

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Armenia and Georgia found themselves in a long process of self-construction in the context of their own complex histories and difficult political and security environments. Even though the foreign policies of the two countries evolved enough to respond to the external and internal threats that faced them in the first two decades of independence, they have not developed a clear vision of foreign policy. However, over time, some patterns of belongingness to the larger community, as well as the construction of “other,” have emerged. By employing a constructivist account of identity construction as the “Self”/“Other” nexus, the study unpacks the process of identity that is reflected in the recent history of the two countries and examines the grounds of “belongingness” and “alterity”. The research is based on an analysis of Armenian and Georgian political discourses. It provides a comprehensive analysis of political discussion and strategic documents. The data is complemented with extensive field-work and in-depth interviews with politicians and members of academia in the both countries, as well as nation-wide surveys of the general public in Armenia and Georgia.

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VALUES AND IDENTITY AS SOURCES OF FOREIGN POLICY  
IN ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

Kornely Kakachia and Alexander Markarov (eds.)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	
<i>Stephen Jones</i> .....	8
Narrating Identity: Belongingness and Alterity in Georgia’s Foreign Policy	
<i>Salome Minesashvili</i> .....	11
National Identity of Georgian Political Elites and Population and Its Impact on Foreign Policy Choices	
<i>Mariam Naskidashvili and Levan Kakhishvili</i> .....	34
Accounting for the "Selfless" Self-Perception among the Georgian Public	
<i>Levan Kakhishvili</i> .....	62
The civic dimension of Georgian National Identity and Its Influence on Foreign Policy	
<i>Tamar Pataraiia</i> .....	79
The Main Dimensions and Issues of Armenia’s Foreign Security Policy	
<i>Alexander Markarov, Narek S. Galstyan and Grigor Hayrapetyan</i> .....	107
The Evolution of Armenia’s Foreign Policy Identity: The Conception of Identity Driven Paths. Friends and Foes in Armenian Foreign Policy Discourse	
<i>Aram Terzyan</i> .....	145
The Armenian Political Elite's Approaches and Beliefs in Foreign Policy	
<i>Abraham Gasparyan</i> .....	184
Armenia's Foreign Policy in the Public Perception	
<i>Narek S. Galstyan</i> .....	233
“Disrupting” or “Complementing”: Diaspora’s Identity Agenda in the Context of Changing Armenian Foreign Policy Priorities	
<i>Abraham Gasparyan</i> .....	264
About the Authors .....	283

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The publication presents nine research papers by Armenian and Georgian authors that explore the role of identity, norms and beliefs in the formation of the foreign policies of the two Caucasian countries. As a whole, the publication explores the triangular relationship between the elitist view of national identity, public perceptions and foreign policy making. The papers investigate different aspects and dimensions of identity, as defined by the elites and perceived by the general public, which are reflected in the foreign policies of Armenia and Georgia in the context of history and their political and security environments. The authors of the papers believe that the two countries are in a process of identity construction. The studies find that this process of identity formation is shaped by ideas and perceptions about external great powers, and follows the path of constructing multiple others vis-à-vis Europe, such as “othering” its northern neighbour, Russia, from a value difference perspective and disassociating from its temporal self – the Soviet past and the Soviet mentality that has lingered in society. The authors of the papers agree that the key decision-makers in foreign policy are the principal agents in the construction process in both countries.

The publication consists of largely qualitative research papers. During the research a comprehensive literature review on the concept of national identity and its linkages with foreign policy was conducted. In addition, the foreign policy discourse, including a content analysis of speeches and statements by representatives of the political elite of Armenia and Georgia, as well as official political documents, have been taken into account. The discourse is contextualized by taking into consideration political, economic and social developments, as well as the public perceptions that have been reflected in numerous surveys conducted in the two countries in recent years. Understanding the identity of the masses made it possible to evaluate the extent of the interrelation between public perceptions and foreign policy. In addition, over the course of the research, the officials involved in making and shaping foreign policy in both the legislative and executive branches were interviewed, which provided invaluable insight into the perceptions of Armenian and Georgian national identities among the political elite in both countries.

The topics addressed in the publication are rarely discussed among the regional scholars and academic community, although they represents

considerable importance for scholars and a much wider audience. The studies have been conducted by both established and young researchers, and are intended to contribute to the transformation process in the region by supporting academic research in social sciences through the promotion of a new generation of scholars.

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## FOREWORD

This collection of essays focuses on the role of identity and ideas in the making of foreign policy in Armenia and Georgia. The essays are not deliberately comparative, but they reveal a “dialectic” of similarity and difference in the foreign policies of both countries; they show us the universal dilemma of small states surrounded by more powerful neighbors, and remind us that even nominally marginal states can be central to international relations, especially during times of Great Power competition and conflict. There are other lessons in these essays for students of international relations when it comes to the divisions between realists and liberal internationalists. Within the two and a half decades of their independent existence, both states have shown realism and liberal internationalism to be interlocking circles rather than opposite ends of a spectrum. There has been no single foreign policy strategy, it has depended in both cases on leaders facing particular conditions - whether it’s the maneuvering of powerful neighboring states (the realist model), or domestic pressures and intercession by transnational bodies (liberal internationalism) - and drawing on their own perceptions of the external world.

The flexibility demanded of both states is not surprising. There are certain underlying geopolitical realities that cannot be ignored, and they have to be dealt with in resourceful ways. Both Georgia and Armenia are situated in the South Caucasian borderlands, a region of enormous strategic significance in past centuries subject to the competitive struggles of powerful empires. They sit on East-West and North-South axes of trade and transit, pressed between the commanding trading blocks of China/East Asia and Europe, and Russia and the Middle East. Both countries describe themselves as a bridge between East and West, vital to European and Chinese ambitions to establish new and more efficient land routes for their powerful economies. They are both small states with few domestic resources and limited foreign policy options against stronger neighbors. They have to perform a balancing act with Great Powers, which when it goes wrong, can become an existential threat. The conflicts in Nagorno Karabagh in the Armenian case, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the Georgian case, show how serious those threats are, and how they distort both domestic and foreign policy. For Armenia, it has meant deeper dependence on Russia; in Georgia, it has led to an exaggerated focus on NATO as a guarantor of security.

This edited volume shows Georgia and Armenia to share other attributes, determined not so much by geopolitics, but by the role of ideas and

values. Both Armenia and Georgia are Christian states (Armenia claims to be the oldest self-declared Christian state), which may have no value in itself for foreign policy, but generates a pro-European outlook based on perceived cultural and historical links (although Azerbaijani elites have a European outlook despite their Muslim background). This has played a more prominent role in the Georgian case - the interviews with Georgian elites as well as the public opinion surveys cited by a number of authors - suggest Georgia's Europeanism is deeply influenced by perceptions of Georgian history. But Armenian leaders, too, in their attempt to pursue a multivectoral policy, rely upon pro-European sentiments, underpinned by Armenia's strong connections to its powerful Diaspora in Europe and North America. What is clear in both cases is that Europe as an idea, as an aspiration, as a balance against Russia, and as an example of prosperity and stability, counts. Such views are firmly stated in the National Security concepts of both countries. The problem, of course, is convincing Russia that this is not an obstacle to Armenia and Georgia's continued deference to Russia's primary role in the region. It is hard to see in Armenia's case - and the recent rejection of the European Association Agreement in favor of the Eurasian Union is an illustration - how Armenia can leverage its self-perceived Europeaness in its foreign policy.

In both countries, history is characterized as one of persistent enmity toward Muslim states. This is a simplification, but in the Armenian case, it has shaped attitudes toward Turkey and Azerbaijan (though not toward Iran, which both countries see less as a threat, and more as a balance against Russia). History has played a vital role in the post-Soviet construction of identity. Yet as the authors remind us, Armenian and Georgian politicians differentiate between Muslim states, and disagree among themselves regarding Russia's role as civilizational ally and protector. Historical perceptions are often overruled in foreign policy by other more pragmatic considerations. Georgia has been successful in securing a profitable economic and political partnership with Turkey and has a vital strategic partnership with Azerbaijan. Armenian leaders have similar aspirations, despite traumatic events in the past such as the emotional memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. President Levon Ter-Petrossyan characterized Armenians' hostility toward Turkey as counter-productive for Armenian security and economic success.

Both Armenia and Georgia are Caucasian states; they share histories, populations, and common cultural values. This collection of essays shows us, however, that elites in both countries are skeptical of a common regional identity, even though it could promote greater cooperation, stability, and

increase the region's attractiveness to the EU and US. The idea of Caucasian identity is barely mentioned by Armenian and Georgian politicians or given consideration in official foreign policy statements. The authors suggest that this is part of a process of "reconstruction," or a broader reimagining that determines how elites think about the world around them. Ideas are selected or deselected for a reason, and the self-image of Armenian and Georgian elites, despite centuries of shared living and common values, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has found greater value in the norms of a more prosperous Europe and a modernizing West.

The majority of essays in this collection focus on the perceptions of elites. But elites, as a number of the authors remind us, are embedded in domestic contexts. If ideas and values are as important as geopolitical realities (or influence those geopolitical realities), then the role of non elites, and the pressures they generate cannot be ignored. Ideas of national identity are not the exclusive property of policy-makers. The relationship of non-elites to foreign policy makers is critical to establishing a complete picture of foreign policy making. The views of non-elites on issues of identity and relations with other states, even if they have limited influence on foreign policy formation, are a powerful resource for politicians seeking alternative strategies abroad. A number of essays in this collection warn us that ignoring the population's own ideas of national identity, could lead to assumptions about the strength of Armenia and Georgia's pro-Western foreign policies that are not always justified.

The articles in this collection are persuasive reminders of the complex variables that make up foreign policy formation in the South Caucasus. The evidence collected in interviews and public opinion surveys reminds us that the tension between geopolitics and civilizational preferences makes for no easy prognosis of Armenia and Georgia's foreign policy futures.

*Stephen Jones  
Amherst, 2016.*

## **NARRATING IDENTITY: BELONGINGNESS AND ALTERITY IN GEORGIA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

### **Introduction**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, former Soviet states emerged from the bubble of predefined roles and policies to face the international community alone for the first time in over 70 years. The new status forced them to redefine themselves domestically, as well as in the international community through their foreign policies. Each country's national identity, self-perception, geographic location and position in the region or the world had to be identified and created (Fawn, 2006, p.1). As a result of the "restructuring of belonging" (Darieva and Kaschuba, 2007, p.18) "any study of post-communist transition(s) became the study of the struggle of ideologies for the power to describe the meaning of the past and determine the direction of the future" (Kaneva, 2012, p.6). For some countries, a notion took hold of belonging to Europe, which was presented as a political, as well as a cultural, community. As a result, the interrelationship between the national and European visions of the community had to be "negotiated specifically in the context of national and European identity discourses" (Kaschuba, 2007, p.25).

Since independence, Georgia found itself in a long process of self-construction in the context of its own complex history and difficult political and security environment. Even though Georgian foreign policy evolved to respond to external and internal threats with reactive features in the first two decades of independence, it did not develop a clear vision. Over time, some patterns of "belonging" to a larger community and also construction of "others" have transformed into an almost irrefutable foreign policy identity. Georgian political elites narrate Georgia's membership in Europe, while "othering" Russia as the antithesis of the West. This paper aims to unpack the process of identity narrating and examine the grounds of "belonging" as well as "alterity". The chapter covers the period after 2003 as the Rose Revolution was a turning point for the country's starkly defined pro-Western foreign policy. The last two

governments –the United National Movement and the Georgian Dream Coalition – are also part of the focus here.

The research employs several constructivist premises when discussing identity. The notion of alterity, or that identity is a relational term and is defined against the other is my focal point (Neumann, 1999; Todorov, 1984; Connolly, 1991). This implies that identity construction is a process of comparison that results in perceptions of similarity and distinctiveness. The other is part of the self and acquires the characteristics that are one way or another embedded in the self. Therefore, the moment of discovering the self is the moment of discovering the other (Todorov, 1984); self-definition is believed to start “in negation, in the designation of what a thing is not” (Norton, 1988, p.3). The process of identity construction is a continuous demarcation between the self and other (Neumann, 1988, p.39), however, it does not always imply exclusion; it might “result in perceptions of distinctiveness as well as similarity and connection” (Woodwell, 2007, p.13). That means foreign policy discourse is not only an expression of collective identity; It is also a process of constructing and reconstructing the self and the other, as well as identifying respective levels of difference and danger from others. Others could be not only multiple but also multiple kinds, defined by the relative difference perceived (Hopf, 2002, p.9).

While employing these premises of identity construction, this paper treats elites as the principal agents in forming states and new identities. Elites “construct, reconstruct and deconstruct collective identities” (Lane, 2011, p.926) and they have a guiding role in first composing and then imposing “concepts of sameness, belongingness and common destiny or purpose” (Best, p.995). The focus of the paper is foreign policy identity, with political elites and their discourse as the major point of analysis.

In line with the theoretical argument that collective identity is a construction, we believe that Georgia’s self-identification as European in the context of othering Russia is also a constructed notion. Elements of identity prevail in foreign policy discourse and, key decision-makers in Georgian foreign policy are the principal agents in the construction process. This study finds that Georgian political elites construct two types of Europe: cultural Europe to

which Georgia already belongs due to its historical ties, and political Europe to which Georgia aspires to belong. European identity is presented as both, and blends into Georgian national identity from both a cultural and supranational (political) perspective. At the same time, Georgia is engaged in a double “othering”: a spatial - othering of Russia, and a temporal othering or disassociation from Georgia’s own Soviet past.

To analyze the foreign policy discourse, the chapter includes a content analysis of speeches and statements by heads of state since the Rose Revolution until 2015, as well as official political documents. In addition, I analyze twenty-two in-depth interviews with officials involved in foreign policy making in both the legislative and executive branches. The three dimensions of construction in the government discourse depending on the intended audience are compared to each other: private (interviews), public and semi-public (speeches and statements directed to domestic public and institutions) and international. Official documents are treated as directed both at domestic and international audiences. This distinction supports the argument that identity is “situational” and “contextual” (Risse, 2010) and is an attempt to consider the element of intentionality in the elites’ attempt to transfer identity to the public mind. The discourse is contextualized by taking into consideration political, economic and social developments.

### **Georgia’s Belongingness to Europe**

“Georgia is forever yoked to Europe. We are joined by a common and unbreakable bond – one based on culture – on our shared history and identity – and on a common set of values that has at its heart, the celebration of peace, and the establishment of fair and prosperous societies” – Mikheil Saakashvili (Inauguration speech, 2004; Civil.ge, 2004).

Before analyzing how Georgian political elites portray belonging to Europe, two questions should be clarified: first, what is meant by Europe and European identity and second, what is the relationship between national identity and European identity.

“Europe” is a contested concept that lacks a single substantive meaning. European Studies scholars have deduced different meanings from the notion of Europe. Michael Bruter (2004) differentiates between cultural and civic aspects of ‘European identity’. He defines identity as “a network of feelings of belonging and exclusion from human groups” (2004, p.31). Accordingly, the cultural pillar of identity corresponds to a citizen’s sense of belonging to a human community, with which s/he believes shares a common culture, social similarities, ethics, values, religion and even ethnicity. On the other hand, the civic pillar corresponds to a citizen’s identification with a political system, an acknowledgement that this political system defines his/her rights and duties as a political being (Bruter, 2008, p.279). Even though Bruter bases his research on the EU member countries, his argument about European identity can be extended to non-member states as well, because “identity is not only caused by citizenship, but desires for the future of citizenship itself” (Bruter, 2009, p.283). This captures the case of Georgia, for which Europeanism is more of a future goal than a current condition.

Thomas Risse (2010) also distinguishes between two types of Europe: EU Europe - embracing modern, democratic and humanistic values against nationalism, militarism or communism and the Europe of white Christian people who see themselves as a distinct civilization (p.6). However, both of these political and cultural Europe imply Christianity as a common European heritage serving on both sides of identity (ibid).

When it comes to national and European identities, the two should not be viewed in exclusive terms. As Risse (2010) argues for European identity, both Europe and the nation are imagined communities, so belonging to both is possible without choosing between the two or “without having to choose primary identification” (p.40). There are various ways of interaction between the national and European identities. The two can interact in a “marble cake” way, which means that they blend with each other or in a “Russian doll” model, when multiple identities are nested with each other (ibid, p.24).

In the case of Georgia, European identity is present both on the national and supranational levels (Coene, 2016). First,

Europeanness is presented on the national level of identity, so the “marble cake” model is relevant here. Georgians refer to cultural Europe when they equate European identity with their own national identity. But Europe is also a supranational identity for Georgians, resembling the “Russian doll” model. In this case, Europe acquires a political or civic aspect and spreads beyond Georgia's borders as a supranational entity. Thus, Georgia appeals to both cultural and political Europe; culturally it is sharing European values that are the basis of modern principles, such as love of freedom, which later transforms into the modern European value of individualism. On the other hand, political Europe is the target of Georgian aspirations; Georgians long to resemble modern Europe, which is a political version of European identity and its polity – the European Union.

In the discourse of the political elite, both patterns of belonging to cultural and civic Europe are visible. Georgian politicians follow two major lines of argument in support of Georgia's aspiration to integrate into European institutions:

- Culturally Georgia is already European, historically it was shaped so.
- Politically Georgia sees Europe as a role model and aspires to resemble it in the future.

Culturally, the political elites present the European identity as part of national identity and appeal to the same foundation of values that makes Georgia part of Western civilization. Historical ties between Georgia and European civilization and Georgia's Christianity are retold as a ground for Georgia's “mental closeness to Europe”, which is believed to have been decided by the Georgian people centuries ago (Official from Ministry of Euro-Atlantic Integration; Official from MFA, personal communication). As Saakashvili stated in his inauguration speech in 2004, Georgians are not only Europeans, but “the very first Europeans and therefore Georgia has a special place in European civilization”. Despite Georgia's long history of mixed contacts with neighbors and constant dealings with the Muslim world, politicians prefer to focus on the brief periods of Georgian-European interactions in the country's history. The earliest example that politicians recall relates to the ancient Greeks, who are believed to have brought Georgia culturally close to the Mediterranean civilization. As proof, some



note the Georgian characters in Greek mythology including Medea, Ayetes, the Minotaur and Perseus (MP, personal communication). Georgia-Byzantium relations are seen as the next stage of Georgia's exposure to Europe and its religion, art and lifestyle (Official from Ministry of Euro-Atlantic Integration). Religion is the primary reference point for politicians when establishing Georgia's Europeanness, starting from the time of Byzantium to the country's "multiple attempts" to approach Catholic Europe (Official from MIA, personal communication). Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani's visit to France in the 18th century to ask for assistance against the Ottoman and Persian empires is one such example.

Relations with Greece and Byzantium are not described as mere historical experience, but as an inherent part of the formation of Georgia's identity and values. Georgian politicians identify two key values that inherently unite Georgians with Europe: individualism and love of freedom. The country's long history of diversity and tolerance (historical examples of different nations peacefully living in Georgia) is another value dimension that unites Georgia with Europe and its key values (Official from MIA; MPs, personal communication). Correspondingly, the current development of closer relations with the West is characterized as a "return to Europe", the "European family" and "the European civilization lost several centuries ago" (Saakashvili, Inauguration Speech 2004; Civil.ge, 2004). European integration is portrayed as a means for restoring Georgia's self after it was diverted from its true path by historical circumstances, such as forced incorporation into the Soviet Union. Political Europe with values like active citizenship, the rule of law and a strong work ethic is something that Georgia has not developed, largely due to its seven decades as part of the Soviet Union. These values have now become the model for the country's development, and it is believed that this model can lead Georgia to EU membership.

However, modern Europe is rather different than the historical version of the continent that Georgian politicians frequently refer to. When Georgian politicians talk about "a return to the European family", they unequivocally imply it is a political version or the European Union. The two versions are regularly mixed up in the discourse and are used interchangeably. Thus, the political elites use cultural belonging to Europe to justify potential membership of the

civic version of Europe. But the link between the two, or the difference, is never explained. Based on the discourse, however, we can deduce that historical values, including Christianity, are inherently assumed to be stronger than the civic elements of Western civilization. Georgia shares the cultural values of modern Europe, but lacks its modern civic values.

When civic Europe comes up in the discourse, it is characterized as a place for democracy, public welfare and security. Politicians connect membership in the European Union to material benefits. Membership in the European Union is portrayed to the domestic audience as a goal for guaranteeing well-being, economic progress and security. Therefore, to the public, Euro-Atlantic integration is communicated as being linked to “a guarantee of national security and sustainable development” (Margvelashvili, Inauguration Speech 2013; Civil.ge, 2013c). Somewhat separately from the historical and cultural Europe to which Georgia aspires to return, the European Union is portrayed as a hub for opportunities such as “building democratic institutions, ensuring people’s welfare and security” (Garibashvili, Address to Nation, 2013; News.ge, 2013). In private interviews, politicians explain how security can be guaranteed, from the European Union, which is not a security institution such as NATO. Their beliefs are based on the logic of the democratic peace theory that violence is not a part of liberal democracy (Diplomat to international organizations, personal communication) and that the US and the EU are promoting democracy to guarantee peace and stability (Official from Ministry of Euro-Atlantic integration, personal communication).

Despite the focus on the common ground between Europe and Georgia, the point of Georgia's unique culture still appears in the political discourse. It is noteworthy, however, that while the issue of Georgia's unique culture is stressed in domestic discourse, it was never mentioned in the interviews we conducted. In public discourse, the European Union is portrayed as a “great family” where all the nations are given equal opportunity to “develop their culture, statehood and uniqueness” (Margvelashvili, Congratulation on signing the Association Agreement, 2014; Administration, 2014). Europe’s diversity and openness is frequently underlined with the assertion that Georgia will make a contribution to the “diverse

European culture” with its “ancient history and unique culture” (Garibashvili, Address to Parliament, 2014; Civil.ge, 2014) and where Georgian “identity will only be interesting and respected by others” (ibid). This inclination should be contextualized keeping in mind the contested nature of European values in the domestic arena in Georgia, in which controversial views are voiced about where Georgia is heading culturally by joining the EU (Minesashvili and Kakhishvili, 2015). Particularly, the Georgian Orthodox Church and several public figures have their own version of Europe, presenting one that “threatens Georgian traditions” (Minesashvili, 2016). Georgian political elites refer to this context of contested representations of identity. Their emphasis on diverse and open Europe is an attempt to counter the “threatening” Europe argument.

Consequently, we observe historical justification for the European integration in contrast to Russia. Centuries of being under invasion and threat to basic survival as a nation are retold in the modern context. Survival of the self in a larger entity is the point that politicians use to contrast Europe with Russia and rejection of Russia is based on its shortcomings in comparison to Europe. Europe “is built on three major pillars: “rejection of extreme nationalism”, “rejection of communism” and “rejection of colonialism and imperialism” (Saakashvili, UN General Assembly, 2013; Civil.ge, 2013b), whereas Russia is the proponent of all three (ibid). The the EU “does not seek to absorb” Georgia, which makes a choice between Russia and the EU easy for Georgians. Russia is seen as an entity in which no ethnic group “flourishes” (Margvelashvili, US Council of Foreign Relations, 2015; Administration, 2015). Invoking small state status that needs protection, this further implies the idea that Georgia visions its security only achievable in a larger entity.

Another topic that is completely absent from our private interviews, but is regularly communicated in the speeches directed to both domestic and international audiences, is the importance and usefulness of Georgia for the West. There are three major reasons for Georgia’s importance to the West: its location, its participation in international security processes, and its dedication to democracy. These postulates are loaded with assumptions on the priorities of the West and its policies (or should be policies) in Georgia.

Georgian politicians attempt to link European and Western

security to Georgia's security. Georgia's location is one such tool. They say the country holds "a unique role in the development of the Eurasian continent at large" (Margvelashvili, US Council of Foreign Relations, 2015; Administration, 2015) by being "a key crossroad linking East and West" (Garibashvili, UN General Assembly, 2015; Civil.ge, 2015). Politicians stress the country's commitment to use its "strategic location" for connecting Asia, Europe and Middle East" (ibid) in terms of trade and the flow of natural resources including gas and oil. Georgian security is equaled to "protecting European energy security" (Saakashvili, Annual Address to Parliament, 2008; Civil.ge, Civil.ge, 2008). As President Giorgi Margvelashvili stated: "we not only develop as a European country, but we believe we are bringing very specific and concrete solutions for European stability, security, as well as for the global European picture at large" (US Council of Foreign Relations, 2015; Administration, 2015).

Second, Georgia is portrayed not only as "a consumer of international security, but also the provider of one" (Saakashvili, Munich Security Conference, 2011; Civil.ge, 2011). Georgia's participation in NATO missions is one such example. However, Georgia's dedication to international security is more intensely covered in international speeches in comparison to those targeting the domestic audience, which makes sense considering that the international community and its decisions are the main targets of Georgia's activity in that field.

The final point is Georgia's commitment to developing a modern, democratic and open country, which meets the West's implied interests. Georgia portrays itself as a front-runner in the region, which should be a model for neighboring countries. The promotion of democracy and stability is assumed to be in the West's interest, which aligns with Georgian interests and aspirations to make "Georgia's success your [West's] success" (Garibashvili, UN General Assembly, 2015; Civil.ge, 2015).

Examining to what extent the political elite believes the above-mentioned is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the emphasis on Georgia's usefulness for the West that is missing from the interviews but often covered publicly, indicates at the intentionality element behind the discourse. They mediate between international and domestic audiences in order to draw the two closer

by sharing the same narrative. In the domestic environment, the politicians further invoke the idea of the country's importance by adding to the cultural uniqueness argument. On the one hand, this is a way to convince the nation that the West needs Georgia and thus their support is inevitable. On the other hand, the Western audience is targeted for persuasion in providing this support by employing more than emotional assertion (Georgia's cultural belonging).

### **Othering in Foreign Policy**

The paper distinguishes two types of othering: spatial and temporal. Spatial othering refers to the "political context of Western modernity, in which political space is structured in terms of territorial exclusivity" and refers to territorial othering based on the principles of state sovereignty (Prozorov, 2010). Spatial othering is often intertwined with temporal othering and the two often become difficult to separate (Rumelili, 2004; Joenniemi, 2008). The logic of temporal othering primarily emerged in the field of European integration (Prozorov, 2010) and implies the process of identity construction, which is self-reflexive. Instead of representing any other group as a threat, it is othering its own past (Diez, 2004). However, as we will see in the case of Georgia, not only both types of "othering" takes place but also temporal and spatial others are closely intertwined.

### **Spatial Othering: Russia**

As Neumann notes, while the majority of post-communist states link their national identities to supranational ones – European for many of them, Russia has been another external driver, building a post-communist identity in its "near abroad" (Neumann, 2001). Europe and Russia form a dichotomy in the Georgian discourse. Russia, Georgia's number one "Other", has been defined as the antipode of the West, othered vis-à-vis the West or Western values.

Russia is listed as the number one threat in the Georgian official documents issued after the August War in 2008. The

Saakashvili government drew a strong dichotomy between pro-Western policy and relations with Russia, portraying the two in exclusive terms. The Georgian Dream coalition, however, claimed the two could be compatible if only Russia would realize it. The government argued that democracy building and stability in the Caucasus should be in Russia's interests. However, until the vague point when Russia "realizes" this, the country's northern neighbor is still constructed as being in opposition to what Europe is, namely a hub for "freedom and diversity" where Georgia will preserve itself. The Russian alternative equals Georgia's disappearance since there is no "example of a small ethnic group flourishing in Russia" (Margvelashvili, US Council of Foreign Relations, 2015; Administration, 2015).

The two Georgian governments differed in their approach towards the major "Other". Unlike Saakashvili's demonizing image of Russia, the Georgian Dream Coalition started a normalization policy, which it called a "pragmatic" approach that implied the resumption of trade, economic, cultural and human relations with Russia, but maintained the goal of Euro-Atlantic integration and the same demands on de-occupation. Normalization of relations with Russia should be preceded by the Russian withdrawal from Georgian territories. Despite these differences, Russia remains the major "other" for both governments.

Most importantly, the conflict with Russia is believed to be value-based. As one Georgian politician said, Georgia's pro-Europeanness is not a problem as such for Russia, rather Russia inherently opposes Georgia building a Western type of state (Official from National Security Council, personal communication). Russia's imperial interests are believed to stem from its lack of democracy at home. Its internal order is believed to be shaping interests that clash with Georgia's democratic aspirations. Partnership with a "non-democratic, corrupt country that does not share modern values would be disastrous for a small state" (MP, personal communication). Substantive internal changes are then the only possible solution. The 2012 National Security Concept briefly discusses the possibility of improved relations with Russia, but stipulates that this could only happen in case of de-occupation and respect of Georgia's territorial integrity. Neil MacFarlane, a scholar on the post-Soviet space,

suggests that, considering the low expectation of unilateral concession from the Russian side and the low possibility of effective external pressure, the Georgian government favours a regime change in Russia which would move it towards democracy. This should bring respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity towards its neighbors (MacFarlane, 2012, p.19). In interviews, Georgian officials underscored that partnership between the two countries would be possible if Russia moved towards democracy (MP, personal communication).

The “clash of civilizations” narrative that is widely developed by the Georgian political elite suggests that the Russian model will eventually fail as it is not compatible with the modern era. They construct the narrative that the Russian “project is doomed to fail” eventually, because it is based on old Soviet methods of empire and it is already rejected at its center [referring to the public protests in Russia in 2011] (Saakashvili, UN General Assembly, 2013; Civil.ge, 2013b). Not only the Russian “empire is already fading”, but it is “irrational”; its national interests lack a logical explanation for “what Russia gains in all of this process; why are they alienating themselves from the rest of the world, why are they occupying new territories, which do not mean anything for the biggest territorial nation in the world?” (Margvelashvili, US Council of Foreign Relations, 2015; Administration, 2015).

### **Temporal othering: the Soviet past and the post-Soviet mentality**

Othering also acquires a temporal dimension that intertwines with its spatial counterpart. Whereas the Georgian political elite focuses on certain moments in history to underline its European striving, it is likewise engaged in “othering” some other parts of the past and more specifically, the 70 years of membership of the communist bloc. Georgia’s experience in the Soviet Union and its subsequent post-Soviet mentality are contrasted with European Georgia and its aspirations to form a modern, democratic state. Naturally Russia, perceived as a successor of the Soviet Union, is the spatial alternative to othering this undesirable history. This is where

Georgia and Russia diverge: “Georgia tries to escape post-Soviet space, by changing its mentality, and, on the other hand, Russia tries to re-create a Soviet state” (MP, personal communication).

The political elite explain that multiple historical obstacles have prevented Georgia from realizing its European path. Georgia, an inherently European country, failed to translate its aspirations into a democratic state and institutions due to historical developments in the 20th century. President Saakashvili recalled the government of the first Georgian president, Noe Zhordania, prior to the Soviet invasion in 1921, had the country's first opportunity to achieve its European destiny. The current possibility of EU membership is the second opportunity “given by history” (Saakashvili, Address to European Parliament, 2010; Civil.ge, 2010). Noe Zhordania, immediately after independence from the Russian empire in 1918, formed a partnership with Germany in an attempt to oppose Turkish influence, and accepted German troops on Georgian soil. It was during this period that European powers started entering the Caucasus. A number of European states even recognized Georgia as a sovereign country at the Paris Peace Conference. However, the government’s attempt to seek European protection ended when the Red Army invading the country in 1921 (Beachain & Coene, 2014, p.39).

The Soviet Union and the post-Soviet legacy stand between Georgia and its unrealized goals. The Soviet supranational identity is something the elite wishes to discard. In private interviews, politicians say that the Soviet period not only suppressed Georgians’ inherent characteristics, such as aspirations of freedom and uniqueness (MP, personal communication) but also “mutated” civic-minded attitudes and attributes such as “individual responsibility, a sense of private property and being part of the state. Consequently, the society developed cynicism towards everything” (Official from MFA; Official from the Prime Minister's Office, personal communication). The Soviet legacy continued to thwart the country from developing properly, even after the dissolution of the Union. The legacy included “the divisions, corruption, the vertical structures and the bureaucracy, the cynicism and the authoritarianism, which were the pillars of the Soviet Union” (Saakashvili, Address to European Parliament, 2010; Civil.ge, 2010). A further narrative has



developed that even the Soviet Union could not manage to completely suppress Georgia's inherent proximity to Europe because "by culture, that is who we are. We are an open society. We were like that even in the Soviet Union" (Margvelashvili, US Council of Foreign Relations, 2015; Administration, 2015).

Otherring the post-Soviet mentality is necessarily linked to the spatial "other": Russia, which is an aggregate of all former Soviet attitudes, values and experiences. Precisely because of the common experience and history, Russia remains the most relevant other. This is the mentality that Georgia attempts to escape. As one of the prominent politicians summed it up: "Russia is an enemy but if we look at it from an ethno-psychological or ethno-nationalistic perspective, Russia, unfortunately, remains the closest "other" (Georgian diplomat to international organizations, personal communication). In private interviews, some politicians mention Russia's European inclination at some point of its history, referring to the flow of European attitudes and habits in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian empire, which also affected Georgia. European ideas filtered in and were, as some respondents note, brought to Georgia via Russia in a somewhat distorted version by the group of *Tergdaleulni*<sup>1</sup>, a generation of young Georgians who studied in Russia in the 1860s.

The emphasis on Georgia's attempt to escape this post-Soviet mentality becomes a grand part of the elite discourse. As an illustration of Georgia's aspirations to join the Western world, representatives from both governments mark the changes which show Georgia is dissociating itself from the Soviet mentality, noting that "the post-Soviet period is over" and "Georgians have already departed from the post-Soviet paradigm" (Margvelashvili, EP Summit, 2013; Administration, 2013). Georgian citizens "stopped thinking of their country as a post-Soviet state" and rather "see it and judge it as a European democracy" (Saakashvili, Address to European Parliament, 2010; Civil.ge, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Literally meaning "those who drank from Tergi" (river running through Georgian-Russian border) as Georgians who traveled to Russia for studies had to cross the river.

## **Escape from the post-Soviet space**

Distancing itself from post-Soviet heritage translates into a geographical dimension as well. No longer willing to be identified with the post-Soviet space or only the Caucasus, a region overloaded with conflicts and other issues - Georgia has moved to associating itself with the Black Sea region – a territory which is frequently mentioned in official documents as a region of priority, unlike the Caucasus region.

According to Kakhishvili, the Georgian government is trying to “reshape the country’s regional identity from the Caucasus to the Black Sea so that it is part of the same discourse as Turkey, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria and Romania (Kakhishvili, 2015). This is the closest Georgia can get, geographically, to Western institutions. In the foreign policy strategies and national security concepts released since 2003, Georgia prioritizes regional organizations that are led or created by the Black Sea littoral states, like the Community of Democratic Choice, the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, GUAM and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The organizations are listed as the main priorities in regional politics. On the other hand, Georgia distances itself from post-Soviet regional structures. The country withdrew or refused to become a member of all the major organizations in the former Soviet space. In 1999, Georgia left the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an intergovernmental military alliance established in 1992 which currently includes Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In February 2006, Georgia withdrew from the ex-Soviet military cooperation body, the Council of Defense Ministers, saying it chose a course towards NATO and cannot be part of two military structures at the same time. In 2009, one year after the August War, Georgia also withdrew from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Georgian government excludes the possibility of joining the Eurasian Economic Union, since it considers it to be a "counter-EU".

On the one occasion the former Prime Minister, Bidzina Ivanishvili, made a statement that he was “keeping an eye on the Eurasian Union and studying it without a defined position” (euobserver, 2013), there was an instantaneous and severe response from Georgian

political groups. Ivanishvili was forced to issue an additional explanation, assuring the nation that there is no alternative to Euro-Atlantic integration (Civil.ge, 2013a). In the latest FP document, the Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia 2015-2018, it is stated that Georgia “participates in every regional format that is directed towards the development of mutually beneficial cooperation and is based on equality and respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity”. As Russia violates all of those conditions, Georgia’s participation in the Russia-lead regional groupings is inherently ruled out.

In private interviews, politicians hardly ever discussed Georgia in the Caucasian context. They called the Caucasus a “post-colonial legacy” artificially created by the Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, without ever developing a proper regional identity (Former NSC Official, personal communication). It is rather considered a “a myth, Georgians are closer to the Czechs than to the Avars in the North Caucasus” (NSC official, personal communication). Georgian politicians think that different aspirations and development paths have further divided the Caucasus; while Georgia is drawn to Europe, the North Caucasus is becoming part of the Islamic world and Azerbaijan shares a Turkish identity (Former Official from MIA, personal communication). The “post-Soviet space” is also viewed as a spurious creation, which lacks a cultural or civilizational dimension (Former diplomat to International organization, personal communication). Black Sea or Mediterranean regions are the most frequently named as culturally the closest for Georgia. However, belonging to these regions serves the idea of belonging to Europe or, as one politician said, “Europeanness comes before our membership to the Black Sea Region” (Former NSC Official, personal communication). Georgian politicians would like to believe that “the Black Sea is an inseparable part of Euro-Atlantic security system” (Foreign Policy Strategy, 2015-18) and therefore, Georgia’s membership of the Black Sea community will make it inherently European.

Politicians viewed Georgia’s categorization as “Eastern European” country in the Association Agreement as an achievement worthy of celebration. They believe it carries political meaning: Being acknowledged as a European country opens the door for potential membership in the European Union as only European

countries can become members.

Prior to that reference, Georgia remained a South Caucasian country for Europe. In the EU Neighborhood Policy launched in 2004, Brussels included Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia as countries of the “Southern Caucasus”, declaring this was the region in which the EU “should take a stronger and more active interest” (Commission of the European Communities, 2004, p.10). Today, the EU is represented in Georgia by the “EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus”. Therefore, the South Caucasian dimension has become unavoidable, despite Georgia’s struggle for escape.

