

EDITORIAL / BAŞYAZI

To cite this article: Alev Kılıç, “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 46 (2022): 11-45.

Received: 30.11.2022

Accepted: 05.12.2022

FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

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Abstract: *This article covers domestic and international developments of Armenia, the process for concluding the peace agreement with Azerbaijan following the 44-day war of 2020 and Türkiye-Armenia relations in the period of June-November 2022. Two full years have elapsed since the end of the war and the cease-fire agreement signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow with the participation of the Russian President. It is possible to explain this lapse with the efforts of Armenia using delaying tactics as it appeals to third states with own interests in the region, to minimize its losses and make some gains. There is an active resistance to the peace agreement initiatives of the government also by a radical-militant group in the Diaspora and an opposition in the country, small in numbers but led by the militant Dashnaksutyun-ARF. This is certainly a nuisance for the government, yet it also appears to provide it with a passable excuse. The most serious challenge before the peace agreement is the issue of delimitation and demarcation of the borders as it would lead to the acknowledgement of Karabakh to be within the boundaries of Azerbaijan. With a view to obviating this, an artificial and disputable issue called the Zangezur Corridor is being pushed to the fore. In foreign policy, the efforts to shift to the West without drawing the ire of Russia is being carried out with the re-fashioned concept of multi-vector foreign policy. The US and France, with the assistance of a more neutral and apolitical acting EU, came to the fore in encouraging, even instigating Armenians in this*

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direction. Relations with Türkiye are moving forward in a step-by-step approach within the process of normalization. On the other hand, the long-established anti-Turk and anti-Türkiye stand of Armenia does not seem to be restrained despite this process.

Keywords: *Pashinyan, Khachaturyan, Mirzoyev, Diaspora, World Council of Churches, Dashnaksutyun-ARF, Karekin II, Aram I, Pelosi, Zangezur Corridor*

Öz: *Bu incelemede 2020 yılında meydana gelen 44 gün savaşı sonrası Azerbaycan ile Ermenistan arasında başlayan barış anlaşması süreci, Ermenistan'daki iç gelişmeler, dış dinamikler ve Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkilerinin Haziran-Kasım 2022 tarihleri arasında gösterdiği gelişmeler ele alınmaktadır. Savaşın sona ermesinin ve Moskova'da Rusya'nın katılımıyla Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan taraflarınca imzalanan ateşkes anlaşmasının üzerinden iki yıl geçmesine rağmen barış anlaşmasının imzalanamamıştır. Bu aksaklığı Ermenistan'ın oyalama taktiklerine başvurarak bölgede farklı çıkarları bulunan üçüncü tarafları kullanıp mağlubiyet sonrası kayıplarını en aza indirme ve birtakım kazanımlar elde etme gayretleriyle açıklamak mümkündür. Diasporada militan-radikal bir kesim, içeride de Taşnaksutyun-EDF güdümüne girmiş sayıca az ancak militan bir muhalefet, hükümetin barış girişimlerine aktif olarak karşı koymaktadır. Bu durum yönetimi rahatsız etse de uygun bir bahane de yaratıyor gibi de görünmektedir. Barış anlaşmasının önündeki en ciddi engel sınırların tespitidir. Zira bu Karabağ'ın Azerbaycan sınırları içinde olduğunun resmen tanınmasını sağlayacaktır. Bunu perdelemek üzere yapay bir engel olarak Zangezur koridoru konusu ön plana çıkarılmaktadır. Dış ilişkilerde Rusya'nın hışmını çekmeden Batı'ya yanaşma çabaları, yeniden gündeme gelen çok vektörlü dış politika anlayışıyla uygulanmaktadır. ABD ve Fransa, daha tarafsız ve apolitik görünüm veren AB'nin de desteğiyle Ermenileri bu yönde cesaretlendirmekte, hatta tahrik etmektedir. Türkiye ile ilişkiler normalleşme süreci kapsamında adım adım da olsa ilerlemektedir. Ancak Ermenistan'ın Türk ve Türkiye karşıtı yaklaşımları bu süreçten hiçbir şekilde etkilenmemiş görünmektedir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Paşinyan, Kaçaturyan, Mirzoyev, Diaspora, Dünya Kiliseler Birliği, Taşnaksutyun-EDF, II. Karekin, I. Aram, Pelosi, Zangezur Koridoru*

1. Domestic Developments in Armenia

As a consequence of the Armenian government's inability to take principled and decisive steps towards the signing of the peace agreement evinced by the contradictory statements and retractions, the intensive provocations of the internal opposition (few in numbers, but able to make itself heard through foreign support), and the despair and disgruntlement in Armenia caused by the defeat of the 2020 war against Azerbaijan, uncertainty has continued in Armenia throughout the period.

The Dashnaksutyun-Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) leader and Vice President of the National Assembly of Armenia, Ishkhan Saghatelian, announced in June that the coordination of the street protests and demonstrations obstructing daily life, which are being called "resistance" by the opposition, and the responsibility of final decision was assigned to him by the opposition parties. The representatives of the majority party in the National Assembly declared that they would initiate the procedure to unseat the two opposition members of the Assembly, Saghatelian and Vahe Hakobyan (Head of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs of the National Assembly) who boycotted the Assembly's work.¹ The justification was absenteeism. It was decided during the Assembly meeting held on 1 July that these two representatives would only be dismissed from their positions. On the day of the meeting, the police blocked the roads leading to the Assembly. The two opposition parties represented in the Assembly described this situation as a new indication of the deepening political crisis in Armenia. Prior to the vote, the Speaker of the Assembly stated that the pro-government majority was open to evaluating candidates proposed by the opposition for the vacated posts. Saghatelian stated that they would not nominate new candidates. Moreover, he went even further by claiming that opposition representatives would resign from their other posts, but this did not materialize. In a new statement on 22 July, he announced that the opposition would participate in Assembly's work with its own agenda in September.²

Saghatelian went to Strasbourg on 6 July, as the leader of the Armenian ARF, to hold talks in the European Parliament. The leader of the ARF in Armenia, whose links to terrorist acts and record of militant extremism are known, was received by the European Parliament's Vice President and met with some Parliament members.³ After returning to Yerevan, in a statement he made on

1 "Saghatelian and Vahe Hakobyan recalled from their positions in National Assembly of Armenia", *Arminfo*, July 1, 2022, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=70330&lang=3

2 "Saghatelian: We will start process of removing Prime Minister when we have favorable conditions for it", *News.am*, August 22, 2022, <https://news.am/eng/news/716998.html>

3 "Opposition Leader Saghatelian Meets European Parliamentarians", *Oragark*, July 6, 2022, <https://www.oragark.com/saghatelian-visits-strasbourg-meets-european-parliamentarians/>

11 July, he declared that he would continue to boycott the Assembly sessions and that he would continue his attempts to overthrow the Nikol Pashinyan administration through street demonstrations.

Another development that raised controversy in the public opinion was an attempt by a wealthy businessman with close relations to the government to have a spectacular statue of Jesus built on a mountain close to the capital, despite the objections of the Armenian Apostolic Church.⁴ The construction, in which the initial excavation took place on 9 July with a ceremony attended by the Minister of Economy, was halted by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport shortly after. The Church essentially declared that this attempt was inappropriate and contrary to Armenian Christian traditions.⁵

In the Assembly's session on 12 July, the topic of establishing a new Ministry of Internal Affairs that would be in charge of the police and law enforcement subjects was discussed.⁶

In a draft submitted to the government on 13 July by the National Security Service of Armenia, it was proposed to solidify the rules for naturalization of Diaspora Armenians. With an amendment to the Constitution in 2005, Armenia approved the practice of dual citizenship. The aim was to easily grant citizenship without the requirement of residence, to preserve and strengthen ties with Diaspora Armenians. However, recently, it has been observed that Armenians of Middle Eastern origin, mainly from Syria and Lebanon, have resorted to this option particularly to go to Western countries, hence stricter rules were needed. According to law enforcement authorities, the number of such citizenship applications in the first half of this year was 9917. In the same period of the previous year, this number was only 3448.⁷

The Zangezur Copper Mines, Armenia's most important source of export and the most valuable source of unregistered financial source for the government, were brought to the agenda once again in July with a court decision on how the shares would be divided, as a Russian billionaire, one of its largest shareholders, was placed on the United States sanction list.

