenian Patriarch's stance was harshly criticized by the writers of the Pro Armenia newspaper. Armenian separatists opposed anyone who established relations with Sultan Abdülhamid.

The newspaper's 1 August 1905 issue primarily featured official statements regarding the assassination attempt on Sultan Abdülhamid on 21 July 1905. According to these statements, a bomb detonated after Friday prayers resulted in the loss of many lives. In response to this incident, Sultan Abdülhamid (as reported by eyewitnesses) followed the events with dignity and courage. The Sultan did not warmly welcome the idea of those around him to go to a safe area and, upon their insistence, shouted at them not to worry. Numerous

54 "Lettres d'Erzinghian et d'Akhlat," *Pro Armenia*, No. 68, September 1, 1903, pp. 347-348.

55 COA, HR.SYS., 2795-25, M. 24. 08. 1903.

56 COA, HR. SYS., 2795-53, M. 01.11.1903.

57 "Le Patriarche et le Sultan," *Pro Armenia*, No. 83, April 15, 1904, p. 478.

arrests were made after the attack. Jean Longuet, a writer for the Pro Armenia newspaper, stated that the Red Sultan narrowly escaped the assassination attempt. Due to conflicting information on the subject, J. Longuet discussed this incident with Dr. Abdullah Cevdet, one of the important figures of the Young Turks. Dr. Abdullah Cevdet stated that he did not believe the claims that this attack was carried out by a Macedonian, Armenian, or Italian anarchist, and that such statements could increase violent incidents against the Christian population. J. Longuet asked whether it was true that Sultan Abdülhamid had gained great prestige among his Muslim subjects by eliminating his Christian subjects. Dr. Abdullah Cevdet stated that this information was absolutely false and that Turkish prisons were filled with Muslim youths who were brutally beaten. Dr. Abdullah Cevdet also claimed that the person who attempted to assassinate Sultan Abdülhamid was definitely a Muslim Turk and emphasized that this was not the first attack on the Sultan, noting that eight months earlier, a young man named Arif Hikmet, a former medical school student, had been caught with three bombs in Sultanahmet Square. He added that this young man managed to escape from Istanbul before he was executed. When asked what the Young Turks' main goal was, Dr. Abdullah Cevdet replied that they aimed to implement the Constitution prepared by the great Turkish reformer Mithat Pasha.⁵⁸ Looking at the Ottoman archive document, it is seen that an assassination attempt was organized against Sultan Abdülhamid by Armenians during the Friday Greeting.⁵⁹ Dr. Abdullah Cevdet, on the other hand, argued that Christians would never carry out such an attack, and openly declared his hatred and anger towards Sultan Abdülhamid through the Pro Armenia newspaper. This issue of the newspaper, as well as various other issues, gave extensive coverage to the views of those opposed to Sultan Abdülhamid. In this way, attempts were made to propagate the idea that the Ottoman Empire was weak and inadequate.

An article titled "Call to President Roosevelt," written by M. Berthelot and published in the newspaper's 1 February 1906 issue, stated that US President Roosevelt, thanks to his high political and moral influence, was constantly striving to preserve and reestablish international peace. The article addressed to Roosevelt stated that there was no doubt he was affected by the tragic fate of the Armenian people; it also stated that the Armenian nation had been subjected to violence by Muslims, who had been described as "barbarians" in recent years, and was facing the threat of extinction. It is emphasized that the reports of US diplomats serving in the region describe these events. It is

58 "L'attentat Contre le Sultan," *Pro Armenia*, No. 115, August 1, 1905, pp. 752-755.

59 COA, Y. PRK. KOM., 14-69, H. 26. 06. 1323.

stated that Armenians' lives and property in Anatolia are no longer safe. It is known that Americans and Europeans have also been affected by the attacks of Kurdish gangs. The letter states that for these reasons, the US should intervene in the region to the extent it deems appropriate.⁶⁰ In a reply letter written by US Secretary of State M. Elihu Root on behalf of President Roosevelt, it was clearly stated that the US had strong sympathy for oppressed peoples in all countries and that attention should be paid to ensuring the safety of Armenian lives and property. However, it was strongly emphasized that the US lacked a legal basis for intervention in the region.⁶¹

In the article titled "The Sultan's Health" published in the 5 June 1906 issue of the newspaper, it was stated that Sultan Abdülhamid's health was not very promising and that it was unknown whether this condition was due to a chronic illness or an unexpected new illness. Considering that Sultan Abdülhamid was born in 1842, it can be said that he was not yet very old. It was emphasized that Reşat Efendi was the heir apparent after Sultan Abdülhamid.⁶² In *Pro Armenia*, in an article titled "The Sultan's Health" republished on 5 September 1906, it was stated that Sultan Abdülhamid had suffered a severe crisis and lost consciousness. It was also reported that the Sultan's plan to receive foreign diplomatic representatives had been canceled due to fatigue.⁶³ An article titled "When the Beast Dies", published in the 20 October 1906, issue of the newspaper, reported that the news of the Sultan's serious illness had been circulating for weeks and that, due to his nervous disposition, he might resist death, but he was extremely weak and exhausted. The article also stated that Turkish newspapers were not allowed to publish anything about the Sultan's health and that German doctors were acting cautiously.⁶⁴ The *Pro Armenia* newspaper was carefully following the news about Sultan Abdülhamid's health. However, as can be understood from the article titled "When the Beast Dies", it continued to use propaganda elements through hate speech. Furthermore, Sultan Abdülhamid was constantly portrayed as helpless and sick.

In an article titled "Can Armenia Survive as a Nation?" written by Edgard W. Upton and published in the newspaper's 1 July 1907 issue, it was stated that despite the enormous obstacles facing the Armenians in establishing a national state, they could be able to build a state due to their strong nationalist

60 M. Berthelot, "Appel au Président Roosevelt," *Pro Armenia*, No. 127, February 1, 1906, p. 845.

61 Elihu Root, "La Réponse du Président Roosevelt," *Pro Armenia*, No. 130, March 15, 1906, p. 869.

62 "La santé du Sultan," *Pro Armenia*, No. 135, June 5, 1906, p. 911.

63 "La santé du Sultan," *Pro Armenia*, No. 141, September 5, 1906, p. 958.

64 "Quand la Bête Sera Morte," *Pro Armenia*, No. 144, October 20, 1906, p. 985.

sentiments. It was stated that due to the difficulties they faced in the region, they emigrated to other countries and that the Armenians who emigrated to the US, for example, caused diplomatic friction between Türkiye and the US. The article emphasizes that allegiance to a country must be mutual and that since citizens pay taxes to the state, the state's police must ensure their security. The article goes on to state that under the rule of a tyrant like Sultan Abdülhamid, the subjects' demands would not be taken into account and the subjects would be seen as slaves. Despite being subjected to intense attacks by Muslims, Armenians still hold high-ranking positions in Türkiye today. Furthermore, Armenians held important positions in Ottoman society, such as bankers, diplomats, and merchants. Considering the problems Armenians have experienced in recent times, it has been stated that the process of building the Armenian nation will be extremely painful.⁶⁵ In this article, the author shares information about the persecution of Armenians under Ottoman rule, while also stating that Armenians were able to work in high-level positions. At this point, a contradiction is clearly evident. If the claims frequently mentioned in every issue of the Pro Armenia newspaper, such as "Armenians were persecuted" or "the Armenian race was targeted for extermination," were true, then Armenian bureaucrats should not have been able to hold any positions under Ottoman rule. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the author considers the possibility of Armenians establishing a state to be low.

The article titled "Muslims Against Hamid", published in the 5 March 1908, issue of the newspaper, states that an investigative commission was established regarding certain Muslims who had established ties with the Young Turks abroad, and that approximately 50 people were arrested. According to the seized correspondence, it appears that an agreement had been reached on changing the form of government and making significant amendments to the constitution.⁶⁶ The article titled "Turkish Rebellion", published in the newspaper's 20 July 1908 issue, stated that the rebellion that began in the Macedonia and Albania regions in early July had spread to the province of Edirne and that the soldiers sent from Anatolia to suppress the rebellion were acting in line with the Young Turks' propaganda. The Yıldız Palace, however, claimed that the uprisings had been orchestrated by Britain. For months, there had been military uprisings in the Turkish army for various reasons. All soldiers in Shkodra, Albania, had requested to be discharged. In addition, officers had only been able to receive one month's pay out of the five

65 Edgard W. Upton, "L'armenie peut-elle subsister comme Nation," *Pro Armenia*, No. 161, July 5, 1907, pp. 1122-1123.

66 "Les Musulmans contre Hamid," *Pro Armenia*, No. 177, March 5, 1908, p. 1245.

months owed to them. Rebellions had also occurred in Manastır for similar reasons. The rebellion in Manastır ended on 30 June after the Ottoman Bank made a payment of 600.000 pounds to the soldiers. The British Consulate in Thessaloniki was also engaged in propaganda activities in favor of the Young Turks. The Young Turks demanded reforms regarding the reestablishment of the constitution, equality before the law, and guarantees for individual freedoms and property rights.⁶⁷

As a result of the uprisings, the Second Constitutional Monarchy was declared in the Ottoman Empire on 24 July 1908. According to an article titled “Statement from the Armenian Revolutionary Federation” published in the newspaper on 20 August 1908, following these developments, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaktsutyun*) submitted a circular to the constitutional government. Accordingly, it demanded the provision of free movement in Armenian regions, the return of Armenian lands “seized” in the recent past, the lifting of measures taken against Armenians between 1895 and 1908, the release of Armenians who were political prisoners, and permission for those who had been exiled to return to the country.⁶⁸ In a statement published on 5 September 1908, through Pro Armenia, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaktsutyun*) stated that they had not forgotten the suffering they had endured for decades, that they had fought for this cause with a love of freedom, that their blood had not been shed in vain today, and that their selfless efforts had been rewarded, emphasizing that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaktsutyun*) was the only force that enabled a new era to begin in Türkiye.⁶⁹

The article titled “The Return of Patriarch İzmirliyan,” published in the 5 September 1908, issue of the newspaper, stated that the former Armenian Patriarch Matheos İzmirliyan, who had been imprisoned in a monastery in Jerusalem, was greeted with enthusiasm by both Armenians and Turks in Izmir and Çanakkale upon his return to Türkiye. In Çanakkale, Mazhar Pasha and Mehmet Efendi from the Young Turks went to see the Patriarch and embraced him. Approximately 100.000 people gathered at the Galata Pier for the ship that docked there; it was stated that such enthusiasm had never been seen before in Istanbul, and that people of all nationalities came to see the Patriarch. In addition, the Committee of the Young Turks in Jerusalem sent

67 Pierre Quillard, “La Révolte Turque,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 186, July 20, 1908, p. 1325.

