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THE STATEHOOD PROCESS OF ARMENIANS, THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THEM AND THE EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

(ERMENİLERİN DEVLETLEŞME SÜRECİ, ETKİLENDİKLERİ UNSURLAR VE
MEVCUT DURUMUN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ)

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Abstract: *Armenians, among the Caucasian tribes, accepted the sovereignty of the states established in the region and could not show a political presence. During the Eastern Roman period, Armenians were emigrated to the west for security reasons. Under the Seljuks period, they were freed from oppression and lived freely. Armenians, who developed their beliefs, culture and language without restrictions under Turkish rule, were appointed to various positions within the Ottoman state organization after the Mora revolt. After seeing that Russia would not be allowed to open up to the world's seas from the Balkans, Armenians became the main actors in policies towards the Ottoman Empire. Armenians, believing in the promises of independence, caused many innocent people to lose their lives*

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with their activities. In the study, the issue of whether Armenians gained the ability to become a state was investigated. The reasons why the independence gained in 1991 existed formally but could not progress were emphasized. The study focused on the consequences of the country being the weakest link in the Caucasus politically, economically and militarily. The reasons and effects of the country's position as the arena where power struggles are staged and the policies needed to be more effective are discussed.

Keywords: *Armenia, Independence, Foreign Policy, Power, Türkiye.*

Öz: *Kafkas kavimleri arasında yer alan Ermeniler bölgede kurulan devletlerin hakimiyetini kabul etmiş ve dönem boyunca siyasi bir varlık gösterememiştir. Doğu Roma'nın güvenlik gerekçesiyle batıya göç ettirdiği Ermeniler, Selçuklularla birlikte baskıdan kurtulmuş ve hür vatandaş statüsü kazanmıştır. Türklerin hakimiyetinde inançlarını, kültürlerini, dillerini sınırlama olmadan geliştiren Ermeniler, Mora isyanından sonra Osmanlı devlet teşkilatı içinde çeşitli görevlere getirilmiştir. Rusya'nın Balkanlardan dünya denizlerine açılmasına müsaade edilmeyeceğini gördükten sonra Ermeniler, Osmanlı Devleti'ne yönelik politikaların baş aktörü olmuştur. Bağımsızlık vaatlerine inanan Ermeniler, faaliyetleriyle birçok masumun hayatını kaybetmesine neden olmuştur. Çalışmada Ermenilerin devlet olma becerisini kazanıp kazanamadıkları konusu araştırılmıştır. 1991'de kazanılan bağımsızlığın şeklen var olması ancak ileri gidemeyişinin nedenleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Çalışmada ülkenin Kafkasların siyasi, ekonomik ve askeri açıdan en zayıf halkası olmasının sonuçları, güç mücadelelerinin sahnelendiği alan olmasının nedenleri, etkileri ve mücadele alanında daha etkin olabilmek için gereken politikaların neler olduğu tartışılmıştır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ermenistan, Bağımsızlık, Dış Politika, Güç, Türkiye.*

INTRODUCTION

Armenians have lived under the rule of different states throughout history without having political existence. In the Eastern Roman-Iranian conflict, the geography they lived in turned into a battlefield and they faced both human and economic losses. For this reason, many Armenians were sent to the west to ensure security on the Eastern Roman-Iranian border. The Armenians, who were subjected to political, military, religious and economic oppression under Eastern Roman rule, were accepted as one of the essential components of the state with the Seljuks and developed themselves in every aspect. Armenians were influenced by the nationalist movements that started to develop after the French Revolution later than the Ottoman Christian citizens in the west.

The Russians realized that they would not be allowed to pass through the Turkish Straits and the Balkans to the Mediterranean by the western powers. For this reason, they saw the Eastern Anatolia region, where Armenians predominantly lived within the Ottoman borders, as a new route hope to reach to the seas of the world. Aiming to reach the Gulf of Iskenderun through the territory of independent Armenia to be established under their control, the Russians encouraged the Armenians to revolt politically, economically and militarily. Although Armenians gained independence for a short time after World War I, they could not avoid being a part of the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War period opened the doors for Armenians to establish an independent state. The Armenians, who declared their independence in 1991, pursued impossible goals without taking into account the features of their geography, population structure and their additional resources. The Armenians' territorial claims towards its neighbors prevented the country from opening up to the outside world and caused it to move away from its claim of being an independent state. The South Caucasus, which the Russian Federation sees as its sphere of influence, has become a new area of international competition.