4 Ani Mejlumyan, "Construction of massive Jesus statue in Armenia suspended" *i Eurasianet*, July 12, 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/construction-of-massive-jesus-statue-in-armenia-suspended>

5 "Proposal to erect a statue of Jesus on Mount Hatis sparks concern among experts, Yerevani residents", *Jam News*, July 12, 2022, <https://jam-news.net/proposal-to-erect-a-statue-of-jesus-on-mount-hatis-sparks-concern-among-experts-yerevani-residents/>

6 Alexandr Avanesov, "Ministry of Internal Affairs to be reestablished in Armenia", *Arminfo*, July 7, 2022, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=70416&lang=3

7 "Security Service Wants Stricter Citizenship Rules For Diaspora Armenians", *Azatutyun*, July 13, 2022, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/31942023.html>

On 14 July, Major General Edward Asrian was appointed as the Chief of the General Staff, which had been vacant since February. Within the scope of the promised “Army Reform Package”, with the amendment implemented before this appointment, the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces was subordinated to the Ministry of Defense and was also given the title of Deputy Minister of Defense.⁸

The prominent leader of the Coordinating Council of Armenians Organizations in France (CCAF), Murad Papazyan, and his wife were not admitted to the country at Yerevan airport on 15 July and were deported with the first plane.⁹ Papazyan, who is also a bureau member of the ARF, participated in the street demonstrations of the Armenian Dashnaks during his previous visits to Yerevan. Being a person with close ties with the President of France Emmanuel Macron, Papazyan complained to the French Embassy in Yerevan and France’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the treatment he received. Catholicos Aram I, the spiritual leader of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia (located in Antelias/Lebanon), also expressed his concern with respect to the latest developments in Armenia, especially the developments in the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process and the ban of ARF Bureau member Papazyan’s entry to Armenia. He declared that “such developments can negatively affect relations between Armenia and the Diaspora. Open and complete information must be provided to the public”.¹⁰

A similar development occurred on 25 October. Konstantin Zatulin, a Russian parliamentarian of Armenian origin and an advocate of the Armenian cause in Russia who has recently made statements against Pashinyan, was prohibited from entering Armenia. A third ban was imposed on Margarita Simonyan, who is of Armenian origin, known for her closeness to the Russian administration and also for her opposition to Pashinyan and is one of the leading figures of the Russian media.¹¹ The Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia said that they wanted an explanation from Armenia regarding the ban on these two names who are known to the Russian public.¹²

8 “Armenian President Appoints New Army Chief After Months Of Vacancy”, *RFL/RL*, July 15, 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-new-army-chief-asrian/31944932.html>

9 Alexandr Avanesov, “Murad Papazyan intends to fight by all legal means to restore his right to return to Armenia – statement”, *Arminfo*, July 28, 2022, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=70684&lang=3

10 “‘They weaken the Armenian world for the benefit of our enemies’: Murad Papazyan”, *Aravot*, July 19, 2022, <https://www.aravot-en.am/2022/07/19/307739/>

11 Lilit Shahverdyan, “Russian parliamentarian banned from entering Armenia”, *Eurasianet*, October 26, 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/russian-parliamentarian-banned-from-entering-armenia>

12 “Russia asks Armenia to explain banning lawmaker Zatulin and RT head Margarita Simonyan”, *ArmenPress*, October 27, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1095843.html>

As a result of the explosion that occurred in a shopping center in Yerevan on 14 August, 16 people were killed and many were injured. Two days of mourning were declared in the country.¹³

The estrangement between Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Catholicos Karekin II, spiritual leader of the Armenian Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, became more evident when the Prime Minister abstained his customary birthday congratulations on the occasion of Karekin II's birthday on 21 August.

Pashinyan, in a speech he gave in the Assembly on 14 September, said that he was ready to sign a peace treaty with Azerbaijan and that he would be “criticized, scolded, called traitor” for it, but declared that Armenia would recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan if Azerbaijan withdrew from the lands it occupied.¹⁴ In response, thousands of people took to the streets and demanded Pashinyan's resignation. The opposition also called for a vote of confidence in the Assembly, but this issue could not be brought to the Assembly agenda as they did not have sufficient numbers. Since it seemed likely that the events were going to get out of hand, Pashinyan emphasized in a new statement on social media that his words were misunderstood, that he did not intend to sign an agreement of surrender and said “no document has been signed. Furthermore, no document is going to be signed”.¹⁵ This statement did not satisfy the opposition or the demonstrators.

On the second anniversary of the Karabakh War of 27 September 2020, government officials did not attend the commemoration ceremonies. It is understood that such a decision was taken not to provoke emotional outbursts and to avoid protests.

Saghatelyan of the ARF, who assumed the leadership of the opposition, called for the three ex-presidents to come together on 13 September. The three former leaders met with the participation of Catholicos Karekin II, discussed the developments and agreed on the continuation of these meetings. In the statements made afterwards, the parties made opposing comments on the past policies and the continuation of the process became unclear.

13 “Armenia to mourn victims of shopping mall explosion”, *Interfax*, August 16, 2022, <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/82284/>

14 “Pashinyan says he is ready to sign document that would make people call him traitor”, *Arka News Agency*, September 14, 2022, http://arka.am/en/news/politics/pashinyan_says_he_is_ready_to_sign_document_that_would_make_people_call_him_traitor/

15 “Pashinyan Claims He Has Not Signed Agreement with Azerbaijan”, *Asbarez*, September 14, 2022, <https://asbarez.com/pashinyan-claims-he-has-not-signed-agreement-with-azerbaijan/>

The Global Armenian Summit was held on 28-31 October.¹⁶ Approximately 600 representatives from 50 countries attended the event. Opponents of Pashinyan in the Diaspora boycotted the meeting. The two highest officials of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Karekin II and Aram I, also joined the boycott. There were those who considered the meeting to be untimely and claimed that it worsened the division within the Diaspora. Although the attitude of the Diaspora's militant wing towards Pashinyan's administration is known not to be positive, the latest indication of this reaction were the protests and insults that the government's Diaspora High Commissioner faced at the beginning of June, when he went to the US to meet with the Diaspora representatives and carry out preliminary preparations. On the other hand, it is also commented that radical and militant elements opposing Pashinyan and the signing of a peace agreement came to the fore in this way and, in a sense, they were thus exposed and sidelined.

In preparation for the Summit, the Diaspora High Commissioner went to Athens on 22 June with the Prime Minister's decree, and a trilateral meeting was held with the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Greek Cypriot representative to discuss and determine the rules of cooperation in the Diaspora relations.¹⁷ The trio signed a memorandum of understanding formalizing this cooperation on 24 June. In the statement made by Greece's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is stated in the signed document that they are "working together for the international recognition of the Pontian Genocide, the Armenian Genocide, as well as for the international condemnation of the occupation of Cyprus".

In his statement issued at the end of October, the Minister of Finance predicted that the Armenian economy would grow by at least 11% by the end of the year due to the increasing trade with Russia and the increase in workers' remittances from Russia.¹⁸ According to official data, foreign trade with Russia increased by 70% in the first eight months of the year and exports to Russia doubled, reaching 1.1 billion Dollars. Likewise, workers' remittances tripled in the first 9 months and reached 1 billion Dollars. This amount added up to more than two-thirds of foreign payments to Armenia. The Minister noted that the government's expenditures in the 2023 budget will be 6.4 billion Dollars, that a quarter of it will be allocated to the social sphere, that defense expenses will come second (the same amount of 370 million Dollars has been allocated to the Karabakh Armenians this year) and that the 2023 budget will

16 "Global Armenian Summit", *Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of Armenia*, October 28, 2022, <http://diaspora.gov.am/en/events/103/globalarmeniansummit>

17 Siranush Gazanchyan, "Armenia, Greece, Cyprus to cooperate on Diaspora issues", *Public Radio of Armenia*, June 24, 2022, <https://en.armradio.am/2022/06/24/armenia-greece-cyprus-to-cooperate-on-diaspora-issues/>.