The South Caucasus has become the geopolitical framework for relations with neighbors. However, it follows Europe and the Black Sea region in the hierarchy of regions listed in the National Security Concepts (NSC, 2005, 2012). For instance, in the list of foreign allies in the National Security Concept from 2005, partnership with Armenia and Azerbaijan comes after the goal of strategic partnership with the US, Ukraine and Turkey. The National Security Concept mentions the importance of developments in the Black Sea Basin prior to the developments in the South Caucasus. Russia follows as a distant third.

When the political elite places Georgia in the context of the South Caucasus, they develop the narrative of Georgian leadership in the region in terms of democracy, development and progress. They declare “for the first time in centuries Georgia created an example of a modern state” (Saakashvili, Address to Parliament, 2012; Civil.ge, 2012), and announce that “democratic values are more acceptable to Georgia than for its neighbors”; Georgia is a front-runner in the region, but it is Europe rather than its neighbors that Georgia should compare itself to (Official from Ministry of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, personal communication). Georgian elites articulate an ambition to become “a window on Europe” for the Caucasian nations, and to become a role model for them (Saakashvili, Address to Parliament, 2012; Civil.ge, 2012). For states in transition, Georgia’s advancement in relations with the West and the signing the Association Agreement, “an agreement at this level for the first time in the region”, (Margvelashvili, Congratulation on signing Association Agreement, 2014; Administration, 2014), is portrayed as a sign of progress that is “useful” not only for the country but for the

region as a whole (Garibashvili, UN General Assembly, 2014; Civil.ge, 2014).

Otherring the post-Soviet space is taking place in terms of values, comparing a liberal democracy on the one hand and authoritarianism on the other. Other former Soviet states are believed to have chosen the latter. Saakashvili particularly loved to mention a specific example when giving speeches on the international arena, which underlined Georgia's uniqueness among the post-communist countries: the two possible ways of proceeding after the fall of communism – the path of Vaclav Havel towards liberal democracy and that of Slobodan Milosevic towards authoritarianism and ethnic nationalism. Russia and the majority of the former Soviet countries fell in the group of the authoritarian and ethnic nationalist model and Georgia seeks to avoid being associated with it. Politicians have developed a narrative that Georgia started from a similar point, but it managed to move out from the Soviet paradigm and advance in comparison to the other states.

## **Conclusion**

Georgian foreign policy is a process of identity construction actively undertaken through belongingness and alterity. The two governments after the Rose Revolution follow a similar path of narrating Georgian identity as part of European identity, and, at the same time, “other” their northern neighbor, Russia.

The Georgian political elite creates two types of Europe however, often without a clear linkage between them. They narrate the cultural version of Europe as an inherent part of Georgian national identity, which acquired similar values through historical ties with Europe, as well as through Christianity. On the other hand, Europe, as a political/civic entity, is also retold as a supranational identity suitable for Georgia, an aggregate of political values and a model that Georgia aspires to in the future. One of the strategies that the elite group uses to base a new identity on the public's most important and tangible needs by emphasizing the linkage between membership in the western institutions and security. The domestic context of contested identity also shapes the way political elites

“sell” Europe to the public. The domestic debate over the extent to which Europe is part of Georgian national identity forces them to emphasize Europe as a place where “Georgia's unique culture will be maintained, unlike in Russia”.

Georgia constructs multiple others vis-à-vis Europe, however all with intrinsic link between them. Georgia others Russia based on value incompatibility, with the belief that the lack of democracy in Russia shapes its imperialist ambitions. Therefore, only domestic change is believed to lead to improvement. At the same time Georgia is othering its temporal self, or its Soviet past and the Soviet mentality that has lingered in society. Historical developments that were beyond Georgia's control, such as membership in the Soviet Union, caused Georgia's failure to keep up with developments in Western civilization. But by claiming that Georgians are moving past the post-Soviet mentality, unlike many former Soviet states, politicians disassociate the country from Russia and the states around Russia. We see a geographical switch in terms of prioritizing more Western regional groupings while distancing itself from post-Soviet organizations both rhetorically and in practice.

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*Mariam Naskidashvili  
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## **NATIONAL IDENTITY OF GEORGIAN POLITICAL ELITES AND POPULATION AND ITS IMPACT ON FOREIGN POLICY CHOICES**

*“I am Georgian and therefore I am European”  
Zurab Zhvania, 1999.*

“I am Georgian and therefore I am European.” This famous phrase coined by Zurab Zhvania, former head of the Parliament, does not resonate with the general populace. In fact, if asked, most Georgians would probably have said, *I am Georgian, therefore I am Georgian*. Being Caucasian or Asian could have been other popular options, but not European. On the other hand, most of Zhvania’s colleagues would have agreed that being Georgian means (or is meant to be) European.

National identity is a constantly evolving and multifaceted notion that should not be overlooked while analyzing foreign policy. In fact, the concepts of *the self*, *the extended self* and *the other* might underpin foreign policy choices, as not every decision is “rational”, and derived from a cost-benefit point of view.

This chapter examines the views of Georgian political elites on national identity in comparison with the opinion of the general population. It finds that there is lack of congruence between elite perceptions vis-à-vis the population when it comes to the way of perceiving national identity. As the qualitative study of the elites will demonstrate, for the Georgian political elite, Europe is a beacon that helps them position themselves in the matrix of identities. In this context, Georgia is either striving to be part of Europe, was historically part of Europe and is in the phase of “returning” to it, or has always been part of Europe. On the other hand, quantitative surveys of the population indicate that people are far less unanimous in the quest for national identity. An overwhelming 90 percent of the population claim to be very proud of their ethnic group (CRRC, Caucasus Barometer 2013) and mostly their national identity remains confined within their own ethnicity. Almost a third of the population

cannot name a region that is close to Georgia in terms of culture or traditions. Additionally, more than half cannot name the country's major ally or enemy (CRRC Caucasus Barometer 2015; CRRC Knowledge and Attitudes towards EU in Georgia: 2015). Interestingly, the largest group of the surveyed respondents considers Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and North Caucasian regions combined) to be closest in terms of traditions (36 percent) or contemporary culture (31 percent) of Georgia (CRRC Caucasus Barometer 2015). The same survey shows that the West (Europe – Western Europe and Eastern Europe combined as well as the USA) is perceived to be the closest match for Georgian traditions and contemporary culture only by 6 and 9 percent respectively (CRRC Caucasus Barometer 2015). In other words, there is a significant discrepancy among the perceptions of elites and population.

As some scholars suggest, elites are often a driving force in the formation of national identity (Gellner 1996; Lane 2011). The case study of Georgia demonstrates that, so far, they have failed to convey their idea of identity to the populace, however. Nevertheless, the study finds that perceptions of national identity among the population have not influenced Georgia's foreign policy choices in the last decade. First and foremost, the Georgian population has been largely supportive of pro-European or pro-Western policies vis-à-vis pro-Russian or pro-Eurasian Union ideas. Furthermore, the population's feeling of affinity toward the Southern or Northern Caucasus has not been proportionally reflected among governmental policies. Finally, strategic documents have not emphasized the importance of the region.

## **National Identity**

Identity(s) and perception(s) are important notions to consider when studying politics. National identity is often considered a cornerstone for forming foreign policy goals and national interests, i.e. what is perceived to be national interest depends “on a particular construction of self-identity in relation to the conceived identity of others” (Jepperson, Wendt & Katzenstein, 1996:60). This chapter examines the national identity of Georgia following the premise that

“identities can only be studied relationally” (Hopf, 2002:8). It focuses on the self/other nexus in the study of identities. Identity formation thus entails the continuous process of demarcating between self and other (Neumann, 1999: 39). The “self” cannot be understood without having perceptions about the “other”. National identities are constructed through the interaction with other states and, later, these identities shape political decision-making (Kubalkova, 2001). It is equally important to highlight that the view of the “self” does not simply boil down to the asymmetric perception of the “other” as there are multiple “others”, from the least threatening (“extended self”) to the most threatening (almost the opposite perception of the self).

As Gellner points out, political elites are primary actors in constructing national identity (Gellner 1996). Political elites are “those who occupy top positions, or decisively influence the making of decisions which are national in scope” (Lane 2011). They make rules, hold consultations, articulate ideologies, enter in the agreements with other states and define boundaries. Lane (2011:926) claims that, in the turbulent process of transition, when the institutions capable of forming ideology are abruptly swept away, elites are the major actors in “constructing and deconstructing collective identities”.

This chapter aims to understand the concepts of the national identities held by Georgian political elites and the population. The study analyses a qualitative survey of representatives of political elites conducted for this project, and compares them with the results of a national-wide survey of the Georgian population. The study finds that there is a lack of consensus when it comes to self-perceptions, which might indicate that the elites have not succeeded in influencing national identity so far. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between the ideas of the elites and population has had an insignificant impact on foreign policy choices. It could be argued that foreign policy has been an elite-driven, rather than a bottom-up, process. Alternatively, it could be that the population has continued to support pro-EU and pro-NATO policies vis-à-vis closer ties with the Eurasian Union due to the costs and benefits of the policies. However, understanding these underlining reasons is beyond the scope of this study and the authors encourage further studies on the matter.

## **Methodology**

The research is based on quantitative as well as qualitative methods and uses both primary and secondary sources. The study is based on in-depth interviews with representatives from the government, academia, and civil society. Moreover, it uses governmental documents and scholarly literature to provide a more holistic picture of the existing situation. Furthermore, it extensively relies on the databases of CRRC “Caucasus Barometer” as well as CRRC Survey of the “Knowledge and Attitudes Toward the EU in Georgia”. The advantage of the qualitative method is that it has more explanatory power and it was applied to study national identity of political elites as well foreign policy documents. On the other hand, the quantitative approach is helpful for understanding to what extent the ideas of political elites are conveyed and shared among the population in general.

The research can be divided into three parts. First, a survey was conducted among 31 members of the political elite, including acting and former representatives of the Georgian government, parliament, and representatives of ruling and opposition parties, as well as political analysts. The interviews were conducted in 2014 and 2015. Second, a set of questions were included in the CRRC Caucasus Barometer Survey of 2015 to examine public attitudes. And finally, foreign policy documents were extensively studied to see how the concepts of national identity, as well as the notions of the “self,” “other” and “extended self”, were reflected in formal documents.

In order to define the notions of national identity, the chapter relies heavily on the perceptions of the political elite and the population, rather than more “objective” analysis of comparing a set of values, tracing historical evidence or analyzing behaviors of societies.

## **National Identity of Georgian Political Elites, a Brief Overview**

While political elites, representatives of legislative and executive organs, ruling and mainstream opposition parties rarely agree upon issues pivoting around foreign or domestic policy, this is not the case when it comes to national identity. In fact, their understanding of where Georgia belongs or ought to belong to centers on Europe. When members of the Georgian political elite were asked where they were from other than Georgia, the most recurring answer was Europe (or parts of it such as: Eastern, Southern or Mediterranean). The reasoning behind this answer varied: some linked it to religion or history, others to cultural ties or to geographical location (Black sea, Mediterranean region).

Christianity was often brought up as a leading factor contributing to the belief that Georgia is a European country. Politicians used phrases such as a “forefront of Christianity” or “bastion of Christianity in the East” pointing out that Georgia, located far east of Christian Europe, is preserving the religion that has served as a foundation for European liberal values.

Members of the political elite frequently highlighted that, in certain stages of history (especially the periods of the Byzantine and Roman Empires), Georgia was part of Europe. Currently, it is at the “edge of Europe” and it is their desire to build it into a European state. Historic ties with Europe faded however, and it was only in the 1990s that connections were re-established. “Since the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Georgia has not been influenced by Europe, we were not part of the processes taking place in Europe,” stated a member of the former government.

Cultural ties, which existed even before Christianity became Georgia’s official religion, were also an argument for Georgia’s Europeanness. According to one of the respondents, even more than Christianity, Georgia’s roots are connected to ancient Greece, to the famous mythical characters of Argonauts and Medea: “We are a European, Mediterranean type of civilization... a quarter of Greek myths are related to Georgia. Therefore, we Georgians do not just want to be European – we already are part of European civilization. Mythical characters like Perseus, Aeëtes, Medea, Minotaur – they

are all Georgian. We are a significant part of that ancient civilization, with our culture and mythology, and that is why I think that we are a country of Gaea. First of all, we are Mediterranean and then we are European," an MP in the ruling coalition said.

The assumption that Georgia is part of Europe was also often supported by the fact that Georgia is located on the coast of the Black Sea. Some of the respondents noted that Georgia is culturally close to other Black Sea countries, such as Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria. Some stretched further, and linked Georgia with the Mediterranean; "I am Georgian and therefore I am Mediterranean and therefore I am European" noted one MP from the ruling coalition. This quote reflects the opinion of a number of other respondents, who drew parallels with Georgian stereotypes, or cultures and/or value systems with other nations in Mediterranean Europe.

Interestingly, while the Black Sea and Mediterranean region or Eastern Europe seem to be less of an "other" and more of an "extended self", the region of the South Caucasus or the Caucasus in general are not perceived the same way. "For a Georgian, a Czech is closer than a Dagestani," said a former representative of the government. "There is no such a thing as a Caucasian identity; a common Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, Abkhazian identity does not exist, it is artificial," noted another interviewee from a major opposition party. Many politicians highlighted that, when asked where they are from or where Georgia is located, they "avoid answering the (South) Caucasus" and usually answer the Black Sea or Eastern Europe. A number of politicians even challenged the existence of the Caucasus as a region, saying "it is a myth" or it is "just a geographical location". Another respondent, a current opposition leader who used to serve in a former government, said, "The South Caucasus, from a geopolitical point of view, is a nonexistent region".

While most of the respondents discussed the influence of the Soviet past on modern Georgia, they did not consider the former USSR as part of Georgia's regional identity, mainly because countries have developed in different directions since their independence. "Compared to the other (former Soviet) countries, with the exception of the Baltic States, Georgia probably belongs to the post-Soviet countries the least," a representative of the government said. In addition, Georgia's efforts to break from its



Soviet past have further distanced it from the region.

The majority of Georgian political elites do not consider Georgia to be a part of the Middle Eastern region despite its geographical proximity. According to members of the current government, “it seems that the Middle East is very close and historically our paths crossed frequently, often times tragically... nevertheless culturally we are not close... This could have been caused by the differences in our religions.” Some interviewees highlighted that Georgian identity is a fusion, rather than a representation, of a specific region “Georgia is located in the Middle East, when it comes to habitual culture... we are a mix of the Mediterranean and Middle East regions,” said a member of the former government. This diversity of opinions highlights that, while not everyone agrees to the extent Georgia is European, there is a common opinion among the country’s political elite that Europe is not a stranger; it is a part of their identity and they seek to strengthen it.

### **The “Other” Russia**

The political elite in Georgia share the idea that Russia is the biggest challenge for the country; there is a common belief that it threatens the very core of Georgia’s existence. Russia was often referred to during interviews as an aggressor, occupant, aggressive neighbor, etc. Members of the political elite repeatedly said the threats coming from the country’s northern neighbor are among the biggest challenges to Georgian statehood.

The history of being part of the Soviet Union (and previously the Russian Empire) is overwhelmingly assessed negatively. The respondents, despite party affiliation, were equally vocal in assessing the damaging impact of Russian rule on the country’s history. Frequently, negative aspects of Georgian culture, such as nepotism, corruption or the lack of work ethic were described as remnants or a legacy of the country’s Soviet past. Furthermore, Russia was often viewed as a force pulling Georgia toward this corrupted past. “We, like Russia, are a post-Soviet country. However, we try to break from this post-Soviet space, break through by changing our mentality. Russia, on the other hand, tries hard to recreate a Soviet country,”

suggested one of the respondents, arguing that close alignment with Russia would result in a return of the values and governing style used in the Soviet Union.

Russia was not only viewed as a force trying to dominate Georgia against its will but also as a potential threat to Georgia's existence. "Russia, in principle, denies Georgia's right to be an independent and sovereign country" summarized a MP and leader of an opposition party. Additionally, he expressed concern over the attempt of the current government to stabilize relations with Russia, which he said is an unreliable partner that could further pressure Georgia.

Representatives of the ruling party agreed that there are threats coming from Russia and that Georgia should avoid being under its sphere of influence. Nevertheless, some of them offered a more pragmatic view toward this issue. "Russia, geographically, is our neighbor, it was and it will be, we cannot avoid this fact. We have serious disputes, problems in our relationship; they occupied our territories, not to mention the damage they caused us during the rule of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union. Nevertheless we have to consider pragmatic politics for the sake of national interests and use Russia for its market, to sell our produce at a good price and spend this money for our interests, including de-occupation," noted a representative of the ruling coalition.

Not all members of the ruling party had the same optimism about regulating relations with Russia, however. Some noted that Russia considers Georgia to be part of its sphere of influence, the "near abroad" and the Kremlin will not accept any movements toward Europe or toward NATO.

Whether or not political elites considered a partnership with Russia possible, it is quite clear the political elites views Russia as the "other" which threatens the meaning of Georgianness. Only one respondent noted that society's attitudes toward Russia might not be as solidified as those of the political elite: "Russia is an enemy but if we look at it from an ethno psychological or ethno-nationalistic perspective, Russia, unfortunately, remains the closest "other". If we had to categorize them on a scale (from the most to the least close) it would be Russia, Europe/North America, South (Turkey, Iran)," noted a representative of the former government.

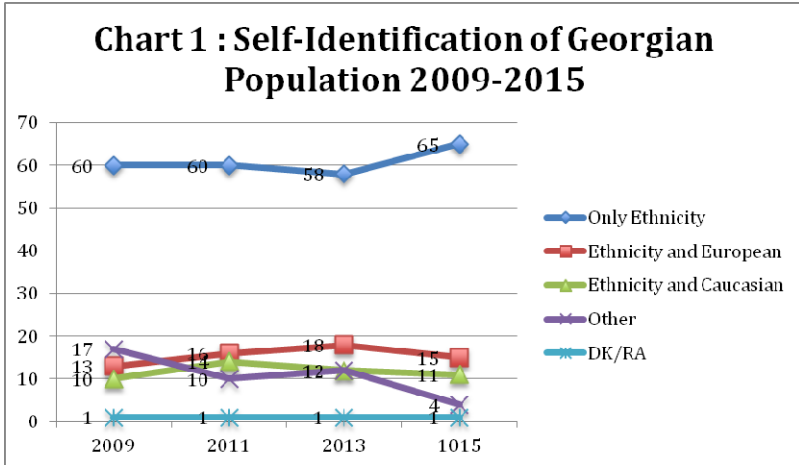
## National Identity of Georgian Population

“If you ask any Georgian whether he/she is Asian or European, probably 99 out of 100 will say that he/she is European because mentally we are closer to Europe. This was decided centuries ago, not now,” a representative of the government said in an interview. Survey results indicate this statement is an exaggeration: only 1 in 20 people thinks that the traditions of Eastern or Western Europe are closest to Georgia and only 15 percent of the population identifies themselves as representative of their ethnicity and European (almost the same number of respondents who identified as their ethnicity and Caucasian).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, identity, including national identity, needs to be studied relationally (Hopf, 2002). To study the “self,” one needs to understand the “other.” Simultaneously, identity cannot be drilled down to self/other nexus, as there are multiple selves, or “extended self.” As surveys demonstrate, to a large extent, national identity is still under formation; for the majority of the population, ethnicity is almost the sole factor for self-identification. Almost three quarter of the population name only their own ethnicity when asked their identity (Knowledge and Attitudes towards Europe; 2015). More interestingly, about a third of Georgians find it difficult to identify a region closest in terms of contemporary culture or traditions, and more than half cannot or refuse to name their country's main friend or enemy. In other words, Georgians still find it difficult to define their “extended self” or the “other” and hence, identify their own “self.”

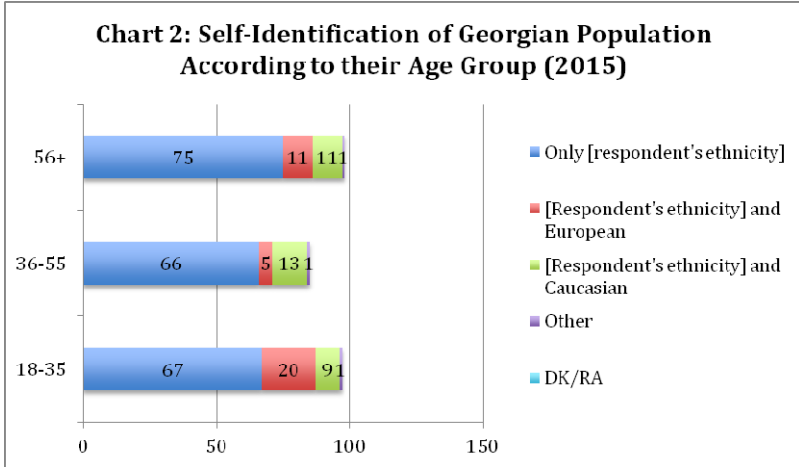
The CRRC Survey of the Knowledge of Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia (2015) demonstrates that a significant majority of the Georgian population (69 percent) named only ethnicity as part of their identity, versus 15 percent indicating their own ethnicity and European or Caucasian 11 percent. Where a respondent lives appears to have an impact with how he or she answers. The overwhelming majority of respondents from rural and urban communities name only their ethnicity when asked to identify themselves. About a quarter of Tbilisi residents identify themselves as European in addition to their ethnicity, while only 13 percent of the rural population shares the same idea. Simultaneously, inhabitants of the

capital of Georgia are also more likely to think of themselves as Caucasian (17 percent) while only 6 percent of rural and a mere 4 percent of the population living in other cities feel the same way (CRRC Survey of the Knowledge of Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia: 2015).



\* Source: CRRC Survey of the Knowledge of Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia: 2009 2011; 2013; 2015

As chart 1 indicates, the attitudes have remained relatively stable over the past six years. However, it is worth noting that the people who identified themselves only by their ethnicity increased from 60 percent to 65 percent. Later in the report, we will review how different groups feel about their identities according to their age group, educational level, languages spoken, etc.

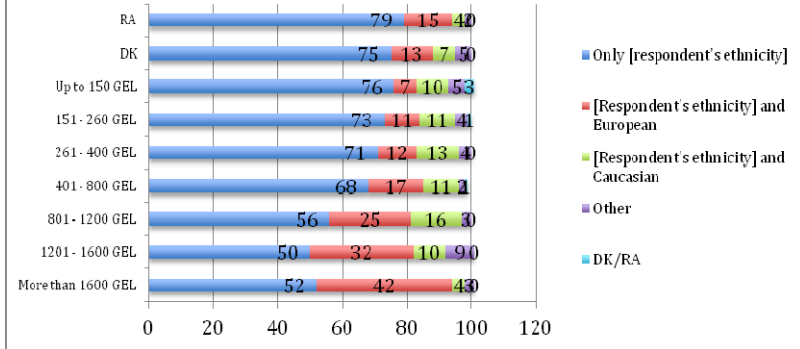


\*Source: CRRC Survey of the Knowledge of Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia: 2015

As chart 2 demonstrates, older people are slightly more likely to name their ethnicity as the sole indicator of their ethnicity, while 1 in 5 people, a large portion of the respondents identifying themselves as also European, are below 35.

Additionally, people with the highest income levels are much more likely to feel European than people who earn less. Almost half of respondents who earn with more than 1600 GEL income per month per household (42 percent) name their ethnicity and European as part of their identity. The number plummets to 7 percent among households with an income under 150 GEL.

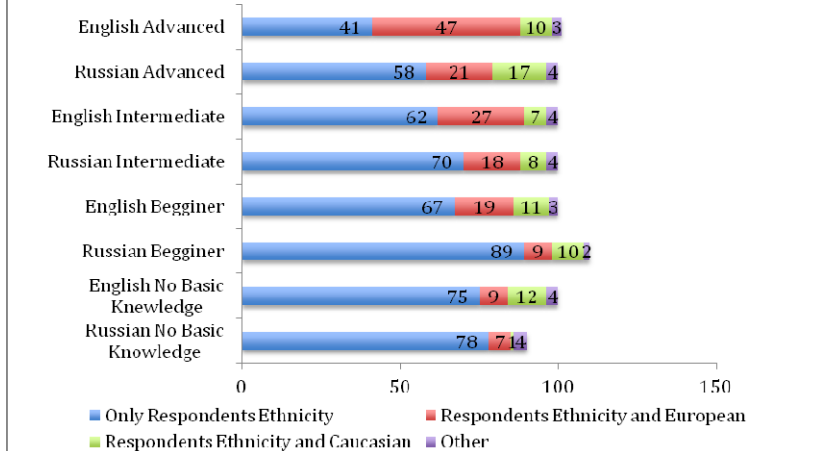
**Chart 3: Self-Identification of Georgian Population According to their Income Group(2015)**



\*Source: CRRC Survey of the Knowledge of Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia: 2015

Interestingly, there is a noteworthy correlation between the second language spoken and identity. As chart 3 demonstrates, English language speakers are more likely to identify themselves as European. Half of the respondents with an advanced knowledge of English, and more than a quarter of people speaking intermediate English, did so. However, it should be noted that only 19 percent of Georgians speak advanced and intermediate English. On the other hand speaking Russian does not seem to have correlate with the perception of oneself as a Caucasian.

**Chart 4: Self-Identification of Georgian Population According to the Second Language they Speak (2015)**

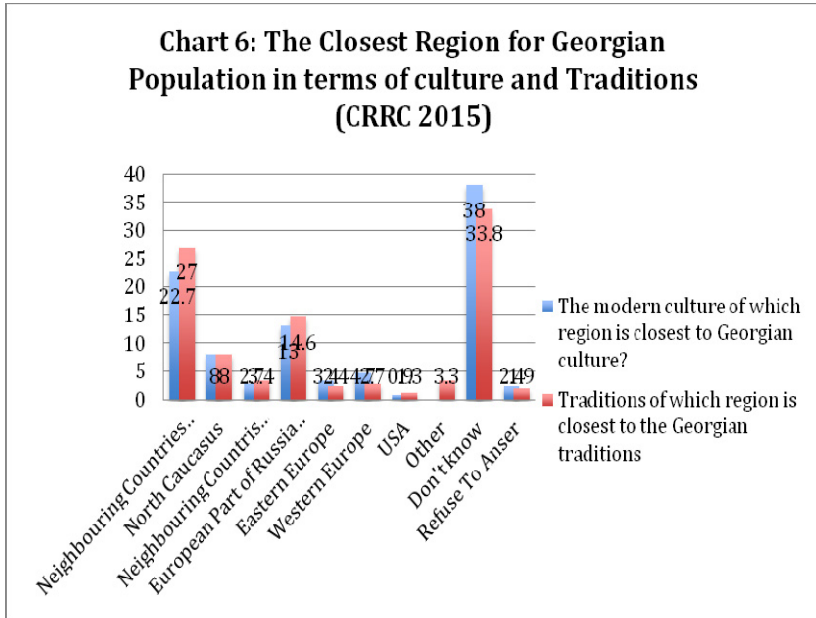


\*Source: CRRC Survey of the Knowledge of Attitudes Toward the EU in Georgia: 2015

Educational level seems to correlate with how Georgians think of themselves. As the survey (Knowledge of Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia: 2015) indicates, people with a university degree are twice as likely to name European in addition to their ethnic identity (23 percent), compared to people that only have a secondary education (10 percent).

As part of this research, CRRC included a set of questions in its Caucasus Barometer of 2015 in an attempt to gain a better understanding of national identity among the Georgian population. For instance, respondents were asked to name the closest region for Georgia in terms of culture and traditions. About a third of respondents said they did not know, and 35 percent named the South Caucasus or North Caucasus as the most like Georgia. A mere 5 percent of Georgians think that Western or Eastern parts of Europe are closest in terms of culture and traditions, while 15 percent of respondents believe the European part of Russia is the closest.

A similar trend was visible when people were asked about the closest region in terms of modern culture: 8.1 percent name Eastern or Western Europe, while the Caucasus (both South and North) is the most familiar in terms of culture for almost a third of the population (30.7 percent). About 1 in 7 considers Russia (13.7 percent) to be the closest.

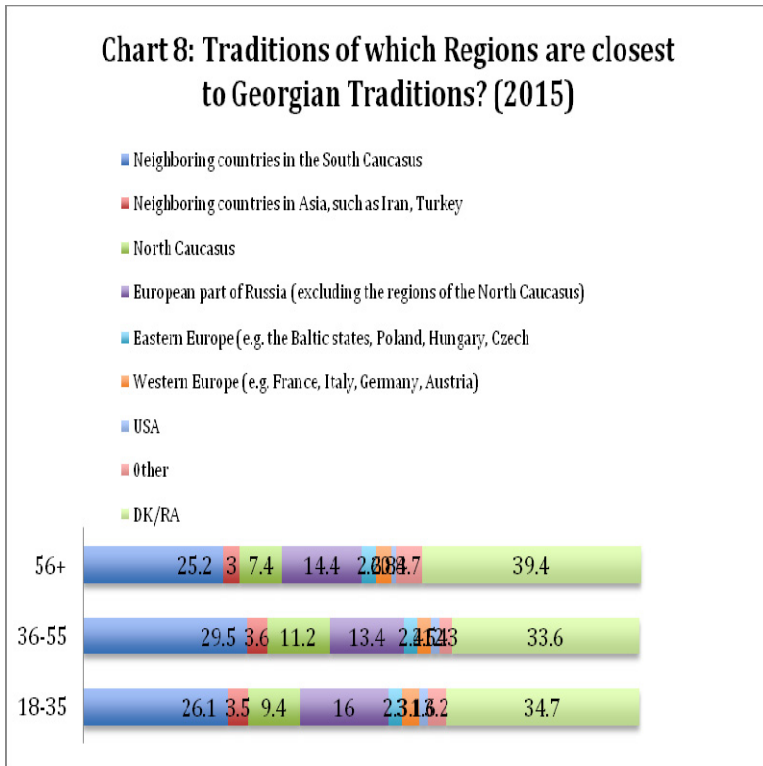


\*Source: CRRC Caucasus Barometer: 2015

Wealthier Georgians might be more likely to say they are European. However, subsequent responses indicate they do not consider the traditions or the modern culture of their homeland to be European. People with higher incomes are as likely to say that the traditions and modern culture of Georgia are closest to the Caucasus or Russia as people with lower levels of income. Similarly, knowledge of English – even at advanced level – does not increase the probability of considering Georgian culture or traditions to be similar to Europe. Likewise, age or education seems to have little to



no impact on these opinions, with the small exception of people with a postgraduate degree. The largest portion of people with a post-graduate degree thinks Eastern Europe is the region most like Georgia (15.5 percent), and proportionally, the smallest number of people with a post-graduate degree (3 percent) believes that the European part of Russia is closest to Georgia. However, if we keep in mind that less than 1 percent of people surveyed hold a post-graduate degree, the correlation could be just a coincidence (CCRC Caucasus Barometer 2015).

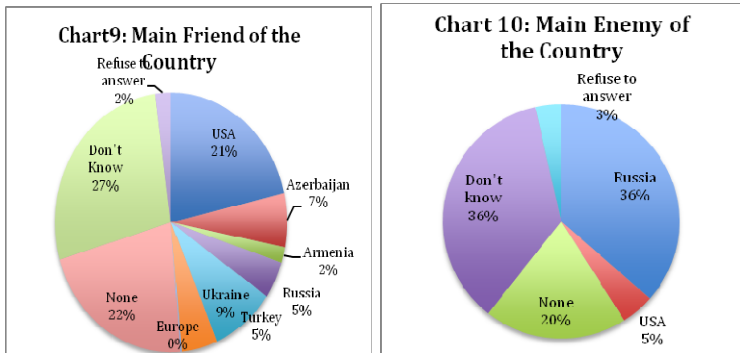


\*Source: CRRC Caucasus Barometer: 2015

While examined across different categories such as age, income or educational level, most of the answers do not vary

significantly. Interestingly, the population living in rural areas is twice more likely to answer, “I don’t know” (41 percent) than inhabitants of Tbilisi (19.4 percent) when asked the question: “Traditions of which regions is closest to those of Georgia?”

In addition to this set of questions, it was interesting to examine whom Georgians view as their friend or enemy. A sizeable representation of the Georgian population finds it difficult to name the country’s main enemy or friend (which could indirectly indicate the lack of specific “extended self” or the “other”). Notably, an insignificant portion – 0.2 percent – named EU as a friend (Russia got 5 percent and USA received 21 percent). On the other hand, more than a third of Georgians considered Russia to be the country’s enemy.



\*Source: CRRCC Caucasus Barometer: 2015

Residents of the capital of Georgia are more likely to consider Russia the main enemy of the country (46 percent) than the population in other urban areas (31 percent) or rural communities (32 percent). Younger people, under the age of 35 (39 percent), are also more likely to name Russia as Georgia’s enemy than people older than 56 (29 percent). Similarly, the younger population is slightly more likely to name the USA as a friend than the older generation, although the difference is rather small and so it is difficult to argue that age has a significant impact on attitudes.

**Table:1 Main Friend of the Country According to Age Category (2015)**

<b>Cross tabulation (percent)</b>	<b>18-35</b>	<b>36-55</b>	<b>56+</b>
<b>USA</b>	35	35	30
<b>Ukraine</b>	33	38	29
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	26	37	37
<b>Russia</b>	32	24	44
<b>Turkey</b>	38	38	24
<b>Armenia</b>	44	29	27
<b>Other</b>	17	40	43
<b>None</b>	30	40	30

**Table: 2 Main Enemy of the Country According to Age Category (2015)**

<b>Cross tabulation (percent)</b>	<b>18-35</b>	<b>36-55</b>	<b>56+</b>
<b>Russia</b>	39	32	29
<b>USA</b>	27	46	26
<b>Turkey</b>	29	37	34
<b>All countries</b>	32	42	26
<b>Other</b>	18	33	49
<b>None</b>	30	37	33

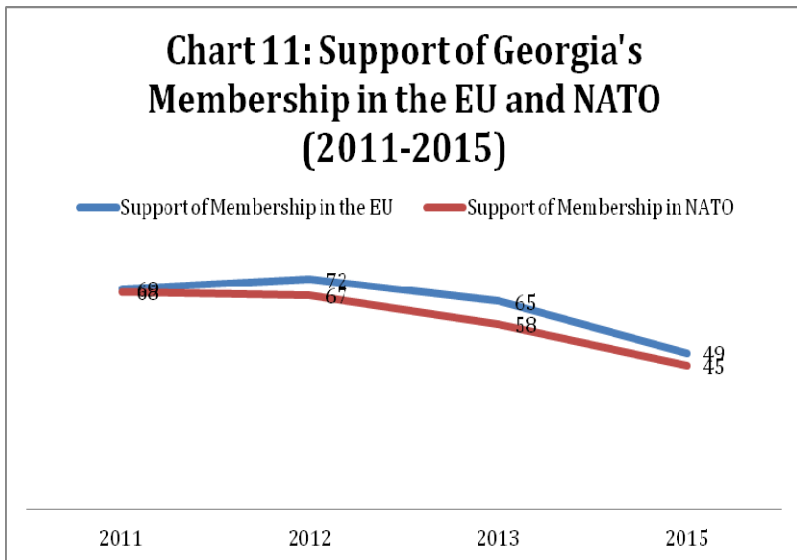
\*Source: CRRC Caucasus Barometer: 2015

### **Influence of national identity on public opinions regarding foreign policy**

Georgian citizens, to a large extent, do not think of themselves as European, nor do they believe that European culture or traditions are close to Georgia. Moreover, they do not consider the EU to be the country's biggest ally or friend. Nevertheless, Georgia has largely maintained pro-Western policies, and consecutive

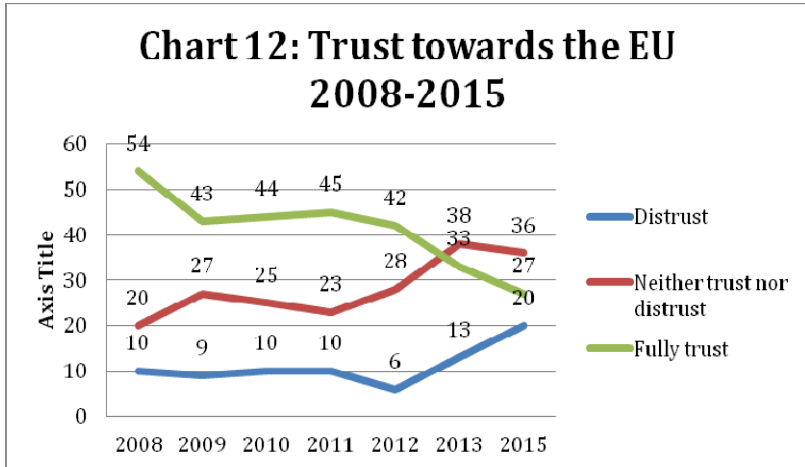
governments have enjoyed relatively significant support from the public on the matter. For instance, in a non-binding referendum held in 2008, Georgian citizens were asked if they would support accession to the NATO and an overwhelming majority (77 percent) said yes (Central Elections Commission: 2008). Surveys conducted by the CRRC demonstrate that the public still largely supports EU and NATO accession policies, however, there has been a steady decline over the past couple of years.

According to the Caucasus Barometer Surveys from 2013 to 2015, support for EU membership reached its peak in 2012 with almost two-thirds of the population supporting it, and only 3 percent against. In 2015, support levels fell to 49 percent and the number of people against EU membership rose to one-fifth of the population (20 percent). Similarly, support toward NATO membership peaked (for the 5 year period) in 2012, with 67 percent being for – and only 6 percent being against. Fewer people felt positive about the idea in 2015, with 45 percent for, and 24 percent against, NATO membership (CRRC 2011; 2012; 2013; 2015).