This study seeks to answer to the question of whether Armenia's capabilities and ambitions coincided. In this context, the impacts on Armenia's statehood process, political structure, economic structure, population concerns, military capacity and social-cultural structure are analyzed. It has been observed that the imperial claims that Armenia has put forward by relying on the diaspora and its supporters have caused instability and poverty to its people. It is concluded that Armenia, whose statehood process continues with difficulties, should shift away from its rhetoric that does not match its capabilities and

accept that living in peace is the only option for Armenia in accordance with the actual reality.

Armenians' Encounter with Turks and the Process of Statehood

There are different views regarding the historical background of Armenians.¹ Armenia is the name of the geographical region inhabited by different tribes in the past, and it is not a region belonging only to Armenians.² It is accepted in many sources that the community, which is predominantly called Armenian, came to the Armenian region through Anatolia in the 6th century BC, and that they were called Armenians in reference to the name of the region.³ Esat Uras emphasizes the ties of Armenians with Iranians. Uras explains these ties as follows:

“Armenians lived together with the Iranians, especially the Medians and Parthians for a long time. They undoubtedly understood each other’s languages. Therefore, it is understood that the Armenian language is of the same origin as the Pahlavi language and that there are religious, cultural and traditional ties.”⁴

Although the relations between Turks and Armenians are said to have started as early as the Scythians⁵, it is accepted that they began with the expeditions of Turkish commanders serving in the Abbasid army to Anatolia in the early 9th century. The active period in Turkish-Armenian relations began with the military incursions carried out by Çağrı Bey in Anatolia from 1018.⁶ Before the Seljuk rule, the people living in Armenia, which was seen as a buffer zone in the Iran-Roman and Byzantine-Arab conflicts, were living in constant distress. In order to increase security on its eastern borders, Byzantium transported Armenians from their homeland to the interior and even to Thrace, replacing them with people brought from other regions and prisoners

1 Şenol Kantarcı, “Tarih Boyunca Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Ermeni Sorunu’nun Ortaya Çıkışı”, ed. Mehmet Metin Hülâgü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014a), 191-192.

2 Bayram Kodaman, “Türk-Ermeni İhtilâfının Başlangıcı (1878-1897)”, ed. Mehmet Metin Hülâgü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 240.

3 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2010), 4.

4 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1950), 109.

5 Şenol Kantarcı, “Tarih Boyunca Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Ermeni Sorunu’nun Ortaya Çıkışı”, 191.

6 Kemal Çiçek, *Ermeni Sorununda Tehcir ve Ötesi*, (Ankara: Astana Yayınları, 2016), 11.

of war.⁷ Armenians, who were subjected to Byzantine pressure to convert to the Orthodox sect, preferred to come under Turkish rule as soon as they saw the tolerant stance of the Seljuk State.⁸ In order to rid themselves of their troubles, they did not show any resistance when Çağrı Bey came to the Lake Van region.⁹

The first relations of the Ottomans with Armenians began when Orhan Bey moved the Armenians and their religious leaders from Kütahya to Bursa. The conquest of Istanbul made a new era for Armenians who were freed from the religious, political, economic and cultural oppression of Byzantium.¹⁰ Armenians lived their beliefs and traditions in peace under Ottoman rule. While there is no nation in the world that lived under the control of Western states and did not lose its ethnic structure, language and religion, Armenians preserved their identity in every aspect.¹¹

In the 17th century, the Karabakh cleric Israel Ori tried to make a crusade by appealing to the Russian Tsar Peter to make an independent Armenia. In the following period, Armenians took advantage of every opportunity to strive for independence or autonomy and always pinned their hopes on Russia.¹² However, Armenians would eventually realize that the aim of their northern neighbors was not to gain independence for Armenians. This is because Russian Tsar Nicholas II, in his statement dated March 21, 1828, announced the annexation of new territories called “Armenian Provinces” to the empire and added the title of “King of Armenia” to the imperial title.¹³ The Armenians, to which no one paid attention to until the 19th century, suddenly became the center of attention of the great powers in this century¹⁴ and the movement for the establishment of a national state among Armenians began to find supporters in the last quarter of the 19th century with the influence of the states that supported them for imperial purposes.

7 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları VII. Dizi, 1983), 20-22.

8 Osman Turan, *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mevkuresi Tarihi*, Cilt 1, 2.Baskı, (İstanbul: Nakışlar Yayınevi, 1978), 294.