18 "Armenia Set For Double-Digit Growth In 2022", *Azatutyun*, October 31, 2022, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32109235.html>

be the largest in the country's history. The Governor of the Central Bank also stated in the budget negotiations that this year's growth is predicted to be 12.9%, that inflation has risen to 9.9%, that this growth will decrease next year, and that they foresee a growth of 4.5%.¹⁹

Saghatelyan, the ARF member who assumed the leadership of the opposition, announced during a press conference at the end of October that the opposition would initiate street demonstrations again after two months, and gave the date of 5 November for the first demonstration to support the Karabakh Armenians. At the demonstration attended by thousands of people, he accused Prime Minister Pashinyan of making unacceptable concessions to Azerbaijan and claimed that Armenia was preparing to hand over full control over Karabakh to Azerbaijan. Afterwards, an opposition statement expressing support for the Karabakh Armenians was approved. The Supreme Spiritual Council of the Armenian Church also pointed out that Armenia was going through difficult times at the meeting held on 1-4 November.²⁰

2. The Peace Agreement Process Between Armenia and Azerbaijan

Although two years having passed since the 2019 Moscow ceasefire agreement, which ended the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia and set the framework for a peace agreement, it has not been possible to sign a peace agreement. Azerbaijan, the undisputed victor of the war, has clearly and consistently put forth her expectations and demands on legitimate grounds from the very beginning. During this period, Armenia's rhetoric and actions were contradictory. While Armenia stated openly and without hesitation at the highest level that they wanted to sign the peace agreement as soon as possible, in practice, it appeared to be buying time, distracting, ingratiating itself to supporters for its narrative and expectations, and searching for a new solution that would minimize losses.

The developments in the region and the international conjuncture and the changing balance of power have undoubtedly enabled Armenia to adopt such an attitude. The Karabakh war made Russia the main regulating power in the South Caucasus. The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship has lost its functionality and competence. The understanding of resolving the regional order among the countries of the region without involving the non-regional

19 "Armenia's Budget for 2023 to Increase to \$6.4 Billion Largest in the History of the Country", *MassisPost*, November 1, 2022, <https://massispost.com/2022/11/armenias-budget-for-2023-to-increase-to-6-4-billion-largest-in-the-history-of-the-country/>

20 "Armenian opposition MP calls on all political forces to put aside differences and join the fight for Nagorno-Karabakh", *Arka News Agency*, October 31, 2022, http://arka.am/en/news/politics/armenian_opposition_mp_calls_on_all_political_forces_to_put_aside_differences_and_join_the_fight_for/

powers has gained impetus. In such a setting, it is clear that Armenia does not have much margin to bend the commitments envisaged in the ceasefire agreement, in view of the actual state of affairs and the agreements that make Armenia dependent on Russia on a wide spectrum.

However, the ongoing Ukraine war has led to some important changes with the following developments: Russia's isolation by the Western world, Russia being subjected to disruptive sanctions, and the war not progressing in line with Russia's predictions (on the contrary, the impression has been made that Russia is in a state of military weakness). This has intensified the West's (the US with France and the EU keenly assessing the situation) initiatives towards establishing its influence in the region. This winfall development has opened a new window of opportunity for Armenia, which has traditionally received financial and moral support from the West for multi-faceted reasons.

After the 44-day war, Azerbaijan retrieved her occupied lands around Karabakh and a part of Karabakh, while the other part, where the Armenian population was concentrated, was temporarily left under the control of the Russian peacekeepers on the grounds of the population's security. Although there is no doubt that Karabakh is within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the Armenian minority in part of it there formed an illegal administration. Eventhough it is not officially recognized by any country (including Armenia), it carried on with its claim to be an independent state by defining itself as the "Republic of Artsakh" and continued to bring its claims to the agenda on every possible occasion with the explicit or implicit support of Armenia. This situation has been a convenient topic for exploitation in the struggle for influence in the region between Russia and the West.

At the end of May, the Mayor of Paris paid an official visit to Yerevan, followed by a visit with her delegation to the illegal Armenian administration of Karabakh.²¹ Likewise, in a statement made by the Catholicosate of Cilicia (Antelias), it was announced that Catholicos Aram I met in Lebanon with the illegal administration's "president of the national assembly" on 27 May.²² During the same trip, the "president" also visited the Greek Cypriot Administration and held talks there. The Secretary of the Armenian Security Council stated "It is the rights and security of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh that will determine the status of the republic" during a statement on 3 June. The Minister of Foreign Affairs also made a statement in the same vein on 17 June and asserted:

21 "President of Artsakh receives delegation led by Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo", *Ilurer*, May 27, 2022, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2022/05/27/President-of-Artsakh-receives-delegation-led-by-Mayor-of-Paris-Anne-Hidalgo/730815>

22 "Artsakh milletvekilleri Kilikiya Katolikosu I. Aram ile bir araya geldi", *Ermeni Haber Ajansı*, 27 Mayıs 2022, <https://www.ermenihaber.am/tr/news/2022/05/27/Artsakh-milletvekilleri-Kilikiya-Katolikosu/231767>

“The addressing of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is fundamental, which should include the provisions of ensuring the security and all the rights of the people of Artsakh, and final determination of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

The West’s interest in the region increased and reached a peak first with the EU taking the lead, then taken over by the US during the period. The US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried conducted a comprehensive visit to the region on 15-19 June and clarified the role that the US wanted to undertake.²³ Acting on the assumption that peace and stability in the South Caucasus depend on the resolution of local conflicts, especially in Karabakh, Donfried said that the Joe Biden administration of the US is very much interested in the region. The visits of senior US officials to the region have increased. The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken increased his contacts with the regional leaders, conveying the message to the effect that the West’s effective and collective support can be relied upon. It has not gone unnoticed that one of the goals of these visits and statements, which increased during the period of the Ukraine war, could be to put Russia under pressure on another front.

In a TV interview during the last part of his visit to Yerevan on 18 June, Donfried emphasized that they are ready to work with Russia within the framework of the Minsk Group.²⁴ The response of the spokesperson of Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was prompt, stating that France and the US caused irreparable damage to Russia’s and the Minsk Group’s work, that one cannot act as if nothing had happened, and that the new realities should be taken into account. During here visit to Baku on 20 June, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov made a similar statement explaining that the Minsk Group has lost its functionality,²⁵ and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov underlined the same view. On the other hand, the Prime Minister of Armenia objected to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs’ statement that the Minsk Group no longer functions and declared that this view contradicts an article of the Joint Declaration signed with the President of Russia Vladimir Putin in April, that this contradiction should be resolved and that the Minsk Group is not dead. On the same day, the Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia met with the co-chairman

23 “The U.S. Embassy to Armenia welcomes Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried to Yerevan”, *US Embassy in Armenia*, June 18, 2022, <https://am.usembassy.gov/embassy-welcomes-donfried/>

24 “US will continue to participate in Minsk Group format” - US Assistant State Secretary in Yerevan”, *Jam News*, June 22, 2022, <https://jam-news.net/us-will-continue-to-participate-in-minsk-group-format-us-assistant-state-secretary-in-yerevan/>

25 “Lavrov: AB ve NATO, Rusya ile savaşmak için koalisyon kuruyor”, *Cumhuriyet*, 24 Haziran 2022, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/dunya/lavrov-ab-ve-nato-rusya-ile-savasmak-icin-koalisyon-kuruyor-1950941>

of the Minsk Group of France in Paris. Both sides agreed on the need to reach a comprehensive solution in Karabakh “under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship”.²⁶

The format titled “3+3”, which foresees the establishment of peace and stability in the region through meetings between the countries of the region, without the intervention of non-regional powers, was brought to the agenda again in June. The follow up to the first meeting that was held in Moscow in December 2021 was discussed in the session between the Turkish and Russian Foreign Ministers on 8 June. It was also announced that the second meeting was planned to be held in Iran before the end of the year, during the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan to Iran in July. Afterwards, although the National Security Council Secretary of Iran made a statement regarding the holding of this meeting in Iran during his visit to Yerevan, the statement was not included in the official reports.