68 “Informations: Déclaration de la Fédération Révolutionnaire Arménienne,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 188, August 20, 1908, p. 1341.

69 “Proclamation de la Fédération Révolutionnaire Arménienne,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 189, September 5, 1908, p. 1349.

a magnificent wreath to be placed on the graves of Armenians in Istanbul. Furthermore, the article titled “Appeasement” in the same issue stated that all civil servants working in the Ottoman Empire had been dismissed and that although the Turks viewed the constitution positively, they doubted that it would be implemented as long as Sultan Abdülhamid was alive. Furthermore, it included statements that the Kurds had become closer to the Armenians, that the past was behind them, and that they were brothers. Another report emphasized that all of Erzurum was jubilant and that young girls and children were singing in the streets. Armenians detained in the Yozgat, Kayseri, and Maraş regions were released.⁷⁰

The article titled “The Committee of Union and Progress” in the same issue includes statements made by Dr. Nazım Bey, one of the founding members of the Committee of Union and Progress, to a *Le Temps* correspondent on 20 August 1908. According to these statements, *“the task of the Committee of Union and Progress is not yet complete; on the contrary, it has only just begun. We have succeeded in proclaiming the constitution, but we must establish it on such solid foundations that there will be no reaction. Asia Minor is by far the richest region of the Sublime State, and there are very important tasks awaiting us there that we must complete. The Anatolian villagers are very pleased with the removal of the oppressive regime. However, words such as constitution, elections, and parliament mean nothing to the villagers. Most villagers believe that they will no longer have to pay taxes. Although Anatolian villagers are very intelligent by nature, centuries of oppression, ignorance, and misery have covered their minds with a hard shell. Similarly, the Kurds, who are said to be very savage, possess remarkable intelligence. I admit that the administration in the country is currently very fragmented. The reason for this is that we believe it is necessary to carry out a major purge in order to completely eliminate espionage. Although it is relatively easy to dismiss those who acted as informants during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid, it is quite difficult to find competent replacements. Everything in the country needs to be taken up again from scratch, and we must succeed in doing so, otherwise anarchy and civil war will break out in the country. Furthermore, as members of the Committee of Union and Progress, we will not pursue any position, rank, or seat in parliament, and we will definitely not take money from anyone. On the day Resneli Niyazi raised the flag of rebellion, there were only 80 Turkish lira (1.824 francs) in the committee’s coffers. We entered the struggle under these conditions. We are currently preventing the Sultan from causing any harm in any matter. At this stage, it is more appropriate*

70 “L’apaisement,” *Pro Armenia*, No. 189, September 5, 1908, p. 1350.

for us to keep him on the throne, because we do not want to deepen the crisis in the country. We will never allow Europe to intervene in the Sublime State, whatever the cost. Furthermore, since the Caliph still has tremendous moral authority, it is important for us that our decisions bear the imperial seal. On 30 August, Enver Bey made some statements to a Times reporter regarding the role of the army in the Turkish Revolution. According to him, the revolution is a national revolution; despite all the hopelessness, it was carried out with a spirit that united the entire people against the government. The army is not the master of the nation, but its servant and the instrument of its will. Although the revolution was carried out against the tyranny of the Palace, the committee will support the legitimate ruler, Abdülhamid, as long as he respects the constitution. Furthermore, in its instructions to the press, the Committee of Union and Progress emphasized the need to show the Sultan the respect he deserved and to avoid mentioning the Balkans' past."⁷¹

According to another report published in the Pro Armenia newspaper, Dr. Nazım Bey visited the Armenian Patriarch's home in Izmir on 28 August 1908, and was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd. Addressing the crowd, Dr. Nazım said: "First and foremost, we owe even more gratitude to the Armenian people than to the army, because it is this people who instilled in us the idea of freedom and led us to freedom."⁷² The article titled "Kurds" in the 20 September 1908 issue of the newspaper stated that supporters of the Abdülhamid regime had begun to reorganize in the face of the unexpected victory of the Committee of Union and Progress. However, thanks to the vigilance of the Young Turks, the Armenians did not experience a repeat of the massacres they had suffered in 1896. The article goes on to emphasize that there was a large Kurdish population in Istanbul and that most of the port and construction workers, as well as the porters, were Kurds. It was stated that it was the Kurds who took up arms against the Armenians during the reign of Abdülhamid, and that vigilance against the Kurds was necessary. A man named Hasan Hayri Efendi, who was of Kurdish origin but was born and raised in Istanbul, gathered the Kurds in front of the Edirne Gate and gave a speech. In his speech, he stated the following: "O my Kurdish brothers, everything is now over for us. We will all come under the rule of the infidels. The Armenians have been granted autonomy. We Muslims will be forced to live with our heads bowed in the future."⁷³

71 "Le Comité d'Union et Progrès," *Pro Armenia*, No. 189, September 5, 1908, pp. 1354-1355.

72 "La propagande et la Constitution dans les provinces d'Asie," *Pro Armenia*, No. 190, September 20, 1908, p. 1358.

73 "Les Kurdes," *Pro Armenia*, No. 190, September 20, 1908, pp. 1358-1359.

In the Pro Armenia newspaper, articles published after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy show that Armenians adopted a positive attitude towards the Committee of Union and Progress coming to power. In particular, statements by leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress Party were frequently quoted. Articles about Sultan Abdülhamid began to be published much less frequently. Furthermore, it is observed that Armenians had high expectations of the new administration. From the first issue to the last, Armenians attempted to use propaganda methods effectively in the Pro Armenia newspaper. In doing so, they frequently resorted to black propaganda methods. Particularly after the Committee of Union and Progress Party began to hold power, statements indicating that Armenians had achieved their goals can be found in the newspaper.

Conclusion

This article examines the black propaganda activities carried out by the Pro Armenia newspaper, published in French in Paris between 1900 and 1908, one of the most critical periods for the Ottoman Empire in political and social terms, in the context of psychological warfare. While analyzing the content and discourse of the newspaper, Ottoman archive documents related to the subject were also used. The Pro Armenia newspaper resorted intensively to black propaganda methods in order to keep the Armenian issue on the European public agenda and to encourage Western states to intervene in the Ottoman Empire. In this context, Armenians were systematically portrayed as “victims” in the newspaper, while the Ottoman administration, and especially Sultan Abdülhamid II, were constantly targeted with epithets such as “Murderer”, “Red Sultan”, and “Monster”. It is evident that the newspaper only reported events from the Armenian perspective and made no mention whatsoever of the massacres committed by Armenian gangs against the Muslim population. Official Ottoman archival documents reveal that Muslims were systematically massacred by Armenians.

The Pro Armenia newspaper not only presented news related to Armenians, but also played an active role in the participation of Armenians, especially those living in Europe, in international meetings or demonstrations. The newspaper continuously engaged in black propaganda, using both the international press and diplomatic channels simultaneously. Furthermore, with the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, changes occurred in the language of Pro Armenia’s news coverage. However, even under these

conditions, the demands and political goals of the Armenians were persistently emphasized.

In conclusion, the Pro Armenia newspaper is one of the most striking examples of how the press was used as a psychological warfare tool in the conditions of that period. Looking at the newspaper's activities, it is clear how the relationship between propaganda and international diplomacy was intertwined, particularly in the context of minority issues and the strategic interests of the great powers.

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BRITISH NATURALIZATION OF TURKISH ARMENIANS IN BENGAL: AN EXAMPLE OF 'NO PERMANENT ALIENAGE.'

(BENGAL'DEKİ TÜRK ERMENİLERİNİN BRİTANYA VATANDAŞLIĞINA
GEÇİŞİ: 'SÜREKLİLİK ARZ ETMEYEN YABANCILIK İLKEŞİ')

Minhazul ABEDİN*

Abstract: *Historically the Armenians, are renowned globally for their expertise in trade and commerce. Another distinct category of Armenians is professionals. During the 17th century, Armenians migrated to Baburid India and Bengal. Armenians were the initial foreign visitors to Bengal during Muslim rule. Due to their proficiency and effective communication, they expanded their business throughout the Indian subcontinent. They maintained robust business and political ties with the Nawab of Bengal. They even mediated the establishment of contacts between the Baburid dynasty and the British East India Company. Following the British annexation of Bengal in 1757 and the subsequent colonization of India in 1857, individuals from British India became British subjects by being born within the dominions of the Crown. To become citizens, the others were required to apply for the British Naturalization and Status of Aliens Act*

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(B.N. & S. A.). Accordingly, this study focuses on when and why the Armenians came to Bengal? Under which act did they apply for this naturalization? Which conditions did they have to obey? How was the sequence of the gradual process? And which theory of naturalization matches their acquirement of citizenship?

Keywords: *Armenian, Bengal, British, Naturalization, Turkish.*

Öz: *Tarihi olarak Ermeniler, ticaret ve iş dünyasında küresel çapta uzmanlıklarıyla tanınmaktadır. Ermeniler arasında bir diğer belirgin kategori ise profesyonellerdir. 17. yüzyılda Ermeniler, Babürlü Hindistanı ve Bengal'e göç etmiştir. Ermeniler, Müslüman egemenliği altındaki Bengal'e gelen ilk yabancı ziyaretçilerdir. Yetenekli iletişim becerileri ve ticaret konusundaki uzmanlıkları sayesinde Hindistan'ın tüm altkıtasına işlerini yaymışlardır. Bengal'in Nevvâb'ı ile güçlü ticaret ve siyasi ilişkiler kurmuşlardır. Ayrıca, Babür Hanedanı ile İngiliz Doğu Hindistan Şirketi arasında temasların kurulmasında aracılık yapmışlardır. 1757'de Bengal'in Britanya tarafından ilhakı ve 1857'de Hindistan'ın sömürgeleştirilmesinin ardından, İngiliz Hindistanı'ndan doğan bireyler, Kraliyet egemenlikleri sınırları içinde doğmuş oldukları için İngiliz tebaası olmuştur. Diğerleri ise, İngiliz Vatandaşlık Tanınması ve Yabancı Durumu Yasası (B.N. & S. A.) uyarınca vatandaşlık başvurusu yapmak zorunda kalmışlardır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma Ermenilerin Bengal'e ne zaman ve neden geldiklerine, hangi yasaya göre vatandaşlık başvurusu yaptıklarına, hangi şartlara uymaları gerektiğine, sürecin nasıl bir sıralamaya sahip olduğuna ve hangi vatandaşlığa kabul teorisinin, onların vatandaşlık kazançlarıyla en iyi şekilde örtüştüğüne odaklanmaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ermeni, Bengal, İngiliz, Vatandaşlık, Türk.*

Introduction

Changing residential areas is as ancient as humankind. Since the concept of citizenship, people have also had to obtain citizenship to reside permanently in another place. It is a human right for people to migrate voluntarily, and Human rights also allow for the immigration of voluntary migrants. Generally, one migrant or short-term visitor first becomes an immigrant, then gradually turns into naturalization and becomes a citizen in his new state. Citizenship is a formal association with legal membership in a state.¹ Several fundamental social, political, and civil rights are attached to citizenship.² However, each of these rights may be granted by a state alone, without conferring citizenship on any individual. States do not always grant their residents the same bundle of fundamental rights. Being a citizen means having specific rights and privileges. Only when a membership confers particular rights, benefits, and entitlements does it qualify as citizenship in this broader meaning. Thus, there is a close relationship between citizenship status and the rights that comprise it: In a sense, having no rights would not constitute citizenship at all.³ Certain regions do not grant any political rights at all. For example, Chinese nationals are unable to vote. Different regimes grant their citizens varying combinations of rights from each of the categories above, even in liberal democracies. Being granted citizenship privileges does not automatically make someone a citizen. Citizenship is more than just a legal status; in most societies, this legal position carries social connotations.