9 Ali Sevim, *Genel Çizgileriyle Selçuklu-Ermeni İlişkileri*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1983), 7-11.

10 Şenol Kantarcı, “Tarih Boyunca Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Ermeni Sorunu’nun Ortaya Çıkışı”, 199.

11 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, 11-19.

12 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, 761-777.

13 Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 24.

14 Bayram Kodaman, “Türk-Ermeni İhtilâfının Başlangıcı (1878-1897)”, 248.

In fact, the Ottoman Empire characterized Armenians as “millet-i sadıkâ” (loyal nation) after the Greeks gained their independence.¹⁵ Armenians became preferred partners in the administration of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶ They were appointed to all kinds of positions without prejudice, such as translators, tax officials, architects, craftsmen and ministers.¹⁷ They took part in the administration of the country as 5 ministers, 22 generals, 33 deputies, 7 ambassadors, 11 consuls, 12 teachers, 8 doctor generals, 42 high-ranking officials¹⁸ and had the opportunity to have more economic opportunities than many Turks. After the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, Armenians, like other Christian components in the Ottoman Empire, intensified their attempts to establish an independent state.¹⁹ The priests, who always had great influence over Armenians, were at the forefront of the Armenian revolts against the state due to Russian provocations. For example, in Echmiadzin, a catagogue named Hagop Chugayesi “put forward the idea of appealing to the Pope for help to save Armenia”, and before that, “two other catagogues named Istepans and Mikael” supported similar views.²⁰

After the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul went to the Russian Tsar in Yeşilköy and demanded the annexation of Eastern Anatolia by the Russians and the granting of autonomy to Armenians. In line with the Patriarch’s demands²¹, the Ottoman Empire accepted the existence of a country called Armenia with the use of the term “Armenia” in Article 16 of the Yeşilköy Treaty.²² In the Berlin negotiations, the “Armenian issue” was brought to the international arena and settled in international politics.²³ Armenians, aiming to establish closer ties with Russia and seek its protection, wanted to leave Ottoman rule.

15 Şenol Kantarcı, “Katolik Ermenilerin Anadolu’daki Faaliyetleri”, ed. Mehmet Metin Hülâgü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014b), 68-78.

16 Paul B. Henze, “Ulusal İç Muhalefetin Görünümü ve Yarattığı Sorunlar, Tarihsel ve İşlevsel Karşılaştırmalar”, p. 29-77, *Stratejik Açından Sovyet Müslümanları ve Diğer Azınlıklar*, translation: Yuluğ Tekin Kurat, (Ankara: Forum Yayınları No:5, 1988), 29-77.

17 Kemal Çiçek, *Ermeni Sorununda Tehcir ve Ötesi*, 14.

18 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, 12.

19 Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya XVIII. Yüzyıl Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına Kadar Türk-Rus İlişkileri (1798-1919)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2011), 113.

20 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, 751.

21 Cemalettin Taşkıran, C., “1915 Yılı Ermeni Tehciri”, (ed) Soyalp Tamçelik, *Ermenistan Tarih, Hukuk, Dış Politika ve Toplum*, (Ankara: Gazi Kitabevi, 2015), 7.

22 Recep Karacakaya, “İstanbul Ermeni Patrikleri ve Siyasi Faaliyetleri (1878-1923)”, (ed.) Mehmet Metin Hülâgü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 83.

23 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 113.

In order to spread the idea of nationalism, especially among young Armenians²⁴, Armenians initiated terrorist activities in order to keep the Armenian issue on the agenda by establishing relations with anti-Turkish organizations and states, most of which were located abroad.