The Lachin Corridor, which provides connectivity between Armenia and Karabakh, was shifted to the north by constructing a new road, as foreseen in the 2020 Memorandum. Moreover, as of 25 August, three more villages on the old route were transferred to the Azerbaijani administration. Thus, Azerbaijan proved once again that it continues to resolutely implement the 2020 Agreement.

The US appointed a new Minsk Group co-chair on 25 August.²⁷ The US Secretary of State Blinken declared that the US is committed to helping Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate to find a long-term political solution to the Karabakh conflict. Blinken added that the new co-chair will “engage bilaterally with like-minded partners such as the EU, and through his role as an OSCE Minsk Group co-chair, to facilitate direct dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan rejected the statement of the US Secretary of State and stated that “The US risks being left out of the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process with its attempts to ‘revive the Minsk Group’.” Likewise, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan reiterated the words of the Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev and said “The Karabakh conflict is resolved and Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan”.

Two high-ranking officials of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia and the Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Presidency of Azerbaijan, met in Brussels on 19 August under the

26 “Armenia’s Security Council Secretary meets with French Co-Chair of OSCE Minsk Group in Paris”, *ArmenPress*, June 28, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1087111.html>

27 “U.S. Appoints New OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair”, *Hetq*, August 25, 2022, <https://hetq.am/en/article/147636>

mediation of the EU.²⁸ It was the first meeting of these two countries' senior officials, following the small-scale conflict on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border at the beginning of August. This meeting also proved to be the preparation for the two countries' leaders to meet again in Brussels. In the statement made by the Presidency of the Council of the EU on 25 August, it was announced that the leaders of the two countries would meet with the President of the European Council on 31 August. Thus, the leaders of the two countries came together for the fourth time after the previous meetings of December 2021, April 2022, and May 2022.

Following the meeting on 31 August, which lasted for about four hours, the President of the European Council provided information concerning the issues discussed. The topics are as follows:²⁹

“-Peace Agreement: Today we agree to step up substantive work to advance on the peace treaty governing inter-state relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and tasked the Foreign Ministers to meet within one month to work on draft texts.

-Humanitarian issues: We also had a detailed discussion on humanitarian issues, including demining, detainees and the fate of missing persons. President Michel stressed to Azerbaijan the importance of further release of Armenian detainees. The EU will continue to be engaged in these questions.

-Border issues: We reviewed progress on all questions related to the delimitation of the border and how best to ensure a stable situation. We agreed that the next meeting of the Border Commissions will take place in Brussels in November.

-Connectivity: We reviewed progress of discussions on the modalities for unblocking the transport links.”

The next meeting with the leaders of the two countries was announced to be held in November. However, as the President of France made some very biased and accusatory remarks against Azerbaijan, and the French Senate passed unacceptable resolutions in favor of Armenia, the President of

28 “Brüksel’de Ermenistan Güvenlik Konseyi Sekreteri ile Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Yardımcısı Hikmet Hacıyev görüşü”, *ArmenPress*, 2 Mayıs 2022, <https://armenpress.am/tur/news/1082199/>

29 “Press statement by President Charles Michel following the trilateral meeting with President Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia, 31 August 2022”, *European Council*, August 31, 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/08/31/press-statement-by-president-charles-michel-following-the-trilateral-meeting-with-president-aliyev-of-azerbaijan-and-prime-minister-pashinyan-of-armenia-31-august-2022/>

Azerbaijan Aliyev declared that he would not attend a meeting should the French President Macron take part.

In the statement made by the President of the European Council at the end of the meeting and within the scope of the issues discussed, it stood out that subjects of the Armenian minority in Karabakh and the efforts to revive the Minsk Group were not mentioned.

Russia has questioned the EU mediation in the Armenia-Azerbaijan talks. The Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia vigorously criticized this initiative of the EU in her press statement on 31 August. In her statements, the spokesperson explained:

“The EU’s activity in the South Caucasus is determined by geopolitical ambitions [...] this basically has nothing to do with a real desire to facilitate the normalization of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations [...] these are pseudo-initiatives of the Europeans [...] They are more like an attempt to shamelessly appropriate the laurels of mediation [from Russia] which is not backed up by anything [...] We, as mediators, are working, and this work brings concrete results and is assessed accordingly by the parties [...] As for those who pretend to be mediators while not being intermediaries, apparently they are just not capable of offering anything.”³⁰

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan informed his Russian counterpart about the summit by phone on 1 September. The Armenian Minister went to Moscow four days later and they discussed the developments face to face. Pashinyan also attended the seventh Eastern Economic Forum held in Vladivostok on 5 September and provided first-hand information to Russian President Putin regarding the latest developments. In the meeting he held with the Armenian community living in Vladivostok, Pashinyan stated (concerning his meeting with the President of Azerbaijan) “I must say that during the meeting we did not manage to register common positions on the most important issues preoccupying us” and expressed that they could not find a common ground of consensus.³¹

The illegal administration of Karabakh Armenians celebrated the 31st anniversary of their establishment on 2 September.³² The Armenian

30 “Zakharova: ‘EU’s real desire has nothing to do with normalization of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations’”, *Apa.az*, August 31, 2022, <https://apa.az/en/foreign-policy/zakharova-eus-real-desire-has-nothing-to-do-with-normalization-of-azerbaijani-armenian-relations-383743>

31 “Pashinyan, Putin Meet in Vladivostok, Discuss Karabakh, Economic Issues”, *Hetq*, September 7, 2022, <https://hetq.am/en/article/147994>

32 “Artsakh is celebrating 31st anniversary of declaration of statehood”, *Ilurer*, September 2, 2022, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2022/09/02/Artsakh-is-celebrating-31st-anniversary-of-declaration-of-statehood/787363>

government and assembly did not send an official delegation to the celebrations this year either. In the message he published on this occasion, Pashinyan stated:

“Our compatriots continue to live in Nagorno Karabakh or in the remaining part of it. They have the right to live in their [home], in a safe environment, where their rights will be protected. Basically, this is the essence of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. All statements claiming that Nagorno Karabakh doesn’t exist as a territorial entity and that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is resolved are inappropriate as long as the issues of the security and protection of rights of the Armenians of ‘Artsakh’ aren’t irreversibly addressed, and subsequently also the issue of the status of Nagorno Karabakh, for which the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship has a mandate approved by the international community, which is still in force”.

It is known that the strongest support for the Armenians concerning the Karabakh issue is based on religion. The eleventh session of the World Council of Churches (WCC), which convenes every seven years, was held in Karlsruhe, Germany, between 31 August and 8 September. Among the eight presidents elected to represent different geographical regions and sects was Catholicos Aram I, the spiritual leader of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia (Antelias), known for his militant anti-Türkiye and anti-Turkish sentiments. A statement concerning Karabakh of 8 September was also published among the council’s closing documents. At the end of the statement, WCC “calls for the start of meaningful dialogue for a just and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group” and indicates that “The World Union of Churches requests the WCC and all member churches to remain engaged in Christian solidarity with the churches and people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in their search for a just and sustainable peace”.³³

The new Minsk Group co-chair appointed by the US visited Armenia on 8 September. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Mirzoyan received the co-chair, he wished him success in this demanding task. The Armenian Minister emphasized the importance of utilizing the potential and experience of the Minsk Group co-chairmanship in the process of finding a permanent and comprehensive solution to the Karabakh conflict.