\*Source: CRRC Caucasus Barometer: 2011; 2012; 2013; 2015

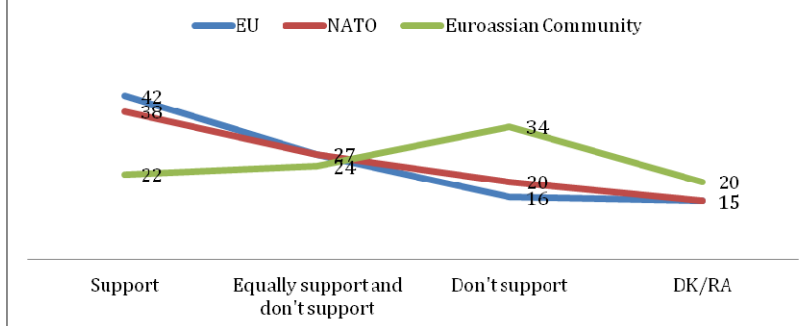
Additionally, trust toward the EU has fallen as well. In 2008, more than half of respondents (54 percent) said they trusted the EU; by 2015 the number had dropped by nearly half (27 percent), and the number of people who distrust the institution doubled (from 10 percent to 20 percent).



\*Source: CRRC Caucasus Barometer: 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2015

Despite the decline in support for the EU and NATO, the majority of the population remains positive toward the idea. For instance, 47 percent think that visa liberalization with the EU would benefit country and only 17 percent disagree. Furthermore, as chart 13 illustrates, support toward the EU (42 percent) is almost twice as high as support toward the Russian-led Eurasian community (22 percent).

**Chart 13: Support of Georgia's Membership in the EU, NATO and Eurasian Community (2015)**



\*Source: CRRC Caucasus Barometer: 2015

Unfortunately, it is difficult to see to what extent the population would support closer ties to other Caucasian countries, which they feel is the region that is closest to them in terms of culture or traditions. An analysis of governmental documents suggests that significant attention has not been given to the region.

Geographically, however, Georgia is locked in the Caucasus. Although the existence of the Caucasus region does not require politicians' awareness, such awareness or lack thereof, does have policy implications. At best, some political respondents view the Caucasus as a sub-region of a wider Black Sea region or Eastern Europe. However, a more recurring idea is that Caucasus either does not exist at all as a separate identity or there is stigma associated with it, which has to be overcome. The idea of overcoming the stigma of the Caucasus and identifying Georgia with more appealing regions closer to the EU and the NATO is repeatedly noted in the strategic documents Georgia adopted from 2000 to 2012.

Following Buzan's (1991) analytical framework, Georgia's security strategy can be viewed as a national strategy that suffers from logical and perceptual problems. Georgia has been trying to increase its reliance on its own military capabilities rather than

cultivate opportunities for cooperation over its security threats. While aspiring to membership in NATO, Georgia has largely ignored its immediate neighborhood and possibilities of cooperation, especially in the security matters of the North Caucasus, which is evidence of the logical problem, while the fact that Georgia does not prioritize Caucasus demonstrates its perceptual problem. An analysis of Georgia's four conceptual and strategic documents demonstrates the extent the Caucasus is recognized as a priority or a threat for Georgia, which indicates that the popular perceptions of the national identity in Georgia does not influence the foreign policy making.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest document in which Georgia, for the first time, declared that its foreign political vector pointed west, never mentions the North Caucasus. However, as the document lists the challenges Georgia faced, it is emphasized that "Georgia supports international efforts to bring about the peaceful resolution of disputes in surrounding areas, such as Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as further afield" (Government of Georgia 2000). Discussing the foreign policy goals, particularly, "Regional and Sub-Regional Cooperation Initiatives" (Government of Georgia 2000), the major focus is on the South Caucasus and occasionally on Russia as a whole. Even the 1996 Peaceful Caucasus Initiative (PCI) by President Eduard Shevardnadze is aimed at creating "a zone of mutually beneficial cooperation" in South Caucasus (Government of Georgia 2000), apparently, excluding Russia from the initiative. Interestingly, the document includes a section on the goals of the border guards of Georgia, which, seemingly, is a reaction to the Russian accusation that Georgia cannot control its borders. The document lists three important goals, two of which are a direct reflection of those accusations: preventing "illegal smuggling of drugs, weapons, or sensitive materials" and preventing "illegal movement of migrant populations or terrorists into or through Georgia" (Government of Georgia 2000). Other than these sections,

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<sup>2</sup> The examined four documents include the following: Georgia and the World: A Vision and Strategy for the Future (Government of Georgia 2000); National Security Concept of Georgia (Government of Georgia 2005 and 2011); and Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009 (Government of Georgia 2006).

there is no trace of the North Caucasus in the document, which, perhaps, means that when Tbilisi was making its first independent steps in strategic culture, along with the first declaration of clear foreign policy goals, the major task was to make it obvious that Europe, not the Caucasus, CIS or Russia, was Georgia's priority. This additionally implies that the public has had little to say in terms of influencing strategic decision-making in the field of foreign policy from the very beginning.

The first national security concept of Georgia was adopted in 2005, after the Rose Revolution. The new government tried to correct the lack of strategic culture and clearly list threats and goals of foreign and security policy. Former President Mikheil Saakashvili's government put even more emphasis on the West. Therefore, the new concept does not say any more about the North Caucasus than the previous document. "Spillover of Conflicts from Neighboring States" is the threat number two for Georgia, mentioning Pankisi Gorge as an example and instability in North Caucasus as capable of "dragging Georgia into conflict" (Government of Georgia 2005). Moreover, in the section on foreign relations, Russia comes fifth after the USA, Ukraine, Turkey, and Armenia and Azerbaijan (Government of Georgia 2005). Perhaps, one of the major shifts was moving the focus of the document's section on regional cooperation from the South Caucasus in the 2000 document to the Black Sea region (Government of Georgia 2005). This demonstrates Georgia's desire to be physically closer to Europe.

In 2006, Georgian government also adopted a foreign policy strategy (Government of Georgia 2006). The document lists the strategic goals of Georgia's foreign policy. The goals include regional stability, which comes after territorial integrity and strengthening national security (Government of Georgia 2006). However, there is no clear reference to Caucasus. The most important issue for foreign policy, according to the strategy, is "strengthening international participation in conflict resolution and avoiding new threats in the Black Sea region" (Government of Georgia 2006 p. 8). Therefore, the strategy expresses Georgia's readiness to "actively cooperate in solving the existing conflicts on our territory, as well as in the Caucasus and the wider Black Sea region" (Government of Georgia 2006 p. 8). The focus on the Black



Sea region is overwhelming in comparison with the Caucasus. It appears that the Georgian government was trying to reshape the country's regional identity from that of a Caucasian country to that of a member of the Black Sea region in order for it to become part of the same discourse as Turkey, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria and Romania. Consequently, Tbilisi's attention was redirected to organizations such as Community of Democratic Choice (CDC), Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, GUAM and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC); while Caucasus (especially North Caucasus) started disappearing from the list of priorities of the government.

The national security concept (Government of Georgia 2011) is the first and the last document so far, in which North Caucasus was allocated significant space. However, more important is the context and the purpose of discussing North Caucasus. Recognizing the threat of the spillover of conflicts, the 2011 concept attributes similar importance to Russia's attempts "to demonize Georgia among the population of the North Caucasus region" (Government of Georgia 2011 p. 9). Although the territorial integrity of the country and relations with Russia are the top priority of Georgia's national security policy, apparently establishing good relations with the peoples of North Caucasus is more important for Tbilisi than relations with Moscow. Georgia expresses its willingness for having good neighborly relations with Russia, however, the document rules out its possibility without "beginning de-occupation" (Government of Georgia 2011 p. 12). On the other hand, the document does not explain how it is possible to "deepen and develop relationships with the peoples of the North Caucasus, which will increase their awareness of Georgia's goals and political course, contributing to the creation of an atmosphere of trust, peace, and stability in the Caucasus" (Government of Georgia 2011 p. 13), without first reconciling its relations with Russia. It is obvious that Georgia tried to reach out North Caucasian republics bypassing Moscow, which, according to MacFarlane (2012 p. 14), "appears to be designed to irritate the Russians." MacFarlane (2012) argues Georgia needs to consider the likely reactions of Moscow, which can be disastrous given Georgia's past relations with Russia. Moreover, the exclusion of the Russian government from Tbilisi's policies in North Caucasus

has been perceived in Russia “as hostile interference in a highly sensitive domestic political issue” (Macfarlane 2012 p. 14).

The incorporation of the North Caucasus in the political agenda, however, was apparently determined by the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, and not necessarily by the cultural affinities between Georgia and the region. The involvement of North Caucasian volunteers in the war against Georgia was a crucial trigger for adopting the policy. The official goal was to correct Georgia’s image in the North Caucasus, which was distorted by Russian propaganda and, in the long run, to avoid the further engagement of North Caucasians in possible armed conflicts between Georgia and Russia. Similarly, the respondents from the former ruling party, the United National Movement (UNM), argued that this policy would lead to creating a buffer zone between Russia and Georgia. According to a former representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs from the UNM, “Russia’s interest is having the tightest possible control over North Caucasus, we want the opposite – to create a buffer between Georgia and Russia.” Therefore, the core problem of the UNM policy was the misperception of reality and misidentification of problems by the Georgian authorities. While a war with Russia was thought to be a given and unavoidable, Georgia focused its efforts to somehow weaken Russia rather than avoid conflict with it.

Therefore, North Caucasus was perceived as a separate region from the Russian Federation – although Georgia has never supported separatism in North Caucasus, neither has Tbilisi ever openly stated in any strategic document related to the region that North Caucasus was indeed a part of Russia. For example, the State Concept of Georgia on Relations with North Caucasian Peoples adopted in June 2012 became a framework of the previously scattered decisions regarding Georgia’s policy towards North Caucasus. The concept emphasizes cultural connections between Georgia and North Caucasian peoples. It also refers to issues related to people-to-people contacts, human rights, free media, civil society, education and science, economy and trade, restoration of historical justice, traditions, culture and sport, relations with Diaspora, and healthcare. Interestingly, Russia is mentioned in the six-page document only three times; twice as the Russian empire, which left a legacy of

ethnic cleansing and genocide, and once in a footnote referring to a chapter in Georgia's national security concept. Therefore, it can be argued that the prioritization on North Caucasus was not driven by identity-related issues but by more strategic way of reasoning. This means that even when the Georgian strategic documents focus on South and North Caucasus, the focus seems forceful and the Georgian national identity stays out of the strategic thinking behind the decision-making process.

As a result, the content analysis of the strategic documents is a useful tool to understand how foreign policy may be driven on the basis of the elite identity, which is apparent in the Georgian case. This additionally shows that the identity of the political elite is much more important in defining the foreign policy directions and priorities of a country than that of the public.

## **Conclusion**

This paper compared the perceptions of the Georgian political elite and the public regarding the national identity. The study finds that the elite's view of national identity largely differs from that of the population. Although scholarly literature views the elite as a driving force to construct national identity, the above analysis demonstrates that, in Georgia, the elite has been only partly successful in this regard. The Georgian political elite has managed to establish a strong political discourse favoring pro-Western foreign policy, which is shared and supported by the society as well. However, when it comes to the self-perception and understanding of what it means to be Georgian and with whom the Georgians share most of their cultural characteristics, there is a large gap between the elite and the public. The qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with members of the Georgian political elite found that they view Europe or its sub-regions as an extended self of the Georgian national identity. On the other hand, however, the quantitative data from nation-wide surveys suggests that the public's idea of Georgianness is different and centers on their ethnicity and the Caucasus region rather than Europe.

Furthermore, the paper analyzed the relationship between Georgian foreign policy and national identity, and juxtaposed popular and elitist views of Georgianness in terms of their relative impact on foreign policy decision-making in Georgia. The conducted content analysis of Georgia's strategic documents demonstrates that the strategic decision-making in the field of foreign and security policies is primarily driven by the worldviews and perceptions of the elite rather than the public. The content analysis indicates that, since the early 2000s, the Georgian political elite has been able to establish a new discourse on where Georgia belongs. This explains why society's view of Georgian national identity has been largely ignored and why Georgia's geographical location has changed from that of a Caucasian country to that of a Black Sea country. This shift in presenting Georgia's regional affiliation in Georgian strategic documents aimed at putting the country in the same political discourse where there are NATO and EU member states, i.e. Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. Thus, the elite in Georgia has tried to focus more on how Georgia's national identity is perceived outside the country than on how the Georgian public itself perceives its own national identity.

Although the case of Georgia may lead to the conclusion that the elite might not be as important as argued in theoretical literature, this discrepancy can be explained. Georgia has been independent only for two and a half decades, which may not necessarily be enough time for the process of identity construction. It is hard, if not impossible, to judge what is going to happen in the future and how the perceptions of Georgian national identity will change over time. What is clear at this point, however, is that there is a high degree of discrepancy between the elite and the public and that the public has little influence on foreign policy making.

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## **ACCOUNTING FOR THE "SELFLESS" SELF-PERCEPTION AMONG THE GEORGIAN PUBLIC**

The idea of "Georgianness" is omnipresent in Georgian political discourse, especially when discussing the foreign policy orientation of the country. Quite often it is argued that Western culture threatens the underlying values of Georgianness and may lead to Georgians' assimilation into the West, which is a collective term denoting North America and Europe.

A number of NGOs and media outlets in Georgia maintain "Western ideas are contradictory to Georgian culture, traditions and religion" and that Georgians "will have to forget [their] morality, Christianity, Orthodoxy and faith" if Georgia pursues a Westward foreign policy (Kakhishvili, 2016). However, because such statements tend to be overly generalized and lack clarity, what it means for the public to be Georgian remains unexplored. This chapter builds on the previous chapter, taking a deeper look at Georgian identity according to the public perceptions and investigating the self/other nexus of the identity. The resulting analysis indicates that the high degree of divergence between elite identity and public identity, as argued in the previous chapter, is due to the fact that national identity is still contested in wider society. The paper first examines self-perception and values and then moves to discussing two orientations of the self/other nexus: external and internal orientations. In the external orientation, the discussion focuses on the other most Georgians aspire to, Europe, and the other most Georgians distance themselves from, Russia. In the internal orientation, the paper underlines the importance of the other within and examines the social distance between ethnic Georgians and other ethnic groups, mostly Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Finally, based on this analysis, it is argued that the process of Georgian identity (re)construction is an unfinished process (although it can be argued that identity formation is a never-ending process constantly undergoing changes). This implies that, among the Georgian public, there is a high degree of confusion in terms of values and goals, on the one hand, and a lack of comprehension of what it means to be a Georgian, on the other. This, in turn, opens a window of opportunity for the political elite to

actively participate in the process of identity construction in Georgia.

## **Values and Norms**

Values and norms are difficult to measure. While quantitative data lacks depth, it compensates with generalizability, which is important when analyzing public perceptions. The following analysis is based on the results of two nation-wide surveys: "Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015" and "Caucasus Barometer, 2015" – both conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre. According to the available data, values can be divided into social values and political values. Social values include the following variables: justification of abortion; divorce; importance of faith; justification of having premarital sex; and a woman bearing a child outside marriage. Political values include: state vs. human rights; attitudes towards freedom of speech; attitudes toward the role of government; and attitudes toward democracy. Finally, the section on political values examines popular perceptions over the extent Georgian political parties share European values, and how these perceptions correlate to their popularity.

Georgia is seen as a conservative society and the data regarding social values appears to support that assumption. An indicator that Georgians are more conservative than liberal is that 66 percent of Georgians tend to think it is impossible to be a good person unless a person believes in God. The importance of religion for Georgians is overwhelming: only 14 percent of the society agrees with the statement that to be a good person one does not necessarily have to believe in God. Surveys also indicate that Georgia is more religious than many other countries: the 2015 worldwide survey by the Worldwide Independent Network of Market Research and Gallup International (2015) found that two-thirds of the global population claims to be religious, compared to 93 per cent in Georgia. This makes Georgia the fourth most religious country in the world after Thailand, Armenia and Bangladesh. In comparison, surveys have found that Western Europe is the least religious region in the world with 51 per cent of the population claiming to be not religious or a convinced atheist. This indicator alone demonstrates the gap between Georgian and European societies but it is worth examining other social values and the portrait they paint of the



Georgian nation.

On a scale from 1 to 10, respondents of the 2015 Caucasus Barometer (The Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 2015) survey were asked to evaluate to what extent abortion, divorce, premarital sex and women bearing a child outside marriage were justified. See Table 1 for the figures (below).

The figures in Table 1 indicate that not only is Georgian society conservative, it is patriarchal. Over half of all respondents found three out of the five variables were never justified: having an abortion; premarital sex for women; and women bearing a child without marriage. The primary characteristic that unites these three variables is that they concern women and women’s decisions or women’s rights to make decisions about their lives. Nearly 75 percent of the population said it is never justifiable for women to have an abortion. More than two-thirds said it is never justifiable that women have a sexual life before marriage. Finally, more than half of Georgian society said it is never justifiable for a woman to have a child outside marriage. Interestingly, when it comes to the men’s decisions, Georgians are more undecided: 29 percent of the population said it is always justified for men to have premarital sex, compared to just 6 percent in the case of women. Divorce, by its nature, may be initiated by either the male or female spouse, which perhaps what explains the fact that 47 percent of the population thinks it is sometimes justified.

Table 1: Social values

	Getting a divorce (%)	Having an abortion (%)	Premarital sex		Woman bearing a child without marriage (%)
			For men (%)	For women (%)	
Never justified (answers from 1 to 3)	40	73	35	69	57
Sometimes justified (answers from 4 to 7)	47	18	26	17	29
Always justified (answers from 8 to 10)	11	4	29	6	8
Don't know	2	4	2	6	5
Refuse to answer	0	1	8	1	1

Source: The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2015a. "Caucasus Barometer" and The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2015b. "Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015". Retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org>

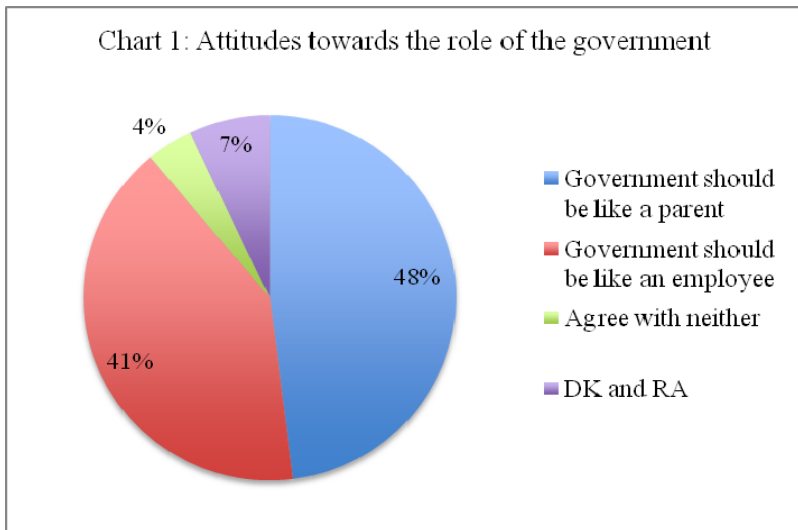
The second dimension of values and norms is political, and can help evaluate popular attitudes toward political rights and freedoms, institutions and parties. One of the goals of the Georgian political elite is that Georgia has to build its institutions and eventually transform itself into a consolidated democracy. Notwithstanding its ups and downs, the country has remained on track for this goal. However, the importance of democracy seems to be unclear for Georgian society. There was no majority response to the question "democracy is preferable to any other kind of government": 47 percent agreed, while 16 percent believes that sometimes "a non-democratic government can be preferred" and 15 percent said that it does not make any difference for them. Furthermore, one out of five Georgians said they do not know what to think of democracy. These figures show a high degree of confusion among the public and the fact that people in Georgia lack information about the benefits of a democratic government. This is not only a problem for ordinary citizens; it is a challenge for the political elite, especially if the elite is keen on developing democracy in Georgia.

Table 2: Attitudes towards democracy

Attitudes towards democracy	
	Percent
Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government	47
In some circumstances a non-democratic government can be preferred	16
For someone like me it doesn't matter	15
Don't know	20
Refuse to answer	2

Source: The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2015a. "Caucasus Barometer".

Judging from the attitudes toward democracy, it is not surprising that Georgians appear to view their government more as a "parent" than as an "employee" (see Chart 1) – 48 and 41 per cent respectively. Such an attitude toward the role of the government causes the public to disconnect from politics and not actively participate in public life. Although there is no clear understanding whether this attitude is a cause or an effect of some other factors, the fact is that the view of Georgians is polarized.



Source: The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2015b. "Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015". Retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org>

While Georgian society might be uncertain about how the political system should work, the public is quite clear when it comes to the conflict between the state and the individual. Asked about the relationship between state interests and human rights, two-thirds of respondents believes that the latter is "a supreme value and should be protected first of all". Only 10 per cent of the population thinks that

state interests should be above human rights. In light of the government being viewed as a parent, this is an important indicator of the conflicting values that are sometimes held in Georgian society. In a similar fashion, freedom of speech seems to be a significant issue for the Georgian public: 72 percent of the population believes that "people have the right to openly say what they think", while 18 percent does not agree with that statement.

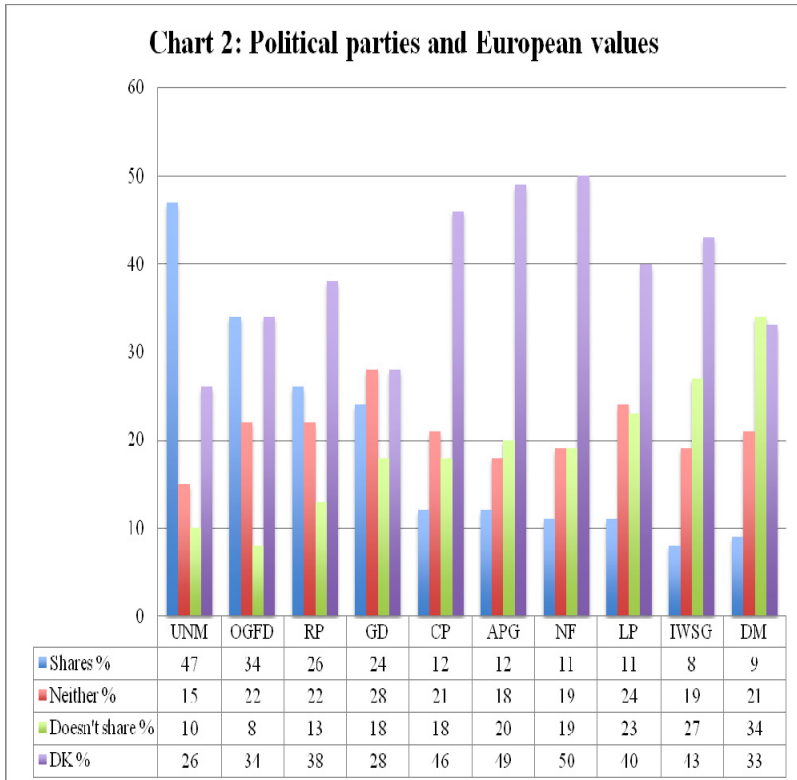
One final aspect of the political values discussed in this paper is political parties: the public's perception of how closely political parties share European values, and popular attitudes toward them. Table 3 (below) shows the extent a particular political party shares European values, according to public perception, and what kind of attitudes people have toward each of them. Such data can provide important insights on whether a party's perceived European values correlates to positive ratings. Political party ratings represent a complex issue in a country like Georgia and numbers can be misleading if one wants to predict election outcomes (see Gutbrod and Dunbar, 2016), however this paper is not focused on which party is more likely to win the next election. The primary concern of this analysis is the extent to which it is possible to establish any reasonable correlation between a party sharing European values and public perceptions of this party. It has to be emphasized, however, that these figures do not necessarily describe the extent to which political parties actually share European values. The popular perception is more important in this case, and that is the focus of this paper.

Chart 2<sup>3</sup> shows the figures about public perception of whether parties share European values. The data makes it clear that there is high degree of confusion among the public, i.e. a large proportion of population cannot decide whether parties do or do not share European values. The share of answer category "Don't know" ranges from 26 percent to as high as 50 percent. Furthermore, the answer category "Neither" also has a high proportion, ranging from 15 to 28

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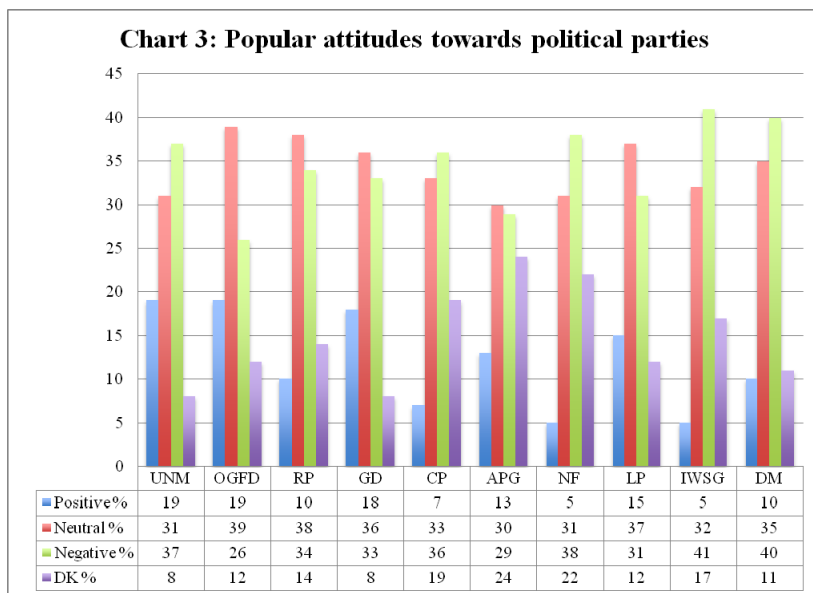
<sup>3</sup> The parties represented in the data include the following: UNM – United National Movement; OGD – Our Georgia Free Democrats; RP – Republican Party; GD – Georgian Dream; CP – Conservative Party; APG – Alliance of Patriots of Georgia; NF – National Forum; LP – Labour Party; IWSG – Industry Will Save Georgia; DM – Democratic Movement.

percent. This may mean two things. First, the public is unsure about what European values mean, which is why people cannot decide whether a particular party shares them or not. Second, political parties themselves represent such conflicting values that it becomes extremely difficult for the people to decide to what extent they share European values. However, it is, perhaps, that a combination of the both of these factors shapes public perceptions.



Source: The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2015b. "Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015". Retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org>

Notwithstanding the limitations of the data, however, the ten political parties can be broken down into three groups in terms of the extent they share European values. The first group of parties includes United National Movement (UNM) and Our Georgia Free Democrats (OGFD) since more a third of the society believes they share European values. The second category also includes two political parties: Republican Party (RP) and Georgian Dream (GD), which are believed to share European values by about 25 percent of the public. The final group would include the rest of the parties. However, the third group includes two political parties – Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG) and Democratic Movement (DM) – that do not represent European values according to 27 and 34 per cent of the public, respectively. These two figures are the highest on the list.



Source: The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2015b. "Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015". Retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org>

Although Chart 3 does not necessarily predict election results, it shows which parties the public views positively. There are a few outliers: GD, APG, LP and DM. The GD was categorized in the second group above but it has the same share of positive attitudes as the UNM, which is perceived to share European values by twice as many people. The APG, LP and DM all have a higher share of positive attitudes – 13, 15 and 10 percent respectively – than the RP, at 10 percent. In light of the fact that RP is perceived to share European values by two to three times more people than any of these three parties, it appears that sharing European values is not the primary factor that shapes popular attitudes towards political parties.

Overall, the discussion of social and political values and norms clearly leads to a few conclusions. First, the Georgian public is largely conservative and patriarchal when it comes to values. Second, there is a high degree of confusion and a lack of information among Georgians about many aspects of social and political values. Third, the extent a political party shares European values, based on public perception, is not of decisive factor in popular attitudes toward political parties. Other studies have also had similar findings. Mestvirishvili and Mestvirishvili (2014) argue that a European identity does not predominate among Georgians. According to the authors, the sense of "Europeanness" among the public is not nearly as widespread as it is among the political elite who, as noted above, define Georgian identity as European. It is important to note, however, that values and self-perception are not easily changeable. Although identity is fluid, modification takes time. In their analysis of Georgia's Europeanness, Mestvirishvili and Mestvirishvili (2014) maintain that there is evidence of a slow process of convergence of Georgian and European values in the gradual change observed in several values. For example, the authors compare two datasets, the 2009 and 2011 Caucasus Barometers, and show that there was a statistically significant increase in the importance attributed to several factors associated with being a good citizen. Such factors include voting in elections, forming one's own opinions, being critical of the government, volunteering and participating in protests. The importance of these factors increased, respectively, by 6 per cent, 9 per cent, 14 per cent, 10 per cent, and 25 per cent (Mestvirishvili and Mestvirishvili, 2014). Another sign of changing values is the

evolution in public opinion regarding women having children outside of marriage and women engaging in pre-marital sex. Although public attitudes towards these values are shifting and Georgian society is gradually moving towards Europe, Mestvirishvili and Mestvirishvili (2014) argue that the high level of "conservatism towards particular social issues continues to set Georgia apart from EU member states." Thus, changes in the values held by the Georgian public are, and will remain, the key to understanding Georgia's process of Europeanization.

### **Self-other nexus**

The self/other nexus is particularly enlightening when it comes to identities (for a theoretical discussion on the issue, please, see the chapter in this book by Salome Minesashvili). As demonstrated in this book, there are multiple others and multiple types of others. There are others to which people aspire, and others from whom people would like to distance themselves. For the political elite, Europe is the type of other, which represents the extended self and Russia is the type of other which represents the identity different from that of Georgian (for more detailed discussion on this issue, please see the chapter in this book by Mariam Naskidashvili). This section of the paper, however, investigates how the Georgian public views this external orientation of the self-other nexus, followed by a discussion on the internal orientation of the self-other nexus, which relates to the national minorities living within Georgia. Concerning national minorities, it is important to understand the boundaries of the Georgian national identity in the sense of who belongs to the nation.

How the external other is characterized by the public is an important aspect for understanding what type of other a particular actor is. For this purpose, questions such as "who is the main friend of the country" and "who is the main enemy of the country" may be illuminating. Unsurprisingly, the largest share of respondents, 35 percent of the population, identified Russia as Georgia's main enemy. The USA is a distant second with a little over 4 percent. It should be noted, however, that 19 percent of the public thinks Georgia does not have any enemies and over 34 per cent does could not answer the



question. On the other hand, the USA ranks first as Georgia’s main friend, with 21 percent. Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia make up the rest of the top-five allies, with 9, 7, 5 and 5 percent of responses, respectively. 21 percent, however, thinks that Georgia does not have any friends, while 27 per cent could not identify the country's main friend. This would appear to indicate that the USA is an extended self for the public and Russia is the other. However, public perceptions are not that straightforward: although Russia is viewed as the main enemy of Georgia, it is also viewed as the country with which Georgia should have closest political and economic ties (see table 3 below). It is interesting that most Georgians would like to see their country developing close political and economic relations with its primary enemy.

Table 3. International actors with which Georgia should have the closest political and economic ties<sup>4</sup>

	Russia	EU	USA	Turkey	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	NATO	EAU
Georgia should have the closest political cooperation with...	54%	49%	46%	21%	16%	15%	14%	4%
Georgia should have the closest economic cooperation with...	57%	43%	37%	27%	20%	16%	7%	4%

Source: The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2015b. "Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, Knowledge and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015". Retrieved through ODA -

<sup>4</sup> Question text: “In your opinion, of the listed countries and unions, which of the following should Georgia have the closest political [economic] cooperation with? Please rank the top three”.

<http://caucasusbarometer.org>

The EU, on the other hand comes second, after Russia, in terms of developing close political and economic ties. This is another interesting, albeit confusing, response because 67 percent of the society believes that "deeper cooperation with the EU" will negatively impact Georgia's relations with Russia and only 8 percent expects that increased cooperation with the EU will positively influence Georgian-Russian relations (The Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 2015b). It should be added, however, that 33 percent of society believes that the EU, "can currently best support Georgia" as opposed to 24 and 17 per cent for Russia and USA respectively (The Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 2015b).

An insightful dynamic can also be seen among those respondents who would like to go abroad for work or study. Although such people are not the majority, only 26 and 21 per cent of the society according to the survey, their first choice of a destination country for work and study is interesting. In the case of work, Germany and Russia lead the list with 15 percent each, closely followed by the USA with 14 percent. In the case of education, however, only 5 percent chose Russia, while 25 percent selected UK, followed by 23 percent for the USA, 21 percent for Germany and 7 percent for France. Russia's popularity for labor emigration can, perhaps, be explained by the fact that 69 percent of the public (mostly older people who are more likely to be willing to emigrate for work relative to younger people who seek education abroad) speaks Russian, as opposed to 19 percent who speak English. However, things might be changing because 68 percent of the public thinks that the mandatory second language at schools should be English, compared to just 22 percent for Russian. Judging from the data, it can be argued that Russia, as an extended self, is being gradually but steadily replaced by the EU and, more generally, by the West.

The Georgian public appears to hold confusing and, at times, conflicting views on the EU. A significant part of the Georgian society – 29 per cent – views the EU as "a new form of empire" while 35 percent does not. A more striking contradiction is the fact that 45 per cent of the population in Georgia perceives the EU as a

threat to Georgian traditions, while 34 percent of the public does not. However, only 28 percent of the society thinks that respect for Georgian traditions will decrease, as a result of EU membership. Although the EU is not exactly the external other with which Georgians share their values, or which is seen as an extended self by the majority of the public, 61 percent of the population would vote for the membership in the EU. By comparison, only 27 percent would vote to join the Eurasian Union (EAU).

Based on these responses, it is surprising that EU membership has this many supporters. In fact, the answer may not lie in identity-related issues; public opinion seems to be driven by issues like the economy and security. These two issues dominate the public's perception of the most important national problems (for more information, see the Library of Georgia Public Opinion reports by NDI, n.d.) and EU membership is seen as the means to improve the situation in both regards. A large number of respondents believe that, once Georgia joins the EU, many of social services and other aspects of life will improve: level of pensions (57 percent of respondents); amount of jobs (57 percent); affordability of healthcare (49 percent); personal income (53 percent); possibility of restoring territorial integrity (41 percent); and the level of national security (57 percent). Although 33 percent also believes that consumer prices will increase, 51 percent thinks that poverty will decrease so, if there is less poverty, more jobs and more personal income, as well as more security, society can easily deal with increased prices. These are simply perceived benefits of the EU membership and may not necessarily come true. However, such perceptions can define how the public opinion swings in decisive moments.

Although external orientation and the idea of external others help define a national identity, equally important is the internal orientation of the self-other nexus and the other within. This determines who belongs to the community. Georgia, as a multicultural, multi-ethnic country, faces a challenge in building a civic identity. Therefore, society's view of the boundaries of the Georgian nation (i.e. inclusion and exclusion of various groups of people) shapes the national identity. According to the 2002 census data, the share of ethnic minorities in the population of Georgia is just over 16 percent, with ethnic Azerbaijanis and Armenians making

up the largest groups, respectively 6 and 5 percent. Minorities in Georgia still suffer from a lack of integration, which is often attributed to factors such as not knowing the state language, employment, etc. However, it is equally important to understand how minorities are perceived by ethnic Georgians. For this purpose, the paper explores the data about the social distance between ethnic Georgians and other communities. Social distance can be discussed using two variables: approval of doing business with members of a particular community and approval of women marrying members of a particular community (see table 4).

Table 4: Social distance

	Women marrying a member of a community members		Doing business with a member of a community members	
	Approve (%)	Disapprove (%)	Approve (%)	Disapprove (%)
Ukrainians	50	43	77	15
Russians	50	43	76	17
Americans	44	49	71	20
Abkhazians	44	49	69	23
Italians	43	49	68	22
Ossetians	40	52	66	26
Armenians living in Georgia	39	53	68	24
Armenians	35	57	61	30
Jews	34	58	66	26
Azerbaijanis living in Georgia	32	60	70	22
Azerbaijanis	29	63	66	25
Iranians	26	67	57	33
Turks	26	67	61	31
Kurds / Yezidis	25	68	55	35

Source: The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2015a. "Caucasus Barometer".

The data demonstrates that the social distance between ethnic Georgians and ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis living in Georgia

is greater than that between ethnic Georgians and members of those communities that are clearly beyond the Georgian nation, such as Russians, Ukrainians, Americans or Italians. The latter two, moreover, indicate that religion may not be a decisive factor for ethnic Georgians approving of Georgian women marrying other ethnicities. This, however, demonstrates that the Georgians have the other within their society as well, and not only beyond their country (for a more detailed discussion on building a civic identity, please, see the chapter by Tamar Patarai).

### **Conclusion: possible reasons for a "selfless" self-perception**

Public opinion surveys in Georgia indicate that perceptions of the Georgian public about their own national identity are confusing and full of contradictions. Additionally, ethnic Georgians are not highly accepting of ethnic minorities within the country. There might be two possible reasons for this situation. First is political and is related to how Georgian political elites, in various stages of the 25 years of independence, have tried to construct national identity in Georgia. The second reason is purely technical and relates to the complexity of the issue of identity. The public is ill informed about the subject of identity, in part because it is still widely debated even among scholars who study the topic.

The construction of national identity is largely determined by the way of the interaction between the political elite and the public and the discourse that is created. Since its independence, Georgia has experienced four different political leaders, all of which have sent somewhat different messages to the society. This is also understandable because, after seven decades of the Soviet rule and over a hundred years of Russian Tsarist rule, it has been a challenge to (re)construct national identity. The first president of the country, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, favored ethnic nationalism and pan-Caucasianism. This was followed by Eduard Shevardnadze's rule, which focused more on post-Sovietism in its early stage although, by the beginning of the 21st century, even Shevardnadze started sending out weak pro-Western sentiments. After 2003 Rose Revolution, however, Mikheil Saakashvili's new government started aggressive

pro-Westernism, focusing on Georgia's "return" to the European family. Finally, the GD government, initially led by the former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, somewhat softened the anti-Russian rhetoric and opened up some room for pro-Russian discourse (for more information about the different types of political leadership in Georgia, please, see Jones and Kakhishvili, 2013). In other words, the political elite itself at various points of the past two and a half decades has not been clear about Georgian national identity, which is the key to successful identity formation among the public.