At a time when the Armenian rebellions were becoming increasingly widespread, Sultan Abdülhamid II banned Armenians from working as goldsmith and state contractors in the Ottoman Empire in order to dry up the economic source of terrorism. Despite diplomatic pressure from Armenian-supporting states, the bans were not lifted. In a period of increasing international tensions, Armenians attempted to assassinate Abdülhamid II, who prevented them from achieving their goals in the Ottoman country, in front of the Hamidiye Mosque in Yıldız on July 21, 1905, but they failed.²⁵ After the assassination attempt, there were other events that would influence world history. On November 12, 1912, Russia issued an ultimatum to the Ottoman Empire, claiming that “Armenians wanted to unite with Russia” and demanded that the promised reforms in the regions where Armenians lived be started immediately. “Russophilia” among Armenians reached its highest level and Armenians in Eastern Anatolia under Russian control started to take up arms to fight against the Turks.²⁶ Since the Armenians were no more than a consistent tool for Russia, their aspirations for independence or autonomy remained a dream until the end of World War I. During World War I, Armenians, who considered being a province of Russia, a Christian state, as a success, were consumed with the idea of remaking an independent Armenia.²⁷ Russia’s withdrawal from the war during the Bolshevik Revolution and the end of its support to Armenians ruined all the plans of Armenians.²⁸ After the dissolution of the Mavera-yı Caucasus Republic, which was jointly established by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenians after the fall of Tsardom, on April 26, 1918 due to the failure to resolve the conflicts, the Armenian State, which was established on May 26, 1918²⁹, was destroyed by the occupation of the Red Army in November 1920 and the Armenian Soviet Republic was declared.³⁰ According to the general

24 BOA, Dâhiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti Belgeleri (DH.EUM): 2.şube, dosya no.20, vesika no.44.

25 Houssine Alloul, Edhem Eldem, Henk de Smaele, ed, to *Kill a Sultan. A Transnational History of the attempt on Abdülhamid II (1905)*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1-9.

26 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, 52-58.

27 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 79-250.

28 Mehmet Saray, *Ermenistan ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, 105.

29 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, ۲۳۶.

30 Abdullah Demir, *Tarihten Günümüze Rus Yayılmacılığı ve Yeni Kurulan Cumhuriyetler*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 1999), 128.

opinion, since the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne resolved the rivalry between Russia and Türkiye, the Armenian question fell off the international political agenda.³¹ As a result, Armenia became part of the Trans-Caucasian Federative Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922. In 1936, it became a member of the USSR and was renamed the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.³²

On January 27, 1973, Guren Migirdich Yanikian, an Armenian komitadji active in Eastern Anatolia during World War II, assassinated Türkiye's Consul General in Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and Consul Bahadır Demir. This assassination started a chain of assassinations of Turkish foreign missions by Armenian terrorists.³³ In 1975, terrorist organizations called ASALA and JCAG was established. As a result of the assassinations initiated by ASALA, more than 30 Turkish diplomats were martyred.³⁴ The statehood process of Armenians occurred in 1991. This was because Armenia, which was part of the Soviet Union until 1991, declared its independence as a result of the referendum held in September 1991. Armenia, whose capital is Yerevan, is the smallest of the Caucasian republics. It borders Azerbaijan to the east, Georgia to the north, Iran to the south and Türkiye to the west.

The Political Structure Of Armenia

After 1990, Armenia was also influenced by the Western policy of promoting democracy in the post-Soviet space. Armenia found itself in the process of democratization in order to take part in the new order and overcome domestic political problems. As a state system, it presents itself as a democratic system that works for the protection of human rights and freedom. However, political developments in post-independence Armenia were far from meeting expectations, and efforts to protect human rights and freedoms were fruitless.³⁵ The regulations made in the laws could not be applied in practice and legal regulations could not be implemented. Karabakh-based politicians who

31 Khatchik DerGhougassian, Genocide and Identity (Geo) Politics: Bridging State Reasoning and Diaspora Activism, *Genocide Studies International* 8, (2 Fall 2014), pp.193-207, p. 199. doi:10.3138/gsi.8.2.05.

32 US Department Of State, (ty). Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/countries/armenia> , date of access: 09.10.2023

33 Anadolu Ajansı, (2019). <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turkiyeden-ermeni-teroriste-siki-ta-kip/1545798>, date of access: 03.04.2022,

34 TRT Haber, (2021). <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/suikastlara-kurban-giden-turk-diplomatlar-564152.html>, date of access: 03.04.2022

35 M. Vedat Gürbüz, *Kafkasya'da Siyaset Çatışma Ortamı ve Taraf Güçler*, (Ankara: Kadim Yayınları, 2012), 171-192.

dominate Armenia's political life have always kept the policy of annexing the Karabakh region, which they occupied with the military and political support of Russia, on the agenda of the country. The utopia of annexing Karabakh has constantly dragged Armenia down. Since its independence, Armenia has taken initiatives in the field of law to achieve a democratic system in line with European standards.³⁶ The 1996 Treaty of Association and Cooperation between Armenia and the European Union (EU) agreed to consolidate the rule of law, democratic principles, market economy and respect for human rights, which paved the way for the development of relations with EU member states.³⁷ In 2001, Armenia became a member of the Council of Europe, reaffirming its commitment to the values of democracy and human rights as well as European integration.³⁸ However, local opposition and civic groups believe that EU pressure on Armenian authorities to bring about democratic change was weak.³⁹ As a consequence of Armenia's accession to the Council of Europe, the 1995 Constitution was revised in a 2005 referendum and a 117-article constitution was adopted.⁴⁰ Despite the change in the constitution, the mentality has not changed, so the changes have been implemented in a formal way, but these changes are not reflected on the people and daily life at the desired level.