This study, therefore, examines the legal position of some Turkish Armenians who took British citizenship in occupied Bengal under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1914. The theoretical standard followed here will also be discussed in detail. The paper deals with four who got citizenship under this theory: Simon Mihigian, Martin Varden Daniel, Haikak Aparcar, and Kinaric Louis Baronian, whose documents can be found in the Bangladesh National Archive.

1 Christian Joppke, *Citizenship and Immigration*, Immigration & Society (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2010).

2 T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class: And Other Essays* (University Press, 1950), 10.

3 Daniel Sharp, 'Immigration, Naturalization, and the Purpose of Citizenship', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (June 2023), 412. no. 2 (June 2023)

Table: Turkish Subjects who took British citizenship in Bengal

	Name	Birth-place	Birth-year	Arrival Year	Year of Citizenship
1	Simon Mihigian	Van	1888	1914	1936
2	Martin Varden Daniel	Van	1907	1923	1936
3	Haikak Apcar	Mosul	1897	1907	1939
4	Kinaric Louis Baronian	Erzurum	1911	1920	1940

Source: Compiled by the author

The research will be based on an archival study. Four files related to the topic are found in the Bangladesh National Archive, although the given files show that there may have been other files related to the topic that have not been found. These documents are preserved in the Bangladesh National Archives. No academic research articulated on persons of Turkish subject and Armenian origin who took British Citizenship in Bengal is not found articulated prior to this article. Since no direct academic writing exists, the study requires a review of partially related writings. Two partial things are found here: naturalization and the Armenian diaspora in Bengal. In the academic field of citizenship and naturalization, Oberman contributed masterpiece research, “Immigration, Citizenship, and Consent: What is Wrong with Permanent Alienage?” and Sharp’s research must also be mentioned here; his article, ‘Immigration, Naturalization, and Purpose of Citizenship,’ can be ideal research in this field. He developed a novel egalitarian account of citizenship. Both articles mentioned above are most relevant to this study.

Other partial literature concerns the Armenian diasporic entry into Bengal, their relations with the British, and their reasons for living in occupied Bengal. Here, the accounts of Aslanian, Bhattacharya, Chaudhury, and Roy & Roya are relevant to this article. The authors have discussed the History of Armenians, Armenian commercial history, and their diaspora in India, Bengal, and Kolkata connections. However, no related academic work is found dealt with Armenian Turkish people who got British citizenship in occupied Bengal. Therefore, based on the particular ‘no permanent alienage’ theory, this paper explores how some Armenian Turkish people got citizenship in Bengal and the act after which they got naturalized in Bengal.

This article is structured into seven sections. The ‘Introduction’ commences with the inherent meaning of citizenship. This section delineates the nature and significance of this investigation. In section II, I succinctly address the

development of a theoretical framework. This section specifically addresses the concept and theoretical framework of acquiring British citizenship in Bengal by Turkish Armenians. In Section III, I address the fundamental criteria and the Naturalization process under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914, by which the aforementioned Turkish Armenians acquired British citizenship in Bengal. Section IV advocates for equitable treatment, common factors and the Oath of Allegiance. Section V delineates the identities of the applicants. Section VI, a notably extensive segment, elucidates the motivations for the existence of Armenians in occupied Bengal. The final portion includes the concluding remarks and ultimate statements.

Theoretical Framework and 'No Permanent Alienage'

The well-known narratives surrounding naturalization rights are Contribution, Agency, Membership and Coercion. Immigrants make contributions in the same capacities as citizens. However, States might circumvent the need for immigrants to become citizens by preventing them from making contributions. Whenever a state does this, it plays the wrong role twice: once by preventing them from contributing and again by refusing citizenship.⁴ Contributors should receive just a reward for their efforts; additionally, it is the equitable distribution of rewards and responsibilities. It would be inequitable to impose substantial barriers on migrants seeking naturalization who have fulfilled the necessary contributions, as their fundamental entitlement has this been proved.⁵ In the context of the Agency argument, Sharp says, "*Immigrants are owed citizenship in order to give sufficient security to their located agency*". Their rights are uneasy, nevertheless, as permanent residents are occasionally more vulnerable to deportation than citizens. However, in the case of subjection, voting rights can be granted to immigrants even without citizenship. This is already the case in some states for municipal elections. Finally, one way to be accepted as a part of society is to be acknowledged as a permanent resident.

Regardless of citizenship status, immigrants are eligible for each right. The process might go like this: Social membership explains the necessity for membership status; agency considerations explain residency rights; subjugation explains voting rights; contribution explains welfare benefits. It is not, however, acceptable for a single state to grant distinctly different

4 Daniel Weltman, 'Territorial Exclusion: An Argument against Closed Borders', *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 19, no. 3 (29 March 2021), 274-275.

5 Jonathan Seglow, 'Arguments for Naturalisation', *Political Studies* 57, no. 4 (December 2009), 788-804.

privileges to diverse subsets of its members or residents. Advocates of equal citizenship status ought to distinguish between fundamental rights, which a citizenship scheme should grant to every individual, and secondary rights, which allow flexibility. Subsequently, Sharp proposes that fundamental rights either (a) have a significant enough social significance or (b) are objectively required to shield people from social hierarchy. This reasoning does not require everyone to have access to every right the state grants. The state may do away with citizenship and grant each individual the (differential) rights they are entitled to. It is known as perpetual alienation when people or groups are continuously left out of or isolated from full social participation. Political justice seeks to avert this by guaranteeing equitable treatment and opportunities for every citizen. This entails drafting and implementing laws and regulations that uphold fundamental justice, advance inclusion, and combat systematic injustices. Political justice ensures that everyone has a stake in the community and helps integrate marginalized people and groups into society by promoting a just and equitable system. This helps to lessen feelings of alienation. Persistent noncitizen status breeds oppressive interpersonal dynamics. However, these rights could be granted to immigrants even without citizenship.

The argument over these matters obscures a broader agreement that legal immigrants should have the opportunity to become citizens. They cannot be denied citizenship indefinitely; they must at least be allowed to become citizens. Philosophers like Oberman, Carens, and numerous others concur that immigrants should not be refused citizenship indefinitely. Sharp developed an egalitarian account of citizenship to explain its reasons.⁶ They suggest many theories of naturalization. Sharp started this research by asking “why immigrants and citizens should be given the same core rights”. Oberman starts it by asking, “What is wrong with permanent alienage?” and then investigates the moral distinctions between long-term foreign residents and locals. According to his findings, both are permanently settled in the state. Both must abide by their laws. One may be socially active or socially alienated. Long-term foreign residents and natives should be treated equally, with the former having the same citizenship status as the latter, if there is no discernible distinction between the two. Oberman introduces it as ‘*No permanent Alienage*’ based on ‘Equal Treatment.’ Oberman argues that unless there is a relevant moral difference that can justify differential treatment, indigenous and foreigners should not be treated differently. Treating citizens and immigrants differently

6 Sharp, ‘Immigration, Naturalization, and the Purpose of Citizenship’ after some time, acquire a claim to naturalize and become citizens of their new state. What explains this claim? Although existing answers (may, 413.

would be against the tenet of 'formal equality'. 'Similar cases ought to be handled similarly.' However, Oberman argues that in this instance, no morally significant distinction may support treating people differently. This is because a native-born citizen's key important element is their state of residence. This also applies to established immigrants. Denying someone their citizenship is a particularly troublesome kind of discrimination. Hence, the most powerful case for not alienating permanently can be respect argument. The respect argument posits that prolonged alienage constitutes a deficiency of regard. Seglow contends that the respect explanation circumvents the challenges posed by alternative arguments and aligns most closely with our intuitions regarding naturalization. The respect argument posits that denying citizenship to individuals who are typically resident in society constitutes a failing to show respect. If we honor migrants, as is warranted, we must facilitate a smooth citizenship process for them. Imposing barriers to migrants' acquisition of citizenship demonstrates a lack of regard for them.⁷

This article shows that some Turkish subjects of Armenian origin were also long-term residents in British Colonial Bengal, and they got citizenship there two months after their application. The state and its enacted law were explicitly prepared for whoever fulfilled its regulations. These cases are burning examples of 'No permanent Alienage' and 'Equal Treatment' in the Twentieth Century. However, the 'No permanent Alienage' theory is agreed upon among political philosophers and advocates of citizenship.

The Process of Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act 1914⁸

This application for Naturalization used to be submitted to the provincial Secretary through the police commissioner of that province. All the applications that used to be started thus were as follows: "*To the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal. Through the commissioner of police, Calcutta.*"⁹ Here, the application consisted of 11 or 12 points describing the applicant's identity, intention of living in His Majesty's dominion for good, adequate knowledge of the English language, good character, having no immovable property in the country of origin or any other foreign country, staying in British India for last

7 Seglow, 'Arguments for Naturalisation', 789.

8 For detailed information on the Act, see "*British Nationality and Status of Aliens act 1914*", accessed December 29, 2024, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/4-5/17/enacted_.

9 Government of Bengal, 'Application from Mr. Martin Varden Daniel a Turkish Subject of Armenian Origin for a Certificate of Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act, 1914' (National Archives of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1936).

four years, having paid initial fee of Rs. 15, seeking to obtain the rights and privileges of British subject under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914. The applicant also had to submit an affidavit on Good Character from two British subjects.

