

## EDITORIAL / BAŞYAZI

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# FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*olarak Batının siyasi bir baskı aracı olarak kullandığı diğer örneklerle de ortaya çıkan bu suçlamanın giderek kendilerinin inandırıcılığına, güvenilirliğine, tarafsızlığına ve etkinliğine gölge düşürmekte olduğu da anlaşılmaya başlamıştır.*

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

## Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

All these developments require an extensive evaluation.

## 1. Domestic Developments in Armenia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The statement made following the meeting is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[...]

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

[...]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3. Armenia’s Foreign Relations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4. Relations with Türkiye

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No response was given concerning the Special Representative.

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

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

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

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

“Minister Çavuşoğlu thanked Minister Mirzoyan for accepting the invitation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Distinguished Members of the Armenian Community,

My dear citizens,

I greet you with my most heartfelt feelings and love.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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