Especially in recent years, the issue that has been politically challenging for Armenia is the possible constitutional amendment. This is because the declaration of independence in the Constitution of Armenia includes the unification of the Karabakh region with Armenia. While Azerbaijan has demanded the amendment of this article, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has signalled that he is willing to respond positively to Azerbaijan's request and that a referendum will be held. It is clear that Azerbaijan-Armenia normalization is not possible if the Karabakh claim continues to be enshrined in the Armenian Constitution.⁴¹ Grigor Minasian, Armenia's Minister of

36 Grigor Mouradian, Independence of the Judiciary in Armenia, *Judicial Independence in Transition*, Judicial Independence in Transition içinde (pp.1197-1253). *Strengthening the Rule of Law in the OSCE Region*, (eds) A. Siebert Fohr, (London: Springer. 2012).

37 Soner Karagül, "Ermenistan'ın Bağımsızlık Sonrası Avrupa ile İlişkileri, OAKA cilt 1, sayı 2, (2006), 128-148.

38 Nelli Babayan, European Neighbourhood Policy in Armenia: On the Road to Failure or Success, *CEU Political Science Journal*, 4(3), (2009), 374.

39 Emil Danielyan (2010). EU likely to stay cautious on political reform in Armenia, <https://www.azatut-yun.am/a/2049408>, date of access: 05.08. 2022.

40 Constitute Project, Ermenistan Anayasası 2005, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Armenia_2005.pdf, date of access: 23.04.2022.

41 Joshua Kucera (2024). A Constitutional Amendment That Could Lead To Peace Between Armenia And Azerbaijan, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-constitution-azerbaijan-nagorno-karabakh/33068045.html>, Accessed: 07.08.2024.

Justice, has stated that a possible referendum on the demanded new Armenian constitution will take place in 2027.⁴² However, Armenian opposition leaders argue that Azerbaijan does not intend to make peace without more extensive concessions from Armenia.⁴³

The Economic Structure of Armenia

Armenia is a country located between Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran, with insufficient resources, geographical disadvantages, incomplete economic development,⁴⁴ and 27% of its population living below the poverty line.⁴⁵ Armenia has the highest unemployment rate and the lowest national income in the South Caucasus.⁴⁶ Regarding energy resources, the country is dependent on external sources, especially from Russia.

As a former Soviet state, Armenia is faced with the problem of poverty.⁴⁷ The most important obstacle to the development of Armenia's economy stems from the country's geopolitical location and economic isolation. External economic and political support provided by the Armenian diaspora is not enough for Armenia to recover.⁴⁸ Armenia's economy is heavily dependent on Russian aid. Increasing foreign debt has made the country's economic structure even more fragile. Armenia has been excluded from energy projects in the region due to its political isolation.⁴⁹ As a result of these events, Armenia has become more dependent on Russia's support. Thus, the opportunity was presented for the Russians to re-establish their influence in the former Soviet space.⁵⁰ According

42 Azatutyun (2024). Armenian Constitutional Referendum 'Planned For 2027', <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33098341.html>, Accessed: 29.09.2024.

43 Galstian, Shoghik (2024). Armenia's Top Court Downplays Constitutional Clause Resented By Baku, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33142396.html>, Accessed: 01.10.2024.

44 Erhan Büyükcakıncı, "Ermenistan Dış Politikasından Uluslararası Sistem Değişkenlerine Bakış", (Der.) Okan Yesilot, *Değişen Dünya Düzeninde Kafkasya*, (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2005), 124-125.

45 The World Bank (2023). https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_ARM.pdf, Accessed: 19.08.2024.

46 Anadolu Ajansı, (2022). 2021'de Ermenistan: Savaş ve Barış Arasında <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/2021de-ermenistan-savas-ve-baris-arasinda/2475853>, Accessed: 12.05.2022.