Particulars relating to the application, including Name, address, occupation, place and date of birth, Nationality, and family information, certainly had to be submitted there. Then, the applicant must make an affidavit in the court of the chief presidency magistrate declaring that everything he stated in the said application is true. The statement, of course, had to be received before the magistrate, identified by a pleader and turned into a document. One of the Letters says, *“In support of his Memorial, Mr. Mihigian has sworn an affidavit before a Presidency Magistrate, which is attached hereto duly stamped. Particulars relating to the applicant, as required by section 2(1) of the act, are also furnished herewith”*.¹⁰

What the police commissioner says at the end of these letters is explicit from following quoting *“As Mr. Daniel is thoroughly conversant with the English language and bears a good moral character, I would recommend that a certificate of naturalization under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914, be issued to him.”* The Commissioner of Police writes at the end of this letter, *“The initial fee of Rs. 15/- has been realized from Mr. Daniel and credited to the government”*.¹¹

Then, the chief secretary of the province sends it to the secretary of the government of India. After reviewing the application, if it is granted, the secretary or joint secretary of the government of India sends a letter on **‘grant of a certificate of naturalization’** to the chief secretary of the province. Since the government of India was under the Home Department of the British government, the letter used to be sealed by the Home Department. However, if the Home Department grants it, it will be issued to the applicant based on some conditions: if the applicant pays into a Government Treasury the balance of the fee (Rs. 85) and complies with the oath of allegiance before the certain date mentioned in the grant-letter. The letter describes that,

10 Government of Bengal, ‘Application from Mr. Simon Mihigian, a Turkish Subject of Armenian Origin for a Certificate of Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act 1914’ (National Archives of Bangladesh, 1936a).

11 Bengal, ‘Application from Mr. Martin Varden Daniel a Turkish Subject of Armenian Origin for a Certificate of Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act, 1914’.

"It should be subscribed as well as taken and should be administrated to him by an officer not below the rank of a Magistrate of the first class. When the oath of allegiance has been sworn, subscribed, and attested in the form indicated above, the endorsement on the certificate of naturalization should be completed and duly attested, and the Government of India informed of the name and official title of the officer attesting it and furnished with particulars as to the date and place of the taking of the oath of allegiance by Mr. Martin Varden Daniel And of the actual issue of the certificate to him. If the oath of allegiance is not taken within the time indicated above or within an extension of the time specially granted for that purpose by the Government of India, the certificate of naturalization shall not take effect and should be returned to this Office".¹²

According to the text 'not below the rank of a magistrate,' an applicant feels honored to get social status. When you give something to someone without showing it to him, you are not legally giving it. The British authority also honored their new citizens following the 'seen to be done' policy. The letter also describes that the applicant satisfied the Governor General of India in Council by fulfilling the conditions laid down in the act mentioned earlier for granting a certificate of naturalization. Further, it says,

"Now, therefore, in pursuance of the powers conferred on the Governor General of India in Council by the said Act, the Governor General of India in Council hereby grants to the said Martin Varden Daniel this certificate of naturalization, and declares that upon taking the oath of allegiance within the time and in the manner required by the regulations made in that behalf the said Martin Varden Daniel shall, subject to the provisions of the said Act, be entitled to all political and other rights, powers, and privileges, and be subject to all obligations, duties, and liabilities, to which a natural-born British subject is entitled or subject, and have to all intents and purposes the status of a natural-born British subject".¹³

After receiving the acceptance letter, the provincial secretary or undersecretary asks the police commissioner to fulfill these conditions to complete all the orders. The order asks to be resubmitted to the Secretary of India. Where he asks to know that,

¹² Bengal, 1936.

¹³ Bengal, 1936.

- Name and official title of the attesting officer,
- Date and place of the administration of the oath of allegiance,
- Date of the actual issue of the certificate, and
- An acknowledgment of the certificate.

The provincial police commissioner fulfills all the responsibilities mentioned in the letter and resends it to the government's (Bengal) undersecretary. A copy of the oath, which the police commissioner signs and says the applicant took the oath according to the law, is also attached. Another copy is the text of the oath signed by the applicant, and the police commissioner also mentions that it was sworn and subscribed before him. The date when the applicant took the oath is the date of the actual issue of the certificate. The chief secretary of Bengal sends the last letter on this matter to the secretary of the government of India, where he describes the pieces of information that the government of India wanted in its previous letters, such as the name and official title of the attesting officer, date and place of the administration of the oath of allegiance, Date of the actual issue of the certificate. The letter also ensures that the fee balance is realized by the applicant and has been credited to the government.

This procedure used to take 2 or 3 months to complete all the stages. If the applicant does not fulfill all the related conditions, his or her application must be returned. For example, in the case of Haikak Apcar, he did not fulfill the condition of submitting an affidavit of good character from two British subjects. The state authority returned a file that was named as "An application from Mr. Haikak Apcar for a certificate of British naturalization has been returned to the District Magistrate, Dacca, with the request that it may be resubmitted supported by two affidavits from two British subjects".¹⁴

Suppose the applicant has a wife and children born before the date of this certificate, mentions their names in the application, and follows the rules. In that case, the Governor General of India in Council also declares their citizenship here. The British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914 says in its 10(1) articles, "*Subject to the provisions of this section, the wife of a British subject shall be deemed to be a British subject, and the wife of an alien shall*

14 Government of Bengal, 'Naturalization of Mr. Haikak Apcar an Iraqi Armenian Subject of Turkey by Origin under B.N. and S.A. Act. 1914' (National Archives of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1939). The first application of Haikak Apcar in 1939 was rejected by the authority. Later, he applied again for his naturalization in 1940 and the application was accepted by the authority.

be deemed to be an alien".¹⁵ The British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1933 in article 10 (5) elaborates this section thus,

"Where, after the end of the year nineteen hundred and thirty-three, a certificate of naturalization is granted to an alien, his wife, if not already a British subject, shall not be deemed to be a British subject, unless, within the period of twelve months from the date of the certificate, or such longer period as the Secretary of State may in special circumstances allow, she makes a declaration that she desires to acquire British nationality".¹⁶

After analyzing all the applications, the successive processes are:

- Application to the Chief Secretary of the province through the provincial police commissioner
- The Chief Secretary asks for a Report from Police Commissioner
- Commissioner gives a report (Mentioning Initial Fee)
- Provincial (Bengal) Secretary forwards to the Government of India
- Then he replies to Bengal's Secretary and orders related to it
- Bengal's Secretary receives it and forwards it to the Police Commissioner
- Fulfilling the given tasks, he forwards to Bengal's Secretary with related papers
- Bengal's secretary forwards it to the government of India.
- The Government of Bengal keeps its record

Equal Treatment and Oath of Allegiance

Generally, there were 10-12 points on which the applicant made an affidavit. Ultimately, the applicant wanted to say that it is important for him/her at any

¹⁵ Anonymous, "British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914", Legislation.gov.uk, accessed December 02, 2024, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/4-5/17/enacted>.

¹⁶ Anonymous, "British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1933", Legislation.gov.uk, accessed December 05, 2024, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/23-24/49/enacted>.

cost. For example, Kinaric Louis said at the last point of her application, *“That your memorialist further certifies that it is her desire to relinquish her Turkish nationality and that she has not made, nor does she intend to make at any time an application to retain her Turkish Citizenship”*.¹⁷

Some common factors are found in their applications. Such as-

- They had to have adequate knowledge of the English Language
- Expressing their intention to reside in His Majesty's Dominions if the application is granted.
- Having no immovable property or substantial ties in any other foreign country.
- Having no connections with foreign political parties.
- Seeking to obtain the rights and privileges of a British subject under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1914.
- Having mentioned the payment of the prescribed initial fee of Rs.15/ and undertaking to deposit the costs which may be imposed for the issue of a certificate of Naturalization whenever called upon.
- Humbly prays that a certificate of naturalization may be granted to her in pursuance of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914.

Every application also states, *“He/ She resided in British India for a period of four years.”*

Although the act did not ask for a character certificate directly from two British subjects, it used to be practiced that every applicant took two affidavits from two British subjects. It is also seen that an applicant did not submit this, and later, he had to resubmit his application.¹⁸

After completing all the processes, the candidate took an oath of allegiance before the police commissioner. This oath was according to article 2 (4) of the B.N. & S. A. Act, 1914. The article says, *“Certificate of naturalization shall*

17 Government of Bengal, 'Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act 1914 of Miss Kinaric Louis Barondan a Turkish National' (National Archives of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1940a).

18 Government of Bengal, 'Naturalization of Mr. Haikak Apar an Iraki Armenian Subject of Turkish Origin under B.N. & S.A. Act' (National Archives of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1940).

not take effect until the applicant has taken the oath of allegiance".¹⁹ Indicating this clause, the 'grant of a certificate of naturalization' says that "Unless otherwise indicated hereon, if the oath of allegiance is not taken within one calendar month after the date of this certificate, the certificate shall not take effect".²⁰ An example of oath-text of Kinaric Louis Baronian, which she took in front of the Police Commissioner of Calcutta on 27th February 1940, is that "I, Miss Kinaric Louis Baronian, swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty, King George the Sixth, His Heirs and Successors, according to law".²¹ The Police Commissioner of Calcutta also certifies taking this oath by describing the following text, "I do hereby certify that Miss Kinaric Louis Baronian, a native of Türkiye, has this day taken the Oath prescribed in the Schedule II Section 24 of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914 and 1918, an Act for the Naturalization of Aliens".²²

Identities of the Applicants

Simon Mihigian: Simon was born in Van, Turkish Armenia, on January 15, 1888. He is the son of Manoug Mihigian and Lucei Mihigian; both were Turkish subjects of Armenian origin. Therefore, Simon Mihigian is also a Turkish subject of Armenian origin. He came first to British India at the beginning of September 1914, when he landed at Calcutta. Since then, he had been residing continuously in Calcutta for the last twenty-one years and ten months before his application. Simon Mihigian applied for British Citizenship in 1936. He was 48 years old when he applied for it. He was single in his personal life. He was then Headmaster of the famous Armenian College, Calcutta. He applied it at his Institutional address as it was written at the top of his application: "*The Memorial of Simon Mihigian of Armenian College, 4, Kyd Street, Calcutta*".²³

Martin Varden Daniel: Martin having been born in Van, Turkish Armenia, on the 15th day of October 1907. He is the son of Varden Daniel and Masoo Daniel, Turkish subjects of Armenian origin. So, Martin is also a Turkish subject of Armenian origin. Both of his parents were deceased at the time of this application. Martin came to British India at the beginning of May 1923

19 Anonymous, 'British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914', Legislation.gov.uk, accessed December 02, 2024, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/4-5/17/enacted>.

20 This statement is mentioned in all the granted certificates.

21 Bengal, 'Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act 1914 of Miss Kinaric Louis Barondan a Turkish National'.