33 “World Council of Churches General Assembly speaks to issues in the Middle East and Europe”, *GlobalMinistries.org*, September 8, 2022, <https://www.globalministries.org/world-council-of-churches-general-assembly-speaks-to-issues-in-the-middle-east-and-europe/>

During the early morning hours of 13 September, there were clashes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, which resulted in heavy casualties. The Prime Minister of Armenia immediately accused Azerbaijan of aggression and violation of the territorial integrity of Armenia and requested military assistance, primarily from Russia and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Azerbaijan, on the other hand, expressed that Armenia engaged in mine-laying attempts and other military forms of harassment and provocation along the yet-to-be established border, and that the Azerbaijani army responded in kind. This development, which reflects Pashinyan's perception that Azerbaijan has been preparing to attack for some time, and that Russia and the CSTO, unlike during the Karabakh war, will have to act regarding the claim of attacking the territory of Armenia was perceived with caution by Russia and CSTO.

The US immediately intervened in the situation and following the US Secretary of State's meeting with Pashinyan, Blinken stated that the US was deeply concerned about the reported attacks on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and demanded that the clashes be ended immediately. The President of France also stepped in and invited the UN Security Council to meet urgently to discuss the issue. In the statement made by Russia, it was explained that a ceasefire was achieved through the mediation of Russia. During the meetings held at the UNSC, France clearly took into account the Armenian allegations, while the US was more cautious. The fighting parties were asked to abide by the ceasefire.

The US Secretary of State Blinken held a trilateral meeting on 19 September with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan in New York on the occasion of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly. In a statement following the meeting, Blinken indicated;

“We are encouraged by the fact that the fighting has ceased and there have not been any additional military actions over the last few days. In my latest calls with both Prime Minister Pashinyan and President Aliyev, both leaders told me that they are ready for peace. The United States is prepared to do whatever it can to support these efforts.”

Although no agreement was reached during the meeting, the US Secretary of State suggested the parties to meet again bilaterally before the end of the month. Blinken also met with Prime Minister Pashinyan in New York on 22 September and discussed similar issues.³⁴

34 “Secretary Antony J. Blinken, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, And Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov Before Their Meeting”, *US Department of State*, November 7, 2022 <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-armenian-foreign-minister-ararat-mirzoyan-and-azerbaijani-foreign-minister-jeyhun-bayramov-before-their-meeting/>

The trilateral contacts of the US continued on 28 September, this time the US National Security Advisor met with the Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia and the President of Azerbaijan's foreign policy head. The US official described the talks as constructive and expressed that they discussed the concrete steps that could be taken. Meanwhile, the Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, this time vehemently criticized the mediation attempts of the US, accusing the West of seizing the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiation process and using it against Moscow in the increasingly tense geopolitical environment.

Armenia and Azerbaijan's Ministers of Foreign Affairs held a bilateral meeting in Geneva during early October, as agreed with the US Secretary of State in their 19 September meeting. The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan also met with the co-chair of the US Minsk Group in Geneva and claimed by showing some videos that the Azerbaijani army committed war crimes in the last conflict. The EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus also took up this claim and called for its investigation. Azerbaijan rejected these allegations and claimed that it was a photomontage. Once again, instead of working on the draft peace agreement, the Armenian minister was able to shift the agenda. The US Secretary of State had a three-way phone call with the two ministers on 5 October and received information about the Geneva meeting.

In his speech at the European Parliament on 5 October, the EU Foreign Policy Chief accused Azerbaijan of occupying the territory of Armenia and stated that they offered to send a mediation mission to the border, that Armenia accepted and Azerbaijan refused.

The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan met for the fifth time in Prague on 6 October under the umbrella of the EU. The following statement was published after the meeting:

“Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev met on October 6, 2022 in Prague, within the framework of the first meeting of the ‘European Political Community’ held at the initiative of the President of the Republic of France and the President of the European Council.

Armenia and Azerbaijan recognize each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty in accordance with the UN Law and the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration, to which they confirm their commitment. The countries established that this will constitute the basis for the border delimitation commission's work and that the next border commission's meeting would be held late October in Brussels.

Armenia expressed its agreement to facilitate a EU civilian mission alongside its border with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan did not accept it, but

agreed to cooperate with this mission to the necessary extent. The mission will begin in October for a period of two months at most. The aim of the mission is to build confidence and contribute to the border commissions through its reports.”

The leading group of the EU civil mission went to Armenia on 14 October and started the preparatory work. On 17 October, the EU countries decided to send 40 EU Monitoring officers. The European Council also announced that these officers will be temporarily reinforced with 200 EU observers stationed in Georgia.³⁵

The US Secretary of State called the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan on 10 October and was informed regarding the Prague meeting. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia also held a comprehensive meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia on 12 October in Astana, where the Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States was held and exchanged views on the recent sessions.

Russia, which did not hide its concern and dissatisfaction with the West’s efforts to establish influence in the region and hijack the peace process, held a trilateral meeting of Foreign Ministers in Astana on 14 October, with the initiative of the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The President of Russia, who was in Astana for the summit, also made an open invitation to hold a trilateral meeting in Russia as soon as possible.

In his address to the Muslim religious leaders meeting of the Organization of Turkic States on 20 October, the Chairman of Azerbaijan’s Caucasian Muslims Office called on the Armenian Apostolic Church to end the hatred, sabotage, and vengeance.

At the invitation of the President of Russia, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan met in Sochi on 31 October. The Russian President first met with the leaders bilaterally, and afterwards met in a trilateral format. The text of the agreement reached by the parties at the Sochi summit is as follows³⁶:

“We, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan I. H. Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia N. V. Pashinyan and President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin, met in Sochi on 31 October 2022 and discussed the implementation of the trilateral statements of 9 November 2020, 11 January and 26 November 2021.

35 Alexandra Brzozowski, “EU deploys Armenia-Azerbaijan border-monitoring mission, but questions remain”, *Euractiv*, October 18, 2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/eu-deploys-armenia-azerbaijan-border-monitoring-mission-but-questions-remain/>

36 “Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation”, *Presidency of Azerbaijan*, <https://president.az/en/articles/view/57744>

We reaffirmed our commitment to strict compliance with all these agreements in the interests of the comprehensive normalization of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations, ensuring a lasting peace, stability, security and sustainable economic development of the South Caucasus.

We agreed to make additional effort to urgently resolve the remaining tasks, including the block of humanitarian issues.

Noting the key contribution of the Russian peacekeeping contingent to ensuring security in the zone of its deployment, we emphasized the relevance of its efforts to stabilize the situation in the region.

We agreed to refrain from the use or the threat of using force, to discuss and resolve all problematic issues solely on the basis of mutual recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders in accordance with the UN Charter and the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991.

We emphasized the importance of active preparation for the signing of a peace treaty between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia in order to achieve sustainable and lasting peace in the region. On the basis of the currently developed proposals, it was agreed to continue the search for acceptable solutions.

The Russian Federation will render all possible assistance in this.

We emphasized the importance of creating a positive atmosphere between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia to continue the dialogue between representatives of the public, expert communities and religious leaders with Russian assistance, as well as launching trilateral inter-parliamentary contacts in order to strengthen confidence between the peoples of the two countries.

The leaders of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia welcome the readiness of the Russian Federation to continue to contribute in every possible way to the normalization of relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, ensuring stability and prosperity in the South Caucasus.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, President of the Russian Federation

I. H. Aliyev

N. V. Pashinyan

V. V. Putin”

3. Armenia's Foreign Relations

During the period, Armenia's primary goal in foreign relations was to overcome its deadlock and estrangement after the Karabakh war, open up to the West without drawing Russia's ire by taking advantage of Russia's increasing vulnerability, to ingratiate itself with Western powers to support its interests (which Armenia named as "multi-vector foreign policy" in the past) and compensate its losses and to obtain new gains, particularly by playing the West against Russia to the extent possible.