47 Arman Vardanyan and Lilit Abrahamyan, PRSP Participatory Process in Armenia: Lessoned Learned, *Transit Stud Rev*, 15:737-745, (2009), 737-738.

48 Abdullah Demir, *Tarihten Günümüze Rus Yayılmacılığı ve Yeni Kurulan Cumhuriyetler*, 130.

49 Gaidz Minassian, Armenia, a Russian Outpost in the Caucasus?, *ifri Russia/NIS Center*, (2008).

50 George Friedman (2008). The Russo-Georgian War and the Balance of Power, Geopolitical Intelligence Report, August 12, http://druckversion.studien-von-zeitfragen.net/The_Russo_Georgian_War.pdf, Accessed: 25.05.2022.

to Russia, Russia is an indispensable country for Armenia. This is because Russia is Armenia's biggest trade partner. Almost half of the investments made towards Armenia are made by Russia.⁵¹ Since the Armenian economy, which does not have sufficient resources and opportunities, continues to depend on Russia, this dependence manifests itself in every field.

Armenia's Population Concern and Its Impact on Military Capacity

Despite the incentives Armenia has put forward, it has not been able to reach the expected population rate. Within the framework of the project of Armenians returning to their homeland, which was initiated worldwide during the Soviet era, about one hundred thousand Armenians migrated to Armenia from foreign countries in 1946-48.⁵² This practice, which continues today, does not receive the expected level of interest. The Armenians who emigrated to Armenia hoped for better living conditions, but they found themselves isolated from the world and with a lower standard of living. Almost all of the Armenians who migrated to Armenia do not want to acquire Armenian citizenship despite the incentives.⁵³ So much so that even those who do come go back to their places of origin after some time. Approximately one million people left Armenia after independence due to police and civil servant misconduct, economic crisis, and restrictions on trade.⁵⁴ Introducing viable health insurance mechanisms and improving employment conditions may be effective in reversing the population's intention to migrate. Policies that improve access to education and technology may make it appealing to migrate to the post-Soviet country, in other words, to return to the region they consider their homeland.⁵⁵

Adopted in 2007, the dual citizenship law declared that Armenia is the homeland of all Armenians.⁵⁶ By making the concept of "homeland" for Armenians, Armenians hope that the diaspora will embrace Armenia more.⁵⁷

51 RT International, (2013). "Armenia Chooses Russian Trade Deal Over EU", 4 Sep. 2013, <https://www.rt.com/business/russia-armenia-customs-eu-391/>, Accessed: 08.02.2022.

52 Emin Arif (Şihaliyev), *Kafkasya Jeopolitiğinde Rusya, İran, Türkiye Rekabetleri ve Ermeni Faktörü*, (Ankara: Naturel Kitap Yayın, 2004), 170-171.

53 M. Vedat Gürbüz, *Kafkasya'da Siyaset Çatışma Ortamı ve Taraf Güçler*, 192.

54 Abdullah Demir, *Tarihten Günümüze Rus Yayılmacılığı ve Yeni Kurulan Cumhuriyetler*, 131.

55 Aleksandr Grigoryan and Knar Khachatryan, Remittances and Emigration Intentions: Evidence From Armenia, *CERGE-EI Working Paper Series* 626, (ISSN 1211-3298), (2018), 29.

56 Anahit Mkrtchyan, The Problem of Adaptation of the Diaspora Armenians in Transition Armenia, *Transit Stud Rev*, (2009), 15:709.

57 Emin Arif (Şihaliyev), *Kafkasya Jeopolitiğinde Rusya, İran, Türkiye Rekabetleri ve Ermeni Faktörü*, 264.

As if they had discovered each other recently, Armenians scattered all over the world have attempted major affairs by ignoring the differences between them. However, the Armenian diaspora, which believes that it is very powerful, has not been able to integrate with the people of Armenia and has not been able to set a goal beyond the psychology of “we can do it too”.⁵⁸ Since diaspora activities have failed to make policies to bring young people to Armenia, the country is in need of an integration policy.⁵⁹ According to 2022 data, the country’s population is 2,976,765.⁶⁰ However, the Armenian population living outside Armenia, which has reached a certain level, also influences the country’s politics. The largest Armenian population in the diaspora lives in Russia with 2.3 million citizens, followed by the US with 1.5 million, France with 400 thousand, and Lebanon with 230 thousand. In addition, varying numbers of Armenians live in Ukraine, Syria, Argentina, Poland, Türkiye, Iran and Canada.⁶¹ Russia, the country with the largest Armenian diaspora, is important in this regard. This is because Armenians living in Russia obtained the right to vote and be elected, which led to an increase in Russia’s influence on Armenian politics.