22 Bengal, 1940a.

23 Bengal, 'Application from Mr. Simon Mihigian, a Turkish Subject of Armenian Origin for a Certificate of Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act 1914'.

when he landed in Bombay and proceeded to Calcutta. He resided in Calcutta as a student for five years and eleven months, from May 1923 to April 16th, 1929, and then left Calcutta for Basra on a tour. He returned to Calcutta on 23rd June 1929 after two months, from 16th April 1929 to 23rd June 1929 spent on a tour to Basra and back to Calcutta. And then, he had been residing continuously at Calcutta. He had been a private in the auxiliary force in India, Calcutta, for seven years and three months from 29th September 1923 to 10 January 1931. Martin Varden Daniel applied to be British naturalized in 1936. He was a veterinary surgeon. Before starting his professional life, he resided in Calcutta as a student. At the time of this application, he was 29 years old. His wife also applied for the acquisition of British Nationality under the provisions of Section 10(5) of the Act as amended by the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1933.²⁴

Haikak Apcar: Haikak Apcar, having been born on the first day of January 1897, is the son of Mr. Apcar Boguse Zerdelian and Mrs. Dolla Thomas (both were deceased at the time of this application), both Armenian residents of Mosul, Iraq. Haikak Apcar was also an Iraki Armenian subject of Türkiye by origin. Haikak was a resident of Godenail, Narayanganj, Dhaka. When Haikak Applied for a grant of “Certificate of Naturalization,” he was 42 years eight months of age. Haikak came first to British India in the first part of December 1907 and has been continuously residing in Bengal for the last 32 years (according to the date of application), except 3 months in Kirkee Poona for General Service. He resided in Calcutta for a period of about 9 years as a student of the Armenian College from December 1907 to August 1915 and School Cadet from 1913 to August 1915; he also resided in Haldibari in North Bengal for about 3 years and in different places in the jute growing districts of East Bengal as an Assistant Manager under Messrs Sinclair Murray & Co., Calcutta (a jute concern) for about 10 years at Chandpur, Akhaura, and Choumuhuni up to 1927. He also resided in 1928 for 1 year in Sharishabari in the District of Mymensingh while employed as Manager under the Co-operative Jute Sale and Supply Society and again Joined in July 1929 the service of Mesars Sinclair Murray & Co. at Narainganj and served there up to the end of May 1923 and then joined the jute concern of Mssrs G & M Fogt (A French concern) Godenail, Narainganj as an Asst. Manager where he was working at the time of this application. Mr. Haikak, on leaving College, joined the B.B. Coy., Dacca, and was a member of the I.D.F. until the end of March 1918 and is a recipient of the General Service Medal. He had served the Crown in Kirkee Poona for General Service from 1st January to the end

24 Bengal, ‘Application from Mr. Martin Varden Daniel a Turkish Subject of Armenian Origin for a Certificate of Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act, 1914’.

of March 1918. He registered his name under the Registration of Foreigners' Rules 1939 on the 15th of July 1939 before the Registering Officer, Dacca.²⁵

Kinaric Louis Baronian: Kinaric was born in Erzurum, Turkish Armenia, on January 19, 1911. She was at the age of 28 when she applied for it. She is the daughter of Armenac Louis-Baronian and Haikanoosh Louis-baronman, Turkish subjects of Armenian origin. Kinaric herself also was a Turkish subject of Armenian origin. She came first to British India in January 1920 when she landed in Bombay and thence proceeded to Calcutta since January 1920 had been residing continuously at Calcutta for the last nineteen years and eleven months before her application and was successively a student in Pratt Memorial School, Calcutta (January 1920 to end of December 1920) and in the Commercial School of Y.W.C.A., Calcutta (January 1929 to December 1929) and since January 1930 she had been working in the Indian & Eastern Engineer Co. Ltd., Calcutta at first as a stenographer and at latter as secretary in the said firm.²⁶

Reasons for Living of Armenians in Occupied Bengal

Why did Armenians come to occupied Bengal? What were their general professions? How did they develop their relations with Baburid rulers and increase their relations with the English? Finally, what is the evaluation of these applicants' professions?

Armenians were among the world's earliest trading diasporas. They were historically located where Türkiye, Iran, and Russia now meet. Though they were Christian in religion, they managed to maintain positive relations with neighboring Muslim empires.²⁷ Armenians participated in long-distance

25 Bengal, 'Naturalization of Mr. Haikak Apcar an Iraki Armenian Subject of Turkish Origin under B.N. & S.A. Act'.

26 Bengal, 'Naturalization under B.N. & S.A. Act 1914 of Miss Kinaric Louis Barondan a Turkish National'.

27 Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 182. Professor Curtin's discussion encompasses a broad and diverse group of trading relationships. Drawing on insights from economic history and anthropology, Professor Curtin has attempted to move beyond a Europe-centred view of history, to one that can help us understand the entire range of societies in the human past. Examples have been chosen that illustrate the greatest variety of trading relationships between cultures. The opening chapters look at Africa, while subsequent chapters treat the ancient world, the Mediterranean trade with China, the Asian trade in the east, and European entry into the trade with maritime Asia, the Armenian trade carriers of the seventeenth century, and the North American fur trade. Wide-ranging in its concern and the fruit of exhaustive research, the book is nevertheless written so as to be accessible and stimulating to the specialist and the student alike." ; "edition": "1", "ISBN": "978-0-521-26931-5", "license": "https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms", "note": "DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511661198", "publisher": "Cambridge University Press", "source": "DOI.org (Crossref

overland trade with Muslim countries in the ninth century.²⁸ In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Armenian diaspora expanded northward along the Volga from the Caspian Sea and eastward to India. Historians argue that the Armenian trading diaspora arrived in India around this period.²⁹ During the reign of Safavid monarch Abbas (I), Armenians were forced to relocate to New Julfa, a suburb of Shah Abbas' new city, Isfahan.³⁰ According to one tale, Shah Abbas envisioned transforming his capital into a regional commercial hub. Historians argue that Abbas (I) foresaw the potential of Armenian merchants' commercial expertise, abilities, and networks to boost the Empire's trade and commerce. He granted the New Julfa Armenians Persian residency, empowering them to govern their community and practice their religion. The port of Bandar Abbas played a pivotal role in the 17th-century commercial diaspora in India, providing access to the Indian Ocean and facilitating a vast trading network throughout the subcontinent and beyond.

Armenian commercial diaspora significantly impacted Indian Ocean trade until the chartered Companies became more powerful in the first half of the 18th century. Since then, the significance of the Armenian trade diaspora in the Indian Ocean has waned. Bengal was a wealthy commerce hub in the Indian Ocean, providing opportunities for individual merchants, family corporations, and chartered companies. Beginning in the 17th century, there was a significant influx of Armenian merchants. The Armenian commercial diaspora was significant to Bengal trade and politics. The linen trade resulted in temporary settlements in Hooghly, a town near Calcutta. New Julfa became the center

28 Curtin, Professor Curtin's discussion encompasses a broad and diverse group of trading relationships. Drawing on insights from economic history and anthropology, Professor Curtin has attempted to move beyond a Europe-centred view of history, to one that can help us understand the entire range of societies in the human past. Examples have been chosen that illustrate the greatest variety of trading relationships between cultures. The opening chapters look at Africa, while subsequent chapters treat the ancient world, the Mediterranean trade with China, the Asian trade in the east, and European entry into the trade with maritime Asia, the Armenian trade carriers of the seventeenth century, and the North American fur trade. Wide-ranging in its concern and the fruit of exhaustive research, the book is nevertheless written so as to be accessible and stimulating to the specialist and the student alike." "edition": "1", "ISBN": "978-0-521-26931-5", "license": "https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms", "note": "DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511661198", "publisher": "Cambridge University Press", "source": "DOI.org (Crossref) Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, 183.

29 Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, 1st edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 80-81.

30 Historians such as Philip D. Curtin (1998) demonstrate some practical grounds for the Armenians' relocation to the new city, New Julfa. He claims that during the Shah's struggle against the Ottomans in 1605, the Ottomans advanced toward the territory where Armenians had previously resided. Because of the Ottoman advance, the Shah devised a new plan to combat the Ottoman advance known as the scorched-earth policy, which resulted in a mass exodus from the Aras River area and was also responsible for many deaths among the inhabitants in the surrounding area.

of Iran's silk commerce at the same time. According to Barboutian,³¹ the first documentation of Armenian settlement in Bengal links with Murshidabad.³² Murshidabad served as Bengal's capital during Mughal rule. Murshidabad Silk Sharee is still renowned.³³ According to Aslanian, the Armenian Church of the Virgin Mary was built at Saidabad in 1758.³⁴ The Holy Resurrection Church in Dhaka (Դսքրայի Սուրբ Յարութիւն Եկեղեցի) was constructed in 1781.³⁵ The earliest gravestone at the Church of Holy Nazareth originates from 1630. This evidence indicates that Armenians had established a presence near Calcutta at least 50 years before to the British East India Company's initiation of its first commercial venture.

Now, we are trying to identify why they came to Bengal. Armenian businessmen were drawn to Bengal due to its prosperity and trading opportunities. Bengal had its own Apostolic Churches, and remnants of Armenian churches and residences may still be discovered in Bangladesh and West Bengal. Historians agree that Bengal flourished in India throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. During the 17th century, the Mughal emperor Humayun referred to Bengal as Zannatabad.³⁶ Emperor Aurangzeb also referred to Bengal as the "paradise of nations". The Mughals frequently referred to Bengal as "the Paradise of India" in their farmans³⁷, and official records. Bengal was well-known for its raw silk, cotton fabrics, and agricultural items sold throughout Asia.³⁸

How did Armenian family enterprises attain such great success? Historians suggest the ethos of trust, the network of organization, and groupism as plausible answers. The Armenian diaspora in Bengal grew significantly in the 17th century. Armenians arrived in many sections of Bengal, including port cities and remote areas, where commodity supply or trading was feasible. They did not hesitate to travel to the most remote areas of the Kingdoms. Armenian merchants were known for sourcing high-quality Bengali items, even from

31 Armen Barboutian, 'The Emergence of the Armenian Diaspora and Genesis of the Indo-Armenian Community', *Diaspora Studies* 2, no. 1 (September 2009), 105.

32 Saidabad was a suburb of the then-capital Murshidabad, established in 1665.

33 Achinto Roy and Reshmi Lahiri-Roy, 'The Armenian Diaspora's Calcutta Connection', *Diaspora Studies* 10, no. 2 (3 July 2017): 137–51.

34 Sebouth David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (California: University of California Press, 2011), 50.

35 Fatma Jale Gül Çoruk, 'Indian Armenians from the Past to the Present', *Review of Armenian Studies*, no. 48 (2023): 94.

36 Because of its strong economy, it is known as 'the house of heaven.'

37 A farman, was a royal command or decree promulgated by a king in an Islamic state. Throughout different eras, such firmans were compiled and utilized as customary legal frameworks. The English term firman is derived from the Persian farmān, signifying "decree" or "order."