On the other hand, the lack of knowledge about identity and what, in general, it means to be a nation may well be another reason for the Georgian public's confusion. It is not easy for an ordinary citizen, especially one suffering from economic hardship, to think carefully about identity issues. Survey results indicate that the attractiveness of the EU and European identity is not its cultural appeal, values or norms; rather people are drawn to the economic prosperity that is a perceived result of deeper cooperation between Georgia and the EU. Therefore, if alternative identity options (for a detailed discussion about Georgia's identity options, please, see Kakachia, 2013) also offer perceived material benefits, there is high probability that public opinion will swing toward whichever option might bring more material wealth.

This situation puts the Georgian political elite in a difficult position if they want to maintain public support for the European identity option. There is a room for flexibility during the process of identity (re)construction in Georgia, which is both a window of opportunity, as well as a challenge for the political elite. This requires a careful approach from political leaders in order to avoid creating public frustration during the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, as the public longs for tangible benefits from the process. To what extent the political elite will be successful, and what needs to be done, is a matter of speculation and a different type of research. One thing, however, is clear: we are observing the process of Georgian identity (re)construction, which implies that, on the one hand there is a high degree of confusion, in terms of values and goals, among the Georgian public, and, on the other, there is a lack of comprehension about what it means to be a Georgian.

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## **THE CIVIC DIMENSION OF GEORGIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON FOREIGN POLICY**

### **Introduction**

This article explores a set of public perceptions in Georgia that can be attributed to the formation of civic identity. It also looks at the connection between civic identity and the forms of participation and engagement that are characteristic of citizenship. The article assumes that the formation of civic identity has an impact - one way or another - on defining a country's foreign policy.

This analysis is based on the post-structural constructivist approach to international relations, which supports the idea that a state's foreign policy is shaped along the norms, beliefs and values that could constitute the identity of a nation (Wendt, 1999). This approach offers a framework that incorporates ideas, perceived identities, and social-order preferences as potential drivers of change in a state's foreign policy. The study also takes note of an opinion put forward by some scholars that small states do not always respond to changes in their external environment and in the regional balance of the power system, and that sometimes ideas play a much greater role in explaining their foreign policy behavior (Gvalia et al., 2011:98-131).

In the study, the concept of civic identity is understood as defined in the work of Daniel Hart, Cameron Richardson, and Britt Wilkenfeld, "Civic Identity" in the Handbook of Identity Theory and Research, ed. S.J. Schwartz et al. (eds.) (Hart et al., 2011: 771-770). The study argues that, although the sense of civic identity is in its development stage in Georgia, it can still further consensus over the country's main foreign policy priorities, such as democratization and European and Euro-Atlantic integration (Foreign policy strategy of Georgia 2015-2018).

Current academic discourse views the concept of civic identity in different ways. These differing views agree, however, that civic identity manifests itself in the public's engagement, and its



willingness to participate in the political process, as well as in promoting human rights and universal values, such as freedoms of speech, expression(Hart et al., 2011: 771-770). In addition, on the basis of a shared notion of civic identity and citizenship, society can agree on the norms and rules of peaceful co-existence, which are then codified in laws and regulations. This creates the conditions necessary for a stable and development-oriented political process in the country. Ultimately, all of this represents the basis for a functioning democratic and liberal political system.

A sense of civic identity encourages a person and increases their motivation to take part in civic life and support civic activism, according to some authors(Hart et al., 2011: 771-770). It is out of a sense of civic identity that people participate in local and national elections; pay taxes - through which they support state social policy and help certain citizens live in the state with dignity; volunteer their time to help their neighbours and the less fortunate, as well as declare solidarity with them; and join the armed forces, risking their life for the sake of national interests. Civic identity is also an important element to explore why citizens are willing to act as jurors(Hart et al., 2011: 771-770). At the same time, a citizen with a strong sense of civic responsibility strengthens the ongoing political discourse and expresses protest against injustice and lawlessness. The lack of such political impetus is not an indication that there is no injustice or public protest in the state - in fact it may point to the contrary: a society that is so intimidated and restricted by the ruling elite that expressions of protest are forcibly limited and there is no free expression. Case after case shows that a high level of civic activism in a country indicates a high level of democracy and widespread public support for liberal values.

This is why democratic societies are characterized by a relatively high level of civic identity in all its manifestations. Members of society are engaged in political life and the governance of the country, and freely express critical ideas regarding flawed public policy and demand changes to decisions made by the government. Such activism is an important factor in proving that the requirements of a participatory political system in the country are

met and the principles of democratic governance are implemented (Leydet, 2011).

In this context, the second chapter of the article examines how conducive the environment in Georgia is to civic identity, whether or not it motivates citizens to take part in public-political life, and to what extent it facilitates the development of democratic processes and long-term stability that affect the achievement of foreign policy priorities.

The analysis presented in the third chapter of the article is based on the outcomes of a survey conducted in 2014-2015, which included a study of primary sources and exclusive interviews with scholars and representatives of the political elite, from the parliament and the executive branch of both current and former governments. The findings indicate the existence of public perceptions and feelings that create the preconditions necessary for Georgia to implement its national interests: establish a democratic system of governance, ensure sustainable development of its political system and become part of European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Chapter three analyses the extent that foreign policy priorities are based on the Georgian population's understanding of themselves and whether it is reflected adequately in state policy and the actions of the government. As such, the chapter also explains the extent to which the existing model of civic identity facilitates the country's European integration-oriented foreign policy.

One of the essential characteristics for the democratic state is to retain the legitimacy of the political system over the long term and achieve conciliation among citizens even when there are differences of opinion (Leydet, 2011). Hereby it is important to take into consideration the fact that Georgia is a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and diverse state and that the ethnic, religious, cultural identities of its citizens have significant influence on the formation of civic self-awareness. Likewise, it is important that Georgia's political system - as a set of agreed and acknowledged decision-making procedures, makes it possible that individual citizens have comprehensive information about the activities of the government; that institutionalized channels for influencing the government exist; and that individual citizens or groups of citizens can easily

communicate their opinions about specific policies to the government. The fourth chapter studies the extent to which citizens representing various minority communities in Georgia can perform these actions jointly or individually, through various communications channels.

The outcomes of the study underscore that the process of civic identity formation is actively under way in Georgia. Yet serious challenges remain, which could cause instability in the country's political and social-economic development, undermine the spread of liberal values among Georgian citizens, and impede the country's efforts to achieve its foreign policy goals.

### **Academic discourse on the sense of civic identity: The case of Georgia**

The interest in academic circles in studies on the nature of civic identity significantly increased in the late 1990s. Many researchers acknowledged the complexity of the concept and linked the issue to the intensification of the globalization process, as well as the internal diversity of contemporary liberal democracies, which consists of the different communities – religious, ethnic etc. These communities sometimes are prevailed with the sense of ethnic identity and consequently lack in a desire to stay loyal to the national interests of a state. As many writers Argues common civic identity should be developed from within the civil society (Goldman Kjell, (2008)).

Different studies on civic identity explore and define the types of attitudes that form the basis for a citizen's desire to take part in civic activities. They argue that most societies have different communities (e.g. religious or ethnic minorities) which do not share the feeling of commonality and do not possess a strong sense of civic identity. Therefore there may be reasons for separate communities to feel that they are not equal to other citizens and do not possess the same rights. A natural consequence of this is that these communities hold protests over the violation of their rights. Accordingly, the issue of integration and enhancing their sense of civic identity is very important to the stable development of a society.

Numerous literary sources also indicate that special problems

arise in societies where nation-states arose as a result of the collapse of colonial empires. In many such cases these were ancient civilizations and societies with a strong ethnic identity but without a shared civic identity: people were mainly loyal to the interests of their ethnic group and faced difficulties in identifying shared rules for cohabitation with other communities.

Georgia underwent a similar transition under Soviet Communist rule when flawed attitudes towards public good, private property and citizenship created obstacles to forming a law-governed state after the country regained its independence.

Domestic vulnerabilities became dominant in Georgia in the beginning of the 1990s and, as Barry Buzan and Ole Waever note, this happened because of incongruity of state and nation (Buzan et al., 2006) like in many other nations of Eastern Europe where cultural and ethnic boundaries were poorly matched (Shulman, 2002). In addition, after the fall of the Communist empire the absence of a shared sense of civic identity among the public of newly independent states also contributed to the emergence of political instabilities and the conflicts in post-Soviet space. As a result, in early 90s Georgian government lost control over the former autonomous territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. (Later, in 2008, after a five day war with Russia, Moscow occupied these territories and recognized them as an independent political entities, deploying military infrastructure in a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia).

Currently Georgia remains to be a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country, and this poses serious challenges to the state in terms of putting in place the conditions necessary for the peaceful coexistence and development of a diverse society. Deepening the sense of civic identity and ethnic and religious tolerance can strengthen the sense of citizenship among members of minority groups, and increase their participation in civic actions in the country's political life.

Thus, more than two and a half decades after acquiring statehood, Georgia needs to overcome the legacy of its past, create a common civic identity for its citizens which could help to consolidate its democracy, strengthen and ensure political stability. Many

observers and analysts working on Georgian democratic reforms believe that, to some extent in recent years, the Georgian population has shown an improved sense of civic identity and the continuous will to intensify the democratic transition process in the country. The political elite, as well as civil society, have demonstrated the responsibility to continue democratic reforms, promote engagement and participation in the decision making process, and demand more accountability and transparency of the government (Nations in Transit 2015, 2016). In general, the majority of the Georgian public shows its commitment to freedom and democratic values.

In fact, the sense of civic identity among Georgian citizens, which is based on a set of common norms and values, is motivated by a public consensus over the foreign policy priorities. Those priorities - the strengthening of democratic institutions and good governance, promoting rule of law and human rights, European and Euro-Atlantic Integration - have already been agreed on at the national level on the basis of a consensus, and shared even by conflicting political ideologies (Foreign policy strategy of Georgia, 2015-2018).

A public consensus on the promotion of a certain set of liberal-democratic norms and values in Georgia has been achieved since 2005: the National Security Concept has been approved - which stated that membership in the European Union and NATO will enable Georgia to achieve its national interests, consolidate its democracy and strengthen its national security (National Security concept of Georgia 2005, 2011).

In general, Georgia's national interests resulted from the country's desperate need for stability, democratic institution building, economic development, and strengthening state security. The main national level policy documents see the NATO and EU integration processes as guarantees for the country to be able to distance itself from the main instigator of conflicts in Georgia - Russia - as well as Moscow's interest in including Georgia in the sphere of its influence.

On the other hand, academic studies indicate that civic identity includes experiences, beliefs, and emotions concerning community membership, rights, and participation (Bellamy, 2008). Yet these attitudes may not be fully interrelated. So while a person agrees to

live with other members of society, follow the same laws, and exercise their rights in terms of participating in political life, the degree to which he or she does so can vary.

Likewise, during some elections people might feel a heightened sense of civic identity, thus leading to a higher-than-normal turnout at the polls. Boosting the sense of civic activeness among voters is an important factor in influencing politicians and political decisions.

Voter turnout might increase due to a state policy that resulted in a sense of injustice, lawlessness, and the violation of rights and universal values. Such heightened turnout may be preceded by public protests. In such cases, opportunities for free expression play a key role in how the political elite take into account the public's interests, which is ultimately reflected in the results of free and fair elections (Hart et al., 2011: 771-770).

Similar processes can also be observed in Georgia. Over the past 25 years, there have been cases in Georgia where people have become more civically active in response to a violation of political rights and freedoms - and this caused higher voter turnout at elections and, by extension, political change. For example, a significant increase in civic activism led to the peaceful transfer of power after the 2012 parliamentary election (in 2008 parliamentary elections the voters' turnout was 53%, while in 2012 it reached 61%). There have been other cases where heightened civic consciousness resulted in peaceful revolution (e.g. the 2003 rigged parliamentary elections with 60% turnout brought the Rose Revolution, and 2004 parliamentary elections with 64% voters' turnout).

The UN World Value Survey data for Georgia shows that Georgians' willingness to take part in elections varies based on the type of elections being held. For example, according to 2014 data, 70 per cent said they were always willing to take part in national elections, while only 41 per cent said they were always willing to vote in local elections. This indicator has held steady in other studies as well, including polls taken by the Caucasus Research Resource Centres (CRRC Caucasus Barometer Survey 2015).

In reality this means that civic consciousness occasionally increases, especially during national elections. As a rule, more the 60 per cent of voters turn out for national elections, while turnout for

local elections does not exceed 50 per cent (Central Election Administration Data from 2016), which means that a bigger portion of the public expects change to take place in national elections rather than in local ones. But voting is not the only expression of civic identity.

Political scientists acknowledge that ethnic, religious and cultural diversity and migration do not aid civic unity and, in fact, hamper the process of boosting civic identity. Globalization leads to an increase in migration and, thereby, the formation of diverse societies. All of this creates the potential for new challenges to the notions of citizenship and civic self-awareness (Hart et al., 2011: 771-770).

Civic identity and citizenship are central to the context of globalization, as processes caused by globalization can pose additional challenges to liberal democratic regimes. Researchers highlight a problem seen in several European countries, like Sweden, wherein immigrants are interested in receiving special benefits accorded to those with resident status, but do not consider themselves to be Swedes. This is manifested in their lack of desire to learn Swedish customs and traditions or take active part in the country's political and civic life (Hart et al., 2011: 771-770).

Similarly, Huntington (2004) has suggested that recent immigrants to the United States might not incorporate key elements of the national identity into their own belief systems, and, consequently, might not view themselves to be Americans (Huntington, 2004) - at least when Huntington argues the need to reassert the core values that make Americans (Huntington, 2004).

Georgia's experience with the migration issue has been very different from that of developed Western countries. As a modern state, as opposed to the experience of post-modern Sweden, (these tendencies are well explained by a model of classification of states into three types – premodern, modern and postmodern - made by authors – Holm and Sorensen 1995, Cooper 2003, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever 2006) Georgia has been mainly a source country of emigration. Over the 25 years since the country regained independence, its demographic profile has significantly changed. Most notably, the population has declined. According to 1989 census

data, 5,400,800 people lived in Georgia compared with 3,729,635 people living in Georgia in 2014 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2014). In the span of 12 years, from 2002 to 2014, the population dropped 14.7 percent, according to census data. In total, it is estimated that 25 percent of the entire Georgian population has immigrated abroad since independence.

Several factors led to Georgia becoming a source of emigration in the 1990s, including the country's challenging geopolitical environment, wars over its territorial integrity and limited economic capacity to create jobs. Usually, those who decide to leave the country on the basis of their socio-economic conditions are willing to use all kind of legal and illegal means to achieve their goals. The latest figures on emigration show that the trend has been steadily declining, however. At the same time, from 2005 to 2013, only around 53,000 foreign nationals were granted Georgian citizenship (The State of Migration of Georgia, 2015). Among these, the large majority were Russian citizens (37,462), followed by Turkish (3,464) and Israeli (3,367) citizens (The State of Migration of Georgia, 2015). Many of these people (particularly from Russia and Israel) sought dual citizenship after losing their Georgian citizenship when they emigrated after the collapse of the Soviet Union (a Georgian citizenship cannot take on the citizenship of another country without having their Georgian citizenship revoked).<sup>5</sup>

Taking into consideration that there are few people seeking Georgian citizenship, their integration does not represent an issue for political stability. Some studies show, however, that the existence of ethnic and other types of diversity (e.g. religious and cultural) could cause majority alienation and marginalization of members of minority groups, which, in turn, could become a factor influencing internal political processes (Buzan et al., 2006).

Recent public opinion polls provide some insight into the extent

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<sup>5</sup> The Constitution of Georgia states that Georgian citizenship can be acquired either through birth or through naturalization and it stipulates that a Georgian citizen cannot at the same time be a citizen of another country, excluding exceptional cases where dual citizenship is granted by the President of Georgia.

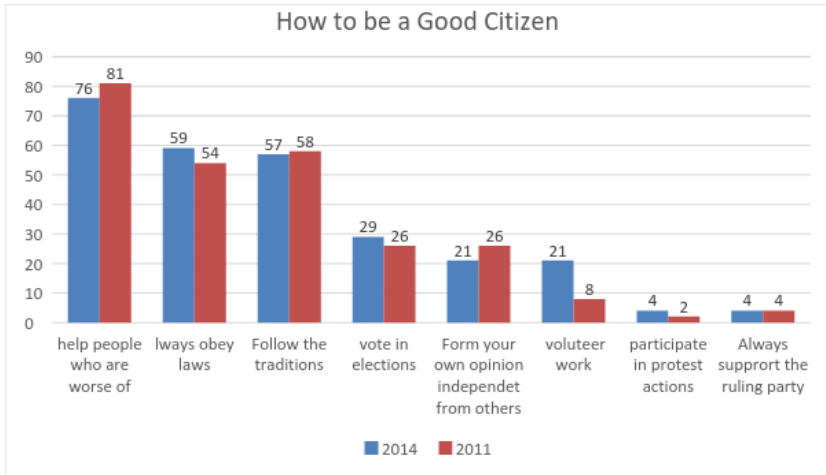


to which the Georgian population has been developing a sense of civic identity.

In 2011-2014 researchers studied public opinion on what it means to be a good citizen (Chart 1) , as part of a research project conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre examining public trust towards the judicial system. Respondents were asked "How to be a good citizen - In your opinion, which of the following is the most important characteristic of a good citizen?"

The results of two nation-wide surveys show a disparity between public perceptions of civic responsibility that could highlight the current tendencies in the public perceptions in Georgia. Based on the responses from the 2011-2014 surveys, the absolute majority of the Georgian population believes that helping the poor is an obligation of citizenship and only 59 percent believe they are obliged to obey the law, and even less, only 29 percent, that they are obliged to vote; 2-4 percent of those interviewed said they regard participation in protests as an important obligation. While the number of respondents who felt voting was an important civic responsibility increased by 3 percent during the period of research - and there was a 2 percent growth in the support for participating in protest actions - this is not seen as an important indicator since it falls within the study's margin of error.

Chart 1: Study on the Attitudes towards the Judicial System in Georgia



Source: Caucasus Regional Resource Center, 2014. [www.crrc.ge](http://www.crrc.ge)

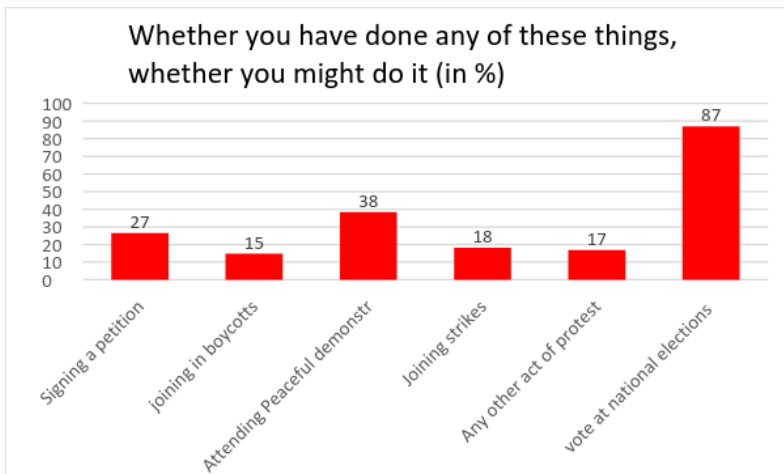
The Caucasus Barometer Survey 2015, conducted by the same group of researchers, revealed important changes in the attitudes of the citizens (CRRC Caucasus Barometer Survey 2015).

The research results shows that, in previous years, helping people and following traditions were reported to be the most important qualities of “a good citizen” in Georgia, while the seven other qualities have been assessed differently than that in the CRRC survey on the Attitudes towards the Judicial System in Georgia 2011-2014. In particular, tendencies have been observed which indicates citizens have an increased understanding of the importance of taking part in the elections and promoting rule of law in the country.

At the same time, monitoring of public perceptions in Georgian media has indicated that Georgian society has shown a fairly high level of solidarity over the past few years. Self-organized groups based on shared agendas have emerged in the country. These groups have formulated demands and even achieved certain success

in having these demands granted. For example, students’ protests at Tbilisi State University in March 2016 demanded internal university reforms. One month before that, there was a self-organized protest by Chiatura miners who put forward social demands. The miners managed to formulate their demands, mobilize supporters and achieve some success. A women's movement also managed to turn women's rights into an issue of broad public importance to the degree that today, the protection of women's rights is one of the most widely discussed topics in public discourse. There were also instances of self-organization among sexual minorities. In addition, recent years have seen an increase in the activities of non-governmental organizations and their engagement in the decision-making process.

Chart 2. Volunteering and civic participation in Georgia, 2014



Source: Caucasus Regional Resource Center, [www.crrc.ge](http://www.crrc.ge) (CRRC Caucasus Barometer Survey 2015)

The second chart shows public readiness for civic engagement, based on a 2013 CRRC research project. The responses contribute to the evaluation of the sense of civic identity among Georgian public.

The research shows that the overwhelming majority of the population (87 percent) had voted in elections and 38 percent had taken part in peaceful protests at least once.

The chart confirms that today the Georgian population exhibits a relatively high degree of civic engagement. Also, some 37 percent of respondents believe mass protests can force the government to reverse its decisions. In the 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey, 57% of Georgian respondents think that people should participate in protest actions.

Among Georgia's institutions, civil society and nongovernmental organizations are the most active and are distinguished by their high degree of civic engagement and initiatives, especially those which are working on issues related to human rights protection and democratic reforms. The some surveys showed, however, that only 23 percent of the population trusts them, (CRRC Caucasus Barometer Survey 2015) a condition that could be the result of the low visibility of the non-governmental sector. The low level of public trust negatively impacts the sector's image as a social agenda initiator and participant in the policy-making process.

According to the existing data, the sense of civic identity has been changing and in some areas improving among the public, as well as political elite. It is in the interest of the state to maintain these tendencies and promote the process of building a sense of civic identity among the members of the different communities and interest groups that exist within the country. Consolidating citizens around the state's basic values and interests is an important precondition for the country's political stability and development, as well as the realization of its foreign policy goal - integration with the EU and Euro-Atlantic treaty organization.

## **Political elite and public perceptions on civic identity**

Scholars recognize that national identities are based on some combination of civic and ethnic elements, but they assert that the relative strength of the civic and ethnic components can vary from nation to nation (Shulman, 2004: 35-56). This section studies the attitudes of the Georgian political elite and scholars about civic composition in national identity and evaluate its influence over the democratization process and its main foreign policy priorities.

The main goal of the section is to define how the political elite and academicians understand what is Georgia's civic identity, using the outcomes of the survey the section shows that Georgian civic identity is in its formation stage. The results of the survey also indicate that it is the main promoter of democratic values in the country, such as human rights, universal freedom, democratic governance. As such, Georgian civic identity could contribute to the consolidation of society around these values, helping the country achieve its main foreign policy priorities, such as the long-term stability of its political system and EU and Euro-Atlantic integration. These processes are similar to the tendencies that are observed in some scholarly articles, which found that civic identity has positively influenced democratization in post-communist states and, in some cases, became a bastion of support for democratic reforms there (Shulman, 2004: 35-56, Holley, 2009).

It is recognized that a truly civic conception of the nation does not require cultural unity. People in a purely civic nation are united by such traits as common citizenship, respect for law and state institutions, belief in a set of political principles and so forth (Shulman 2002: 554-585).

In order to understand how Georgian political elites perceive civic identity, exclusive interviews were conducted in 2014-2015 with representatives from former and current parliaments and administrations, university scholars and political party leaders. During the interviews, representatives of the political elite provided an assessment of Georgian citizens' perceptions on civic identity, which is usually best understood in relation to the traditional notion of citizenship (Hart et al., 2011:771-790).

The opinions the interviewees expressed about the character of the national identity of Georgian citizens were divided, and two main groups were identified during the research. The first group focused on a more civic understanding of the concept. They described Georgian identity as a part of a broader European identity, arguing that European values (sovereignty, freedom, justice, tolerance and human rights) form the foundation of Georgian identity.

In their definition of Georgian identity, these respondents gave supreme importance to their civic identity. For them, being Georgian means being a citizen of Georgia, which is about being loyal to the idea that Georgia is a modern, European, democratic state. The idea of being part of European civilization was often mentioned by this group of interviewees. “For me being Georgian, without any exaggeration, means being European, being part of European civilization. This is not a monolithic culture; rather it is a set of values that constitute a core of the system and Georgia is part of it,” stressed one of the respondents, a former foreign minister (Interview with former official, 30.05.2014).

Being European for the interview subjects in this group means tolerance and respect for individuality. It also means upholding human rights and freedoms, as well as the peaceful coexistence of different peoples, and equal opportunities. This group sees Georgia, with its ideals and its multiple ethnicities and religions, as always having been part of this civilization. In this context, this group of respondents say that factors such as language, religion and ethnicity are of less importance.

“The citizenship you hold is what defines your politics and identity. The rest, such as your cultural, religious or sexual identity, is a personal preference,” said one of the respondents, a member of Georgian parliament, neatly summarizing opinions of many respondents .

“Being Georgian means being a Georgian citizen. This is what this concept means to me,” noted another interviewee. For this group, being Georgian represents a multiethnic entity, with all the cultural elements that various groups bring together. It is the heritage of this country and most important element of nationhood. Therefore the interests of all citizens define the national interest of the country.

It is worthy mentioning that, during the interviews, respondents

repeatedly stated that Georgia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state. Most of them agree that the formation of the Georgian nation-state is still under way and that any person who has historically resided in Georgia - and is engaged in the development of the multi-ethnic Georgian nation - represents the Georgian nation and adheres values that makes Georgian citizen.

Therefore, the perception of nationality of this group of people is linked with a modern European perception of nation-state identity.

The second group of respondents prioritized cultural and social factors (such as language, religion, ethnicity, culture, habits and shared history) in its definition of Georgian national identity, but also argued that it was necessary to consider other factors. "Language, homeland, religion," a quote by a famous 19th century Georgian writer and public figure, Iliia Chavchavadze, was named as the main determinant of Georgian national identity by representatives of this group. However, many respondents acknowledged that these factors do not necessarily or sufficiently define Georgian national identity.

Some interviewees in this group also noted that there are people, including those who were born and raised in Georgia, for whom belonging to another ethnic group does not mean belonging to another nation. The majority of respondents agree that how a specific person sees their civic identity, rather than the languages they speak, is the most important part of identity. For example, while some people may not be fluent in Georgian, they regard themselves to be Georgian, and their attitudes may be based on common heritage and area of settlement.

In sum, there are largely two narratives in the public discourse regarding identity. One is a liberal, pro-Western narrative and the other is a more self-contained, ethno-religious national narrative which unites such values as ethnicity, homeland and religion.

This explains why respondents from the political elite and scholars expressed mixed views regarding a famous statement by Georgia's late prime minister, Zurab Zhvania, made on the occasion of Georgia's accession to the Council of Europe in 1999 - "I am Georgian, therefore I am European."

For one group the phrase is a recognition of the fact that Georgian culture, history, traditions and religion, based on purely Georgian ethnic roots, have a firm shared foundation with European

values. On the other hand, other respondents view this as a partially aspirational statement that is based on the acknowledgement of European values, such as tolerance, the acceptance of the peaceful coexistence of different confessions and ethnic groups.

At the same time, interviewed representatives of the political elite and scholars defined multiple identity ‘circles’ which have an influence over the formation of civic identity. The respondents note that there are some challenges which make it difficult for members of the nation to develop common beliefs in the same political principles or ideology, and willingness of individuals to become part of the same identity .

First of all, it is clear that Georgia’s civic identity is much focused and limited with the country’s borders, and is based on the liberal norms and values to be adhered to by the public and supported in the framework of Georgia's cooperation with Western democratic states, the EU in particular. This is the way citizens view Georgia, as a political entity, democratic, independent, free and sovereign state with integral borders, which defends the principles of unviability of its borders, as expressed in the main policy documents (National Security Concept of Georgia, 2011).

Since independence there has been a consensus on the promotion of a certain set of liberal-democratic norms and values among the Georgian public, which is believed will enable Georgia to consolidate its democracy and strengthen its national security, as well as achieve its foreign policy goal of integration into the European Union and NATO. These statements are addressed at various national level security documents, such as the National Security Concepts published in 2005 and 2011; Foreign policy Strategy 2015-2018; Parliamentary Resolution 2013 on Basic Directions of Georgia’s Foreign Policy; and in many bilateral and multilateral international agreements signed by Georgia with its strategic partner countries and organizations.

At the same time, the fact that Georgia does not have a clearly defined regional affiliation on the international level confuses Georgian citizens in their efforts to further promote their identity. Regional identity is dependent not only on the choices of Georgian citizens and the political elite but also on international recognition



and the prospect of integration into international organizations.

For example, according to a university professor, the majority of Georgian citizens believe that Georgians have a European identity: they identify with Europe as a region and proudly say that they are Europeans. However, the perceptions of Georgian citizens and the European political and academic establishment about Georgia's regional identity do not coincide;

Europe has been slow to acknowledge common roots.

Besides, the belief of Georgia's political elite – that Georgia is a sovereign state that chooses to be part of the European political space – is not acknowledged by its most powerful neighbour, Russia. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has constantly attempted to establish "zones of Russian influence" in neighbouring countries of the former Soviet Union. Now Russia is inviting post-Soviet neighbour states to join an alternative integration project, the Eurasian Union. Currently, seven former Soviet republics are members. Georgia is not a part of the Eurasian Union but still faces threats as Russia attempts to influence its foreign policy decisions through its leverage over Georgia - the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow's interference slows down Georgia's process of integration with the European Union and NATO (BBC World, 04.09.2014).

Some respondents of the survey argued that, to achieve its aims, Russia also seeks to capitalize on the slow pace of Georgia's democratization, and consequently, the European integration process. In interviews, political elite expressed its concerns about Russia's aims to disseminate an ideology discrediting Western liberal-democratic values by portraying EU policies as a threat to Georgian national identities (Burbashin et al., 2015). The narrative of Russian leaders' official rhetoric, which is shared by the country's state-backed propaganda media outlets, supports authoritarianism, the restriction of freedom of expression and media, nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments, the protection of so-called 'moral' norms and traditions. Laden with the Communist ideological legacy, today Russia seeks to assume the role of a spiritual leader for which it uses the Orthodox Church, criticizes liberalism and tolerance and does not respect the protection of the rights of LGBT and other minority

groups.

The survey respondents expressed their concerns about potential effects of Russian propaganda in Georgia. They think that Russia's policy, such as promoting anti-Westernism and nationalist ideology in the near abroad in general, and Georgia in particular, could seriously challenge the ongoing efforts in the process of developing civic identity, democratic transition and nation building in Georgia. According to some respondents, the Russian propaganda machine could negatively affect the level of public support toward EU values, slow down the country's democratization and, consequently, make the European integration process more difficult.

The respondents of the survey also expressed awareness that if the creation of a European value-based civic identity process fails in Georgia, there is a threat that Georgia could become a hotbed of conflict. The multi-ethnic and multi-confessional character of Georgian society might threaten the peaceful coexistence of different communities and the stable socio-economic development of the state. This will inevitably result in Georgia once again being drawn into the Russian sphere of influence.

Thus, according to the interviewed policy leaders, these two issues – the disparity between Georgian civic/ethnic identity perceptions and the diversified views of the main influential foreign powers about the formation of Georgian civic identity– present a fundamental challenge for Georgia to meet its foreign policy goals. When interviewed, members of the Georgian political elite underscored that the interests of Georgia and the West currently fully coincide. Yet they also recognized that Georgia faces problems due to the scale of important reforms that still need to be implemented. The process of forming a civic identity is still under way, something that could contribute to Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration process. In this sense Georgia still requires support from the democratic world.

### **Civic identity in state policy and national strategic documents**

The political environment in the country plays an important role in the process of creating civic identity, in part because it influences the degree of public openness. The building of civic

identity may be hampered by repressive attitudes toward freedom of expression or the restriction of minority rights. The level of public engagement in the political process in the country is related to the degree of freedom and democracy in the country and the extent to which the public can freely express its views in elections, protests or other types of political demonstrations.

In countries where democratic norms and values are freely upheld and individuals can freely express their views, participate in political life and run in elections without interference, the sense of civic identity is better developed. In such countries, everyone has a clear idea of their political affiliation and the rights and obligations of being a member of the community.

According to Freedom House reports, over the past 12 years Georgia has remained a Transitional Government or Hybrid Regime (Nations in Transit, 2016). Despite the fact that the main aim of the reforms in 2003-2015 was to improve the democratic environment, there has been no major advancement in democratization indexes. Georgia has achieved relative success in carrying out certain reforms. For example, Georgia managed to root out low-level corruption, strengthened state institutions, improve public services and public engagement. It also managed, to some extent, improve the level of the protection of human rights and universal freedoms in recent years. However, Georgia still has not fully succeeded in consolidating its democratic system, ensuring the democratic governance of state institutions, strengthening the independence of the judicial system and the media, introducing high standards of human rights and effectively implementing democratic oversight measures through the parliament. In addition, the country's ethnic and religious minorities remain disenfranchised, which is a hurdle to cultivating a united Georgian civic identity.

The next section of the article explores the sense of civic identity among minorities residing in Georgia and discusses the challenges that their attitudes could pose to the state's national interests and foreign policy course.

In its national level policy documents, the Georgian government acknowledges the existence of challenges and expounds that the equal engagement of members of the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Georgian nation in public and political life is one of the

priorities of the state. Besides, it acknowledges the importance for Georgia to create conditions for the protection and development of the identity and culture of these groups (National Security Concept of Georgia, 2011).

According to the 2014 national census, around 13 percent of the Georgian population are ethnic minorities, of which the largest groups are Azerbaijanis (6.3 percent) and Armenians (4.5 percent). A large number of studies have shown, however, that the participation of minority groups in social, economic, political and cultural activities is rather limited. Rights activists and experts believe that this is due to both legal and practical obstacles<sup>6</sup>. Accordingly, in order to succeed in the democratic consolidation process, it is vital that the rights of ethnic and religious minorities are protected, and that a secular environment, which does not leave room for discrimination, is promoted<sup>7</sup>.

Georgian legislation does not restrict an individual's right to participate in the political process based on religion or ethnicity. Georgian law does not include minimum quotas for minority representation in elected institutions, or quotas for ethnic minorities in the public sector. There are also no preferential career promotion programs for minorities in Georgia. As a result, few ethnic minorities participate in local or national politics: the 2007 public opinion poll found that 92.9 percent of ethnic Azerbaijani respondents residing in Kvemo Kartli Region say that they are not prepared to work in executive or legislative bodies. Half of them do not name reasons for this but 15.9 percent cite an insufficient level of education. In addition,

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<sup>6</sup> Georgia in Transition (2013) Report on the human rights dimension: background, steps taken and remaining challenges, Assessment and recommendations by Thomas Hammarberg in his capacity as EU Special Adviser on Constitutional and Legal Reform and Human Rights in Georgia. A report addressed to High Representative and Vice-President Catherine Ashton and Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle, September 2013

<sup>7</sup> To achieve these aims, in 2015, the Government Action Plan for Human Rights Protection in Georgia (for 2014-2015) was developed.

few minorities run for office<sup>8</sup>. After the 2004 parliamentary election, only nine ethnic minorities became MPs, just 4 percent of the ethnic population.

This trend has played out in subsequent elections. Out of the 1,767 candidates included on party lists in the 2008 and 2012 elections, only 24 were ethnic Azeri and 16 Armenians . Out of 434 single seat constituency candidates, only 15 were representatives of ethnic minorities (10 Azeris, 4 Armenians and one Abkhaz) (Radio Liberty, 05.06.2014). In the 2008 parliamentary elections, only six minority candidates nominated by the ruling party won seats in parliament.

In the 2012 elections, neither the opposition nor the ruling party tried hard to attract more votes from ethnic minorities residing in Georgia. The Georgian Dream coalition, which succeeded the National Movement, nominated nine ethnic minority candidates for their party list - of which three were elected to the new parliament (one Azeri, one Armenian and one Kurdish national) (Minorities in 2012 Parliamentary elections, 2012). Therefore it seems that there is a limited extent to the genuine representation of minorities by the main political actors in Georgia. (Minorities in 2012 Parliamentary elections, 2012)

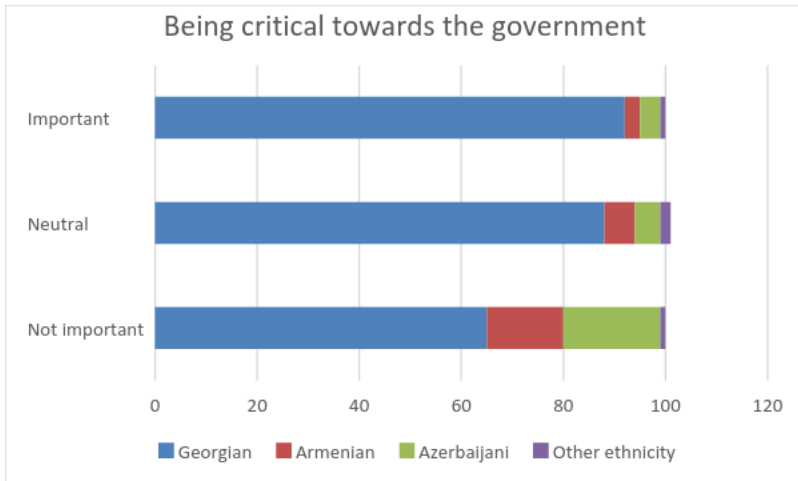
It is also important to note that, according to the results of nation-wide surveys, representatives of ethnic minorities show less understanding about the meaning and responsibilities of citizenship compared to those of ethnic Georgians. Surveys conducted by the CRRC as part of the Caucasus Barometer 2015 in Georgia indicates that representatives of minorities, those of Armenian and Azerbaijani origins residing in Georgia, have different a sense of what is a good citizenship. The perception of minorities differ from that of ethnic Georgians. For example, among the ethnic Azerbaijanis and Armenians questioned in the survey, more respondents did not believe that, in order to be a good citizen, it is important to obey laws, vote in elections, do volunteer work. Attitudes were markedly difficult among

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<sup>8</sup> Azerbaijanians densely reside in Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti and Shida Kartli. Armenians reside in Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda and Kvemo Kartli's Tsalka District.