Armenia is not at the desired level in terms of military capacity and defense budget. According to “Firepower”’s data on countries’ defense budgets for 2024, Armenia ranks 81st with a budget of \$1,380,000,000.⁶² The Armenian army consists of land and air forces. The inventory of the army, which has approximately 45 thousand active soldiers, mostly includes Soviet-era equipment.⁶³ The country, which does not have a navy, wants to improve its military capacity.

According to the document signed between Armenia, the US and the EU in Brussels on April 5, 2024, it was decided to upgrade the Armenian Armed Forces with new generation US-made weapons.⁶⁴ In fact, this situation would

58 M. Vedat Gürbüz, *Kafkasya’da Siyaset Çatışma Ortamı ve Taraf Güçler*, 187-193.

59 Anahit Mkrtchyan (2009). The Problem of Adaptation of the Diaspora Armenians in Transition Armenia, 712.

60 CIA, (2024). The World Factbook Armenia, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/armenia/#military-and-security>, Accessed: 15.08.2024.

61 Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2015). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armenias-diaspora-its-role-and-influence#full-publication-update-history>, Accessed: 16.01.2023.

62 Global Firepower, <https://www.globalfirepower.com/defense-spending-budget.php>, Accessed: 10.10.2024.

63 CIA, (2024). The World Factbook Armenia, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/armenia/#military-and-security>, Accessed: 15.08.2024.

64 Nargiz Mammadli (2024). US Supplies Military Equipment, Personnel to Armenia: Report, <https://www.caspiannews.com/news-detail/us-supplies-military-equipment-personnel-to-armenia-report-2024-8-7-8/>, Accessed: 08.08.2024.

have been unthinkable in the past. This is because Russia was Armenia's long-term strategic partner. However, Armenia, which suffered a defeat in Nagorno-Karabakh, started to move away from Russia politically and economically as it felt that Russia was not fulfilling its security commitments. The EU and the US, seen as alternatives, responded positively to Armenia's initiatives for closer security and economic ties. Thus, the US expanded and deepened its contacts with Armenia.⁶⁵ Despite these partnership initiatives, it is not possible for Russia to remain completely out of the issue. Especially considering the fact that Armenia's economy is dependent on Russia, the scope of these activities will remain limited. Even if Armenia develops closer relations with the West for military cooperation, it will be unlikely to take military initiatives against Russia.

Social-Cultural Structure of Armenia

Armenians practiced pagan beliefs before they converted to Christianity. Even after they accepted Christianity, they could not give up the influence of some traditions from the Zoroastrianism and idolatry period.⁶⁶ Although Armenians claim that they converted to Christianity before other nations in the 4th century,⁶⁷ their claims have not been proven.⁶⁸ It is possible to state that the first serious break that differentiated Armenians from other Christians was the beginning of the Armenian Church's separation from the Byzantine Church and its emergence as an independent national church.⁶⁹ The Armenian national church became the main aspect of Armenian national unity in the following period.⁷⁰ The use of the Armenian Church as an instrument of international politics by Russia, Britain, France and the US led to important opportunities for Armenians.⁷¹ This was because the Armenian Church utilized the role

65 Ani Avetisyan (2024). US to help Armenia modernize its military, <https://eurasianet.org/us-to-help-armenia-modernize-its-military>, Accessed: 18.08.2024.

66 Şenol Kantarcı, "Katolik Ermenilerin Anadolu'daki Faaliyetleri", 73.

67 Ali Arslan, "Ermeni Kilisesi'nin Ermenilerin Hayat ve İdeallerindeki Yeri ve Büyük Güçlerin Ermeni Kilisesine Nüfuzu", ed. Mehmet Metin Hülügü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 13.

68 Şenol Kantarcı, "Katolik Ermenilerin Anadolu'daki Faaliyetleri", 73.

69 Hamza Yavuz, "Konstrüktivist Yaklaşım Çerçevesinde Ermeni Kimliğinin İnşası ve Ermenistan Dış Politikasına Yansımaları", (ed) Soyaloğlu Tamçelik, *Ermenistan Tarih, Hukuk, Dış Politika ve Toplum*, (Ankara: Gazi Kitabevi, 2015), 213.

70 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 25.