38 Sushil Chaudhuri, 'General Economic Conditions Under the Nawabs', in *History of Bangladesh: 1704-1971*, Sirajul Islam, vol. 2007 (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1997), 30.

remote areas. Haikak Apcar is one of the applicants for this naturalization, and he went to remote areas for his commercial activities.³⁹

According to Chaudhury, they built trusting networks, shared information, and provided mutual support as an ethnic and religious minority. He viewed Armenians in India as a bunch of merchants.⁴⁰ One of the factors that contributed to Armenian merchants' success was business correspondence. Elderly people simultaneously pass on business knowledge to the younger generation.⁴¹ 'Trust' was tightly practiced among the Armenian merchants, as seen by their contact through letters. Most Armenian merchants in Bengal were connected to their nodal center, New Julfa, and merchant's assembly. There are still traces of their residences and churches in Dhaka. Armanitola is the name of the region where their settlement was formerly.

How was the relationship between the English and Armenians built? The English, Dutch, and French East India Companies relied heavily on Armenian merchants for their dominant position in Bengal commerce during the 17th and early 18th centuries. Armenian merchants mediated between the British East India Company and the Mughal monarch to establish Calcutta through a royal edict. Armenians lived in Calcutta for over three centuries. According to Aslanian, Armenians played crucial roles as diplomatic and financial mediators between the Mughal and Safavid empires and the British.⁴² Thus, the British appointed Armenians as their legal agents (Vakils) in Mughal courts.⁴³ The British East India Company also strongly valued Armenians as trading connections. Khoja Sarhad Israeli was a prominent Armenian trader who liaised between the British and Baburid Sultans to secure territorial rights in Bengal. He acted as mediator to get the Baburid Firman on taluqdari (rent farming), by which they could buy Sutanati, Gobindopur, and Kalikata from a local landlord that later turned into contemporary Calcutta.⁴⁴ Khojah Phanoos Kalandar of Dhaka was the first recorded Armenian to engage in large-scale

39 Bengal, 'Naturalization of Mr. Haikak Apcar an Iraki Armenian Subject of Turkish Origin under B.N. & S.A. Act'.

40 Suushil Chaudhury, 'Trading Networks in a Traditional Diaspora: Armenians in India: C. 1600-1800', in *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History*, Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou (New York: Berg Publishers, 2005), 51–72.

41 Sebouh Aslanian, 'The Salt in a Merchant's Letter: The Culture of Julfan Correspondence in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean', *Journal of World History*, no. 19(2) (2008): 127–88.

42 Aslanian, 'The Salt in a Merchant's Letter: The Culture of Julfan Correspondence in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean', 128.

43 Roy and Lahiri-Roy, 'The Armenian Diaspora's Calcutta Connection', 138.

44 The famous Mughal Farman (royal edict) of 1715, the English were granted trading privileges and the right to build defenses around their town. In 1717, Khwaja Sarhad Israeli acquired the Grand Imperial Farman for the British. This Farman granted them significant trading advantages over the French and Dutch.

business with Europeans. In 1688, he agreed with the East India Company to conduct trade in English vessels with himself and other members of his society.⁴⁵ During the First and Second World Wars, Calcutta Armenians, as Indian nationals, supported the British government and served in the armed forces. The Armenians played a significant role in the commercial development of Calcutta as a trading hub. Their support during the Bengal Famine of 1943 demonstrates their love for their adopted city.⁴⁶

If a settlement had more than 40 Armenians, Armenians could build more churches.⁴⁷ This meant they had the freedom to practice their religion. In 1690, Armenians and Portuguese accepted Governor Charnock's offer to settle here. According to Ray, the disintegration of the Mughal Empire and the growth of British political authority in ports like Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras contributed to the increase in Armenian migration to Calcutta beginning in the late 18th century.⁴⁸ Calcutta's port became increasingly important as marine trade expanded, attracting Armenians from other settlements.⁴⁹ Armenian institutions in Calcutta include the Armenian Church of Nazareth, the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy, and the Davidian Girls School, Armani-ghat, demonstrating the city's connection to its once-thriving Armenian community. In Dhaka (The capital of present-day Bangladesh), there is an area named Armanitola, the Armenian Apostolic Church of the Holy Resurrection, and Armanitola High School. The writers (Roy & Roy, 2017) visited the Armenian Church in Calcutta, where surviving tombstones and church documents provide insight into the city's Armenian settlement history.⁵⁰ Most Armenians arrived as partners or representatives of wealthy Armenian businessmen from New Julfa. According to Bhattacharya, Armenians were the first foreign immigrants to settle in Calcutta and have had a 500-year history of prosperity and downfall.⁵¹

Armenians significantly contributed to various industries, including services, professions, railways, civil service, armed forces, and business. They

45 Anonymous, 'The Armenians', in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh* (Dhaka), accessed 29 December 2024, https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Armenians_The.

46 Roy and Lahiri-Roy, 'The Armenian Diaspora's Calcutta Connection', 139.

47 Jayanta Kumar Ray, ed., *Aspects of India's International Relations 1700 to 2000: South Asia and the World*, Towards Independence 6, 2007.

48 Ray, *Aspects of India's International Relations 1700 to 2000: South Asia and the World*, 77.

49 Susmita Bhattacharya, 'The Armenians of Calcutta', in *Calcutta Mosaic: Essays and Interviews on the Minority Communities of Calcutta*, Himadri Banerjee, Nilanjana Gupta and Sipra Mukherjee (London: Anthem Press India, 2009), 77.

50 Roy and Lahiri-Roy, 'The Armenian Diaspora's Calcutta Connection'.

51 Bhattacharya, 'The Armenians of Calcutta', 70-85.

introduced rugby to Calcutta and have maintained its popularity until today.⁵² The Armenian population in Calcutta was mostly separated into three classes. Calcutta Armenians were an English-speaking, educated group that included professionals like doctors. The Julfa Armenians arrived from New Julfa and were mostly concerned in trade and business. The Charmahalis, originally from the Armenian village of Charmahal in Persia, were the last tribe. This group arrived in Calcutta in the early 20th century and was viewed as ‘plodding, industrious, clannish, and ambitious’ by other Armenians.⁵³

The applicants should be counted in the English-speaking Armenian professional group. A renowned family named Apcar is famous for commercial activities and is from the New Julfa group.⁵⁴ However, the applicant, Haikak Apcar, is not from this group; he may be from an educated group. Other applicants are from professional groups. For example, Simon Mihigian was the headmaster of a famous Armenian college, Martin Varden Daniel was a veterinary Surgeon, and Kinariac Louis Baronian was the secretary of Indian & Eastern Engineer Co. Ltd. So, the given applicants were from the professional Armenian group.

How did they decline from Bengal? According to Ray & Chatterjee, by the end of the 20th century, only a few Armenians remained in Calcutta. Calcutta’s port helped the diaspora spread to the Southern Hemisphere, establishing businesses in Malacca, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, etc., and thereby Armenian settlements at each place. Armenians, unlike Jews and Parsees, did not claim geographical ties to India. Additionally, many families did not stay in the same settlement for more than two generations. Despite wealth and affluence, many people hesitated to marry outside their community, resulting in low marriage and birth rates. The emergence of Australian goldmines in the mid-nineteenth century resulted in the first exodus of Armenians from Calcutta.⁵⁵ Following India’s independence from British control in 1947, many Armenian businesspeople fled due to concerns about the nationalization and Indianization of their firms. The Indo-China war of 1962 and the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971 prompted many Armenians to flee Calcutta. This stream of emigrant Armenians went to Australia. The most significant blows

52 Anonymous, ‘Boys’ Team of Armenian College, Kolkata Wins the Centenary Plate’, *Hetq Investigative Journalists*, 9 July 2012. accessed January 13, 2025. <https://hetq.am/en/article/16360>.

53 Bhattacharya, ‘The Armenians of Calcutta’, 76.

54 Mesrobian Jacob Seth, *Armenians in India: From The Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Calcutta: Asian Educational Service., 1937).

55 Bhattacharya, ‘The Armenians of Calcutta’, 82.

inflicted on Calcutta were the relocation of the British capital to New Delhi, the politicization of the city's culture by the Bengali Bhadrakalok class, which resulted in nationalism disrupting trade, and, most notably, the partition of Bengal in 1947.⁵⁶ Thus, Kolkata transitioned from an imperial to a regional city.

Conclusion

Armenians have played a crucial role in the history of India and Bengal from the 17th to the 20th century. Their arrival in India occurred in the seventeenth century and departed in the mid-twentieth century. In this paper, it is stated that certain individuals acquired British citizenship in Bengal during the 20th century. Given the absence of any scholarly research on this subject, it might be asserted as inaugural. The paper incorporates a theoretical framework, specifically focusing on the 'No permanent Alienage' theory for analysis and discussion. The preceding conversation centered on the archival records about the Turkish Armenians who applied for British citizenship in Bengal. Subsequently, it focused on elucidating the complete procedure of acquiring this citizenship, as plainly stated in the application paperwork. While the materials represent the fundamental aspect of the British Naturalization and Status of Aliens Act 1914, This study does not provide a detailed description of the individual parts of the act. The conditions of this act, especially the common factors among all applicants, are also reviewed here. The discussion did not exclude the oath of allegiance. Oath and language tests are also available in modern citizenship tests. Language assessment is utilized as a mandatory component of naturalization procedures. Numerous nations opt to evaluate it through oral or written assessments.⁵⁷ Fortier considered language proficiency as a robust facilitator of integration.⁵⁸

Additionally, certain images sourced from the application files are included here. The information regarding the candidates' lives, as gleaned from their records, is likewise stated above in addition to the primary motive for Armenians migrating to Bengal, particularly the occupation they lived for.

56 Tai-Yong Tan, 'Port Cities and Hinterlands: A Comparative Study of Singapore and Calcutta', *Political Geography* 26, no. 7 (September 2007): 851.

57 Elçin İstif İnci, 'Citizenship Test as A Migration Policy Proposal in Turkey', *INJOSS: İnönü University International Journal of Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2020), 171.

58 Anne-Marie Fortier, 'On (Not) Speaking English: Colonial Legacies in Language Requirements for British Citizenship', *Sociology* 52, no. 6 (December 2018): 1254–69. *Sociology* 52, no. 6 (December 2018)

Ultimately, the research examines the decrease in the population of Armenians originating from Bengal. Nevertheless, the research examined the theoretical framework and procedural aspects of Turkish Armenians in Bengal obtaining British citizenship. Then, one may question what happens to the local population. Individuals from British India held British subject status by being born inside the dominions of the British Crown.⁵⁹

59 Anonymous, 'British Subjects from India and Pakistan: An Enduring Status to Avoid Statelessness', *Nationality and Citizenship Law* (blog), 2020, <https://nationalityandcitizenshiplaw.com/2020/03/13/british-subjects-from-india-and-pakistan-an-enduring-status-to-avoid-statelessness/>.