Georgian respondents: more answered that it is important to obey laws and vote in elections in order to be a good citizen. Overall, the research found less engagement in public life and a lower sense of civic identity among representatives of ethnic minorities.

Research indicates that minority representatives who consider that it is a duty of a good citizen to be critical of the government are outnumbered by those who do not agree with this sentiment. In the case of ethnic Georgians, the results were different – more Georgians think that good citizenship means to be critical toward the government. The table below (Chart 3) summarises respondents’ responses to the following question: Please tell me, in your opinion, how important or unimportant it is for a good citizen to be critical toward the government?



Source: Caucasus Regional Research Center CRRC, Caucasus Barometer 2015 Georgia dataset, [www.CRRC.org](http://www.CRRC.org)

In sum, minorities' participation in the country's social, economic, political and cultural life is rather limited today. Minorities' participation in elected bodies and their representation in the civil service is rather low. Therefore, numerous attempts have been made by the Georgian Public Defender and international organizations to ensure minorities are

more actively engaged in political life, something that would increase their civic identity and the desire to embrace the values of human rights and universal freedoms<sup>9</sup>.

According to the EU Special Adviser on Constitutional and Legal Reform and Human Rights in Georgia, Thomas Hammarberg, despite the fact that the state has tried to encourage a policy of integration in recent years, the political elite has historically viewed ethnic minorities through the prism of security and has only recently sought to ensure their full integration into the Georgian nation. The tradition of distrust and segregation has created challenges for the government today. The Special Adviser noted that the violent dismantling of a minaret by the Revenues Service in Samtskhe-Javakheti Region in 2012 was a clear example. Another example was the mob violence against a peaceful demonstration held on the International Day Against Homophobia on May 17, 2013, when thousands of members of Georgia Orthodox Church organized a counter-demonstration and attacked pro-LGBT rally. That tension has also seeped into politics.

Georgian politicians quite often resort to Islamophobic and homophobic remarks, including in their parliamentary campaigns (including in 2012). Human rights activists say that cases of religious intolerance, and in rare instances, even violence towards religious minority representatives is alarming, and the government's insufficient response to these incidents could cause internally instability. (Georgia in Transition, 2013)

The anti-discrimination law adopted in 2014 is one response to this. On the one hand, the adoption of the anti-discrimination law is a very important step, not only in terms of the protection of minority rights, but also for ensuring their increased engagement and participation. The law facilitated the signing of the EU-Georgia

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<sup>9</sup> Georgia in Transition (2013) Report on the human rights dimension: background, steps taken and remaining challenges, Assessment and recommendations by Thomas Hammarberg in his capacity as EU Special Adviser on Constitutional and Legal Reform and Human Rights in Georgia. A report addressed to High Representative and Vice-President Catherine Ashton and Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle, September 2013.

Association Agreement in 2014, and advanced Georgia's prospects for the integration with the EU <sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, in 2015, nongovernmental organizations found that the implementation of the law has been problematic. Based on their monitoring, nongovernmental organizations recommended that, for the protection of victim's rights, it is important to strengthen the role of Public Defender and further develop a court practice, something that is not always well managed by the government.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of this article was to explore the sense of civic identity among the Georgian political elite and the public in the context of contemporary debates around that notion. The article investigated the ways civil identity connects with different forms of participation, as well as other actions that are characteristic of citizenship.

The research suggests that the lack of a shared sense of civic identity following Georgia's independence immediately triggered separatist conflicts over the former autonomous territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, at different periods of independence, Georgian citizens have showed a relatively high sense of civic responsibilities related to the participation in elections, protests against injustice, illegality, corruption, shortcomings of the rule of law and protection of human rights and universal freedoms. These tendencies strengthen a European value-based civic identity building process in Georgia, support peaceful coexistence of different communities and the stable socio-economic development of the state. This will inevitably result in Georgia to draw into the European community of states.

Many politicians and analysts in Georgia believe that the process of creating a civil identity is still under way in Georgia. Two issues – disparity between the Georgian civic/ethnic identity perceptions and differing views of the influential foreign powers

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<sup>10</sup> On June 27, 2014 Georgia and the European Union signed and ratified an Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), a major milestone in Georgia's European aspirations



about the formation of Georgian civic identity– still present fundamental challenges for Georgia to meet its foreign policy goals. Besides, there is room for the Georgian government to improve the civil integration of multi-ethnic and multi-confessional communities and achieve a wide public consensus on the rules for cohabitation and the ways of peaceful co-existence.

To address the above, Georgia still requires support from the democratic world. In the past, various attempts to consolidate citizens around the basic civic values appeared to become an important precondition for the country's political stability and democratic development, as well as further promoting its foreign policy goal - integration with the EU and Euro-Atlantic treaty organization.

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## **THE MAIN DIMENSIONS AND ISSUES OF ARMENIA'S FOREIGN SECURITY POLICY**

### **Introduction**

This article explores the most important aspects of Armenia's foreign and security policy<sup>11</sup> based on the country's 2007 National Security Strategy, including the main trends and problems that influence them, and their impact on Armenia's international economic relations. Armenia's foreign and security policy (FSP) is very sensitive to changes in its geopolitical environment, particularly in the South Caucasus. Historically, this part of the world has always been a place of geopolitical conflicts and interactions. Today it is important as a transit area for energy resources from Central Asia and the Caspian basin, in addition to its wider importance as a platform for the strategic control of Central Asia, Black Sea, Caucasus and Middle East regions. The region's strategic location could explain the presence of so many active players - and the relationships between them that makes the region's geopolitics so complex.

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<sup>11</sup> There are valuable scientific papers related to the Armenia's FSP. Among the relatively recent publications on Armenia's foreign policy are notable the monographs of H. Peimani (Peimani H., 2009) and A. Mirzoyan (Mirzoyan A., 2010), as well as the books edited by A. Jafalian (Jafalian A., 2011), and M. Palonkorpi and A. Iskandaryan (The Caucasus Institute, the Aleksanteri Institute, the University of Helsinki, 2013). There are also papers, devoted to the conceptualization of Armenia's foreign policy. In particular, in this context the articles of S. Minasyan (Minasyan, 2013) and R. Giragosian (Giragosian, 2005), where the authors analyze the "Armenian style" complementary foreign and security policy, linking this style with the existing geo-political environment of the country. The publications of Armenian and foreign analysts, which analyze the impact of the two most important events in the present stage of Armenia's foreign policy - the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 and Armenia's "Eurasian shift" in 2013, are of particular importance, too.

Today the South Caucasus should be considered as a sub-region of the large Black Sea-Caspian Sea mega-region. On this geopolitical "chessboard," several players are playing at the same time – the internationally recognized republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan; disputed territories like Nagorno-Karabakh (also known as Artsakh or NKR), South Ossetia and Abkhazia; regional neighbors Russia, Turkey and Iran; as well as extra-regional actors like the USA and leading major European countries. These actors alone or as part of different configurations (for example, NATO, EU, CIS, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) etc.) use short-term tactical or long-term strategic coalitions to play their own games on the geopolitical map of the South Caucasus.

The outcome of wars has historically divided the region into areas of influence, and battles have led to new formations of power and new geopolitical games. The Georgian-Russian war in 2008 was no different: it also played a significant role, directly and indirectly influencing all regional actors and developments. For the international community, the 2008 war made it obvious that the potential for violent conflict in this "distant region" was not decreasing. The 2008 war between Georgia and Russia was also the first major geopolitical challenge to the administration of the newly elected Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan.

The war had several long-lasting implications for the region:

- it was as a signal for all sides involved in regional conflicts that the consequences of such a war can be quite unpredictable, and military measures do not always guarantee a desirable result;
- it was vivid proof of the fact that any instability in the region could become a direct threat to energy and communication projects. In particular, it became clear to the West that Western projects cannot be secured if unsolved conflicts and closed borders remained in the region;
- it served as an opportunity for Turkey to activate the idea of the Caucasus stability platform;
- it was a shock for the Armenia's economy, since Armenia's foreign trade is mainly carried out through Georgia's

territory;

- it served as a main reason for Armenia to start actively seek to diversify its foreign relations and start the so-called "initiative" foreign policy, which resulted in Armenia and Turkey's two-year "football diplomacy."

The second main geopolitical challenge to Sargsyan's administration was the deepening conflict between the West and Russia. This confrontation was the main impetus for the "Eurasian shift" in Armenia's FSP in 2013, which called into question the country's complementary foreign policy. Sargsyan's statement on the state's accession to the Russia-led Customs Union (CU), coupled with a clear desire for deepening Eurasian integration, has left a distinct imprint on the country's foreign policy agenda. Specifically:

- Armenia has refrained from deepening European economic integration within the EU's Eastern Partnership, emphasizing the priority of Eurasian integration and thus reducing the likelihood of combining European and Eurasian dimensions;
- the decision to join the CU has underscored the susceptibility of Armenia's complementary FSP to external changes (in terms of "geopolitical determinism vs. geographical determinism"), especially when it comes to mutually exclusive agendas of Russia and the EU.

### **Conceptual Framework of Armenia's Foreign and Security Policy**

The National Security Strategy (NSS) highlights the main objectives, principles, threats of the RA's foreign security policy (FSP). (The National Security Council (2), 2007). The two main principles are *complementarity*, according to which Armenia should have effective relations with all interested actors in region, and *participation* in international processes, which are consistent with Armenia's interests. The complementarity principle is based on strategic relations with Russia; the European path of development; mutually favorable cooperation with the USA and with Iran;

membership in CIS and in CSTO; and cooperation with NATO.

National security threats are categorized as intra-regional and extra-regional. Intra-regional threats are mainly connected with interethnic conflicts and armed clashes; extra-regional threats largely stem from the competition between regional and world power centers – Turkey, Iran, USA, EU and the Russian Federation. In the NSS, the risk of an *armed attack* is specified as a possible external threat. In this context, the Artsakh conflict and aggressive rhetoric from Azerbaijani officials are seen as a direct security threat.

The country's Military Doctrine (MD) defines the country's main security threats as the arms race with Azerbaijan; Baku's readiness to use force in the Karabakh conflict; and the threat of a possible military attack against Armenia and (or) NKR. (The National Security Council (1), 2007)

The MD stipulates that *Armenia is the security guarantor of the population of the NKR*, and is the supporter and the guarantor of its development. Armenia's position as Karabakh's protector is justified for several reasons, including the historical and territorial, religious, ethnic and cultural links between the RA and the NKR, and their common security challenges. Other threats defined in the country's main strategic documents include *the Azerbaijan-Turkey blockade, which is perceived as use of force against Armenia and Armenia's isolation from regional programs* is seen as direct threat of security. *Ethnic conflicts, internal clashes and military operations in neighboring countries* are also seen as a potential security threat. This also includes the Turkish-Kurdish conflict.

*The destruction of transit routes.* For example, based on the strategic importance of Georgia's territory for communication security, the closure of the Tbilisi-Sukhumi railway and any attempt to close the Georgia-Russia highway are defined as a threat in the NSS. The danger of closing the Georgian-Russian highway became very clear for Armenia during the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia.

It is also noted that *large-scale economic sanctions from the international community against Iran* can become a direct security threat for Armenia. Previous international political-economic sanctions against Iran negatively influenced Armenia, and a new round of sanctions, their increase, or, especially, military operations

against Iran, can seriously undermine not only Armenia's security, but could also the larger region.

In this context, Armenia's national security policy gives a special role to the military-political section: deepening of the strategic partnership with Russia; membership in the CSTO; bilateral military cooperation, especially with the USA and Greece; cooperation with the NATO, membership and activity within OSCE.

### **The Rise and Fall of Armenian-Turkish "Football Diplomacy"**

Turkey officially recognized the RA in 1991, however, it still refuses to establish diplomatic relations. In addition, Turkey, as a sign of solidarity with Azerbaijan in the conflict over Artsakh, unilaterally closed the air and land border with Armenia in 1993. Air space between the two countries was restored in 1995. The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs outlines several Turkish preconditions for reopening its land border with Armenia: Nagorno-Karabakh must return the regions under its control to Azerbaijan; Armenia must renounce international recognition of the Armenian genocide; and Armenia must recognize the borders agreed on in the 1921 Treaty of Kars. The NSS states that Armenia supports the establishment of diplomatic relations and reopening of the border without any preconditions<sup>12</sup>. The Turkish-Armenian border is defined as a security threat, and unregulated relations have a direct negative impact on regional stability.

Interestingly, despite the absence of diplomatic relations, the two countries do have trade relations. In 2015, Turkey accounted for 0.1 percent of Armenia's export and 4 percent of its import. The volumes of Armenia's export to Turkish market notably increased in 2015. Turkish exports to Armenia have also grown steadily, about 700 percent from 2001 to 2015. Turkey supplies a wide variety of

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<sup>12</sup> The NSS notes that Armenia has stated its willingness to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey without any preconditions and will continue to take steps for overcoming obstacles and improvement of bilateral relations



products, including machinery and electronic equipment<sup>13</sup>.

There have been many initiatives to regulate relations between Ankara and Yerevan since 1991. The latest, known as "Football diplomacy" was initiated in 2008 by Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan. After a year of closed negotiations, on October 10, 2009, the Armenian and Turkish foreign ministers signed two protocols on establishing diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey and on developing relations between two countries. In his message to the people, Sargsyan highlighted Armenia's position both on the regulation of Armenian-Turkish relations and conflicting national interests (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia, 2009).

He underscored that the relations with Turkey would not cast doubt on the fact of the Armenian Genocide. The other significant message concerned the lasting consequences of the 1915 Genocide, i.e. the fact Armenians were deprived of their homeland. He also touched on the need to use international law to regulate the de jure status of the de facto border between Armenia and Turkey. According to Sargsyan, this issue will be regulated by international law. A very important stipulation was that "Armenia doesn't observe the issue of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders as connected with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," and there is no connection between Armenian-Turkish relations and the resolution of the Artsakh conflict. The most important provision was the announcement that if Turkey does not ratify the protocols in a set period and implement all its provisions on time – or if it violates them in the future – Armenia will take the necessary steps to annul

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<sup>13</sup> All trade data here and further are taken from or calculated by the authors based on the Armenian National Statistics Service's Yearbook (National Statistical Service of RA, (2015). External Economic Activity. Statistical Yearbook of Armenia. [online] Yerevan: National Statistical Service of RA, pp. 436-543. Available at: <http://armstat.am/file/doc/99493858.pdf> [Accessed 12 May 2016] ) and International Trade Center database (Trademap.org. (2016). Trade Map - Trade statistics for international business development. [online] Available at: <http://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx> [Accessed 12 May 2016]).

the agreement.<sup>14</sup>

The normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations failed, however. Armenian senior officials noted that the protocols' ratification process would start only after their ratification in Turkey (PanARMENIAN Network (1), 2010). In February 2010, Armenia's President Serzh Sarkisian sent the protocols to Armenia's parliament for ratification, waiting for similar steps by the Turkish side, noting once again that the ratification should be "in a reasonable time frame" and without any precondition (Azatutyun.am, 2010). In September, however, before the rapprochement of protocols, Turkey's PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that ratification would depend on the resolution of the Karabakh conflict. The following month, when presenting the protocols in Turkish parliament, Turkish FM Ahmet Davutoglu again linked the normalization of relations with Armenia with the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Hurriyet Daily News, 2009).

Relations soured in 2010, when Turkey threatened to deport 100,000 Armenians, illegally living in Turkey, "if there is a need in the future" (ArmeniaNow.com, 2010). In response, on April 22, 2010, Armenia's president signed a decree suspending the protocols'

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<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that the "football diplomacy", initiated by Armenia's President, met with sharp criticism in the Armenian Diaspora and in Armenia. Critics have seen in these secret negotiations and protocols the victory of Turkey's policy of preconditions and the refusal of the Armenian authorities from national interests, in particular, on the issue of compensation for the consequences of the Armenian Genocide.

Immediately after the announcement of the existence of the Road Map of the normalization, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which is strongly connected with the Diaspora, withdrew from the ruling coalition with the Republican Party of Armenia. See for example Abrahamyan, G. (2009). *Battle for Diaspora: Sargsyan hears criticism over Turkey protocols ahead of meetings with Armenians abroad*. [online] ArmeniaNow.com. Available at: [https://www.armenianow.com/news/10506/battle\\_for\\_diaspora\\_sargsyan\\_hears](https://www.armenianow.com/news/10506/battle_for_diaspora_sargsyan_hears) [Accessed 23 May 2016] and Asbarez.com. (2009). *ARF Leaves Sarkisian's Governing Coalition*. [online] Available at: <http://asbarez.com/61363/arf-leaves-sarkisians-governing-coalition/> [Accessed 23 May 2016].

ratification process. By 2015, the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the protocols had not been ratified in Turkey and Sargsyan officially recalled the protocols from the National Assembly. (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia (1), 2015). In addition, the Pan-Armenian Declaration was adopted by the State Commission on Coordination of the events for the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. It calls for the preparation of "a file of legal claims as a point of departure in the process of restoring individual, communal and pan-Armenian rights and legitimate interests" (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia (2), 2015).

In September 2015, the Chairman of Armenia's Constitutional Court Gagik Harutyunyan submitted a package of legal demands to the president, although the details are still not public knowledge (Panorama.am, 2015). Generally, the following *conclusions* can be made about Armenian-Turkish relations:

- Armenia officially considers the blockade imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan as a use of force against itself, and, therefore, as a security threat.
- Armenian-Turkish relations are connected to the issue of recognition of Armenian Genocide and the compensation for its consequences. As long as these problems are not resolved, it will not be possible to expect relations to normalize.
- While Turkey has expressed interest in taking part in the resolution process over the Artsakh conflict, Armenia does not support any role for Ankara in the peace negotiations.
- A discrepancy exists between the position of Armenian authorities, the public, and the Diaspora. This disparity will remain as long as the protocols remain on the agenda.
- The provisions included in the protocols fall short of the demands of the major Armenian political players both in the Diaspora and Armenia. Therefore, a new, more realistic normalization formula of the relations would be one which would not only satisfy the official circles of two countries, but also would gain the support of the main part of two societies.

## Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) Conflict

A great deal of historical, legal and analytical data on different aspects of the Artsakh issue have been published. The conflict is also the most important issue in Armenia's foreign and security policy. The country's position, as outlined in the NSS, is based on the following principles: any final agreement must be approved by the Artsakh authorities; and Armenia will only accept solutions that sustain the current status of the NKR, i.e. Artsakh should geographically be linked with the RA and its security must be internationally guaranteed. (The National Security Council (2), 2007).

Later the first two principles were reformulated as follows: the conflict settlement must be based on recognition of the Artsakh people's right to self-determination; and Artsakh should have uninterrupted land communication with Armenia, under jurisdiction of the Armenian side (MFA of the Republic of Armenia, n.d.). The Russian-Georgian war demonstrated the real risks to attempting to resolve the Artsakh conflict militarily, and it encouraged several meetings between officials from Armenia and Azerbaijan, together with international mediators.

From the Armenian point of view, there are two major issues obstructing the conflict resolution process: the lack of confidence between the conflicting sides and the sides approach to the Madrid principles – one of the proposed peace settlements for the conflict – as a basis of negotiations. Persistent concerns about crimes against humanity have undermined the peace process, however, like the murder of Armenian Lieutenant Guren Margaryn by Ramil Safarov<sup>15</sup>, and, more recently reports of war crimes committed by Azerbaijan

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<sup>15</sup> In 2004, in Budapest, during NATO training course, Azeri officer Ramil Safarov killed Armenian Officer Guren Margaryn, who was sleeping in his room. Safarov was convicted in 2006 of first degree murder, and sentenced in Hungary until 2036. But in 2012 Hungarian authorities extradited him to Azerbaijan, where was immediately pardoned by President I. Aliev, promoted and publicly glorified (see The Economist. (2012). *Blunder in Budapest*. [online] Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easter-approaches/2012/09/hungary-armenia-and-axe-murderer> [Accessed 23 May 2016].)

during the April 2016 clashes. (Armenpress.am (2), 2016).

Regular ceasefire violations are also an obstacle to building trust. The international community, including monitors like the OSCE MG, has called on both sides to reduce tensions. But Armenian officials, like President Sargsyan, have argued it is impossible to negotiate for peace while the adversary is planning for war. The president has urged countries to go beyond verbal support for the ceasefire by creating mechanisms to ensure security in the conflict area (Armenpress.am (5), 2016). Officially, Armenia has put forward several preconditions for the resumption of negotiations: introducing confidence-building measures; effective mechanisms to investigate cease-fire violations; and guarantees that Azerbaijan will not resort to new aggression against the people of NKR (Armenpress.am (1), 2016).

The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to "finalize in the shortest possible time an OSCE investigative mechanism, to reduce the risk of further violence" at the May 16, 2016 meeting in Vienna (OSCE Minsk Group, 2016). The parties also agreed to meet in June 2016 with an aim at the resuming of negotiations on a comprehensive settlement. However, violations of the ceasefire regime on the contact line continued even after the Vienna meeting (Reuters, 2016). The myriad of draft peace agreements is also an issue in the resolution of the conflict. The most recent agreement over the settlement of the Karabakh conflict is based on the 2007 Madrid Principles, also known as the basic principles. The Madrid Principles provide that the future status of Karabakh will be decided by referendum and foresee "return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control" and "a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh" (OSCE Minsk Group, 2009).

The fact remains, however, that several agreements were reached in 2007, which highlights the differences between the parties to the conflict. For example, Karabakh officials have stated they don't intend to discuss the status and the territory of the NKR. On April 28, NKR President Bako Sahakyan stated that "there will not be a return to the past, in regard to the territories" and "the prerogative of solving the issues related to territories belongs to our people" (Armenpress.am (4), 2016). Another core issue is the fact that Armenia does not see itself as a party to the conflict; rather it is a

guarantor of the 1994 ceasefire agreement, and it partially represents Artsakh's interests as a member of the negotiating process.

In this context, Armenia insists that Karabakh cannot be part of Azerbaijan and, at least, there should be an uninterrupted land communication between NKR and the RA, and Karabakh should officially participate in the negotiations. In addition, Armenia does not consider it appropriate to discuss issues concerning territory, which should be decided by Karabakh. The official Azerbaijani position, however, is that Karabakh's status should be considered only within Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Baku also refuses to negotiate with Karabakh officials.

So we can conclude that

- A failed peace process for the Artsakh conflict settlement may result in the resumption of hostilities, which will have very negative influence on the security of the entire region. Ceasefire violations, incidents on the border, military rhetoric, the efforts to transfer negotiations to another platform, and anti-Armenian policy all have a negative effect on conflict regulating processes;
- The international community, especially OSCE MG, should implement effective mechanisms to prevent any negative impact on the negotiation processes. Criticisms should be directly addressed, and the violation of agreements should be condemned and receive adequate responses;
- The involvement of other international actors in the conflict resolution process should be directed to the promotion of the work of the OSCE MG;
- Armenia wants to include Artsakh authorities in the negotiation process. The direct participation of Karabakh officials can change both the content and the very course of negotiations. It can both guarantee a final peaceful solution to the conflict, and, on the contrary, deepen differences of positions of the conflicting parties. In any case, Artsakh's direct participation in the negotiations is needed in order to find an exit from the current impasse. A sustainable peace is not possible if NKR does not participate in the negotiations.

## **The Armenian-Georgian "Difficult Neighborhood"**

The NSS notes that the development and further enlargement of mutually beneficial and multidimensional cooperation with Georgia is in Armenia's long-term strategic interests. Armenia also puts great importance in Georgia's stable and secure development, as well as in the peaceful and integral regulation of existing conflicts. This will facilitate the safe and reliable use of transit routes through Georgia, which are vitally important for Armenia, as well as the eventual re-opening of the regionally significant "Tbilisi-Sukhumi" railway.

The only communication highway linking Russia and Armenia was closed for a period following the 2008 Russian-Georgia war. In the post-war period, President Sargsyan underscored that Armenia must fulfill its responsibilities both as Russia's strategic partner and Georgia's neighbor. (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia, 2008). Armenia was one of the first countries to offer its support during the war. Relations between Armenia and Georgia suffer from political and cultural problems at times, however.

During the war, media outlets reported that Armenia had allegedly allowed Russia to use its warplanes deployed in Armenia's territory against Georgia. Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan refuted these reports (GeorgiaTimes, 2008). Even before the war, in May 2008, Armenia-Georgia relations were tense due to Armenia's delegation which voted against a resolution draft on the rights of return of internally displaced persons to Abkhazia, proposed by Georgia at the United Nations General Assembly. Giorgi Saganelidze, a representative of Georgia's Embassy in Armenia, noted: "If finally Armenia votes against the document, then, I guess, it will decrease the level of reliability among our nations. I ask Armenian authorities and call on them to be wise and not to harm itself and its colleagues" (Panorama.am, 2008). Bilateral relations also suffered due to Georgia's support for an Azerbaijani proposal: Saganelidze declared that the particular issue related to the territorial integrity of a neighboring country and Georgia itself facing similar internal problems cannot claim to restore its territorial integrity if it

acts against that of other states<sup>16</sup>.

Another blow to relations occurred when Georgia announced the 2011 municipal elections in Artsakh were "illegal" (MFA of Georgia, 2011). Georgia's ambassador to Armenia Tengiz Sharmanashvili was even summoned to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs over this statement (PanARMENIAN Network, 2011). This tension in the two countries' bilateral relations is directly related to the conflicts over Abkhazia and Karabakh. Armenia, which officially does not recognize Abkhazia's independence, has never made any statement on the election of local or central government in this region, however. There are also problems concerning the protection of national and cultural identity of ethnic Armenians in Georgia and, particularly, in Georgia's southern region of Samtskhe-Javakheti (known as Javakhk in Armenia).

The issue has long been the subject of bilateral talks between the two countries. Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandyan reported that, after his meeting his Georgian counterpart in June 2009, the Georgian government pledged to allocate funds for construction of roads, schools and other infrastructure improvements in Javakhk (Asbarez, 2009). There was some progress addressing this issue in 2013, after former Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili said he would do everything "in order to make the Armenian community feel that they live in their own country" (The Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2013).

In April 2013 at a meeting with Georgian Foreign Minister

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<sup>16</sup> In March 2008, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, which was supported by Georgia. Armenia and the OSCE MG co-chairs Russia, France and the US voted against the resolution, noting that in 2007 the conflicting parties adopted the Basic principles of the conflict settlement, but the resolution selectively reflects these principles.

In May 2008, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the rights of return of internally displaced persons to Abkhazia. Armenia, while not recognizing Abkhazia's independence, voted against the resolution, noting that it was one-sided.

In January, 2016, Georgia voted for two PACE resolutions related to Nagorno-Karabakh, initiated by Azerbaijan, which were condemned by Yerevan.



Maia Panjikidze, President Sargsyan thanked Ivanishvilli for his special attention towards Armenian historical monuments in Georgia and for his readiness to assist in their restoration (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia (1), 2013).

For Armenian public figures, politicians and experts, the issue of wellbeing in Javakhk is very important as poor conditions could cause ethnic Armenians to leave the area, potentially jeopardizing the security of Armenia's "northern gates". In particular, prolonged economic and social problems in Javakhk could lead to social unrest, which would harm Georgia's domestic security. In this context, the realization of joint Armenian-Georgian economic projects could benefit both countries. There are several steps that could be taken to help ethnic Armenians living in Georgia preserve their Armenian roots, including: settling issues concerning conservation of Armenian cultural monuments; legalizing the use of Armenian as a regional language; giving some autonomy to the Armenian population living in Javakhk; and creating a joint Armenian-Georgian university. In its turn, Armenia could provide assistance for the ethnic Armenian population living in Georgia, and work with the Georgian government to develop and implement joint economic projects aimed at the solution of numerous socio-economic problems of the ethnic Armenian population of Javakhk region.

Regional politics also add to the complexity of Armenian-Georgian relations. There is a consensus among major Armenian public actors that the focus should be on bilateral ties, rather than being influenced by Yerevan and Tbilisi's relations with other countries in the region. For example, Armenia is a CSTO member-state and Russia's strategic partner, hosting Russian military bases on its territory while Georgia has rather strained relations with Russia. Likewise, Tbilisi is actively engaged in Azerbaijani-Turkish energy and communication projects that further exacerbate Armenia's regional isolation. Armenia's position is, however, that these circumstances should not be given priority in bilateral ties because strained relations may negatively affect the lives of ordinary Georgian citizens of Armenian descent.

Unresolved problems could negatively influence the development of bilateral relations, however. Under the current circumstances, Georgia's territory retains its strategic importance for

Armenia as a corridor that connects the country with its main economic partners. Yerevan cannot support Tbilisi's participation in projects like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline and the construction of Kars-Akhalkalaki railway as they all intentionally bypass Armenia's territory. Instead, Armenia emphasizes the importance of Gyumri-Akhalcikha-Bavra-Batumi highway within the North-South transport corridor, which is currently under construction and will eventually improve transportation from Armenia to the Black Sea ports and in the opposite direction.

During his visit to Georgia in December 2008, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan announced that the Armenian government will assist in the construction of Yerevan-Akhalkalaki-Batumi strategic route, an agreement which aimed to create a second customs house on an interstate border which would facilitate the export and import of goods. He also added that when an agreement is signed with Iran on increasing the amount of gas supplies, Georgia might be invited to join the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline project (The Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2008).

Georgia is an important trade partner for Armenia. In 2015, it was Armenia's 5<sup>th</sup> largest export market and the 9<sup>th</sup> largest supplier of imports. The trade balance between two countries was positive (over \$47 million) in 2015, which indicates a potential for future growth. After Armenia joined the CU, and Georgia became part of the EU free trade zone, there were new restrictions, as well as new opportunities, for bilateral trade. The heads of state of both countries met twice in 2014 to discuss how best to expand trade relations, although to date the countries have only agreed to look for ways to develop bilateral economic relations (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia, 2014). In addition, in recent years, some promising projects were agreed, such as the construction of a "Bridge of friendship" on the Armenian-Georgian border in 2014 (Azatutyun.am, 2014) and the 2016 agreement on a multinational North-South electricity corridor project between Russia, Georgia, Iran and Armenia (RA Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, 2016).

## "Southern Dimension": Armenian-Iranian Relations

Iran is strategically important for Armenia as both a bilateral partner and as a major regional actor. Bilateral ties between Tehran and Yerevan are deepening, due to a number of factors. First and foremost, Iran serves as a bridge that connects Armenia with the Middle East and Central Asia, a vitally important role considering the Turkish-Azerbaijani blockade and issues with the Georgian trade routes. The planned Armenia-Iran railway will add to Iran's role as a transit route for Armenia. It is also important to note that the Armenian community in Iran does not face problems concerning the preservation of Armenian historical and cultural monuments, unlike the situation in Georgia.

Iran was one of Armenia's top-10 trade partners in 2015, purchasing 5 percent of the country's export and holding 3<sup>rd</sup> place in imports (6 percent). Since 2010, 90 percent of Armenia's exports to Iran have been mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products. Iranian businesses have also invested in Armenia's economy. Cooperation with Iran was particularly important during the Russian-Georgian war, which resulted in the closure of the Georgian Military Highway - the main land link between Russia and Armenia<sup>17</sup>. While the highway is currently open and functioning, the tension between Georgia and Russia has highlighted the vulnerability of this route.

The planned *Armenia-Iran railway* still has to overcome some issues, including securing funding for construction, as well as attracting the necessary cargo volume in order to ensure the economic advantage of the railroad (PanARMENIAN Network (2), 2010). But the project would create significant potential for Armenia, and other countries in the region, to increase trade between Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Georgia, Iran, Pakistan, India and China. Moreover, the Armenia-Iran railway could contribute to the Chinese "New Silk Road" project. In June 2015, Armenian Transport Minister Gagik Beglaryan reported that Iran is also ready to join the project after the start of construction in Armenia (News.am, 2015). The project has not yet been implemented, but Seyed Kazem Sajjadi,

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<sup>17</sup> During the Russian-Georgian war, Iran supported transporting essential goods through its territory.

the Iranian ambassador to Armenia, said Iran is planning to send experts to Armenia to explore the technical possibilities for building a railway (Asbarez.com, 2016).

Another important aspect of Armenian-Iranian relations is energy. The two countries share the *Iran-Armenia gas pipeline*, which is currently underutilized: according to Armenian Energy Minister Yervand Zakharyan, Armenia's Energy Minister, the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline is currently filled by only 15-20 percent. (News.am, 2016). The Iran-Armenia pipeline is strategically important for Armenia as an alternative to Russian gas, and as a way to import gas through Georgia. It will ensure Armenia's energy security in case of possible new regional destabilization. The pipeline also has the potential to increase the volume of electricity produced using imported natural gas, increasing Armenia's potential for electricity export.

*Electricity production* is the next aspect of Armenian-Iranian cooperation. Iran and Armenia have been swapping gas and electric power. Deputy Armenian Energy Minister Areg Galstyan, said that a planned electricity transmission line between two countries will enable Armenia to provide three to five times more electricity than it currently does. In addition, the sides have negotiated the construction of two new thermal power plants, which will also operate by using Iranian gas (ARKA, 2016). In 2011, Armenian officials announced the imminent start of construction of *Iran-Armenia oil pipeline* (Armenpress.am, 2011), which, if implemented, could provide Armenia with an independent source of oil and protect it from unexpected situations like the Russian-Georgian war.

In general, strong Armenian-Iranian relations can strengthen the argument for a stronger Iranian presence in regional projects. For example, exporting Iranian gas through Armenia. While geographically it is more strategic to export gas via Turkey, political factors have always played a crucial role in Iran's energy policy- and Iran is interested in increasing its presence in Armenia and the South Caucasus. Armenia welcomes Iran's involvement in various regional processes, and Yerevan considers it one of the guarantors of *regional stability and balance*. Tehran has a balanced approach regarding resolution of the Artsakh conflict, and Iranian officials have been clear that there is no need for intervention from international actors –

including international peacekeeping forces.

Iran's policy is pragmatic: it does not welcome the resumption of military conflict on its borders. Armenia and Iran are natural partners due to their mutual problems with Turkey and Azerbaijan: Turkey is Iran's opponent in the region and Baku's claims on Iranian territory has been a source of tension in Azerbaijan-Iranian relations. Russia's interests in the South Caucasus could hamper the Iranian policy of deepening relations with Armenia and other countries in the region, however. At the moment, there is no guarantee that Russia, the exclusive provider of gas and nuclear fuel and the sole gas and rail operator in Armenia, will support the further development of the energy and transport projects detailed in this section.

International sanctions against Iran were also an issue, and Yerevan has welcomed the 2016 nuclear deal and the lifting of restrictions on trade and banking with Iran. For Armenia, international isolation robbed Iran of its important role providing regional balance. The lack of serious problems between the two countries underscores the potential for growth in Yerevan's regional policy, such as the abovementioned Iranian-Armenian-Georgian-Russian electricity project of an "energy corridor".

### **The Armenian-Russian Asymmetric Strategic Alliance**

Armenia's strategic cooperation with Russia and its relations within the CIS and CSTO continue to be important strategic directions within the Armenian FSP. Armenian-Russian cooperation is defined by the Armenian-Russian military alliance, as well as by Russia's role in the Artsakh conflict settlement process and the existence of a large Armenian community in Russia. Cooperation between the two countries takes place on both bilateral and multilateral levels, particularly within the CIS and the CSTO.

Russia is also Armenia's leading *economic partner*. In 2015, the Russian market received 15 percent of Armenia's total exports and accounted for 30 percent of its imports. Trade between the two countries was affected by the Russian economic downturn in 2015: Armenia's export to Russia dropped by 26 percent, while Russia's export to Armenia fell by 7 percent. Russian imports to Armenia's

market consisted mainly of mineral fuels, cereals and aluminum in 2015. Russia is also a major investor in the Armenian economy. In 2013, Russian FDI to Armenia was \$ 2.5 billion (41 percent of all FDI). In 2007-2013 Russian enterprises invested \$2.1 billion as FDI in Armenia's economy. Russian companies invest in a wide variety of sectors, although the majority are focused on energy, energy infrastructure and telecommunications (44 and 22 percent of all Russian investments respectively).

In *the energy sector* Armenia is deeply dependent on Russian energy, particularly natural gas and nuclear fuel supplies, which is transmitted through Georgia's *North-South gas pipeline*. Gas import and distribution in Armenia is monopolized by Gazprom-Armenia, which has been 100 percent owned by Russia since 2014. Since Armenia lacks sufficient domestic energy supplies to meet its needs, the safe transportation of Russian gas to the Armenian market is of vital importance and the disruption caused by the 2008 Georgia-Russia war caused great concern.

Armenia also imports nuclear fuel for its *nuclear power plant* from Russia. There are plans to build a new energy block for the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant. The construction will begin in 2018 and exploitation is scheduled to start in 2028. The only country that expressed interest in the project was Russia, which will cover a significant part of financing. According to bilateral agreements signed in 2014 and 2015, Russia will give Armenia a grant worth \$30 million and \$270 million in credit (Armenpress.am (3), 2016).