71 Ali Arslan, "Ermeni Kilisesi'nin Ermenilerin Hayat ve İdeallerindeki Yeri ve Büyük Güçlerin Ermeni Kilisesine Nüfuzu", 33.

played by the religion factor to the fullest and became a tool for the policies against the Ottoman Empire.⁷²

The alphabet used by Armenians and their preservation of it is also important. It is observed that the Armenians, who established their own printing press in Venice in 1512, developed considerably in the field of literature by using the Armenian alphabet consisting of 39 letters and expanded their publishing activities from 1567 onwards.⁷³ For this reason, the press became the most important means of communication for Armenians. Armenians made it one of their basic policies to protect and use their own alphabet regardless of the state they were under. During the USSR period, while the alphabets of Turks and Muslims were changed on the grounds that they caused difficulties in education, the Armenian alphabet was left untouched. Armenians preserved their national identity during the USSR period through their alphabet. In addition, the Armenian alphabet fulfilled an important function in maintaining ties with Armenians in different parts of the world.⁷⁴ Armenians, nevertheless, know Turkish. Most of the Armenians who have lived under the rule of Turks since the Seljuks arrived in Anatolia have adopted Turkish as their mother tongue as a result of living together for more than eight hundred years.⁷⁵ Armenians also took full advantage of the extensive opportunities provided to them by the Ottoman Empire in the field of education and opened many schools.⁷⁶ They preserved their culture with the broad religious privileges, cultural and legal rights they were given.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The Armenians, who lived under the rule of different states until 1918, tried to make the conditions for establishing an independent state in a part of the South Caucasus that has always been an area of conflict from a strategic point of view. However, during the period they lived under the rule of Turkic states,

72 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 39-40.

73 Gürsoy Şahin, “Ermeni Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri Hakkında”, ed. Mehmet Metin Hülâgü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 117-118.

74 Ali Arslan, “Ermeni Kilisesi’nin Ermenilerin Hayat ve İdeallerindeki Yeri ve Büyük Güçlerin Ermeni Kilisesine Nüfuzu”, 34.

75 Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya XVIII. Yüzyıl Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına Kadar Türk-Rus İlişkileri (1798-1919)*, 111.

76 Ersin Müezzinoğlu, “Ermeni Azınlık Okullarının Ermeni Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşundaki Rolü”, (ed.) Mehmet Metin Hülâgü...[ve başk], *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı: Kilise ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 144.

77 Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, 36-37.

they had opportunities to develop themselves in every aspect. Since the 19th century, they have acted in line with the wishes of states with imperialist aims in the region. Although Armenians conveyed their demands to their supporters at every opportunity to gain independence, they could not achieve their goal until the collapse of the Russian Tsardom. While the Armenians had a short-lived experience of independence after the collapse of Tsarism and the end of the World War I, their state was forced to be a part of the Soviet Union.

Armenia, which gained its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, turned into an arena between Russia and Western powers due to its geopolitical position in the region. Armenia's inadequacies prevented it from acting as an independent state. The country has staked its future on the aid it receives from the diaspora and Europe. Militarily, it is under the control of Russia and is far from forming a realistic policy with its neighbouring countries. Armenia seeks to solve its problems by exerting external pressure on the states it is dealing with. However, it should be recognized that this stance will not fulfil expectations and will have to solve more important problems. Armenia's economy is unable to achieve sufficient growth and development and unable to prevent people from leaving the country. The country is trying to solve these concerns with different formulas and has failed to get the desired result from the dual citizenship policy. Armenia's defeat in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War demonstrated the inadequacy of its economic, political and military capacity. Armenia should objectively analyze the impact of its inability to improve economic conditions on its population's movements. It needs to consider in more detail the impact of the population in meeting Armenia's labour force and trained military personnel requirements. Armenia, which is unable to prevent the internal population from emigrating from the country, needs to address its problems in more detail. Peaceful relations with its neighbours will improve the country's development policies. An Armenia that has resolved its conflicts will not be excluded from the economic projects in the region. It would be mutually beneficial for Armenia to pursue realistic and constructive policies instead of expansionist ones. The idea that Armenia can solve its own problems with its neighbours through public pressure by relying on foreign support is unrealistic. After all, inter-state relations are based on mutual interests. Armenia needs to realize without further delay that it has almost no chance to compete with Azerbaijan, one of the main sources of Europe's energy needs, and Türkiye, a regional power. It should be recognized that more constructive and positive policies in foreign policy will promote development and mutual benefits.

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