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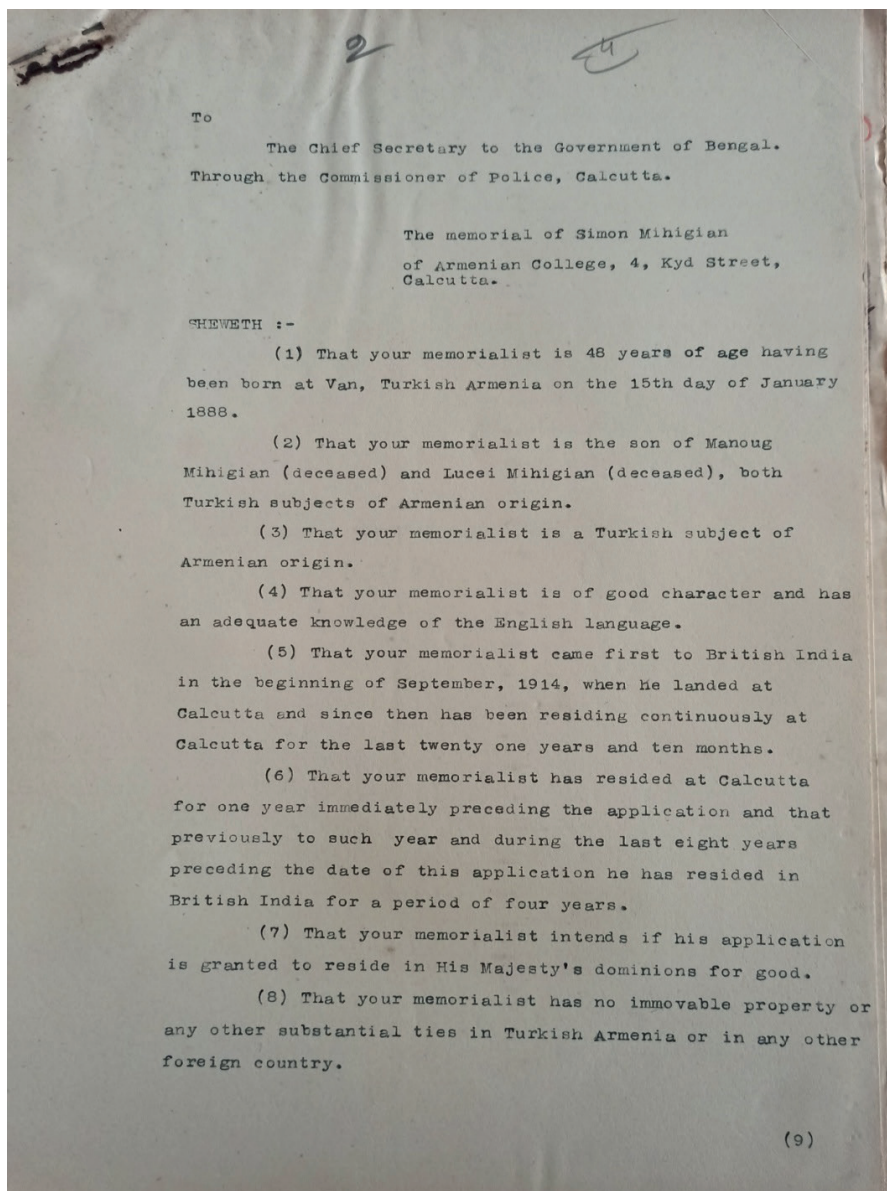
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- 1914'. National Archives of Bangladesh, 1936a. [Call number: Rack No. 29, Bundle No. 12, SI No. 584.]
- . 'Naturalization of Mr. Haikak Apcar an Iraki Armenian Subject of Turkish Origin under B.N. & S.A. Act'. National Archives of Bangladesh. Dhaka, 1940. [Call number: Rack No. 30; Bundle No. 30; SL No. 1142.]
- . 'Naturalization of Mr. Haikak Apcar an Iraqi Armenian Subject of Turkey by Origin under B.N. and S.A. Act. 1914'. National Archives of Bangladesh. Dhaka, 1939. [Call number: Rack No. 30; Bundle No. 20. SL No. 944.]
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APPENDIX: Archival Documents

Source: Collected by the author from the National Archive of Bangladesh



Archival Document 01: First page of an application

**British Naturalization of Turkish Armenians in Bengal:
An Example of 'No Permanent Alienage.'**

(9) That your memorialist seeks to obtain the rights and privileges of a British subject under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914.

(10) That your memorialist has paid the prescribed initial fee of Rs.15/-.

(11) Your memorialist therefore humbly prays that a certificate of naturalization may be granted to him in pursuance of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914 (4 and 5 Geo.V. Chap. 17).

Sd. Simon Mihigian.

Calcutta, Dated the 17th July, 1936.

Archival Document 02: Last page of an application

S.P.A.
10/2

12/12

No. 102040-PUBLIC.

FROM
C. J. W. Lillie, Esquire, I.C.S.,
DEPUTY SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

To
The Secretary to the Government of Bengal,
Home Department.
New Delhi, the 7th February, 1940.

Home Department.
10.2.40
5/142

SUBJECT:—Grant of a certificate of naturalization to
Miss Kinaric Louis-Baronian.

SIR,

With reference to your letter no297 P, dated the 19th Jany., 1940, I am directed to forward a certificate of naturalization under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914, for Miss Kinaric Louis-Baronian, and to request that it may be issued to her on payment into a Government Treasury of the balance of the fee due from her (Rs. 85) and on her complying with the conditions laid down in the following paragraph.

2. The oath of allegiance in the form endorsed on the certificate forwarded herewith should be taken by Miss Louis-Baronian, on or before the 7th March, 1940. It should be subscribed as well as taken and should be administered to her by an officer not below the rank of a Magistrate of the first class. When the oath of allegiance has been sworn, subscribed and attested in the form indicated above, the endorsement on the certificate of naturalization should be completed and duly attested and the Government of India informed of the name and official title of the officer attesting it and furnished with particulars as to the date and place of the taking of the oath of allegiance by Miss Louis-Baronian and of the actual issue of the certificate to her. If the oath of allegiance is not taken within the time indicated above or within an extension of the time specially granted for that purpose by the Government of India, the certificate of naturalization shall not take effect and should be returned to this office.

I have the honour to be,
SIR,
Your most obedient servant,

Deputy Secretary to the Government of India.

H.D. 8.
H398HD—500—21-12-38—GIPS

B.M. 10
4/4

Archival Document 03: A document of a 'Grant of Certification of Naturalization'

**British Naturalization of Turkish Armenians in Bengal:
An Example of 'No Permanent Alienage.'**

(Rs 85/-) has been realised from Mr. Daniel and credited to Government.

In this connection I forward herewith a declaration made by Mrs. Daniel for acquisition of British Nationality under the provisions of Section 10(5) of the Act as amended by the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1933.

The prescribed fee of Rs 8/- has been realised from Mr. Daniel and credited to Government.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
L.R. Dungeford
for Commissioner of Police.

Archival Document 04: The document on applying for Mrs. Daniel

(7)

other substantial ties in Turkish Armenia or in any other foreign country.

(9) That your memorialist seeks to obtain the rights and privileges of a British subject under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914.

(10) That your memorialist has paid the prescribed initial fee of Rs.15/-.

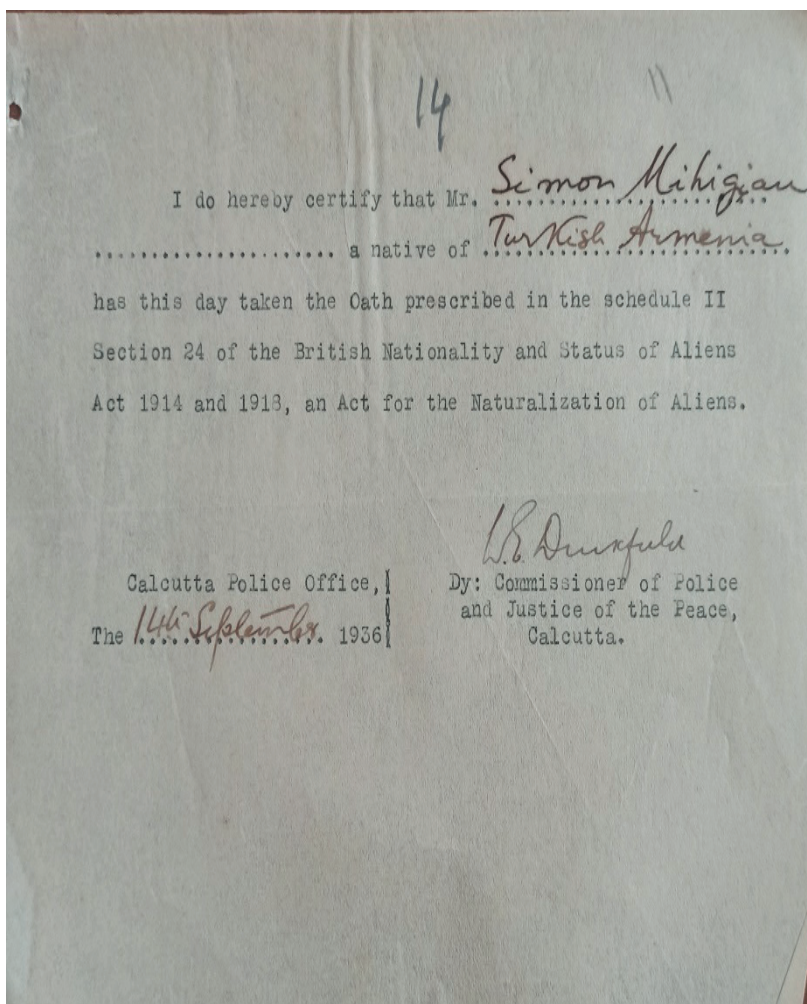
(11) Your memorialist therefore humbly prays that a certificate of naturalization may be granted to her in pursuance of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914(4 and 5 Geo.V. Chap.17).

(12) That your memorialist further certifies that it is her desire to relinquish her Turkish nationality and that she has not made nor does she intend to make at any time an application to retain her Turkish citizenship.

Sa/-Kinaric Louis-Baronian.

Calcutta. Dated the 19th December 1939.

Archival Document 05: A document showing the applicant's desire to relinquish her previous nationality.



Archival Document 06: An example document on ‘Oath of Allegiance’

A COMMENTARY REVIEWING ROBERT GERWARTH'S "THE VANQUISHED: WHY THE FIRST WORLD WAR FAILED TO END"

(ROBERT GERWARTH'IN "MAĞLUPLAR: BİRİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI NEDEN BİTMEDİ?" KİTABI ÜZERİNE ELEŞTİREL BİR DEĞERLENDİRME)

Dr. İlahi KHANTAMIROVA*

Abstract: *This critical review examines Robert Gerwarth's *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End*, focusing on its explanation of why the 1918 armistice did not bring lasting peace to Europe. The commentary highlights the book's strengths, including its wide use of multilingual archival sources and its persuasive synthesis of post-imperial violence, civil wars, and radical ideologies. At the same time, it evaluates the limitations of Gerwarth's approach to the Ottoman/Turkish context, especially his reliance on a genocide framework without judicial grounding, the asymmetrical representation of Christian and Muslim suffering, and the limited engagement with Turkish archival materials and perspectives. The review argues that, while *The Vanquished* is a valuable contribution to the historiography of the post-First World War era, it should*

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be read alongside studies that incorporate Ottoman and Turkish sources to achieve a more balanced understanding of the period.