Russia has a substantial presence in the *railway* sector, managing the South Caucasus Railways, which covers the entire territory of Armenia. This company is strategically important since it operates the railway connecting Armenia and Georgia. If the Iran-Armenia railway is built, Russian management will also oversee its operations. In the sphere of *telecommunications*, Russia also has a strong presence: two of the three operators – VivaCell-MTC and ArmenTell-BeeLine – have Russian capital. Russian companies can also be found in the banking, insurance and infrastructure sectors.

Armenian-Russian *military cooperation* is based on both bilateral and multilateral agreements (CSTO). In 2010, Armenia extended the term of the Russian base, stationed in the country since 1995, for 49 years. Additionally, the geographical responsibility and

defensive functions of the base were expanded. (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia, 2010). A member of the CSTO, Armenia is not only committed to collective defense, but also to cooperate in the arms industry, and to deepen and strengthen the security cooperation with other CSTO members. Within this framework, Armenia has an opportunity to buy weapons at low prices. This is considered to be one of the major international keystones of Armenia's military security.

Although Armenian-Russian strategic cooperation is mutually beneficial, it essentially restrains Armenia's maneuverability. Armenia is comprehensively and strategically dependent on Russia. In addition to the obligation of mutual defense, Russia is the exclusive supplier of military equipment to Armenia. And as noted above, Russia is also the exclusive supplier of natural gas and nuclear fuel, the only rail operator, the main economic partner and main market for Armenia's labor migrants. Russian companies also own the largest share of the telecommunication market of Armenia. For Armenia, which is facing a constant threat of foreign aggression and is grappling with a weak economy, close cooperation with Russia is its only viable option.

This complex dependence in strategic areas explains the principle of "Russia first" in Armenia's FSP. In exchange, Armenia is a strong ally for Russia in the strategic South Caucasus. By deepening its strategic partnership with Armenia, Russia is trying to strengthen its regional position and presence. Russia's important role in the region, as well as in the Artsakh conflict, will continue to be a priority in Armenia's FSP. But Yerevan also seeks out partnerships outside of its strategic alliance with Moscow: Armenia is developing and deepening relationships with the West – particularly with the US, NATO and the EU. In addition, its relations with Iran remain a priority.

The West and Russia, to some extent, have been tolerant with Armenia's complicated security situation and Yerevan has not been forced to formally choose between the global power centers. Armenia's decision to join the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (the EAEU) in 2015 added an additional dimension to relations between the two countries.

## Armenia's "Eurasian Shift"

The Eurasian dimension is a relatively new part of Armenia's FSP agenda, which means the NSS does not include a complete section on the country's Eurasian aspirations. In accordance with the guiding principles of its foreign policy, for many years Armenia has been trying to balance its policies within the CIS space and in the European direction. As noted above, Armenia's leading partner in the post-Soviet space is Russia. It is through the prism of the Armenian-Russian relations that Armenia considers its policy in the CIS space. In addition to the bilateral economic relations, in 2012 Armenia joined the CIS free trade area (FTA) agreement. However, this agreement could add little to the existing relations between Armenia with its CIS partners. Probably for this reason, and because of the geographical remoteness and differences in economic policy, official Yerevan distanced itself from the formation of the Russian-led Eurasian Customs Union in 2009-2010. In 2003 Armenia was granted observer status in the Eurasian Economic Community. However, it also could not change its relations with CIS partners.

While the country's participation in the CU was never seriously discussed at home prior to 2012, it became the topic of active debate in Armenia's political, analytical and public circles in 2012. Even then, there was an understanding that the possibility of Armenia's membership in the CU was complicated by several factors. In February 2013, Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan called Armenia's accession to the CU "inexpedient". He gave four main reasons: the lack of common borders; the tremendous structural differences between Armenia's economy and those of CU member-states; the rate of standard taxes within the CU, which go far beyond Armenian rates; and the fact that Armenia is a member of WTO, which affects its relations with the CU (Moskovskiye novosti, 2013).

It is noteworthy that Armenia's trade with EAEU members made up 16 percent of the country's total export and 32 percent of import in 2015. Additionally, it is important to note that Armenia's trade relations with Russia are significantly larger than its trade turnover with any other member state: Russia is Armenia's largest trade partner; Belarus ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> in terms of Armenia's export and 26<sup>th</sup> in imports; and Kazakhstan is in 22<sup>nd</sup> place in export partners. Armenia's imports from Kazakhstan,



and trade relations with Kyrgyzstan, are too small to be included in Armenia's statistical reports.

During the Armenia-CU discussions in 2012-2013, special attention was paid to the issue of the compatibility of Armenia's membership in the CU and free trade area with the EU. In government circles, there was a clear understanding that the two organizations were technically incompatible. In a 2012 interview, the prime minister said that Armenia wants to become a member of EU's free trade area and, at the same time, he proposed that Russia develop a new platform of relations between Armenia and the CU that would give the country a special status (Gazeta.ru, 2012). In May 2013, Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan noted that, if Armenia becomes a member of the EU, the country could not sign a FTA treaty with the CIS or cooperate with the CU. The opposite was also true: if Armenia becomes a member of the CU, the country is no longer free to sign any FTA agreement with the EU. According to him, "Armenia doesn't seek membership in the EU and in the CU so it can take part in both EU and post-Soviet free trade zones" (ARKA, 2013).

In August 2013, few days before President Sargsyan announced plans to join the Russian-led CU, Kocharyan also stressed that Armenia's accession to the CU is inexpedient: it would constrain Armenia's access to international markets through Georgian territory (Galstyan, 2014, p. 125). In March 2013, President Sargsyan also sought to quiet rumors about Russia's pressure on Armenia joining the CU. He stated that Armenia is committed to deeper integration with both the CSTO and European organizations. He also stressed that "the members of the CU have no intention yet to involve any one else, at least when it comes to us, I haven't seen such an intention" (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia (3), 2013).

Nonetheless, on September 3 2013, President Sargsyan confirmed Armenia's desire to join the Customs Union and actively engage in the process of the formation of the Eurasian Customs Union" (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia (5), 2013). His argument was clear – the common system of military security makes further isolation from geo-economic integration unfeasible. He outlined the following reasons for the government's decision: the necessity of Armenia's active participation in the

architecture of a new geopolitical space; the international political climate; regional conflicts, specifically the problem of NK; the perspective of a deepening strategic partnership with Russia, including stronger military technical cooperation; and the acknowledgement of the possible negative consequences if Armenia does not join the CU (Galstyan, 2014, p. 127).

This chronology makes it clear that Armenia's Eurasian shift (with a specific reference to the CU membership and the mechanisms of cooperation) was largely unexpected. The fact that the country's leadership was intensively negotiating with the EU, while also acknowledging the incompatibility of European and Eurasian agendas, strengthens this conclusion. In 2014, Armenia became a full member of the CU: the country has not received the aforementioned "special status" that would allow it to sign a free trade agreement with the EU. In addition, in 2015, Armenia became a full member of the Eurasian Economic Union, which absorbed the CU and the Eurasian Economic Community. This eliminates Armenia's right to sign a free trade agreement with other countries and economic blocs.

### **Relations with the US**

Armenia's position concerning the US and its policy in the South Caucasus depends on several factors. First, the USA is a major regional actor. It is important to mention the US support for the Turkish-Armenian normalization process and its participation in the Artsakh conflict resolution.

Second, since 1998, the US has been the sole country (apart from Armenia), that provides annual direct financial assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh, while formally not recognizing its independence. Third, the US is a leading actor in global politics. In this context, the most important aspects of the Armenia-US relationship are bilateral cooperation in the spheres of defense reforms, terrorism and other asymmetric challenges, as well as participation in NATO operations, such as Armenian military units deployed in NATO peacekeeping missions. Fourth, the US also plays an important role in Armenia's political and economic reforms. Finally, there is the existence of a large, influential and organized Armenian Diaspora in the US. The

Armenian lobby plays an influential role in domestic politics, especially in US electoral processes. Another important factor is the US's pragmatic attitude towards Armenia's FSP.

Despite of the geographical distance between the two countries, the USA is also one of Armenia's top 10 foreign trade partners. In 2015, the USA was the 9<sup>th</sup> largest market for Armenia's exports (4 percent) and the 8<sup>th</sup> largest importer to Armenia (3 percent). The USA is also a major investor in Armenia's economy. From 2007-2013, US investors contributed around \$ 92 million of FDI. Interestingly, while the bulk of EU and Russian investment is focused on mining and processing natural resources, most US investment goes to Armenia's R&D sector. The US has remained neutral regarding the Armenian-Russian military-political alliance and the presence of the Russian military base in Armenia. But the US appears to realize that, while Armenia cooperates closely with Russia in many spheres, Yerevan is also effectively working with Washington in other areas. The US has adopted a similar policy towards Armenia's relations with Iran, an indication that Washington has a good understanding of Armenia's lack of alternatives in its foreign policy.

The Azerbaijani-Turkish economic blockade, the Karabakh conflict and the country's lack of domestic energy sources mean that Armenia must engage closely with Russia and Iran to reduce or neutralize the country's security threats. The US policy towards Armenia has, in part, been based on the assumption that reopening the Turkish-Armenian border and resolving the Artsakh conflict will have a fundamental impact on Armenia's security – and would significantly reduce Russia's influence on the country. While acknowledging Russia's and US interests in the South Caucasus especially in terms of their competition in a global context, it seems Armenia's FSP towards these countries and their alliances does not aim at balancing their influence, which would not only be unrealistic, but could even be dangerous for the country.

Generally, Armenia tries to complement the cooperation with the US and Russia in areas where their interests coincide, or at least not are not in competition, as much as geopolitical realities allow. For instance, in military-political issues, Armenia's relations with Russia and the CSTO (as a founding member-country) contain

commitments to mutual military assistance (collective defense) and arms supplies at low prices. Armenia's military alliance with Russia puts some limitations on its relations with NATO. Unlike Georgia, NATO membership is not a goal for Armenia, its relations with the US and NATO (as a partner-country within the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP)) do not contain commitments of mutual defense and do not relate to arms purchases. Instead, these relations aim at the institutional reform of Armenia's army and the exchange of experience in defense planning. In addition, the participation of the Armenian contingent in NATO operations reinforces the country's international image.

Armenian political circles associate NATO with the US, and it is referred to as the "Atlantic" dimension of the country's foreign policy. Armenia's political elite has some reservations about NATO, stemming from Turkey's active role in the military alliance, however. In Euro-Atlantic programs and projects, Turkey lobbies for Georgia and Azerbaijan. For instance, Azerbaijan and Turkey have tried to involve NATO in the process of Artsakh conflict resolution (NEWS.am, 2011). But in Armenian leading political and analytical circles, there is a certain level of agreement on this question, as in the case of Russia and CSTO: the mutually beneficial cooperation with the USA and NATO are based on Armenia's security interests.

### **Armenia's European Priorities**

According to the NSS, the development of relations with European institutions is a priority for Armenia's FSP. In this context Armenia-EU relations have three main aims. First, the further intensification of the Armenia's diverse cooperation with the EU to promote the consolidation of democracy, strengthen the rule of law, and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Second, Armenia seeks to develop relations with the EU to broaden its trade and economic links, and support the country's economic development. Finally, Armenia supports EU regional initiatives to promote a favorable environment for the establishment of lasting stability and cooperation in the South Caucasus region (The National Security Council (2), 2007).

Unlike Georgia, however, Armenia does not wish to become a member of the EU, but is actively engaged in European institutions. Economic relations with the EU are also of particular importance for Armenia. EU countries have long been Armenia's main trade partners. However, the EU's share in Armenia's trade turnover has been decreasing over the past several years, even as the absolute value of trade turnover between Armenia and the EU has been increasing. Trade with five EU countries (Germany, Bulgaria, Italy, Belgium, and Netherlands) constituted about 83 percent of Armenia's trade turnover with the EU. The vast majority (70 percent) of Armenia's exports to the EU are raw materials. Armenia imports a wide variety of goods from EU countries.

In terms of investments, the EU is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest investor in Armenia following Russia. Out of the EU member states, France is the largest investor. In general, Armenia's relations with the EU should be considered both regionally and bilaterally. In this regard, Armenia considers its active participation in the ENP and the Eastern partnership as a tool to escape regional isolation, as well as an impetus for political, institutional and economic development.

At the regional level, the EU differs from other actors with its lack of a common strategy for the region. Rather, it carries out its policy through different projects relying on its image as a soft and transformative power. EU's South-Caucasian policy is based mainly on its energy and transit interests. The significance of the South Caucasus for the EU is based on its geographical neighborhood, regional energy (Baku-Tbilisi-Supsa, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, Iran-Armenia and "Nabucco-West" pipelines) and transit routes (Baku-Tbilisi-Akhalkalaki-Kars, Iran-Armenia etc.), especially for production and transportation of Caspian, Central Asian, Middle Eastern energy reserves. In this context, the South Caucasus serves as a micro-region of the Black Sea-Caspian energy region. The EU is also interested in the restoration of a historical "Silk Road", to provide a direct commercial linkage with Asia, and the South Caucasus becomes a strategic crossroads of the Central Asia-Caspian Sea- (Middle East)-Black Sea-Europe route.

Despite its interests in the region, the EU has not adopted a policy for the South Caucasus. It is in the EU's interests to strengthen regional security and stability, however. Long-term

stability and peace keeping requires the active engagement of the EU in the settlement of regional conflicts, local and international differences, as well as support for the economic growth of transit states and the democratization of their political systems. The idea of supporting effective governance, democracy and rule of law is at the heart of creating a zone of "democratic stability and welfare" in the EU neighborhood. In particular, the impact of democracy development for countries in conflict is important.

The EU can also promote regional and interregional cooperation in the South Caucasus through various projects, which will make the region more attractive for business and investments. The EU's active engagement can serve to change the regional power balance and reduce disproportional dependence on external actors. In this context, the regulation of "frozen conflicts" is a priority for the EU, since a resumption of violence could harm the region's energy and communication projects, and cause mass migration to Europe.

Armenia has some concerns regarding the EU's regional policy. For instance, although Armenia doesn't have the same level of strategic importance for the EU as Georgia or Azerbaijan, the country is concerned that Turkey and Azerbaijan continue to use energy and transport projects directed to the EU to strengthen Armenia's isolation. In 2011, President Sargsyan underlined that Armenia respects and understands the EU's desire to ensure energy security and diversity of energy sources. But the country also expects the EU and its member states to respect Armenia's security and regional stability issues. "The regional cooperation component of these programs can play a positive role in establishing stability. [...] The result of these programs should promote peace and not war. These programs should be implemented in a manner which don't add to the militarization of the conflict." (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia, 2011) Regarding the "militarization of the conflict", in recent years Armenia's authorities have periodically raised the issue of the arms race in the region at various international venues, including European ones. But, as Sargsyan noted at a meeting with OSCE countries' ambassadors in April 2016, "when Azerbaijan was bragging about the acquisition of arms and weaponry in profound quantities, the international community remained almost silent; when statements about seeking a military solution to the

problem were being made at the highest levels, the international community remained almost silent" (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia, 2016).<sup>18</sup>

In July 2013, at the summit of the European People's Party (EPP) Eastern Partnership Leaders in Chisinau, Sargsyan stressed the unacceptability of Armenia's blockade by the EU's Customs union member Turkey, as well as by Azerbaijan<sup>19</sup>. According to him, closed borders go against the very essence of the EU and its system of values, and it makes trade with the EU inefficient, which warrants serious consideration from the EU (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia (4), 2013). The EU faces also several obstacles as it deepens its engagement with the region. Not the least are the high expectations that Brussels can resolve the complicated problems in the region. For instance, the EU has considerably less engagement in Artsakh than in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in part due to the difference in how Armenia and Azerbaijan view Brussels, compared to Georgia's position on EU engagement. As it was defined by the International Crisis Group, "*the EU doesn't work on conflict, it works around conflict*" to create the conditions and environment that are necessary to have a positive impact on conflict resolution (International Crisis Group, 2006, p. 18).

In the case of the Artsakh conflict, the EU is not directly involved in conflict resolution, unlike the OSCE MG. Instead, the EU expresses its full support of the OSCE MG efforts and prefers to initiate or support projects aimed at a dialogue at the level of the Armenian and Azerbaijani civil society. It should be noted that although the obligation to peaceful resolution of the conflict is

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<sup>18</sup> There is a contradictory situation in this matter: on the one hand, all EU countries have joined the OSCE military embargo towards Armenia and Azerbaijan and, accordingly, they do not sell arms to these countries. However, on the other hand, Azerbaijan uses the proceeds from energy cooperation with the EU for arms purchases. And, most notably, it is Russia, a co-chairman of the OSCE MG, which is a major arms supplier to its "military ally" Armenia and its "strategic partner" Azerbaijan.

<sup>19</sup> For over 20 years, the EU has failed to force or persuade Turkey - an EU Customs Union member - to open its border with Armenia. Thus, part of the customs border between Armenia and the EU remains closed.

included in the EU's cooperation programs with Armenia and Azerbaijan, there is no direct conditionality between the fulfilment of these obligations and the EU's assistance to these countries.

The legal basis of cooperation between Armenia and the EU is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA, in force since 1999). In 2004, Armenia joined the EU's ENP and in 2009, the country joined the EU's Eastern Partnership. The cooperation covers a wide-range of areas, including institutional reforms, law-making, political dialogue, economy, culture and migration. In 2014, the procedures for issuing entry visas to the EU countries were simplified. Armenia continues also to qualify for the EU's GSP+, which provides preferential access to the EU market in the form of zero duties and reduces tariffs for thousands of goods.

In 2010, the parties began to negotiate an Association Agreement (AA), which had both political and economic parts (including deep and comprehensive free trade area - DCFTA). In July 2013, Armenia and the EU concluded negotiations on the DCFTA. It was expected that the negotiations on the AA would be finalized and the Agreement would be signed at the Vilnius Summit in November 2013. However, on September 3, 2013, President Sargsyan announced the decision to join the Eurasian CU. As the membership in the CU is incompatible with the DCFTA with the EU, Armenia proposed to sign only the political part of the AA, that is, without the DCFTA. (The Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia (2), 2013) However that was impossible, and despite more than three years of negotiations, no document was signed between Armenia and the EU at a summit in Vilnius. Instead, the parties began to look for a new cooperation formula. After nearly two years of negotiations, Johannes Hahn, the EU commissioner for ENP and Enlargement, confirmed the possibility that the EU and Armenia could sign an AA without its free-trade component (RFE/RL, 2015). In December 2015, the official launch of negotiations took place. It is expected that the new agreement will replace the current EU-Armenia PCA and will be compatible with Armenia's obligations within the EAEU.

In summary, the Black Sea-Caspian region is strategically important for the EU, both as an energy corridor as well as a vital part of the wider "Silk Road" route that connects Europe with Central Asia and the Middle East. The importance of the region makes it imperative that Brussels take a more active role in resolving



the conflicts that threaten security in the South Caucasus.

The EU, like the US, can provide more support for Artsakh. In addition, Brussels is in a unique position to play a more effective role, due to its experience at establishing trust, democratization, economic development, and, after reaching a peace agreement, implementing programs for post-conflict reconstruction. To improve regional stability and security, the EU could use Turkey's membership in the EU's Customs Union and the process of its EU membership to force or persuade it to open the border with Armenia and assist the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations. Moving forward, Armenia and the EU have renewed their intentions to deepen relations in some areas following Yerevan's decision to join the Russian-led CU/EAEU instead of signing an AA with Brussels. The new agreement could allow both parties to better utilize the opportunities that have been outlined in this report.

## **Conclusion**

Armenia's FSP and foreign trade policy are deeply influenced by the country's geographical and geopolitical environment. Thus, one of the major characteristics of Armenia's foreign policy practices is its focus on regional issues, even though concerns related to global problems are widely noted in official documents and statements. Armenia's National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine mainly reflect the decisive geopolitical realities faced by Armenia. This geopolitical environment includes Armenia's landlocked geography and "fragile" economy, the permanent security threats emanating from the conflicts with Azerbaijan and Turkey and the regional political and economic blockade by these countries. In the near future, confronting these security threats will remain the main dimension of Armenia's FSP.

The competition between the regional and world power centers in the South Caucasus also has a great influence on the country's FSP. The practice of Armenia's foreign policy reflects the principles of complementarity and international involvement prescribed in the country's NSS and MD. However, this practice also reveals the existence of another principle - "Russia first" – which, in fact, dominates foreign policy. The country's deep, complex and comprehensive

dependence on Russia in all strategic areas decreases Armenia's ability to maneuver in foreign policy. This dependence is a direct result of the realities of Armenia's regional geopolitical environment. It means that, in Armenia's case, "complementarity" does not mean "proportionality", while it may include some aspects of "balancing".

In other words, Armenia does not seek to oppose the different interests of the leading power centers, which could be decisively dangerous for the country. Instead, Armenia tries to complement the interests of these powers in matters where they have a common interest or, at least, have no contradictions, as far as the geopolitical situation allows for it. On the other hand, it can also mean that changes in Armenia's geopolitical environment will directly affect the country's foreign policy. Armenia's cooperation within the CIS and CSTO should be considered within the prism of relations with Russia. In addition, the principle of "Russia first" may explain the sudden "Eurasian shift" in the country's FSP. However, as long as there are no fundamental changes in Armenia's geopolitical environment, the principle of "Russia first" and the strategic importance of relations with Russia will remain core dimensions of Armenia's FSP.

Armenia tries to combine strategic cooperation with Russia and the CSTO with its relations with the USA and NATO, especially as Russia's relations with Azerbaijan "push" Armenia to cooperate with the West. As for the "European dimension" of the country's FSP, Armenia started a new round of negotiations with the EU aimed at signing a new document that will emphasize the desire to deepen cooperation, with consideration of Armenia's commitments following its membership in the EAEU. The EU remains Armenia's main trading partner and a major "transformative power" in the context of the institutional and political reforms in Armenia, despite its membership in the EAEU.

The strategic importance of relations with Georgia and Iran, another important dimension of the country's FSP, is also a result of the existing regional geopolitical realities faced by Armenia. These relations are deepening due to mutually beneficial cooperation. Moreover, these countries are the main transport routes that connect Armenia with the rest of the world. Georgia's strategic importance for Armenia is largely as a transit hub, while Iran plays the role of "regional balancer" for Armenia.

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**THE EVOLUTION OF ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY  
IDENTITY: THE CONCEPTION OF IDENTITY DRIVEN  
PATHS. FRIENDS AND FOES IN ARMENIAN FOREIGN  
POLICY DISCOURSE**

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of Armenia's foreign policy identity. Drawing chiefly on presidents' speeches and policies, it delves into the evolution of Armenia's foreign policy identity, identifying the core characteristics of friends and foes. The starting point of this analysis is the rise of the un-Sovietized and nationalistic foreign policy identity that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union. The second critical phase involves the shift in the discussion about European identity, which started during Robert Kocharyan's presidency. This was followed by a disconnect between identity-based European aspirations and security driven Russian/Eurasian constraints.

The restoration of Armenia's independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union has faced many challenges. The country's foreign policy identity has been inextricably linked to the pan-Armenian movement for Nagorno Karabakh's self-determination and its reunification with independent Armenia.

During perestroika, Armenians sought to address the long-standing issue of Nagorno - Karabakh's status. This ultimately led to a pan-Armenian movement for independence.

The newly formed political elite in Soviet Armenia, known as the Pan-Armenian National Movement (PANM), positioned itself as a flag carrier of a movement pursuing self-determination for Nagorno-Karabakh and the restoration of Armenia's independence. To this end PANM developed nationalistic policies that shaped the fundamental transformations that were taking place across the country. They put a special emphasis on modernizing Soviet Armenian identity and redefining national interests. In its search for a new national and foreign policy identity, PANM's anti-Soviet positions also extended to a rejection of Russia.

Russia's historic role as Armenia's "savior" in Armenian strategic thinking was profoundly challenged in the wake of the

breakup of the Soviet Union. Russia, Armenia's "big brother," suddenly became a "chauvinistic empire" widely regarded as a formidable challenge to the independent, free and democratic development of Armenian statehood. This change in public thought occurred gradually, gathering speed in the later stages of the Nagorno-Karabakh movement. One of the prominent leaders of PANM and the first president of independent Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, declared: "Armenians have pinned their political hopes on Russia for over 300 years and, regardless of constant disillusionment, they have continued to adore the Russian people, making a clear distinction between Russians and the imperial, chauvinistic policy carried out by the authorities... We sincerely seek to strengthen friendly ties with the Russians and other Soviet nations, yet fiercely oppose any encroachment on our national interests, along with any sort of imperial chauvinistic policies of Russification," (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 34).

Armenia's traditional pro-Russian orientation was also condemned by other prominent Armenian public figures and politicians, who urged the nation to give up its reliance on Russia and embrace Armenia's national identity (Mirzoyan 2010, p. 28). In the early stages of the movement, the leaders of the national movement targeted "imperial" Russia as a fundamental obstacle to Armenia's development in order to encourage nationalistic sentiments across the country.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, the first Armenian minister of foreign affairs, Raffi Hovhannisyan, was forced to resign because of considerable frictions with Ter-Petrosyan, focusing on national issues, namely the question of sidelining the issue of Genocide in Armenia's foreign policy agenda. *America From Abroad : Distant Relations : Armenians living abroad are generous with money--and advice--for their homeland. And that's creating some resentment.*

## **New strategic approach toward Turkey**

Once Armenia became an independent country and the movement became the ruling party of the new state, the new political elite toned down nationalistic rhetoric. It started to shape a new neutral and civic identity that was believed to be conducive to the challenges threatening the country. At the core of this policy was the transformation of Armenian-Turkish relations.

Given the Ottoman past and, in particular, the strong mark that the Genocide has left on Armenian collective memory and identity, "Turkey" appeared to represent everything that opposed the essence of "Armenia." Armenia's political elite, however, viewed anti-Turkish sentiments as a threat to Armenian-Turkish rapprochement, which was viewed as indispensable for Armenia's steady development and regional stability. The political elite worked hard to overcome Armenian society's deep-seated anger toward Turkey. "We always remember historical conflicts but, guided by our country's realistic interests, we must overcome our pain and establish normal interstate relations... The psychological barriers appear to be overcome, which is the greatest achievement of our movement" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 300).

Ter-Petrosyan's administration did not put the issue of the Genocide recognition on the foreign policy agenda, viewing it as prejudicial to Armenian-Turkish relations. "Armenia regards the events that occurred in 1915 as a genocide against the Armenian people. Nevertheless, Armenia does not view that issue as a prerequisite for normalizing Armenian - Turkish relations... Mutual understanding between two societies is contingent upon rapid settlement of bilateral relations" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 480). Ter - Petrosyan avoided placing Armenia in either a Western or Eastern context. Rather, he stressed that Armenia should be a bridge between the East and the West. In the president's view, independence offered Armenia the opportunity to become the center of an international crossroads – a political, economic and cultural link between East and West (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 265) .

The Armenian political elite preferred to portray Armenia as a part of Europe according to its religion and core values; but it politically associated Armenia with the Middle East, while still

emphasizing the significance of the Caucasian region. "We see ourselves in the Middle East alliance and security system in the future... I hope that upon the settlement of the Nagorno- Karabakh conflict our relations with Turkey will be resolved. We see possibilities for large-scale cooperation in the South Caucasus" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 301).

Ter-Petrosyan's administration placed a great deal of faith in European integration, driven by the belief that integration into European institutions was essential to achieve sustainable development and enhance regional stability in the South Caucasus. (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 557) Anti-Russian propaganda started to decline shortly after Armenia reclaimed its independence.\*

### **Friends and foes**

After the restoration of independence Ter-Petrosyan started to advocate strengthening Armenian-Russian ties, drawing on the two countries' backgrounds: "The break-up of the Soviet Union does not blunt the unity, which has emerged as means of coexistence over centuries... it is no secret that for a long time, Russian culture was the only way of interacting with world civilizations for all the nations in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 401). The discourse concerning the identity of Armenia's foreign policy under Ter-Petrosyan's presidency can be summarized as culturally Western (European), and politically Eastern (Middle East). Armenia sought to be a bridge between East and West with a foreign policy based on universal values and pragmatic calculations.

An analysis of Ter-Petrosyan's foreign policy speeches lead to the conclusion that he attached negligible importance to identity, norms and beliefs in foreign policy, and prioritized pragmatic political and economic considerations. He was constantly striving to redefine "foes" and "friends" in Armenian collective memory. In his view, the challenges facing the country pushed historical conflicts to the background, and moved the economic and political benefits of cooperation with both Azerbaijan and Turkey to the forefront. Turkey's portrayal as a "foe" was challenged by Ter-Petrosyan, who regarded Azerbaijan and Turkey as Armenia's most natural allies.

Ter-Petrosyan saw identity and collective memory as detrimental to the country's development, and he sought to introduce rationalism and pragmatism to Armenia's foreign policy. He avoided characterizing Armenia as overly European, Caucasian or Asian, preferring to identify the country as a bridge between the East and West. There is evidence that Ter-Petrosyan's controversial positions on national and identity-related issues, especially his willingness to prioritize relationship building with neighbors over national values, led to the opposition against him and his 1998 resignation.

### **Robert Kocharyan: A shift in the European Identity narrative**

Given the unpopularity of Levon Ter-Petrosyan's vision of Armenia's foreign policy priorities and its identity, it was unlikely the country's second president, Robert Kocharyan, would adopt similar positions. Kocharyan's presidency heralded a new era of Armenian foreign policy, largely hailed as "well-balanced" He embarked on the construction of a new foreign policy identity that revolved around three core dimensions: Genocide recognition; a complementary foreign policy; and, most importantly, full-scale European integration. Kocharyan made a clear distinction between himself and his predecessor, particularly regarding national identity-related issues. He questioned the viability a foreign policy agenda that pursued "material" interests at the cost of national identity and collective memory.

In his view, Armenia should not give up on Genocide recognition for the sake of Armenian-Turkish rapprochement: "We are neighbors, and we must find a common ground, but not at the expense of our historical memory" (Esiweb.org, 2015). Putting his words into action, Kocharyan introduced the issue of the Genocide recognition as a priority of Armenia's foreign policy agenda during the UN General Assembly in September 1998, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Genocide Convention.

## **No preconditions**

Kocharyan stressed that Genocide recognition was not a precondition for normalizing relations with Turkey, underscoring that it was a moral issue, which would not include legal consequences. Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian called on Turkey to establish relations with Armenia without any preconditions, stressing that "we must talk to each other, deal with each other, visit each other, trade with each other, and do so within the framework of our own equal, sovereign identities" (MFA.am, 2002).

Kocharyan introduced an ambitious foreign policy agenda, reflected in the "complementarity" doctrine. This envisaged multivector foreign policy making, aimed at skillfully balancing core dimensions and avoiding problems in relations with major powers. Kocharyan explained: "Complementarity is based on the concept of seeking advantages by softening the contradictions of the global and regional powers, and not by deepening the differences. We are responsible for regional stability and our actions shall help solve problems, instead of creating new ones (MFA.am, 2004). It is worth noting that, from the outset, Kocharyan adopted a pro -Western (European) policy, putting a strong emphasis on Armenia's integration into European institutions.

## **A move toward the West**

In contrast to his predecessor, Kocharyan favored a broader foreign policy agenda that included both political and military rapprochement with the West. In April 1999 Kocharyan attended the celebration of NATO's fiftieth anniversary in Washington, which was branded by the leader of Armenia's Communist Party, Sergey Badalyan, as betrayal of Russia (Nt.am, 2015). In the early stages of his presidency, Kocharyan was largely perceived as a pro-European politician, who strived for European integration to increase room for maneuvering in relations with Russia.

The ruling elite tended to view the shift in the Western/European dimension of Armenia's foreign policy as its civilizational choice. Foreign Minister Oskanian declared: "There

were many questions about which path to take. ... The choice was clear. Armenians believe in the values of European enlightenment, of European civilization..." (Panarmenian.net, 2005). There was a resolve to rectify the shortcomings caused by Armenia's long isolation from Europe, and to achieve substantial progress, in terms of democracy promotion, and economic and social development. Kocharyan announced: "Armenian society, which has deep European roots, was isolated from European political, economic and legal realm because of the ideological confrontation of the 20th century... Today our goal is to comply with EU standards," (Kocharyan 2011, p. 253).

The will to move toward Europe was furthered by Armenia's membership in the Council of Europe in 2001, which Armenian society and political elites hailed as a historic advancement toward the "European civilizational realm." Oskanian expressed confidence that the European values promoted by the Council could be instrumental in tackling the mounting challenges facing the country, and the region overall, with a specific reference to the Nagorno - Karabakh conflict and Armenian-Turkish relations (MFA.am, 2000). In his speech on Armenia's joining the Council of Europe, Kocharyan also stressed the organization's perceived role in further integration into Europe: "The priorities and objectives of Armenia are in full conformity with the values and practices of Europe and its institutions. It was with this vision in mind that we tabled our application to join the Council of Europe and engaged ourselves in the long accession process. We view our membership as a crucial juncture on the road to Armenia's comprehensive integration within Europe... At last, Europe has institutionally extended its borders to where they belong. We are here to mark our own effort in enriching the sense and meaning of being European" (MFA.am, 2001).

The Kocharyan-led elite placed their faith in the European path of development, which was deemed essential for fostering large-scale political, economic, legal reforms across the country in compliance with European fundamental values of democracy and human rights. This optimism was encouraged by Armenia's inclusion in the EU's European Neighborhood Policy initiative. The EU's 2004 enlargement, which was a substantial shift in its policy towards the South Caucasus, created high hopes. It encouraged



Armenia's efforts to integrate further into European structures, which were associated with a peaceful and democratic path of development.

Armenia's inclusion in the European Neighborhood was welcomed by Kocharyan's administration, which regarded the program as essential for Armenia's homecoming to the European family. "Armenia perceives its future in its full-scale integration with the European family... the "new neighborhood" initiative will further advance our resolve to satisfy Europe's criteria, to be able to contribute and fully benefit from the cooperation between our states and nations. We walk this road with deep belief and confidence, and we appreciate your efforts to help us in that uneasy but crucial effort" (Address by Robert Kocharyan 2004).

Armenia's foreign policy principles, enshrined in the 2007 National Security Strategy, reflected the ruling elite's dialogue about identity. The development and consolidation of Armenia's relations with European structures (Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and with the European Union (EU), was considered a foreign policy priority (MFA.am, 2007). Hayk Kotanjian, a current advisor to the defense minister and one of the author's of the strategy, said: "The choice of the European direction of development is not an accidental one. It conforms to the Armenian people's deep European roots (common values of ancient Christianity, uninterrupted centuries-old historic cultural ties, an Indo-European language, widely spread Diaspora etc) and a European world outlook...Armenian-Russian relations have never been an obstacle to developing other vectors in Armenia's foreign relations, for instance-to Euro-Atlantic integration. On the contrary, Russia has also chosen the European road of development" (Kotanjian 2008, p. 500).

The Armenian political elite chose the identity-based European path of development due to the following factors. First, Armenia's firm commitment to the European value system and the resolve to create a modern European state characterized by a full-fledged democracy and free market economy. Second, the Armenian political leadership's deep conviction that European integration holds the potential to radically improve Armenia's geopolitical position by producing a breakthrough on peace and cooperation promotion in the region. The EU's commitment to reforms and development in the

region resonated deeply with Armenian society and its policy - makers. Third, there is a belief in the EU's "soft power" and its capacity to challenge hard power politics in the region by applying its rich toolbox and patterns of sustainable development and peaceful coexistence. Finally, Armenia was committed to a complementary foreign policy, by maintaining well-balanced partnerships with core regional actors. This would enable Armenia to expand its ability to maneuver and preclude it from moving deeper into the orbit of Russian influence.

### **Russia as a strategic partner**

Kocharyan never questioned the significance of Armenian-Russian relations and viewed Russia as Armenia's indispensable and strategic partner, despite his overtures to the West. In the eyes of foreign policy makers, Armenia's integration into European institutions was not at odds with the Armenian-Russian strategic partnership. This position was based on the assumption that Russia had also chosen the European path. "Russia is the most powerful state across the post-Soviet space in economic and military terms. Russia is our pivotal partner which does not preclude us from establishing new relationships with the European Union, the United States of America and Iran" (Kocharyan 2011, p. 272).

The National Security Strategy of Armenia (2007) notes, "The importance of Russia's role for the security of Armenia, the traditional friendly links between the two nations, the level of trade and economic relations, Russia's role in the Nagorno Karabakh mediation effort, as well as the presence of a significant Armenian community in Russia, all contribute to a strategic partnership" (MFA.am, 2007). The concept of strategic partnership in Kocharyan's discourse was not characterized by identity-related or cultural references, and focused chiefly on shared economic, political and military interests. The pivotal role of Armenian-Russian relations has never been questioned by the president, government, parliament and major political parties. In Armenia's foreign policy discourse, security-related references unequivocally fall in the realm of a "Russia-first" approach. All other European and Euroatlantic security

actors, whether the European Union or NATO, take a back seat to Russia and Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

There is no mention in the National Security Concept of Armenia's Caucasian identity or a reference to a common regional identity. Kocharyan tended to view ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious divisions as a potential cause for emerging political conflicts. He questioned the feasibility of the peaceful co-existence of Armenian and Azerbaijani populations because of their "ethnic incompatibility. "The Caucasus is an extremely complicated and explosive region, taking into consideration its ethnic diversity, religious mosaic, heavy historical heritage and mixture of multiple interests..." (Kocharyan 2011, p. 47).

Nevertheless, Kocharyan noted the indispensable importance of regional cooperation as a recipe for peace and stability promotion in the region. In Kocharyan's view, the key to addressing the acute hardships facing the region lies in complementary economic cooperation rather than the artificial construction of common regional identity. "Today our common challenge is to transform the Caucasus into an area of economic routes—an area of peace and stability" (Kocharyan 2011, p. 47). Kocharyan believed that regional economic cooperation in the spheres of energy and transport, was instrumental to confidence building and resolving conflicts. He saw this vision as inextricably linked to the European Union's experience of conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence: "There is confidence in Armenia that, through formulating and pursuing common interests for all the three states of the region, we will be able to surmount the present difficulties.... Europe's history and present achievements provide encouragement for this objective" (MFA.am, 2001). Foreign Minister Oskanian also pinned high hopes on the European Neighborhood policy as a viable tool for finding a way to break the deadlock obstructing dialogue and cooperation (MFA.am, 2004).