President of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturyan paid an official visit to neighboring Georgia on 30 May. Prime Minister Pashinyan held a day-long working meeting with the Georgian Prime Minister in the border town on 17 June. Pashinyan made a working visit to Tbilisi on 19 August, and both prime ministers inaugurated the friendship bridge on the border, which will facilitate transportation between Armenia and Georgia.

The President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi had an extensive phone call with Pashinyan on 2 June, discussing the situation in the region and the latest developments. During the period, Armenia-Iran relations became closer than ever before and almost acquired the appearance of an alliance relationship. The Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran went to Armenia for a working visit on 7 July. The Iranian official, who also met with Pashinyan, said that Iran wanted to deepen its ties with Armenia "in all spheres". According to the Iranian news agency IRNA, Iran sees no limitations in expanding bilateral ties. Iran stated that the transit from Chabahar Port to the north will also develop the Syunik (Zangezur) region.

In a statement he made on 22 September, the Chief of General Staff of Iran said that they would not accept a change on the Armenian border and that they had the strength to oppose it. These statements were the repetitions of the previous statements of the Iranian President and the spiritual leader by a military official. The President of Iran, with whom the Armenian Prime Minister met on 22 September in New York, where they attended the UN General Assembly meeting, repeated similar statements also on this occasion. During a speech he delivered on 12 October, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian re-emphasized that they are against any change in the Armenian border.

The Iranian armed forces started a comprehensive military exercise on the Azerbaijan-Armenia border on 19 October. The exercise, which included tanks crossing over the Aras River with pontoon bridges, constituted a message of support to Armenia and a threat to Azerbaijan. Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir-Abdollahian also did not hide this during a statement

he made on 19 October and made a connection with the exercise and the subject of the border with Armenia not changing. The next day, on 20 October, Amir-Abdollahian went to Armenia for an official visit, met with the Prime Minister and the Vice President as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Yerevan. The following day, he inaugurated a new Consulate General of Iran with the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Syunik Province's Kapan town, adjacent to the Iranian border, near which the Zangezur Corridor passes. In the speeches in which praises were mutually showered, the Iranian Minister said that "Iran considers Armenia's security as its own security". Ultimately, Prime Minister Pashinyan went to Tehran on 1 November, upon the invitation of the President of Iran. In the historical Sadabad Palace, the two leaders signed a cooperation memorandum between their countries.³⁷

Relations with the US have also reached an advanced level with numerous meetings. On 2 June, the head of the United States European Command Regional Military Cooperation Department visited Armenia to discuss issues of cooperation in the field of defense. On the same date, Armenia implemented an amendment bringing restrictions to the "Cooperation in the Area of Prevention of Proliferation of Technology, Pathogens and Expertise That Could Be Used in the Development of Biological Weapons" signed with the US in 2010. This agreement, which allowed the US to also establish biological laboratories in Armenia, had led to a reaction from Russia.

The Assistant Secretary of State of the US for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor visited Armenia on 9 June.

The Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs at the US Department of State Donfried visited Armenia on 17-18 June and had high-level meetings. Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan praised the Armenia-US Strategic Dialogue which was launched in May.

The head of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) made an unexpected visit to Armenia on 15 July, where he met with the Prime Minister and his Armenian counterpart. This visit was a first in the relations between the two countries. Three days later, the head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service went to Armenia and held similar meetings.

During his visit to the US, the Armenian Minister of Defense met with the Undersecretary of the US Ministry of Defense on 8 September. At the meeting, defense cooperation between the two countries was discussed in its entirety and it was agreed to expand the partnership in peacekeeping missions, military

³⁷ "Paşinyanın İrana səfəri dönüş nöqtəsi olacaq", İ.Rəisi", *TRT Azərbaycan*, 1 Kasım 2022, <https://www.trt.net.tr/azerbaycan/bolg-x-b-rl-ri/2022/11/01/pasinyanin-irana-s-f-ri-donus-noqt-si-olacaq-i-r-isi-1900625>

education, military medicine, and other fields. The Armenian minister also visited the Kansas National Guard headquarters, a linchpin of long existing military connections.

On 18 September, Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi visited Armenia with three pro-Armenian representatives, two of whom are of Armenian descent. In Pelosi's own words, it was a family visit with this delegation. Pelosi's visit constituted the highest-level US delegation to Armenia to date. During her visit, Pelosi made various emotional statements including opposition to Russia, Azerbaijan, and Türkiye. On 23 September, the US Embassy in Yerevan published the revised official text of Pelosi's press conference with the Armenian counterpart on 18 September, to put on record at least an official wording without polemics.³⁸

The Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia went to the US on 26 September to hold various meetings. His first meeting was with the White House National Security Advisor and a trilateral meeting was held with the Azerbaijani representative. Afterwards, he met with the Deputy Secretary of State and attended meetings at the CIA headquarters on 30 September.

On 18 October, another US Congressional delegation visited Armenia. The head of the delegation addressed the Armenian Assembly and held high-level meetings. The head of the delegation stated; "We are against the invasion of Armenia's sovereign territory and are demanding that Azerbaijan return to its initial positions".

Relations with Greece also gained new momentum during the period. On 2 June, Greece's Deputy Minister of National Defense visited Armenia. On 24 June, the Memorandum on Trilateral Cooperation on Diaspora issues was signed between Armenia, Greece, and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) in Athens. Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mirzoyan went to Greece for a two-day working visit on 27 June. The Foreign Minister, who was also received by the Greek Prime Minister, emphasized the historical Armenian-Greek brotherhood in his meeting with his Greek counterpart and stated that the Armenian-Greek relations developed not only on bilateral but also on multilateral prominent platforms. He specifically pointed out three dimensions,

"First of all, the cooperation within the framework of the Armenia-Greece-Cyprus trilateral format was at the center of our negotiations.

38 "Speaker Pelosi Remarks at Congressional Delegation Press Conference with Armenian Speaker Alen Simonyan", *US Embassy in Armenia*, September 18, 2022, <https://am.usembassy.gov/speaker-pelosi-remarks/>

Secondly, we emphasize the importance of signing of the multilateral agreement on the establishment of the Persian Gulf-Black Sea international transport-transit corridor. We also exchanged views on issues on the Armenia-EU partnership and the Eastern Partnership.”

At the end of the talks, a cooperation memorandum was signed between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries. The foreign ministers of the trilateral format also met on 19 September in New York, where they attended the UN General Assembly’s 77th session.

The Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs went to Armenia for an official visit on 27 September. This was the second visit of the Greek Minister after October 2020. During his meetings, he also met with the Armenian Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense. The Greek minister, targeting Azerbaijan and Türkiye in his speeches, stated “Turkey is trying to take advantage of the recent turmoil in order to undermine peace and stability, be it in the Caucasus or the Aegean.”

The Prime Ministers of Armenia and Greece met on the margins of the European Political Community summit in Prague on 7 October, and they emphasized the trilateral format cooperation once again.

CSTO Foreign Ministers Meeting was held in Yerevan on 10 June. Armenia had much to complain on the inaction of the organization. This was further raised on the Foreign Ministers meeting of the organization in Yerevan on 21 November and at the Summit on 23 November which the President of Russia also attended. Pashinyan even refrained from signing the final statement, giving rise to the speculations whether Armenia would be leaving the organization, an outcome much propagated by the Western press.

Armenia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs officially visited Bulgaria on 14-15 June.³⁹ During the visit, the preliminary preparations for the President of Armenia’s official visit to Bulgaria on 18 October were also discussed.

Prime Minister Pashinyan visited Qatar on 13 June. During the visit, in which many cooperation documents were signed, Yerevan and Doha were declared as sister cities. In an interview with the *Al-Jazeera* TV channel, Pashinyan explained “It is not so easy to be a direct, honest, reliable partner for both Russia and the West, our duty is not to betray anyone.”