Keywords: *Post–First World War violence, Defeated states, Ottoman/Turkish perspective, Genocide debate, Critical book review*

Öz: *Bu eleştirel inceleme, Robert Gerwarth'ın The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End adlı eserini, 1918 mütarekesinin Avrupa'da neden kalıcı bir barışa dönüşmediğini açıklama biçimi üzerinden değerlendirmektedir. Çalışma, eserin çok dilli arşiv kaynaklarını geniş biçimde kullanması ve imparatorlukların çöküşü sonrasında ortaya çıkan şiddet dalgaları, iç savaşlar ve radikal ideolojileri başarılı bir sentezle ele alması gibi güçlü yönlerini vurgulamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, Gerwarth'ın Osmanlı/Türk bağlamına yaklaşımının sınırlılıkları da tartışılmakta; özellikle yargı kararına dayanmayan bir “soykırım” çerçevesine yaslanması, Hristiyan ve Müslüman toplulukların yaşadığı acıların asimetrik biçimde sunulması ve Türk arşivleri ile perspektiflerine yeterince başvurmaması eleştirilmektedir. İnceleme, The Vanquished'in Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası döneme ilişkin literatüre önemli bir katkı sunduğunu, ancak dönemin daha dengeli bir şekilde anlaşılabilmesi için Osmanlı ve Türk kaynaklarını kullanan çalışmalarla birlikte okunması gerektiğini savunmaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelime: *Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası şiddet, Mağlup devletler, Osmanlı/Türk perspektifi, Soykırım tartışmaları, Eleştirel kitap incelemesi*

Robert Gerwarth's *The Vanquished* is a comprehensive study that examines why peace in post-World War I Europe failed to become a lasting victory. The author's primary aim is to explore the experiences of the populations of defeated states in the aftermath of the war and to reveal how Europe entered a chaotic, violence-ridden "peace" period.¹

The peace conferences held and the treaties signed in the aftermath of the war, contrary to expectations, failed to bring stability to Europe; instead, they opened the door to a period of great uncertainty and political collapse. In this context, Gerwarth focuses on the disintegration of the multiethnic empires—the Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Ottoman—and on the social and political transformations experienced by the peoples within these structures.

The author also examines how countries considered victors of the war, such as Italy and Greece, ultimately faced long-term failure and instability, thereby questioning the traditional meaning of "victory." The emergence of nation-states, along with the accompanying civil wars and ideological polarizations, is also explored in detail in the work.

In summary, Gerwarth analyzes the postwar period not merely as a process of reconstruction between victor and vanquished states but also as a transitional era in which new forms of violence emerged, fragile peace took shape, and radical ideologies were born. Gerwarth's central thesis is that the post-1918 peace settlements failed because the unresolved conflicts and power vacuums left by the collapse of the Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Ottoman empires generated new cycles of violence, radicalization, and instability that ultimately made the Second World War inevitable. This review assesses the analytical contribution and methodological rigor of Gerwarth's work, with particular attention to the balance and completeness of his treatment of post-war violence in Anatolia and the Caucasus, the precision of his legal and historical terminology (especially regarding the contested term 'genocide'), and the extent to which his archival base reflects the perspectives of all affected populations, including Turkish sources and narratives that remain underrepresented in Anglophone historiography.

The Vanquished is significant for its examination of the new order states sought to establish after the First World War, the way the war ended, the

¹ Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016)

transformations it brought about in the mental worlds of nations, and the new ideologies that emerged in its wake. The book explores in detail how defeated countries—such as Russia in certain respects—found themselves in the position of “victors,” the rise of new nation-states after the war, and the conditions that ultimately paved the way to the Second World War. By discussing the disintegration of empires that had played a central role in world politics until the early 20th century, and how this process gave birth to new ideas and forms of struggle among peoples, Gerwarth sheds light on the dynamics that shaped the postwar order.

“The statement that ‘many in the West believed that the First World War would above all be a conflict to end all wars and make the world safe for democracy’ essentially summarizes the core argument of the work. In reality, the opposite occurred: the unresolved issues brought to the fore by the war or the 1919–1920 treaties created a more dangerous power asymmetry compared to the pre-1914 period.” The most striking example of this is the emergence of radical ideologies such as Bolshevism and Fascism, whose influence would persist for years after the war. These two polarized political ideologies, which arose in the aftermath of the First World War, ultimately led to devastating consequences that affected the lives of millions.

The book examines the developments of the 20th century within the context of the First World War, showing how the war laid the foundations for a new world order and, in fact, foreshadowed another future conflict. In this respect, Gerwarth’s work offers a unique perspective that analyzes not only the past but also the dynamics that shaped the future.

The Vanquished also holds an essential place in studies of the post–First World War period due to its extensive use of literary and archival sources. The author consulted archives from numerous countries, including Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Serbia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and conducted a comprehensive review of contemporary periodicals and existing scholarship. This approach enhances the work’s scholarly depth, reliability, and value for historical research.

In his work, Gerwarth generally strives to adopt a multidimensional approach. However, in some sections—particularly in narratives about the Turks—traces of bias can be observed. For example, while the chapters on Greek-

2 Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished* (United States: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 11.

Turkish relations briefly describe the actions of the Greek army in Anatolia³, the book's opening chapter begins with accounts of the burning of İzmir by the Turks, the killing of Orthodox Metropolitan Chrysostomos, and the deaths of approximately thirty thousand Greeks and Armenians⁴. This emphasis has the potential to create a negative perception of the Turks from the very first pages of the work.

Similarly, when addressing the Maraş Events of January–February 1920, the author focuses solely on the violence suffered by the Armenians, noting that tens of thousands of Armenians were killed by the Turks. However, the complex historical context of these events also involved reciprocal acts of violence between both sides. In this respect, the work appears to adopt a limited perspective when recounting specific historical incidents.

Moreover, Gerwarth's work does not focus solely on the violence experienced by Christian populations; it also addresses massacres suffered by Muslim communities. For instance, the author references attacks carried out by Armenians in Erzurum, in which thousands of Muslims lost their lives, demonstrating his effort to maintain a balanced and multidimensional approach.⁵ However, certain expressions—such as describing Kars Fortress as an “Armenian fortress”—indicate that the author occasionally leans toward a particular perspective when conveying historical realities. While Gerwarth strives for objectivity, the work at times includes notably biased assessments.⁶

Another notable issue in *The Vanquished* is the frequent use of the Armenian genocide narrative, with Talat Pasha portrayed as one of the instigators of this genocide⁷.

Firstly, Gerwarth's designation of the events of 1915 as “genocide” has no legal basis. Genocide is a concept explicitly defined in international law, and the deaths of Armenians during the 1915 relocations due to harsh conditions do not meet the legal definition of genocide. Furthermore, assuming that the term “genocide,” which was formally adopted in 1948, can be retroactively applied to actions committed before the law's enactment is legally incorrect.

3 Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished* (United States: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 232.

4 Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished* (United States: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 2.

5 Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995)

6 McCarthy, Justin. *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995

7 Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished* (United States: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 37.

Gerwarth could have made his valuable study more balanced and objective by noting that the term “genocide” is a political and historical accusation against the modern Republic of Türkiye, that it has not been proven in international courts, and that it is not universally recognized.⁸

Moreover, as noted above, Gerwarth utilized archival and periodical sources from various countries in his study. However, his frequent use of the Armenian genocide narrative and assertions that Armenians and Greeks were victimized by Turks, without consulting archives or periodicals from Türkiye, allowed the work to be written in a way that largely overlooks the Turkish perspective and takes on an accusatory tone.

In conclusion, through in-depth research, the author examines the postwar history of the defeated states within the context of the First World War from a distinctive perspective and strives to approach the events impartially. However, accusatory narratives, such as the claims that Turks committed genocide against Armenians and massacres against Greeks, have cast a shadow over the objectivity of the study.

The Vanquished offers a significant contribution to the historiography of the post–First World War period. Its principal strengths lie in its narrative power, its extensive use of multilingual archival sources from eight countries, and its ambitious synthesis of the political and ideological transformations that shaped interwar Europe. Gerwarth successfully illuminates how the disintegration of the Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Ottoman empires gave rise to new nation-states, radical ideologies such as Bolshevism and Fascism, and cycles of violence that foreshadowed the Second World War. The work’s broad geographic and thematic scope makes it an essential resource for understanding why the post-1918 peace failed to bring stability.

However, the book has notable limitations that readers must consider critically. Gerwarth’s conceptual stretching of the term “genocide”—a legal category formally defined only in 1948—to events in 1915 lacks a foundation in international law and overlooks the absence of judicial determination. More fundamentally, the work’s treatment of violence is asymmetrical: while it documents suffering across multiple communities, including Muslims,

8 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005)

its narrative framing—particularly the opening chapter’s focus on Turkish actions in İzmir and the treatment of the Maraş Events—creates an imbalanced portrayal that emphasizes Christian victimization while marginalizing Turkish perspectives. The author’s failure to consult Turkish archives or periodicals compounds this problem, limiting the work’s claim to objectivity.

Overall, *The Vanquished* is a valuable and thought-provoking study for scholars and readers seeking to understand the collapse of empires, the rise of radical ideologies, and the cascading conflicts of the interwar period. However, it should be read critically about its treatment of the Ottoman-Turkish case and its use of contested legal and historical categories. Readers interested in a balanced account of post-war violence in Anatolia and the Caucasus will need to supplement this work with scholarship that incorporates Turkish sources and perspectives.

Bibliography:

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McCarthy, Justin. *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995

Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.

CALL FOR PAPERS AND STYLE SHEET: *REVIEW OF ARMENIAN STUDIES*

The Review of Armenian Studies is a biannual academic journal that was established in 2002 with the aim of publishing academic papers to stimulate inter-disciplinary debate between academics and practitioners on topics relating to Armenian Studies.

The Review of Armenian Studies invites paper submissions on any subject related to the journal's scope of research, which include:

- The Armenian revolts in the 19th and 20th century era of the Ottoman Empire
- Historical, political, and social dimensions of the 1915 events
- Various aspects of the dispute over the 1915 events
- Politics in the Armenian world (in Armenia and in the Armenian Diaspora)
- Culture and society in the Armenian world (in Armenia and in the Armenian Diaspora)
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- Regional and international politics of Armenia

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