The identity of Armenia's foreign policy under Kocharyan's presidency was pro-European, notwithstanding large discrepancies between the rhetoric and the real policy, which was dominated by

pro-Russian constraints\*. The prevailing feeling of insecurity deriving from the formidable security challenges facing Armenia can explain the uneasy coexistence of the country's pro-European political choice and its strategic alliance with Russia. Nevertheless, unlike his predecessor, Kocharyan attached more importance to identity, norms and beliefs in foreign policy making. The path to European integration was viewed as a civilizational choice, given Armenia's European identity and commitment to the European value system.

### **Armenia's Foreign Policy Narrative under S. Sargysan's Presidency (2008-present)**

President Serzh Sargysan came into office in 2008 with the aim of radically improving Armenia's geopolitical position. The search for a development strategy led Sargysan to place a special emphasis on identity-related issues, particularly Armenian identity. "We should formulate and define a new Armenian identity. An identity, which should become our beacon in the new century. The new Armenian identity should be person-centered, freedom-centered, and rights-centered. An identity based on freedom and rights is the most appealing and empowering... Diversity is the key to continuity, while isolated species become extinct. The Armenian identity is an umbrella for diversity. Tolerance fortifies Armenian diversity. Are we tolerant? We should be! We have to be!" (President.am, 2008).

### **Seeking a Russian-European balance**

The underlying objective of the president's call to redefine Armenian identity was to bring it in line with the wider European identity and the prerequisites for full-scale European integration. Sargysan stressed: "The people of Armenia have made their historic and irreversible choice. Our road to becoming closer to Europe has

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\* During Kocharyan's presidency the strategic assets of Armenia's economy, especially in the energy sector were taken over by Russia.

been unique in an organic way. ... (President.am, 2011).

He unequivocally stated that Armenia's heritage, values, culture and identity make the Armenian nation an indivisible part of Europe, constituting the cornerstone of Armenia's Euro-integration policy (President.am, 2012).

Under Sargsyan's presidency, the following events determined the constraints under which foreign policy discourse evolved. First, the shift in the EU's policy towards the South Caucasus that led to the Eastern Partnership program; second, the Russian-Georgian war, which further deepened lines of conflict in the region; lastly, the intensification of the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. The Eastern Partnership, which opened up an EU Association perspective for the EU's Eastern partners, was welcomed by the Armenian political leadership, which regarded it as a crucial milestone on the path to European integration. Sargsyan hailed it as a new impetus to Armenia's European integration; it was largely regarded as a recipe for peaceful, sustainable and democratic development: "Today Europe has become a synonym of tolerance, a constructive approach, and peaceful resolution. We aspire to the Eastern Partnership to enforce that perception of Europe. We want the initiative to be successful and to prove that policies based on such a system of values are able to bring exceptional and unexpected results" (President.am, 2009).

Most Armenian political parties, the government and parliament shared Sargsyan's position on Armenia's European foreign policy identity and the necessity of adhering to the path of European integration. Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan, who also served under the former president, has consistently supported the European path of development as Armenia's civilizational choice. "The European direction of Armenia's foreign policy is a result of a reasonable choice, which is rooted in a common value system, a rich cultural and Christian heritage, and derives from our domestic agenda... Armenia is part of European civilization with its past and present, with its commitment to establish democracy, ensure the rule of law, protect human rights and fundamental freedoms," he said (Armradio.am, 2013). Sargsyan's staunch opponent – Ter-Petrosyan, who was Armenia's former president and current leader of the opposition Armenian National Congress (ANC) - did not question

the path to European integration. He agreed it provided the best chance at free and democratic development (Ter-Petrosyan appeals 2008).<sup>21</sup>

The Armenian president, along with other leading officials, repeatedly reiterated Armenia's commitment to the European path of development, despite close ties with Russia. "Today, the issue of becoming a full member of the European Union is not yet on our foreign policy agenda. However I would like to repeat that the European rules of the game and European standards must take root in our country because these are high and time-tested standards... There is no discrepancy between this reality and Armenia's being a CIS and CSTO member, and Russia's strategic partner. Our close and multifaceted, I would say in many instances exemplary, cooperation with the Russian Federation does not contradict these values, which are proclaimed by Russia itself. Furthermore, I am confident that our friends – Russia, the West, and all others, will be only happy for our success" (President.am, 2010).

Relations with Russia have created obstacles for Armenia's EU Association aspirations, however. Russia viewed Armenia's closer relations with the EU as hostile to its own interests, and moved to block Yerevan from intensifying ties with Brussels by maneuvering the country to join the Russian-led Eurasian Customs Union, instead of signing the EU Association Agreement. (Emerson and Kostanyan, 2013). The notion of complementarity commits Armenia to a policy that seeks to simultaneously develop relations with all states in the region and with states with interests in the region. The notion of "engagement" commits Armenia to active involvement in both regional and international integration as an equal partner. "Armenia's strategic partnership with Russia; its adoption of a European model of development; its mutually beneficial cooperation with Iran and the United States; membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); and the intensification of its cooperation with the NATO alliance all contribute to the consolidation of the potential of

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<sup>21</sup> Ter-Petrosyan did condemn Sargsyan for Armenia's abrupt move away from the EU Association Agreement to Russian-led Customs Union, however, even if he said this choice was inevitable (Azatutyun.am, 2013).

Armenia's policy of complementarity," (MFA.am, 2007).

To what extent is Armenia capable of remaining committed to its identity-driven European path of development, while deepening strategic security partnership with Russia. Consistent with his predecessor, Sargsyan has never questioned the vital importance of the Armenian-Russian strategic partnership, which is viewed as fundamental to improving national security. Even though no identity-related reference has been attributed to the Armenian-Russian partnership, it is viewed as the most important and indispensable factor for the maintenance of stability and security in the South Caucasus: "The Armenian-Russian strategic partnership will remain the pivot of Armenia's security, which through the twenty years of independence has proved its viability. Within this context, we attach the utmost importance to our membership to the Collective Security Treaty Organization" (President.am, 2013).

Armenia's European identity and pursuit of European integration, with a focus on Armenia-EU and Armenia-NATO rapprochement, are outweighed by the "Russia-first" approach. Armenian society, government and most Armenian political parties broadly share this attitude. Political parties have not opposed Armenia's membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union; rather they defend the decision by saying that the acute regional challenges facing the country lead to the bolstering of Armenia's strategic partnership with its 'best friend' and security provider, Russia, in all possible spheres (Armenianow.com, 2013). Sargsyan, along with other high-ranking officials, justifies Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union chiefly in terms of its security concerns.

This is particularly important, given several core facts. First, there is an Armenia-Russia comprehensive security partnership, and Armenia's membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Shortly before Armenia unexpectedly opted for the Eurasian Union rather than signing the EU Association Agreement 2013, Russia intensified military cooperation with Azerbaijan by supplying it with \$4 billion worth of military equipment (Eurasianet.org, 2013). This sent ripples of apprehension through Armenia and significantly influenced its choice of the EEU. Prior to Armenia's move towards the EEU, Russia increased gas prices for

Armenia by 50 percent in April 2013. The gas price was subsequently reduced once Armenia decided to join the EEU. Armenian Energy Minister Armen Movsisyan stated outright that the country's Eurasian choice shields it from gas price hikes (Asbarez.com, 2013).

Russia is the main external trade partner of Armenia, buying 20 per cent of Armenian exports and is the source of 70 per cent of remittances (Worldbank.org, 2015). Russia also maintains a lead in the realm of foreign investments in Armenia. Finally, Russia is home to more than 2.5 million Armenian migrants, who could be subjected to severe hardships in case of Armenia's 'non-Russian' foreign policy options (Emerson and Kostanyan, 2013, p. 2).

### **The South Caucasus: a "broken region?"**

In Sargsyan's administration, regional identity is not given any particular emphasis in the foreign policy discourse. Much like their predecessors, Sargsyan and Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian tended to regard the South Caucasus as a political and-economic, rather than cultural, space with a common regional identity. The South Caucasus has been broadly viewed as a complex and volatile region, which is prone to acute interethnic, political and economic conflicts. "If we look back at our history, it becomes obvious that superpowers and empires historically had the ambition to establish their hegemony over this part of the world. It is also true today. The contemporary South Caucasus is a model of the multi-polarity of the world. It is one of the regions where there are seemingly unyielding dividing lines, where the internationally recognized political map is very different from the real one, where stability is extremely vulnerable, and the re-establishment of peace requires joint and concentrated titanic efforts" (President.am, 2009).

The core characteristics of the South Caucasus in Armenia's foreign policy discourse are linked to the notions of a "broken region," "transportation corridor," and a "route for energy export and transit." However, the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity of the region is also associated with the possibilities of interethnic dialogue and meaningful cultural interactions, rather than challenges and identity-related conflicts. "Certainly, there are not too



many places in the world where one can find such a diversity of nations, ethnic groups, cultures, religions and civilizations. All of it combined constitutes our real wealth. We should be able to rise and move forward, working not against this diversity or rejecting each other but rather complementing and mutually enriching each other – just like other European states have done and continue to do so" (President.am, 2010).

In Sargsyan's view, the countries of the South Caucasus have to come up with the common values that are essential to peaceful co-existence and lasting peace: "I am confident that we can have a secure and developing region exclusively through a common system of values. Our region really needs to sow the seeds of understanding common values, developing the security agenda, and creating an integrated economy, particularly considering the peculiarities of our region and multiplicity of the existing challenges" (President.am, 2012). Unsurprisingly, the president pinned high hopes on the EU's involvement in the South Caucasus, which was perceived as a force capable of promoting fundamental European values, applying European patterns of peaceful co-existence in the region. "We attach importance to EU's involvement in Armenia and South Caucasus not only because the EU is a global player, but first of all because it is the best model of nations' peaceful, secure and sustainable development. Our vision of the full-fledged development of the South Caucasus is anchored in the values and understanding that made Europe's success possible" (President.am, 2012).

There is no marked reference to regional identity, but Georgia occupies a privileged position among Armenia's "special" friends in its foreign policy discourse. Armenia is under a double blockade, which makes Georgia the main gateway for its communication with the world. Georgia is also home to a large Armenian community, mostly living in the southern Georgian region of Samtskhe-Javakheti. Sargsyan called the bilateral relationship with Georgia "brotherly," based on the long-standing experience of peaceful coexistence and deep ties between the two countries. (President.am, 2015). Sargsyan declared: "The consistent reinforcement of the Armenian-Georgian partnership is one of the priorities of Armenia's foreign policy. The fragile stability and peace in the South Caucasus region greatly depend on the effectiveness and firmness of

Armenian-Georgian cooperation." (President.am, 2014) The National Security Strategy attaches great importance to Georgia's stable and secure development, considering it essential for Armenia because of the vital transit links across Georgia (MFA.am, 2007). In the hostile environment prevalent in the South Caucasus, Armenia is bound to regard Georgia as indispensable friend and to downplay issues that could impair bilateral relations.

### **Iran as partner**

In Armenia's foreign policy discourse, Iran is perceived as a reliable partner, which has gained the status of friend. The National Security Strategy attaches critical importance to the consistent reinforcement of traditional neighborly relations with Iran due to shared borders, historic and cultural ties, and mutual economic interests. President Sargsyan has repeatedly expressed his appreciation to Iran for its balanced position towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as its friendly policy towards the Armenian community in Iran and its mindfulness of the Armenian cultural heritage in its territory. He has underlined the fact that Iran willingly supported Armenia and the Armenians in times of trouble, given that some Genocide survivors found refuge in Iran (President.am, 2009). Iran is viewed as a crucial economic and trade partner.

European identity is at the core of Armenia's narrative foreign policy identity. European integration heralds Armenia's homecoming to European civilization and cultural space. Europe is associated with peace, freedom, tolerance, full-fledged democracy and rule of law. In contrast to the first Armenian president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who believed Armenia was part of Middle Eastern civilization, his successors regarded Armenia as a European country due to its identity, beliefs and culture. Both Kocharyan and Sargsyan prioritized identity, norms and beliefs in foreign policy making. Yet, the security challenges facing the country have overshadowed Armenia's European identity, and a "Russia first" approach in foreign and security policy has dominated the discourse.

Armenia is limited in its ability to choose "friends" and select

its own strategic partnerships, due to its size and regional conflicts. There are substantial differences between the country's European foreign policy identity and Russian-led security policy constraints. Russia is viewed as Armenia's 'best friend', while the Armenian-Russian strategic partnership is seen as the main provider of Armenia's national security. Armenia's foreign policy is extremely vulnerable to Russian pressure.

Even though the term "friend" is ubiquitous in official discourse. The country's "best friend" is Russia, and the EU is the most "desired" partner. Georgia and Iran are regarded as essential partners and brotherly nations. They are critically important in the face of the double blockade imposed on Armenia by neighboring Azerbaijan and Turkey. A scrutiny of Armenia's foreign policy discourse supports the theory that acute regional constraints, rather than identity-related drivers, have led Armenia to view Georgia and Iran as 'friends'. There is also evidence suggesting that, in addition to their geographical vicinity and security relations, several other factors have caused Armenia to view these countries as friends in its foreign policy. These include the need for a balanced approach to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement; the presence of an Armenian Diaspora, the importance of bilateral relations; and the intensity of economic and trade relations.

### **The Conception of "The Other" in Armenian Foreign Policy Discourse**

Conventional wisdom presumes that the evocation of "the other" in a state's foreign policy discourse is indicative of the core characteristics of its foreign policy identity. "The other" is largely deemed a symbol in the definition of who "we" are. A discourse analysis of the conceptions of "the other" in the policies and speeches of Armenian presidents is indicative of the major ups and downs in the country's relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey over the past two decades. This section scrutinizes the core characteristics attributed to "the other," examining their identity-related and situational contexts.

The path to Armenia's independence was inherently linked to the national movement and Nagorno-Karabakh's self-determination.

The devastating war with Azerbaijan, coupled with the double blockade imposed on Armenia, created formidable challenges to the newly independent state. Essentially, the Nagorno-Karabakh movement was instrumental in distinguishing foes and friends in Armenian political thinking and public consciousness. Given both historical conflicts and new hostilities, both Turkey and Azerbaijan were unequivocally identified as "the other" in the presidents' speeches and in foreign policy documents – anti-Armenian, hostile, "antagonistic" and belligerent.

Clearly, independence catalyzed a substantial transformation across the country, extending to national identity-related issues, reframing ideas of traditional "foes" and "friends." Russia's traditional role as Armenia's "savior" in Armenian strategic thinking was challenged in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet Union. The country's anti-Russian political and social sentiments started to wane shortly after the restoration of independent statehood, replaced by deep-rooted anti-Turkish and anti-Azerbaijani ideas. In Armenian public consciousness, Turkey and Azerbaijan are largely perceived as the two parts of an indivisible whole, rather than two independent entities.

Turkey's perception as a historical foe in Armenian collective memory was reinforced following the Turkish blockade of the country, a gesture of solidarity with Azerbaijan. In an attempt to alleviate the severe suffering caused by the economic blockade and transition, the ruling elite was consistently striving to prepare ground for an Armenian-Turkish rapprochement.

The discourse analysis of Armenia's foreign policy from 1991-1998 indicates that despite the challenges facing Armenia due to the blockade by Turkey, there was no outright anti-Turkish rhetoric. To this end, it attempted to transform Turkey from a historical foe to an indispensable neighbor. Furthermore, Turkey's core characteristics in Ter-Petrosyan's discourse are intimately linked to the notion of "friend" rather than that of "foe." Ter-Petrosyan refrained from bringing up issues concerning Genocide recognition or its consequences, seeing them as detrimental to Armenian-Turkish rapprochement.

The most frequently used terms in his speeches on Turkey were: "natural ally," "economic partner," "vital bridge," "indispensable

neighbor." (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, pp. 553-554). In Ter-Petrosyan's view, Turkey's historical depiction as a hostile enemy in Armenian collective memory had to be overcome in order to prepare society for dialogue and mutual understanding. He declared: "As neighboring states, Armenia and Turkey have to forge mutually beneficial economic ties and gradually overcome historical conflicts, rebuild confidence between Armenian and Turkish societies via the establishment of friendly relations... this obliges each party to display political will and moral attitude" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 48):

The Armenian president tended to attribute the lack of progress in Armenian-Turkish relations to Azerbaijan's aggressive stance against any sort of normalization: "We stand ready to establish relations without any preconditions right away... Turkey does not reportedly oppose this but seems to have been fallen into a trap which it set by linking the improvement of its relations with Armenia to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and in particular to the resolution of Nagorno - Karabakh conflict" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 595):

Ter-Petrosyan avoided taking a harsh position on Azerbaijan since he believed that the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno - Karabakh conflict was essential for Armenia's national interests and regional cooperation. Ter-Petrosyan tended to interpret the conflict as a Kremlin-led conspiracy against two nations, rather than a manifestation of ethno-political antagonism stemming from racial, cultural and religious divisions: "There is no ethnic, racial, national or religious factor behind the conflict...the conflict itself has been artificially incited and retained by colonial nation [Russia]. Without the Kremlin's interference, Armenia and Azerbaijan would find a common language... If there was a democratic government in Azerbaijan that was open to dialogue, any sort of mediation would be rendered obsolete" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 197).

President Ter-Petrosyan was adhering to the "democratic peace" theory, which believes democracy promotion is essential to breaking the impasse in the "frozen" conflict. "I am confident that, once we have a fair settlement for the Karabakh conflict, our societies will quickly rediscover the devices necessary to retain the traditions of peaceful co-existence" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 196). Notwithstanding the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, Armenia's foreign policy discourse was free of rhetoric that propagated

contempt against Azerbaijan. Ter-Petrosyan made a clear distinction between the Azerbaijani state and society, contending that the core hindrance to Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute resolution was the deficit of democracy in Azerbaijan and its unwillingness to remain committed to a negotiated settlement. Nevertheless, Ter-Petrosyan's discourse tended to be more negative than positive about Azerbaijan; there was a blurred line between the notions of "friend" and "foe."

Ter-Petrosyan criticized Baku's policy, which in his view, used the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to deflect attention from domestic economic, political and social shortcomings (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 194). The core conceptions of Azerbaijan in Armenia's foreign policy discourse under Ter-Petrosyan's presidency were reflected in the following terms: "destructive," "belligerent," "non-democratic," "natural ally," "neighboring partner," etc.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was seen as the major obstacle to the rapprochement with "natural allies," Azerbaijan and Turkey. The ruling elite stressed the potential economic significance of Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, claiming that historical conflict and identity-related constraints must come second to economic interests. In Ter-Petrosyan's view "Karabakh's foe is the international community rather than Azerbaijan" (Ter-Petrosyan 2006, p. 630). Nevertheless, his efforts at redefining Azerbaijan and Turkey in Armenian strategic thinking beyond the notion of "the other" and reconciling collective memory with economic considerations proved futile. His "pro-Turkish" and "pro-Azerbaijani" views, especially the emphasis on concessions in the NKR conflict resolution in exchange for lifting the blockade, were at odds with widely held views among the public. This ultimately resulted in his resignation in 1998.

Table 1: The portrayal of "the other" under Levon Ter-Petrosyan's presidency (1991-1998).

The other	Discourse
Soviet Union (Russia)	Chauvinistic; Imperial
Azerbaijan	Non-democratic; Destructive; Natural ally
Turkey	Traditional foe (given the Armenian Genocide); Indispensable neighbor; Vital bridge

### **The "Other" Under Robert Kocharyan's Presidency (1998-2008)**

The Armenian government's positions toward Azerbaijan and Turkey in foreign policy discourse hardened throughout Robert Kocharyan's presidency. He declared in 2015: "After 10 years of a re-evaluation of our approach, now I think that it was politically wrong [to make concessions]. It gave no results. And what happened in 1998-2000 regarding the toughening of the position towards Turkey was logical as we got nothing from our concessions..." (Robert Kocharyan 2015).

In speeches by Kocharyan, Turkey is fiercely condemned for subjecting Armenia to an unlawful blockade, which hindered Armenia's advancement toward European integration and steady development. Yet, despite the historical conflict and the Turkish blockade, there was a tendency to regard Turkey as an important neighbor that could play a crucial role in regional stability if it reversed its policy toward Armenia. "History and geography have thrown us together, we are neighbors... some distance between our two countries might have allowed us to put distance between our past and our future. But we have no such luxury. There is no space, no cushion, between us" (MFA.am, 2002). The National Security Strategy states: "The absence of normalized relations adversely affects the stability of the region... The normalization of Armenian-

Turkish relations would lower the possibility of new dividing lines emerging in the region and would help to create a more conducive environment for the final settlement of the Nagorno- Karabakh conflict" (MFA.am, 2007).

Throughout Kocharyan's presidency, Yerevan repeatedly expressed its readiness to bypass the issue of Genocide recognition in order break the impasse in the Armenian-Turkish relationship. The National Security Strategy of Armenia states:"Armenia has long advocated the establishment of diplomatic relations without any precondition and will continue its efforts to surmount the obstacles and improve the bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey" (MFA.am, 2007). The lack of any tangible progress in normalization was attributed to Ankara's aggressive policy. When asked about the main obstacles to the normalization of bilateral relations, Foreign Minister Oskanian was quick to cite Turkey's stance on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict: "The establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey or the complete re-opening of the border before the conflict's final settlement is not probable... the Karabakh issue has become a precondition for normalizing relations" (MFA.am, 2002). The core characteristics of Turkey in foreign policy discourse under Kocharyan are linked to contrary notions of "important neighbor" and "historical foe," characterized by "non-European policy" and "belligerent rhetoric."

Regarding Azerbaijan, Armenia's foreign policy makers started out on a positive note, placing strong faith in peaceful negotiations. Initially, Kocharyan abstained from adopting a harsh position toward Azerbaijan, calling on the latter to tone down its ambitions and resume negotiations over a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno - Karabakh conflict without preconditions. (Kocharyan 2011, p. 19). In the president's view, a breakthrough in the conflict settlement could be achieved only via intensified and persistent efforts at moving beyond the deep-rooted hostilities. Like his predecessor, Kocharyan invariably stressed that, despite Azerbaijan's efforts at presenting the conflict in religious and cultural realm in order to win the Muslim world's support, there is no religious or cultural reason behind the conflict (Kocharyan 2011, p. 141). Nevertheless, over time he started to respond to Azerbaijan's propaganda and threats to resume war against Armenia. A new line



in Yerevan's foreign policy discourse regarded Azerbaijan as an "aggressor" "The war of 1992-1994 was precipitated by the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijani authorities seeking to conquer the territory of Nagorno - Karabakh through ethnic cleansing...the conflict settlement should build upon its essence rather than Azerbaijan's build-up stemming from oil dollars. That is a recipe for confrontation rather than compromise," (Kocharyan 2011, p. 247).

Guided by European patterns of conflict settlement, Armenian foreign policy makers believed intensified interaction between Armenia and Azerbaijan would be instrumental in breaking the impasse: "The history of EU formation indicates the advantages of regional cooperation as a path to prosperity and stability...Lack of regional cooperation is one of the core impediments to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement. Armenia believes in the possibility of conflict settlement through regional cooperation, whereas Azerbaijan rules out the possibility of cooperation unless the conflict is settled," (Kocharyan 2011, p. 255). Kocharyan began to question the ethnic compatibility of Armenians and Azerbaijanis: "The anti-Armenian pogroms (in 1988 in Sumgait and in 1990 in Baku) have shown that Armenians and Azerbaijanis are ethnically incompatible. People who have lived through a genocide cannot allow it to repeat itself," (reliefweb.int, 2003).

The parties have drifted further apart during President Aliyev's presidency. The nadir came when Azerbaijani Army lieutenant, Ramil Safarov, killed 26-year-old Armenian officer, Lieutenant Gurgen Margaryan in his sleep, during a special NATO-backed course in Budapest on February 19, 2004. Safarov was subsequently hailed as a hero in Azerbaijan, gaining Aliyev's explicit support (Washingtonpost.com, 2004). In statements following the incident, Kocharyan emphasized that Azerbaijan's hostility left little room for optimism in regards to peaceful conflict resolution. The murder widened the conflict, and consolidated anti-Azerbaijani sentiments across Armenian society. The portrayal of "the other" became increasingly savage. President Kocharyan said "Armenian society would never glorify an axe-murderer decapitating a human being who is asleep. I am confident that in such a psychological condition a society cannot succeed..." (Kocharyan 2011, p. 297).

The National Security Strategy of Armenia stresses the need for conflict transformation, referring to Azerbaijan's policy as detrimental to conflict settlement and regional cooperation: "Azerbaijan has adopted a policy aimed at the exclusion of Armenia from all projects of regional cooperation. Azerbaijan continuously refuses to open its communication routes with Armenia and denies all Armenian and international initiatives to engage in bilateral cooperation in an attempt to exert pressure on Armenia regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Armenia believes that bilateral and regional cooperation could build confidence and have a serious positive impact on the overall situation. Armenia will continue its confidence building efforts and to this end will encourage cooperation, contacts and visits on every level," (MFA.am, 2007).

To sum up, unlike his predecessor, Kocharyan adopted a harsher position *vis-à-vis* Turkey invariably stressing that Armenia was not going to ignore the history. Yet Kocharyan abstained from putting preconditions on the establishment of bilateral relations, which he believed were essential for Armenia's eventual European integration. In Kocharyan and Oskanian's view, the normalization of bilateral relations was prevented by Azerbaijan's belligerent position *vis-à-vis* Armenia, which tied all regional cooperation initiatives to the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The accumulated evidence prompted Kocharyan to state that peaceful co-existence was unfeasible. The core characteristics of Azerbaijan and Turkey in Armenia's foreign policy under Kocharyan's presidency revolved around the notions "belligerent," "bellicose," "destructive," "ethnically incompatible," and "aggressive."

Table 2: The portrayal of "the other" under Robert Kocharyan's presidency (1998-2008).

The other	Discourse
Azerbaijan	Aggressive; ethnically incompatible; destructive; (uncommitted to a negotiated outcome to the conflict); bellicose; impediment to regional cooperation

Turkey	Traditional foe unwilling to encounter the past; Impediment to Armenia's sustainable development; Obstacle to Armenia's European integration;
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### **The “Other” Under Serzh Sargsyan’s Presidency (2008-present)**

The outset of Serzh Sargsyan’s presidency coincided with large-scale geopolitical developments in the South Caucasus, including the Five Day War fought between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. The unfreezing of "frozen" conflicts sent ripples of apprehension through Armenia at the possibility of a "spill-over" of instability into the country. To mitigate possible risks, Sargsyan expressed the political will to move beyond deep-rooted hostilities and identify the means for peaceful co-existence with Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Sargsyan placed special emphasis on redefining Armenia’s general and foreign policy identities, a process seen as essential to achieving a breakthrough in regional cooperation: "We should formulate and define a new Armenian identity, an identity that should become our beacon in the new century." (President.am, 2008) The call implicitly stressed the necessity to resolve the Armenian-Turkish conflict and turn the page on the long-stalled relations between the two countries. The Turkish notions of "zero-problems with neighbors" and "rhythmic diplomacy" seemed to reflect Ankara’s new position, particularly concerning the normalization of Armenian - Turkish relations, which were previously perceived as a "red line" issue. This warming received a further impetus from Ankara’s 2008 proposal to establish the "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform." The new developments were expressed in Sargsyan’s foreign policy discourse, characterized by a strong emphasis on the notions of a united Caucasus and Armenian-Turkish rapprochement.

Sargsyan declared: “I believe that the August (2008) events have made it clear for everyone how tense the situation in the

Caucasus actually is, and how serious the challenges and threats are (President.am, 2009). He attached critical importance to regional cooperation as a recipe for addressing these new challenges (President.am, 2008). Armenian-Turkish rapprochement was placed at the heart of the renewed regional policy: "I truly believe that the time has come to solve problems in Armenian-Turkish relations" (President.am, 2008). To bring these visions to fruition, Sargsyan invited the Turkish president to visit Armenia on September 6 2008 to watch the World Cup qualifying match between Armenia and Turkey. Abdullah Gül's historical visit to Yerevan, coupled with Sargsyan's commitment to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey without setting pre-conditions, profoundly challenged the status-quo.

All subsequent developments and statements appeared to support the establishment of diplomatic relations within a very short time. The "roadmap" for normalizing relations was finalized in April 2009 and on October 10, the two countries' foreign ministers signed the "Protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey" and a "Protocol on the development of relations between of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey." The ratification of the protocols seemed to be just a matter of time, given the parties strong rhetoric supporting the end to the deadlock. Regrettably, the reality shaped up differently and, shortly after signing them, Turkey backtracked on its commitment to establishing relations with Armenia without setting preconditions (Kardas, 2011).

The conciliatory policy spotlighted many identity-related obstacles to the establishment of bilateral relations. From the outset, Armenian-Turkish rapprochement sparked political and public debates in Armenia. The nationalist party Dashnaktsutyun pulled out of the ruling coalition in protest over the talks. The party harshly criticized Sargsyan's conciliatory policy towards Turkey, in particular, the normalization "roadmap", which it believed did not reciprocate Armenia's concessions. Dashnaktsutyun expressed deep concerns over the possible preconditions imposed on Armenia by Ankara, referring to the fact that Turkey had not lifted the economic blockade (Azatutyun.am, 2009). Armenians in the Diaspora –the descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors –viewed Sargsyan's

conciliatory policy towards Turkey as a "betrayal". To reduce widespread anxieties and clarify the process, the president went on a pan-Armenian tour to major Armenian communities. He repeatedly emphasized that the process would not jeopardize the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide and was not dependent upon the settlement of the Nagorno - Karabakh conflict through unacceptable concessions (President.am, 2009).

Notwithstanding this intensified effort to break the deadlock, over time other obstacles came to the light. Specifically, Turkey proved incapable of resisting Azerbaijan's staunch opposition to Armenian-Turkish conciliation. Sargsyan suspended the procedure of ratifying the Protocols (President.am, 2010). Following the failed process, Sargsyan toughened his position on Turkey: "The policy of "zero problems" with neighbors yielded zero results. That occurred because Turkey is trying to solve all problems with neighbors at the expense of those very neighbors" (President.am, 2013).

The failed outreach had deep repercussions with Armenian society, reinforcing fears that Turkey's imperial nature was unchanged. Sargsyan's discourse expressed this idea clearly, when he branded Turkey's regional policy as a vivid manifestation of a "New Ottomanism.": "What did the Ottoman Empire bring to the peoples under its yoke other than massacres, oppression, and tyranny? Does anyone miss Ottomanism, or support a reason to deliver a "New Ottomanism" (President.am, 2013)? Foreign Minister Nalbandian questioned Turkey's adherence to "zero problem with neighbors", stressing the disconnect between its rhetoric and policy: "Turkey pretends that all problems in the region must have a "comprehensive solution" once and for all. This is a beautiful phrase, but how realistic is it? It is mere rhetoric, all words and no performance... It seems we speak in different languages. On the one hand, the Turkish leaders pretend that they always respect the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept), but on the other hand, they refrain from ratifying and implementing the agreements signed by themselves in Zurich" (Wsj.com, 2010).

Turkey's withdrawal from the protocols eroded Armenian confidence in Turkey and further hardened the view of Turkey as an unreliable and unpredictable neighbor which pursued anti-Armenian policies. "To hell with you, ratification," (President.am, 2014). This

crude phrase, which Sargsyan delivered to Ankara at the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly on September 24, 2014, is indicative of the difficulties that his position towards Turkey has undergone throughout his tenure. On February 16, 2015 the president sent an official letter to the Chairman of the National Assembly Galust Sahakyan to recall the Armenian-Turkey protocols from parliament (Civilnet.am, 2015). In essence, Sargsyan's initial attempts at redefining Armenia's foreign policy identity to bring it in line with Armenian-Turkish rapprochement proved futile. Subsequently, the terms "Ottoman," "destructive," "belligerent" and "unreliable" became the core characteristics of Turkey in Armenia's foreign policy discourse.

### **Azerbaijan in Armenia's Foreign Policy Discourse (2008-present)**

From the very outset of his presidency, Sargsyan stressed the necessity of political will in achieving a breakthrough in Armenian-Azerbaijan relations. Armenian foreign policy makers have consistently stressed that Azerbaijan's anti-Armenian propaganda, coupled with the full-blown arms race between the two countries, doomed initiatives for regional cooperation and conflict settlement to failure. This disappointment particularly applies to the EU's peace-oriented Eastern Partnership. Sargsyan questioned the viability of its regional cooperation component, noting that Azerbaijan's resolve to extort unilateral concessions from Armenia render it meaningless. In his view, there is no common ground between Armenia and Azerbaijan due to Baku's aggressive and uncompromising policy. "The Eastern Partnership had some problems in its formation period yet... I still do not understand the criterion of grouping Armenia and Azerbaijan into one partnership – different opportunities, different approaches, different goals – and this is the reason that this component did not work" (President.am, 2014).

Nevertheless, unlike his predecessor, Sargsyan has utterly rejected the identity-based notions of ethnic incompatibility between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. He has made a clear distinction between Azerbaijani state and society, expressing a hope that the

people of Azerbaijan or a significant percentage of them do not endorse state-run Armenia-phobic propaganda: "I am confident that our peoples will have a better future than the one contemplated by some leaders who preach hatred and war... I do not consider the people of Azerbaijan to be the enemy of the Armenian people. We are capable of respectfully resolving our disagreements and peacefully co-existing as neighbors" (President.am, 2013).

Armenian foreign policy makers - President Sargsyan and Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian - have fiercely criticized speculations about the religious nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, asserting that any attempt to package the dispute in a religious context is not constructive. Nalbandian has repeatedly condemned Baku for propagating ethnic contempt against Armenians. In Armenia's foreign policy discourse, Azerbaijan is largely characterized as Armenia-phobic and uncompromising. Despite the commitment by both Armenia and Azerbaijan to find a compromise settlement for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, ample evidence indicates there are misconceptions about the very term of "compromise." President Sargsyan's statement at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly on September 29, 2015, in addition to his address at the 31st Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie on October 10, 2015, is indicative. "I shall note that aggressive policy pursued by Azerbaijan resulted in the absence of any meaningful progress of negotiations for the conflict settlement, and the situation drifts toward increasing tensions. The dictatorial regime of the country made disgraceful repression an instrument to strangle the people's anger ... It is obvious to us that the Azerbaijani leadership has irreversibly lost both the sense of reality and all norms of human conduct (President.am, 2015).

The President expressed his frustration: "Unfortunately, there is currently a huge gap between the perceptions of the Azerbaijani authorities and the norms accepted by the civilized world. While the civilized world is creating the necessary conditions for a people's exercise of their right to self-determination, Azerbaijan, blinded by its oil revenues, is trying in all possible ways to impose its views on not only Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, but also on the mediator countries..." (President.am, 2015).

In Armenia's foreign policy discourse, Azerbaijan is largely

associated with the terms "non democratic," "uncompromising," "belligerent," "bellicose," "destructive," and "Armeneophobic": "Coercion, violence, terror, war; these are our opponent's notions of reality. They are trying to impose upon us the same notions they force on their own people. We have rejected these terms, and will never accept them. We are creating a different reality: economic growth, the rule of law, strengthening of democracy. The word "Armenia" must first of all entail these notions" (Statement by President 2013).

Armenia's foreign policy discourse vis-à-vis "the other" has undergone considerable changes throughout Sargsyan's presidency. Unrealized expectations for reconciliation with Turkey led Yerevan to toughen its positions, which shifted from optimistic to critical. The latter was precipitated by Azerbaijan's rhetoric and aggressive policy toward Armenia, as well as the failure to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey without setting preconditions.

Table 3: The portrayal of "the other" under Serzh Sargsyan's presidency (2008-present).

The other	Discourse
Azerbaijan (elite)	Armenia-phobic; Bellicose; Aggressive; Dictatorial; Destructive, (uncommitted to a negotiated outcome to the conflict), Non-European (misperceived the essence of European integration)
Turkey (elite)	Unreliable; Imperial (referring to New Ottomanism); Obstacle to Armenia's European integration; Belligerent and destructive

An analysis of Armenia's foreign policy discourse shows that although all three presidents attached varying degrees of importance to identity, norms and beliefs in foreign policy making, each of them advocated foreign policy decisions that are not negatively influenced by identity-related conceptions. This is supported by Armenian foreign policy makers' attitudes to Genocide recognition. Even though Kocharyan touched on the issue of recognition, he - like his



predecessor and his successor - did not view it as a precondition for the establishment Armenian-Turkish relations. In contrast to Ter-Petrosyan, who rejected the idea of Azerbaijan and Turkey as "the other", and considered them Armenia's natural allies, both Kocharyan and Sargsyan regarded Azerbaijan as Armenia's fiercest foe, which is entirely responsible for suffering in Nagorno Karabakh. In their view, Turkey should be condemned for subjecting Armenia to a blockade and refusing to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Consequently, Turkey has been regarded as a formidable obstacle to Armenia's European integration and its sustainable development. The failure to normalize Armenian-Turkish relations hardened Sargsyan's position on Turkey. He likened Turkey's destructive policy to its Ottoman traditions, contending that Ottoman Turkey had in fact remained unchanged.

In Armenia's foreign policy discourse, "the other" - Azerbaijan and Turkey - are not characterized by ethnic, religious and cultural notions. Rather they are regarded as belligerent, destructive, non-democratic, bellicose, and aggressive. Kocharyan once went so far as to assert that Armenians and Azerbaijanis are ethnically incompatible.