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe visited Armenia on 16-17 June.

39 “Armenian FM meets with Bulgarian President”, *ArmenPress*, June 14, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1085911.html>.

Armenian President Khachaturyan attended the St. Petersburg International Economy Fair on 18 June. The President of Russia, whom he met in the margin of the meeting, stated that “Armenia is not just our partner, it is also our strategic ally, and we appreciate it”.

In June, Armenia also participated in the military mountain training organized by NATO for three weeks in Georgia within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program. Other military enrollments were from Georgia, the US, Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The Canadian government decided to open a resident embassy in Armenia on 29 June. Russia rejected the statements targeting Russia in the justification for the embassy’s opening.

The Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India arrived in Armenia on 4 July for the intergovernmental commission meeting. During the meeting, the subjects of deepening bilateral relations and long-term military cooperation were discussed.

On 6 July, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia paid a working visit to Spain.

Pashinyan went to Kyrgyzstan on 25 August to attend the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council meeting. During his meeting with the Russian Prime Minister, concrete projects for the development of bilateral economic relations were discussed.

The President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) visited Armenia on 15 September as part of his tour of the South Caucasus.

The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) visited Armenia on 4-5 October. It was noted that the shortcomings of the Metsamor nuclear power plant, which is the most important issue within the agency’s area of interest and responsibility, and its expiry were not sufficiently emphasized. It was announced that the life span of the facility, which became operational in 1980 and had to be shut down in 2017 with its extensions, has been extended until 2036 this time. This Chernobyl-type facility, which is only 30 km away from the Turkish border, meets 40% of Armenia’s electricity production.

Prime Minister Pashinyan addressed the UN General Assembly on 23 September. The entire speech was addressed to Azerbaijan and the peace process.

A delegation from the members of the Armenian friendship group of the Swiss parliament went to Yerevan on 14 October and supported the independence of the Karabakh Armenians in their statements. The adoption of a resolution on the same date titled “For the survival of Armenia” conveying a similar demand at the cantonal council of Geneva, where the headquarters of the WCC is located was indicative that Switzerland is far from the current facts and impartiality.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia paid an official visit to the Vatican on 25 October, met with the Cardinal Secretary of State and was received by the Pope. Mirzoyan also met in Rome with the Chancellor of the Knights of Malta, a leading Christian religious sect.

4. Relations with Türkiye

The normalization process that started in Türkiye-Armenia relations, with the mutual appointment of “Special Representatives” and the special representatives’ holding three meetings, the first in Moscow and the other two in Vienna, has warmed up and reached higher levels in the period. Armenia wants to carry out this process exclusively from the perspective of bilateral relations and to ensure rapid development in the issues they prioritize such as opening borders and establishing diplomatic relations. Türkiye has no objections to these issues, but approaches the normalization from a regional perspective, gives priority to ensuring peace and stability in the region, and aims to contribute to that goal. On the other hand, Armenia’s sincerity in the normalization of relations with Türkiye is mired in uncertainty in view of Armenia’s inimical activities against Türkiye, the trilateral front it formed with Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration and the clearly declared objectives of this front to always taking a stand in opposition to Türkiye’s relations with third parties and trying to gain some benefit from it. These are questionable attitudes and policies for a country preaching normalization.

The Armenian Foreign Minister made the following comment on the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process on 9 June at the press conference held on the occasion of the visit of his Russian colleague⁴⁰:

“The Armenian side is happy to hear statements by the top leadership of Turkey that they are going and are ready to normalize and establish diplomatic relations with Armenia and open the Armenian-Turkish border. On the other hand, we see differences in approaches in a sense that Turkey constantly announces that this normalization process must

40 “FM Mirzoyan comments on Armenia-Turkey normalization process”, *ArmenPress*, June 9, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1085589/>

take place without any precondition, but we regularly see connection between the Armenia-Turkey normalization process and the Armenia-Azerbaijan processes. 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 pace. 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"

With the statement made by the Foreign Ministries of both countries on 28 June, it was announced that the fourth meeting between the special representatives of the two countries would be held on 1 July 2022 in Vienna.

Prime Minister Pashinyan held a comprehensive online press conference on 28 June. The part of his speech about Türkiye and the normalization process is below:

"There is an opportunity for a positive shift, and we must do everything to use it. If negotiations are ongoing, then there is a realization that a settlement is possible and we need to move forward in small steps. However, some statements that come from Turkey have a negative impact on this process, create a negative background. Particularly the 'Zangezur corridor' wording. This refers to the road through the territory of Armenia, which will connect Azerbaijan with its exclave Nakhichevan. The Armenian side has repeatedly announced that it agrees to unblock communications, but with the preservation of sovereign control over these roads, since the term "corridor" implies a loss of sovereignty. At the same time, dissatisfaction with the statements of the Turkish side does not mean the end of the dialogue with the Armenian side."⁴¹

The Armenian Special Representative Ruben Rubinyan, who is also the Vice President of the Armenian National Assembly, made some statements to the press correspondents in the Assembly on 30 June before the fourth meeting:

"Armenia does not see much progress in the negotiation process with Ankara. Since the beginning of the process, Armenia has been very constructive. Armenia has the political will and has shown that will for quickly reaching the normalization. The success of this process depends on the respective political will of Turkey. As you can see, up to this point there has not been much progress. There is no specific document

41 Ani Avetisyan and Ismi Aghayev, "Pashinyan confirms the city of Lachin to be handed to Azerbaijan", *OC Media*, June 28, 2022, <https://oc-media.org/pashinyan-confirms-the-city-of-lachin-to-be-handed-to-azerbaijan/>

on the table and there is no issue of ‘re-delimitation’ of borders on the agenda. Ankara’s proposal to hold one of the meetings in Yerevan implies that our Turkish colleagues consider the process to be two-sided. The statements of some Turkish officials that they coordinate or have coordinated the process with Azerbaijan are a bit strange. But I repeat that the main thing in the process is political will, if there is a will, the rest is easy to solve. The lack of progress so far does not mean there cannot be any in the future. And also it doesn’t mean that it will definitely give results. Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, last week, said that Ankara was anticipating for the opening of the ‘corridor’ — a scheme being advanced by Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev, who wants a land route to connect mainland Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan. These statements in no way contribute to the Armenia-Turkey normalization process, perhaps, they have the opposite effect — they hinder that process. There is no term ‘Zangezur corridor’ on our agenda. Armenia has not discussed it, is not discussing and will not discuss any project in a corridor logic.”⁴²

The Zangezur Corridor issue continues to be a major agenda item in Armenia. At the cabinet meeting on the same day, the Secretary of National Security underlined that no road passing through Armenia could be called a corridor and stated that border and customs controls could not be lifted.

As a result of the fourth meeting of the Special Representatives, a similar statement was made by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both countries. Below is the statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye:

“Special Representatives for the normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia, Ambassador Serdar Kılıç and Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament Ruben Rubinyan held their fourth meeting today in Vienna.

They agreed to enable the crossing of the land border between Türkiye and Armenia by third-country citizens visiting Türkiye and Armenia respectively at the earliest date possible and decided to initiate the necessary process to that end.

They also agreed on commencing direct air cargo trade between Türkiye and Armenia at the earliest possible date and decided to initiate the necessary process to that effect.

42 “Rubinyan notes lack of progress in talks with Turkey ahead of Vienna meeting”, *Karabkhspace.eu*, June 20, 2022, <https://karabkhspace.commonspace.eu/news/rubinyan-notes-lack-progress-talks-turkey-ahead-vienna-meeting>

Furthermore, they discussed other possible concrete steps that can be undertaken towards achieving the ultimate goal of full normalization between their respective countries. Finally they reemphasized their agreement to continue the normalization process without preconditions.”⁴³

In the Armenian press, it was noted that the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu expressed the following issues regarding the normalization process with Armenia at the joint press conference held on the occasion of the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs’ visit:

- Türkiye wants the Armenian-Turkish process to continue step-by-step.
- Türkiye “consults and coordinates its actions with Azerbaijan at all stages”.
- Ankara supports the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, it is necessary to open the “Zangezuri Corridor”, which should be created on the basis of agreements between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as implement other transport projects, because after the Ukrainian war, this corridor became of strategic importance.
- So far, Yerevan is not ready to hold the next rounds of negotiations aimed at the settlement of Armenian-Turkish relations.
- Some circles in Armenia do not want peace in the region and are putting pressure on Yerevan, which is an obstacle to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Türkiye. The pressure does not allow Yerevan to take bold steps towards settlement. We are ready for constructive dialogue. The region needs lasting peace.
- The Armenian Diaspora is divided into two parts. One part categorically does not want to support the settlement process, the other part supports it.
- Some forces in Armenia attack the house of the Prime Minister, carry out street actions and exert serious pressure, and this creates a serious obstacle in the process of normalization of Armenia’s relations with Azerbaijan and Türkiye.

43 “No: 212, 1 July 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 Türkiye*, July 1, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-212_-turkiye-ve-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcileri-nin-gorusmeleri-hk.en.mfa

In his subsequent statements, Minister Çavuşoğlu reiterated that the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations depends on Armenia's negotiations for a peace agreement with Azerbaijan and opening a highway corridor to Nakhchivan. He noted that, even after four meetings, Armenia did not take any concrete steps in this direction. Çavuşoğlu made similar statements in August, saying that Yerevan needs to stop using the pressure of the Armenian Diaspora and local extremists as an excuse in order not to accept the Turkish-Azerbaijani demands. Regarding the armed conflict that broke out on 13 September on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, Türkiye firmly sided with Azerbaijan and warned Armenia to end its provocations against Baku. In a speech, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan invited Armenia to immediately turn away from this wrong path it had taken, stated that this policy will undoubtedly have consequences for Armenia and that not only does Armenia not comply with the agreement it has signed, but it is also in a perpetual stance of aggression.

In a statement he made on 7 July after the cabinet meeting, the Minister of Economy of Armenia also touched upon the issue of opening the border with Türkiye and stated; "After the opening of the border, Armenia will turn from a 'dead end' into a 'crossroads.' Naturally, as a result of this, we will have very large economic effects".⁴⁴ On the same date, Prime Minister Pashinyan issued a memorandum to the government institutions of Armenia and instructed them to contact and cooperate with the relevant Turkish authorities as soon as possible for the implementation of the agreement reached to open the Turkish-Armenian border to third country citizens. According to a report published in the Armenian press, it was claimed that the Turkish and Armenian authorities planned to conduct a meeting at the border on 14 September, but this meeting was canceled due to the 13 September clashes on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

A symbolic development in the normalization process was the telephone conversation between the President of Türkiye and the Prime Minister of Armenia on 11 July. The parties made similar brief statements regarding the context of this conversation. It was the first call between the two leaders where they also congratulated each other for the Sacrifice Feast and Vardavar Holiday. The two leaders underlined the importance of the bilateral process for the normalization of relations between their countries and stated that this would assist the solidifying of peace and stability in the region. The Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul Sahak II and the representatives of the Turkish Armenian community expressed their satisfaction with this development.

44 "Economy minister: After Turkey border opening Armenia will turn from 'dead end' into 'crossroads'", *News.am*, July 7, 2022, <https://news.am/eng/news/710794.html>

The US, EU, and Russia expressed their content with the normalization process in Türkiye-Armenia relations. The US Department of State stated that they strongly support the normalization process, and that the Turkish-Armenian dialogue has the potential to improve regional stability. The Spokesperson of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed that they are ready to assist the Turkish-Armenian dialogue and provide all kinds of support and that they believe this is crucial for the stability and economic prosperity of the region.

The gestures in the normalization process continued with mutual messages of condolence. The Turkish Special Representative sent a message of condolence to the Armenian counterpart on 15 August, expressing his sadness due to the explosion that occurred in the center of Yerevan on 14 August, which claimed more than 20 lives. The Special Representative of Armenia sent a message of condolence to his Turkish colleague on 22 August for the traffic accident in Gaziantep and Mardin in which 32 Turkish citizens died. The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs also sent a message of condolence to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu on 15 November due to the terrorist bomb attack in Istanbul.

The Armenian lobby in the US continued to escalate its anti-Türkiye activities. One of the four resolutions against Azerbaijan and Türkiye, of which the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) ensured its approval in the US Congress, was in relation to not selling F-16 fighter jets to Türkiye. In September, the Armenian and Greek lobbies decided to cooperate to prevent Turkish-origin Dr. Mehmet Öz from being elected as a US Senator in the by-elections and continued their disruptive campaigns essentially targeting Türkiye and Turks until November. The Governor of the State of California signed a law on 30 September, which has been worked on for a long time by the Armenian lobby, thereby 24 April was declared a public holiday in California as the "Armenian genocide remembrance day".

Despite the normalization process, Armenia remained indifferent within the period to the continuation of activities that fueled hostility towards Türkiye and Turks, and even expedited them with the formation of a trilateral format. With its statement published on 7 September, the Armenian Embassy in Athens commemorated the events of 6-7 September 1955 in a manner that was "more royalist than the king". The "genocide museum-institute" in Yerevan organized a three-day international seminar titled "Smyrna in the context of the Armenian and Greek genocides: annihilation, arson and deportation (September 1922)".

Within the framework of the European Political Community Summit held in Prague on 6 October, the President of Türkiye and the Prime Minister of

Armenia met face to face for the first time.⁴⁵ Prior to this bilateral meeting, a conversation took place in the summit hall, in an informal setting, with the participation of the President of Azerbaijan. A brief statement was made from the Armenian government's press office regarding the meeting. Accordingly, the two leaders discussed further steps to be taken in establishing diplomatic relations and opening the common border between their countries. In addition, the subject of implementing the issues agreed by the special representatives as soon as possible was also reviewed. It was also noted that views were exchanged concerning regional developments. No details were given in the statement issued by the Turkish Presidency. It was only stated that the Turkish President had received the Armenian Prime Minister.⁴⁶

On the other hand, Turkish President Erdoğan also touched upon the issue of Türkiye-Armenia relations at the press conference he held after the summit and said the following:

“Türkiye and Armenia can achieve full normalization on the basis of good neighborly relations. Türkiye-Armenia negotiations are carried out through special representatives. My meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan took place in a friendly atmosphere. I sincerely believe that we can achieve our goal of full normalization on the basis of good neighborly relations in the region. Türkiye has no preconditions for full normalization. Ankara expects Yerevan and Baku to resolve their own issues and conclude a peace agreement. Ankara wants the relations between Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Armenia to soften and the problems between the parties to be resolved. The foreign ministers and special representatives of the two countries will meet and take matters to a higher level. What I said to Prime Minister Pashinyan was that as soon as we make a peace agreement with Azerbaijan, there will be no problem.”

The opening of a second airport in the liberated lands of Azerbaijan, in Zangilan, after Fuzuli, on 20 October with a ceremony attended by the Presidents of Türkiye and Azerbaijan, had limited coverage in the Armenian press. An attempt was made to cover it with the opening ceremony of the Iranian Consulate General in Kapan, a nearby town.

45 “Erdoğan ile Paşinyan arasında ilk temas: Prag’da bir araya geldiler”, *Cumhuriyet*, 6 Ekim 2022, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/erdogan-ile-pasinyan-arasinda-ilk-temas-pragda-bir-araya-geldiler-1989357>

46 Mehmet Tosun, “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Prag’da Ermenistan Başbakanı Paşinyan’ı kabul etti”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, 6 Ekim 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-pragda-ermenistan-basbakani-pasinyani-kabul-etti/2704585>

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