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## **THE ARMENIAN POLITICAL ELITE'S APPROACHES AND BELIEFS IN FOREIGN POLICY**

### **Introduction**

Serious geopolitical events in the South Caucasus have traditionally prompted Armenia to seek out alternative foreign policy strategies. For example, the Armenian political elite started making more diplomatic initiatives with its neighbors following the Georgia-Russia war in 2008. Another change in policy occurred in 2013: after four years of difficult negotiations with the EU,<sup>22</sup> Armenia's political elite decided to join the Eurasian Economic Union<sup>23</sup> (EAEU), a Moscow-led project meant to counterbalance the European Union<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Negotiations for Armenia's associate membership in the EU started on July 19, 2010. An Associate Membership Agreement assumed close ties between Armenia and the EU in fields of improving democracy, human rights, institutional amendments, economy, energy issues, etc.

<sup>23</sup> Armenia became a full member of the EAEU on Jan 2, 2015. Its share in distributed customs duties from imports to the EAEU is 1.13%. By preliminary data, Armenia will receive about \$250 million in 2015. EAEU customs taxes on a range of goods, particularly, cars, drugs and essential goods, will be applied in Armenia a year after accession. The aggregate volume of economy of the EAEU member states is more than \$2 trillion. The agreement implies freedom of movement of commodities, services, capital and workforce, implementation of a coordinated or single policy in economic sectors stipulated by the agreement and international agreements within the EAEU. See President's interview with <Russia 24> TV, <http://news.am/arm/videos/1541.html>

<sup>24</sup> On September 4, 2013, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan abruptly announced the decision to join the Eurasian Customs Union (which has now morphed into the Eurasian Economic Union) following a visit to Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin. This decision occurred after almost four years of negotiations with the European Union to sign the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, which was to have been initiated in Vilnius in November 2013. This decision completely derailed Armenia's foreign policy track, which many hoped

This analysis looks at how the Armenian political elite view the country's foreign policy. Its findings are based on politicians' responses in 50 in-depth interviews, as well as previous reports on their positions and their public comments concerning Armenia's foreign affairs.

Our team conducted qualitative surveys to illustrate the position of Armenian party leadership on foreign policy. Each group of respondents (decision-making centers, political party leadership, experts, and Diaspora and NGO sector representatives) answered questions regarding specific political issues, as well as general trends.

The questions given to policy experts and party leaders consisted of six main parts regarding national security issues; national identity impact on foreign policy; the process of establishing post-Soviet (independent) Armenia's bilateral and international relations with its neighbors; regional and global powers; the influence of the Armenian Genocide on Armenian state policy and leadership political decisions.

In addition, we analyzed the position of the six leading parliamentary parties on relations with neighbors; with major world powers; military and economic alliances; the Diaspora; and their views on Armenian identity. We also discussed Armenian parliamentary parties' changing beliefs—their flexible stance towards the ruling party's "multidimensional diplomacy"—and its impact on policy.

This report seeks to answer several questions: How do political parties characterize external actors? How are they viewed — as friends, allies, or enemies? What kind of relations do members of political parties have between themselves and others? How can foreign policy be interpreted through these perceptions? The answers that emerged from the interviews reveal the relationship between Armenian parliamentary forces' position, and public attitudes. It is possible to categorize the perceptions of MPs toward neighbors, regional, and global powers into three groups. We classify them as "Positive/Friends/Allies", "Negative/Enemies" and/or "Neutral". Taking into consideration the fact that the positions and attitudes of

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would have elevated standards in the country and brought them into line with European norms and values.

political parties are fluid, this report examines the position of every party on each issue - on neighbors, on regional or mega-treaties, on alliances and on major world powers.

### **Background on Armenian political parties' foreign policy**

Foreign policy programs are often a major part of pre-election periods and election campaigns for Armenia's major political parties. Six political parties won seats in the 2012 National Assembly elections<sup>25</sup>. The political map changed following the 2013 presidential elections, however. Former coalitional partners – the ruling Republican party (RPA), and its two allies, the Rule of Law and Prosperous Armenia parties – announced a political divorce, and the Rule of Law and Prosperous Armenia parties sought out a niche in the already crowded opposition.

As a result, Armenia ended up with one ruling party – the Republicans – and five opposition parties: Prosperous Armenia, Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutyun, Rule of Law, Heritage and the Armenian National Congress. Heritage and the Armenian National Congress ended their alliance following two years of close collaboration.

All respondents from the ruling party indicated that Armenian foreign policy has no "Eastern" or "Western" focus, and that the state's foreign policy targets security– as well as political and economic pragmatic successes–rather than long-term strategies.

It is important to underline the fact that, after Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), even radical pro-Western parties reconsidered their own positions and underscored their partial loyalty to the official policy, although they maintained the rhetoric of objective criticism. The majority of parliamentarian parties lack a definite and decisive position on the concept of the state's enemies, friends or allies. The dominant political forces in the country have a

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<sup>25</sup> It's important to note that all in-depth interviews with Armenian political elite representatives conducted by the end of fall 2015, when Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutyun (ARF-D) party was an opposition party. The last became a coalitional partner with the ruling Republican Party in February 2016.

strong position on Turkey and Azerbaijan, due to Baku's "hostile policy" towards Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The one exception is the Armenian National Congress party, which looks at Turkey as a "prospective partner", rather than an enemy.

### **Imposed Membership or Pragmatic Choice? Political Parties' Stances towards the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)**

The decision by the Armenian political elite to join the Russian-led EAEU was unexpected. Political parties tried to understand if it was a sovereign decision or if it was imposed on the government. They rushed to calculate the obstacles and opportunities created by this process. Some parties agree with the government's strategy in order to overcome the country's hopeless economic situation; others have highlighted the political, security and economic benefits that the EAEU offers Armenia.

The ruling party, the RPA, which holds a large majority in the National Assembly (NA), initiated the country's pro-Russian orientation. An MP from the party's parliamentary faction, Khosrov Harutyunyan, believes that no other organization has offered Yerevan the same conditions as the EAEU. *"In Armenia's case, this is the most acceptable option and we can already see its results. The fact that we have not cut our ties with EU is another good aspect of the EAEU. Our European partners value Armenia even more,"* he told us (Harutyunyan, 2015).

Another MP, Artak Zakaryan, stated that the ruling party calculated the economic outcome and the strategic price of the integration. *"Armenia's benefits from this process are greater than the risks. We'll appear in a large economic arena and our products will be more competitive in that market. Our borders are closed and we can't fully realize our economic potential with Europe. This decision is a pragmatic one and our European friends understand our position"* (Zakaryan, 2015). The head of the NA standing committee noted that Armenia's accession to the EAEU "ensures the security of the country."

The party's senior leadership thinks that Armenia's accession to the union was partly driven by security factors since the EAEU is

a geopolitical and economic initiative. *"We must not forget that the Armenian-Turkish protocols, which aimed to unblock Armenia, preceded this process. Unfortunately we must note that the international community failed to pressure Turkey to open Europe's last closed border, a development that could make Armenia's potential moves more flexible,"* Samvel Farmanyan said in response to our questions (Farmanyan, 2014). He added that this treaty will significantly increase Armenian exports and develop living standards in the country.

The **Prosperous Armenia Party** (PAP) believes that membership of the Moscow-led union implies economic and political integration. One of the respondents, party MP Mikayel Melkumyan, stated: *"Armenia has many ties to the Russian Federation, and Armenian products and goods are well received in the Russian markets, so the EAEU is the lesser evil for the current regional situation and conditions."* He added that integration into EAEU was the least bad option. *"It has brought a huge market; has provided opportunities we should take. There are problems but they are solvable. Armenia's entrepreneurs must take advantage of it as much as they can"* (Melkumyan, 2015).

The party's speaker Tigran Urikhanyan confirmed that integration into the EAEU was a sovereign decision taken by an independent state. *"Our party's position is clear: the price of relations with other states, international alliances or organizations should not cause us bad relations with other parties. Armenia has friendly, economic and strategic relations with EAEU countries. But we can't sacrifice our mutual political connection with the West."*(Urikhanyan, 2014)The PAP, according to senior party leaders, does not approve of the current government's foreign policy.

One party MP, Stepan Margaryan, noted that the vote in favor of the pro-EAEU decision was controversial within the parliamentary faction. He stated, "some colleagues were against the treaty, but the decision to support it was made by consensus." *"We consider this treaty to be neither good, nor risky. It is just a pragmatic decision. If the elite had continued and fully accomplished the ending negotiations with the EU, Armenia's position would be stronger. On the other hand, by abandoning the EAEU process, we could have aggravated the regional isolation of the State"* (Margaryan, 2014).

Members of the **Armenian National Congress** (ANC), which is the country's main opposition party, believe that the EAEU member countries are uncertain about the organization: *"Armenia has no voice in that Union. It is an artificial institute that was established in opposition to the EU. In my opinion, the integration to EAEU was the right step,"* stated Arman Musinyan (Musinyan, 2015). While he highlighted the importance of this integration and the strategic benefit for the state, he expressed doubt about the political competence of authorities regarding this issue. *"If we were in power we would not play a dual game with Russia and the West, like the current regime. I mean that we would not go to Moscow and Brussels and say things that could be pleasant for their ears and play with different rules. This regime has lost its dignity and the confidence of both Europe and Russia,"* said Levon Zurabyan (Zurabyan, 2015).

However, the opposition leader accepted that the treaty on Armenia's accession to the EAEU is critically and strategically important for Armenia. In the end, he also voted in favor of joining the EAEU due to the current geopolitical situation and the present-day challenges that Armenia faces.

The **Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun** (ARF-D), which considers itself to be a member of the constructive opposition, agreed that the ruling party's decision to integrate the country into EAEU was a pragmatic one and membership in the union could neutralize security concerns. *"We should consider that there is no other alternative. Yerevan must maintain its security. We understand our other partners' anger, but they also must understand our conditions. We don't have open borders and our European colleagues must remember this reality,"* stated Artsvik Minasyan (Minasyan, 2015). At first glance, the EAEU integration process appears to be a "security imperative" for the party. The head of the ARF-D faction listed two major factors that explain the ruling party's "snap decision": Armenia and Karabakh are still in an open-ended war with Azerbaijan and the world is on the eve of a new cold war. *"We clearly see the perspective of new geopolitical cataclysms. Our decisions must be fast and flexible. This is a security issue and we cannot waste time. Security is not just your military arsenal; it is also your balanced foreign policy with regional and international*

*huge powers. This decision doesn't mean loss of our independence and national sovereignty,"* the ARF-D leader Armen Rustamyan told us (Rustamyan, 2015).

The opposition **Rule of Law Party (ROL)** is largely pro-Western but not anti-Russian.

The party believes the country should be actively involved in European structures, with the final aim of EU membership. The party considered European integration as the main direction of RA foreign policy. At the same time, however, the secretary of the party's parliamentary faction noted that Armenian accession to EAEU has political, economic and security importance. *"Our society has expectations from this process, and the majority of them have positive expectations. Therefore, Yerevan must use the opportunities of this accession effectively. I think that there is also a high public demand for this,"* Heghine Bisharyan told us (Bisharyan, 2014).

The party has pursued a consistent pro-European policy stance, at least on a declaratory level<sup>26</sup>. It was also one of the five Armenian parties aligned with European party blocs. Regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenia's policy toward Turkey, the party's positions were moderate and generally in line with those of the governing party, the RPA. It is notable that ROL convened a party session after the president announced the country would join the EAEU: *"The Moscow process is important to enhance the economic potential of Armenia, is in line with the state's goals, and fully expresses the national security priorities of the RA"* ( Rule of Law party, 2013).

**Heritage**, Armenia's main pro-western and opposition party, believes that the European agenda offers the best option for the country's continued existence. At the same time, Heritage advocates for close cooperation with Russia, Armenia's traditional ally. The party's platform does not view European integration as a final goal for Armenia, however; rather it sees it as a tool for improved well-

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<sup>26</sup> In 2006, Party's leader Arthur Baghdasaryan resigned from the post of the Speaker of the National Assembly allegedly because of criticism coming from the government following his statements on the need for Armenia to join NATO and the EU. Currently the party is not publicly promoting Armenia's full membership to the EU and NATO.

being, prosperity and security. "By integration, the party means mutually beneficial cooperation, mutual understanding and an enhanced level of mutual aid" (Heritage.am, 2012). The party's senior leadership believes close ties with Russia are necessary – although they must be redefined based on respect and common interests. *"Within the scope of that cooperation, the formula of 'property in return of debt,' as well as the sale of the Armenian economy's strategic assets to Russia or any other country are deemed unacceptable"* noted party MP Ruben Hakobyan (Hakobyan, 2014).

Party leader Raffi Hovhannisyan argued, however *"the deplorable efforts of the republic's regime to push Armenia's accession to the EAEU, together with [President] Serzh Sargsyan's domestic and foreign policies –which do not flow from Armenia's national interests –are aimed merely to maneuver and perpetuate his illegitimate personal power"*(Hovhannisyan, 2014).

The responses from MPs underscore the disagreement in the party over the policy to balance Armenia's membership in the EAEU and the country's continuing partnership with the EU. While the two organizations –the EU and the EAEU – are seen as a means to create a balanced foreign policy, MPs are at odds over how they should be used. *"Being an EAEU member state, Armenia has to, by all means, take steps towards building active relations with EU institutions, thus preventing a possible provocation (which we have already witnessed). I do accept the policy of maneuvers, and understandably, quite serious work is now underway with respect to other states in the region,"* Ruben Hakobyan, the leader of the Heritage faction in National Assembly stated (Hakobyan, 2014).

Another senior leader, Armen Martirosyan, argued, *"Cooperation is incompatible." "EAEU makes Armenia vulnerable. It is not the best culture of cooperation: it will not give the Armenian economy the opportunity to develop. Even the process of cooperation was, how to say, very humiliating. I am against it,"* he said (Martirosyan, 2014). Another party MP, Alexander Arzumanyan, called the EAEU agreement a *"deprivation of Armenia's independence." "All assertions that this Treaty will secure our energy and economic systems are false. Who can provide this security? Russia? Moscow is under the yoke of international*



*sanctions, the ruble is plunging and this process could end up costing a lot in terms of our independence. Russia can't solve any security issue for us" (Arzumanyan, 2014).*

### **Political Parties Urge a "Multi-vector" policy with EU, EAEU**

Regarding current relations with the EU, the RPA parliamentary leadership maintains that Armenia has always wanted to continue deepening relations with the EU in order to carry out political reforms within the country. MP Khosrov Harutyunyan from the RPA stated, *"Armenia wants to have more European partners. We are open to discuss any question that our EU partners want. I think that we still have a chance to stay in contact with the EU partners. The Ukrainian crisis has shown our European partners why we ... joined the EAEU"* (Harutyunyan, 2015).

He added that Armenia still needs the EU partnership. *"Armenia does not oppose cooperation with both with EU and Russia. We consider them complementary factors. We must continue to deepen our relations with our strategically, Russia, while maintaining and developing the level of relationship with the EU that we established over many years,"* ruling party MP Eduard Sharmazanov told us (Sharmazanov, 2013).

Even during the parliamentary hearings on the EAEU deal, the chairman of the NA Standing Committee on Foreign Relations underscored the country's desire for a "multi-vector" policy that included both Russia and the EU. *"Unfortunately, different situations have been created for different countries today and differentiated approaches and attitudes for them have become an objective necessity. Yerevan adopted a policy of multi-vector cooperation. The entry of Armenia into the EAEU cannot be an obstacle for the development of Armenia-European Union relations. Our relations with Brussels increasingly rely on our national values and common European values. This will be an ongoing process"* (Parliament.am, 2015).

**The Prosperous Armenia Party** prioritizes deepening relations with the EU. The party program calls for bringing

Armenian legislation in line with EU standards; integrating into European structures; contributing to the development of mutually beneficial relations with EU countries in all spheres; and enhancing and deepening cooperation with NATO, the main structure that guarantees European security("Prosperous Armenia" Party, 2007).At the same time, however, the head of the party's parliamentary faction, Mikayel Melkumyan, stated that he agreed that joining the EAEU will be beneficial for Armenia. *"The region and the conditions surrounding us make us change our foreign policy direction, but I suppose that our partners from the EU can understand us: the example of Ukraine is before them,"* he said (Melkumyan, 2015). The MP added that the EU understands Armenia's situation and some exceptions are made for the country. The cooperation will last until problems arise with Russia, he said.

Secretary of the Parliamentary Faction of the ANC, Aram Manukyan, noted that it is imperative and vital for small states to have many allies. While relations with EU must be on the highest level, these relations must not be directed to foreign security or political systems, he said. Another member of the party said that democratic reforms have not been completed on a number of issues – including the freedom of speech, democracy, human rights and elections. *"If EU-Armenian cooperation continues and develops, Yerevan will be able to solve problems,"* stated Vladimir Karapetyan, a senior politician in ANC (Karapetyan, 2015).

According to MP Artsvik Minasyan, a member of ARF-D, Armenia is correct to continue cooperating with the EU. *"Major countries understand [our position], so we should not succumb to provocative statements attempting to derail cooperation [with the EU]. Such an intention is clearly seen from pro-Turkish and pro-Azerbaijani statements,"* he said, adding that 35 percent of Armenia's trade is with EU countries. He underscored the shortcomings in EU relations with Armenia, noting that Yerevan needs Brussels help to resolve its conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan and Turkey (Minasyan, 2015).

Another party senior leader, Armen Rustamyan, noted that while ARF-D advocates using the EU integration process as a path for eventual membership, the party cannot ignore Armenia's geopolitical reality. *"Thus, it is necessary to promote cooperation in*

*political, economic and other fields simultaneously with the EU, the USA and RF (the Russian Federation) based on common interests. We are strategic partners with Moscow, but we consider it necessary to cooperate with NATO to promote regional security,"* he said (Rustamyan, 2015).

Senior party officials at **ROL** said the party is neither pro-western, nor pro-Russian. *"Our aim is Armenia's interests and our priority in this region is to build a strong and effective state. But at the same time, our party has - and will - adhere to European values, and we are the biggest supporter of our country's political, economic, and judicial system's harmonization to European standards,"* stated Mher Shahgeldyan, the Secretary of Party's Faction (Shahgeldyan, 2014). He added that Europe understands Armenia's pragmatic decision to join the Moscow-led EAEU and "now they are thinking about effective mechanisms for further cooperation with Yerevan".

The **Heritage Party** considers the way to Europe to be a priority for the country's foreign policy. *"European civilization is where diversity is respected, where everyone is held accountable to the same laws of democracy despite the diversity of identities. Consequently, Armenia should define its goal to conform with international democratic standards quickly and fully, and become a full member of international democratic society, implementing all the necessary steps in that direction,"* the party leader said (Hovhannisyan, 2014). The Heritage Party program specifically states that *"European integration for Armenia is not a final goal in itself. It is a means for achieving more prosperity, welfare and security"* ("Heritage" party, 2012).

### **Political Parties Differ over Turkey**

Armenia's relations with Turkey are the most controversial and debatable issue in the Armenian political spectrum. The political elite, as well as the majority of Armenian parties, share a similar position on relations with Ankara, but advocate different tactics. For the ruling party, negotiations with Turkey have been a source of frustration, according to one respondent.

A member of the ruling party, Khosrov Harutyunyan, noted

that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the economic situation forced the authorities to start negotiations with Turkey. *"I contacted the Turkish PM several times and offered to start negotiations without preconditions. Today we are ready to restart negotiations with Turkey, but... no negotiations can be held if there are not two parties. The previous century has had a noticeable impact on our foreign policy thinking. Being a part of the former Soviet Union makes Armenian society more inclined to cooperate with the Russian Federation in economic, military, food and other forms of security as well"* (Harutyunyan, 2015).

The ruling party MP said Armenia has dedicated a lot of resources to the process of international recognition and condemnation of Genocide. *"Time will come when Turkish diplomats understand it is time to face the real facts. It is possible to find ways to cooperate based on similarities not contradictions,"* the MP said. Armenia and Turkey should coordinate bilateral relations and establish diplomatic ties without preconditions, according to the **PAP**. *"All issues related to regional security and cooperation, Turkey's balanced, constructive and non-ideological standpoint in the processes of the peaceful settlement of the NKR issue; the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border; communication infrastructure, including the re-exploitation of Gyumri-Kars railway; and preservation of Armenian cultural values in Turkey may be subject to discussion,"* stated Stepan Margaryan (Margaryan, 2014). Another PAP Faction member, Mikayel Melkumyan, added that the problems in Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations could be resolved using the principles of international law. *"We should develop good relations with them [Turkey], in which opening the border is the main point. I think the issue will be resolved to the benefit of both parties"* (Melkumyan, 2015).

He stressed that the recognition of the Genocide is also an important issue for the party. A member of the party told us the government has made "tactical errors" in its dealings with Ankara. While the authorities made several steps to foster Armenian-Turkish relations, preconditions are not acceptable, he said. *"We have failed to present the correct economic interests to the Turkish side. Opening the border is beneficial for Armenia and Turkey,"* stated Mikayel Melkumyan (Melkumyan, 2015).

He drew a correlation between resuming relations with Turkey and resolving the conflict with Azerbaijan. *"We still have border problems with our neighbors. In this case, we cannot have normal relations. Of course, we do not often demand our ancestors' lands from Turkey, but the Turkish authorities know what will be the next step after the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. But we should not forget that our relations with Georgia and Iran are very close. I suppose that the only problem is Turkey. If we can solve the problem with them, the frozen conflict with the Azerbaijani authorities will be solved automatically."*

**ANC** maintains that relations with Turkey are vital for Armenia. The party's leadership was the first to initiate good and normal relations with "the most problematic country". *"Armenia's development depends on the normalization of relations with Turkey and the solution of Nagorno-Karabakh problem. Now there is no diplomatic relationship with Ankara. But there are a lot of Armenians in Turkey. This can easily be used against us. There are huge economic and trade possibilities that are not used,"* MP Arman Musinyan told us (Musinyan, 2015). The party spokesperson noted that there is a deadlock in relations, which makes it impossible to evaluate Armenia's current Turkish policy. The party praised the government's attempts to negotiate with Ankara, known as the protocols, but slammed the ruling party for linking the Karabakh conflict to talks with Turkey.

**ROL** agrees that any hypothetical Turkish engagement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict negotiations "is too risky and unacceptable." Ankara has played a destructive role in the South Caucasus and cannot be impartial, a member of the party, Mher Shahgeldyan, said. *"Turkey is the biggest promoter of Azerbaijani military aggression against Armenians both in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. It's the largest source of weapon sfor Baku and a foreign lobbyist of Azerbaijani interests. Under these conditions Yerevan can't accept any mediation or interference from the Turkish side"* (Shahgeldyan, 2014).

He added: *"We are interested in opening Europe's last closed border, but the problem is from the Turkish side. They clearly know that no Armenian leadership can agree to establish relations with Turkey by ignoring the Genocide issue. Although we must note that*

*Yerevan permanently underlines that Genocide recognition is not a precondition for establishing diplomatic relations. Our position is clear: Armenia says "Relations without preconditions" (Shahgeldyan, 2014).*

The **ARF-D** party has adopted the toughest policy on Armenian-Turkish relations. The party believes Turkey is to blame for the lack of relations due to its hostile policy toward Armenia and its preconditions. *"A relationship with Turkey is vital not only as an important element for regional security, but also from an economic and social point of view. It is unacceptable for us to make vital concessions for the sake of open borders and strategic partnership with neighbors. Armenia can't dispute the two main issues: the international recognition of Armenian Genocide and the issue of compensation,"* stated Artsvik Minasyan, a member of the ARF-D faction (Minasyan, 2015).

**The Heritage** Party leadership is pushing for an open, honest dialogue through cultural, economic and social cooperation. *"The two nations should gradually amend the stereotypes governing over them; adopt universal human and European values; recognize their own history; and resolve the Genocide and the issue of its legacy; as well as regulate all separating disputes and relations in a comprehensive and complex way,"* Hovsep Khurshudyan, the spokesman of the party told us (Khurshudyan, 2015). Party Vice President Armen Martirosyan believes *"There is only one future: recognition from Turkey of the undeniable historical facts. Afterwards there can be progress for a relationship that will bring security to this region. I believe that Armenia and Turkey can establish good relations by bypassing the Genocide issue. I understand that these closed borders are weakening Armenia, but there is not much of benefit for Turkey either"* (Martirosyan, 2014). Heritage has also protested the ruling party's policy toward Turkey, claiming the government created an obstacle to the process of the recognition of Armenian Genocide when it signed the protocols with Turkey in 2009.

## Political Parties Broadly Aligned over Azerbaijan

The peaceful settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (NKR) remains a priority for Armenian politicians and they view the regulation and the normalization of relations with neighboring Azerbaijan within this context. There is a broad consensus among Armenian politicians that any settlement of the conflict should, first, take into account the Armenian population of the NKR's political right of self-determination. All Armenian parties represented in parliament say that this can only be achieved through the international recognition of the self-declared NKR. All parties accept the fact that there is no military solution to the conflict, and they support the Minsk mediation process.

During interviews with the author, senior party figures underlined that there is no agreement on involving Turkey in the peace talks, due to Ankara's open support for Baku. They showed a wide support for Tehran's role as a balancing force in the negotiations, however. The ruling party, the **RPA**, believes that relations with Azerbaijan threaten Armenia's security. A ruling party MP said that Azerbaijan does not seek the normalization of relations. *"NKR cannot be subordinated to and included in the Azerbaijan Republic. This position is based on the view that Nagorno-Karabakh became independent, according to the internal legislation of the Soviet Union and according to international law, and Nagorno-Karabakh has never been – not for a single day – part of an independent Azerbaijan Republic,"* Khosrov Harutyunyan (Harutyunyan, 2015).

He stressed that, based on Soviet-era legislation, Nagorno-Karabakh became independent before the Republic of Azerbaijan established its independence. *"NKR should have a common land border with Armenia and the international community and actors dealing with the conflict should give firm security guarantees for Nagorno-Karabakh and its people. This is the way to regulate relations with Azerbaijan"*(Harutyunyan, 2015). Harutyunyan added that Armenian authorities have the correct approach: RPA has declared that Armenia does not seek any solution other than a peaceful negotiation process. *"Our foreign department works properly,"* stated the MP.

**PAP** maintains that as long as there is a dictatorship in Azerbaijan, there is no possibility to normalize relations between Baku and Yerevan. Furthermore, the Republic of Azerbaijan must accept the existence of an independent NKR as an indisputable fact from the very outset of the peace process in order for the process to continue – and this should be a precondition from the beginning. *"Any attempt to settle the conflict would be incomplete if it ignored the political and historical truth of the NK people's undisputable right to self-determination. Azerbaijan must understand this. I mean there cannot be a settlement of the conflict and, therefore, there cannot be diplomatic relations with Baku, if they undermine this objective imperative"* (Melkumyan, 2015).

The party believes that Yerevan should do everything in its power to sustain the peaceful and secure existence of Nagorno-Karabakh and its people. ("Prosperious Armenia" party, 2011) *"Our Armed forces are battle worthy, which our enemy recognizes. This is why it does not undertake clear assaults or large-scale operations. The MFA's positions on this issue must be clarified. After all, we, the citizens of Armenia, are the parents of our soldiers. Every loss is on our conscience. It is difficult to deal with Azerbaijan when it is not ready to listen to you,"* said Mikayel Melkumyan. He also expressed concerns about the government's diplomatic policy. **PAP** believes that it is necessary to take constructive steps to develop a relationship with Azerbaijan. The problems that exist in Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani relationships should be resolved based on the principles of international law, not hate, the MP said. He stressed the importance of the democratization in the region and the benefits of EU integration process. This, he said, will nurture peaceful and normal relations, even with "difficult" neighbors, like Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The **ANC** believes there should be a balanced solution and, since the main party in the conflict is the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, whatever agreement its authorities accept the alliance will support. *"These are vitally important relations since we are neighbors, especially when we have a serious political dispute with Azerbaijan. This issue must be solved. These two nations [Azerbaijani and Armenians] must get along with each other to live together. And surely we will find common ground"* (Musinyan, 2015).



As the ANC is not privy to the peace negotiations, party members could not comment on the details of the latest proposed solution. The party maintains any successful resolution for the conflict has to involve mutual concessions from all sides. *"There are several fundamental points. Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) is not a party to the negotiations and that is an irretrievable loss. The Armenian authorities are not interested in finding a solution. In my opinion, the NKR conflict, which I consider to be the axis of our foreign policy-resolution policy, is the logical continuation of politics followed from 1998-2008"* (Musinyan, 2015).

For **ARF-D** leadership believes that the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is at the core of foreign relations with Azerbaijan. The party was in favor of three-sided negotiations (Armenia, NKR, and Azerbaijan), where NKR is the main conflict party and Armenia provides the guarantee for its independence and security. A MP, party board member Artsvik Minasyan, explained that the sooner relations could be normalized between the neighboring countries, the better. *"If we think that we can get positive results by concessions, we are mistaken as we should not only examine the historical lesson of relations with Azerbaijan, but also take into consideration the fact that Artsakh is an Armenian land, a part of RA and should remain Armenian. If we cannot make them understand this, we will continue feeling the disadvantages of this conflict. But concession is not a way to escape the conflict"* (Minasyan, 2015).

Like other opposition parties, **ROL** also believes that Armenia can't establish relations with Azerbaijan without solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The party leadership believes that it is not possible to return to the Nagorno-Karabakh-Azerbaijan borders of 1988 and 1991 and a peace process without the participation of Nagorno-Karabakh is illogical. *"Azerbaijani authorities have realized that they can't change anything with war. Simultaneously they created an atmosphere where people believe this conflict can be solved through a military solution, funded by their unfailing petrodollars,"* stated Mher Shahgeldyan, a senior official in the party (Shahgeldyan, 2014). He added that, although the international community should judge Baku harshly for its provocations, it fails to do so. *"Azeri forces are intensely firing at Armenian positions on the line of the contact with Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan*

*authorities proved that they are disturbing the negotiation process by increasing tension on the border," Shahgeldyan said (Shahgeldyan, 2014).*

The **Heritage** has asked the parliament to draft Armenia's formal recognition of NKR but its initiatives have never passed.<sup>27</sup> *"We have a values problem with Azerbaijan. This country implements an aggressive policy that threatens both NKR and Armenia. If Azerbaijan recognizes NKR, the future development of the relations may be expected,"* stated Armen Martirosyan (Martirosyan, 2014). The party believes that, while there are issues that can be negotiated on with Azerbaijan, the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh is non-negotiable and non-revisable due to the history of the conflict. The party has also slammed the government for its policy toward Azerbaijan: *"Both countries have similar political issues, the processes are alike. We have an issue with why our authorities cannot implement an effective policy on the NKR issue"* (Martirosyan, 2014).

### **Political Parties' Stance towards the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) Conflict**

Armenia's major political parties also share a common position on Nagorno-Karabakh: it will eventually be recognized as an independent nation. RPAMP Samvel Farmanyanyan stated that the Armenian position on NKR is largely unchanged and is reflected in the country's foreign policy. *"The people of Nagorno-Karabakh have used their right to self-determination. This is a historic truth. You or I may have differing views, but there is no doubt that Nagorno-Karabakh should be independent or at least its people should choose their own status; it should enjoy international recognition"* (Farmanyanyan, 2014).

Another MP, Khosrov Harutyunyan, believes that Artsakh will

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<sup>27</sup> The majority of Factions explained and declared that they can vote for the recognition of NKR independence "in one second", but this recognition would not be a self-serving one. The parliamentary majority believe that recognition by Yerevan will be in the case of aggression toward NKR.

decide its future on its own. *"It can either unite with Armenia or remain independent. It should decide. It may depend on future geopolitical developments"* (Harutyunyan, 2015).

The **PAP** maintains that the unification of Armenia and Artsakh is not realistic today. In the near future, however, Armenia and Artsakh could be one country. *"The border conflict with its neighbors needs to be solved. In the current situation, we cannot establish normal relations. I think that the resolution of the conflict with Turkey would be helpful in the process of expediting the resolution of the NK conflict with Azerbaijan. It will kind of be an automatic process; the Turkish preconditions are not accidental,"* Mikayel Melkumyan told us (Melkumyan, 2015).

The **ANC's** Arman Musinyan said it is difficult to predict the future of Karabakh. *"The final solution derives from the current balance of the powers. This is how I see the solution: Armenia and Azerbaijan will never come to an agreement on this issue. The best solution is the Cyprus example. While peace is maintained, status remains uncertain. Let us solve the issue of war and later negotiate for years on who owns NK. Making the issue of status the key means the conflict will never be solved"* (Musinyan, 2015).

**ARF-D** senior leader Armen Rustamyani convinced that Artsakh was, and is, an Armenian territory – and in the future it will maintain Armenian regardless of whether it will continue to exist as a separate state or if will decide to unite with Armenia. *"Artsakh should be Armenian. There is no other solution. It is not debatable. The Armenian population living there will decide the territory's final status. They have achieved the right of self-determination. For more than two decades, Karabakh Armenians have proved that they are more democratic than the aggressor state, Azerbaijan. War is much more costly for us. We lost our infrastructure, economy, and human recourses. Nothing can replace these losses; the issue of Artsakh liberation is an issue of human dignity and values,"* stated the MP (Rustamyani, 2015).

The **ROL** party leadership also believes in a peaceful and mutually beneficial settlement of the Artsakh conflict, and rules out a military solution. The party supports the Madrid Principles (i.e. the non-use of force; territorial integrity; the right to self-determination). The head of the party, who was the Secretary of the Armenian

National Council, stressed that they uphold the independence of NK with a common land border with Armenia. *"Nagorno-Karabakh will never be a part of Azerbaijan. The international community should guarantee NK's security. We must increase political support for the OSCE Minsk Group conflict settlement efforts on the basis of international norms and principles, including the principle of self-determination"* (Panarmenian.net, 2010).

The deputy head of the party, Mher Shahgeldyan, said that the government and the Diaspora support NKR Armenians' right of self-determination. *"Reunification with the motherland is a secondary issue. First we must bring Artsakh Armenians into direct negotiation with the other side of the conflict,"* the MP said (Shahgeldyan, 2014).

The **Heritage** party also sees Artsakh as part of Armenia but only after a definite period of independence. Senior leadership in the party believes that after gaining independence Artsakh will want to unite with Armenia. *"But if it does not, we will have two Armenian states. I see two options to resolve the issue: through negotiations once Artsakh will be recognized by Azerbaijan, which is preferable, or through large-scale war, which is not preferable – after which Azerbaijan will be obliged to recognize Artsakh's independence"* (Martirosyan, 2014).

### **Political Parties' View Iran as a Strategic Partner**

Respondents stressed that Armenia's relations with Iran have been stable since independence. Today an estimated 100,000 Armenians are living in Iran, where they enjoy a certain amount of political and religious protection. Armenians are the largest and most respected Christian minority in Iran (Ministry of Diaspora of RA, 2008).

*"Iran remains one of Armenia's biggest economic partners",* stated Khosrov Harutyunyan, an MP from the ruling **RPA**. He added, *"In the case of Iran, we are dealing with a predictable and reliable partner. It can be said that both the roles of both Russia and Iran are important. Iran can be a more beneficial partner than Turkey once the international sanctions are lifted"* (Harutyunyan, 2015).

The head of the parliament standing committee, Artak

Zakaryan, confirmed that Armenia would continue implementing policies to develop renewable energy sources and alternative energy. *"We will finalize the Armenia-Iran and Armenia-Georgia 400 kV overhead power transmission lines"* (Parliament.am, 2015).

The **PAP** believes it is necessary to deepen relationships with Iran in order to realize joint programs related to the creation of energy system and communication infrastructure in the spheres of transportation and energy. *"In many areas we are agree with Iran and are allies. In the economic sphere, Iran has a big market and can be beneficial to our entrepreneurs. We can strengthen our potential ties, because we have a sustainable and reliable background,"* Mikayel Melkumyan told us (Melkumyan, 2015). **ANC** believes that Armenia should benefit from the geo-economic situation that could develop now that international sanctions against Iran have been lifted. The head of ANC's foreign relations committee Vladimir Karapetyan considers Iran to be an important country for Yerevan. *"From a commercial and economical viewpoint Iran has prospects. There is a big Armenian community there. We have a neighbor with opportunities but lack a government that can handle problems. For seven or eight years we have been speaking up about the Iran-Armenia railway but we have not built even a meter of the railroad"* (Karapetyan, 2015).

**ARF-D** also considers Iran to be a strategic partner for Armenia and sees this alliance as a way to circumvent the economic embargo imposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey since the 1992 Nagorno-Karabakh War. Moreover, ties with Iran help Yerevan avoid being overly dependent on Moscow. *"We have quite good relations with Iran but they do not only depend on the two countries' wishes to deepen relations. International sanctions are obstacles for us, and our relations with Iran bring certain challenges for Russia. In the future, many things will depend on geopolitical events that Armenia cannot influence. We should strengthen our ties with Iran as an indirect influence on Middle Eastern countries. We have a heritage in those territories,"* stated Artsvik Minasyan (Minasyan, 2015).

**ROL** also considers Iran to be a strategic partner for Armenia. A senior leader in the party, Mher Shahgeldyan, told us that the close, friendly relations between Yerevan and Tehran have always been

based on mutual interests. *"But we also need to deepen political, economic and security cooperation and discuss the implementation of strategic projects. Iran is our southern path to the Middle East and Central Asia. In addition to a great historic background, friendly relations and connections, we have mutual economic agenda based on concrete interests. The railway project, obviously, will make us economically closer,"* stated the MP (Shahgeldyan, 2014).

**The Heritage** Party believes that Armenia's good relations with Iran could lead to deeper economic cooperation with Tehran, which would ensure transport, energy and other forms of security for both countries. *"Construction of a wide-diameter Iran-Armenia-EU gas pipeline should be a high priority,"* ("Heritage" party, 2012).

A senior leader of the party, Armen Martirosyan, stated that Armenian and Iranian interests coincide in many areas. *"Although we are dealing with an Islamic country, our compatriots living there have wide autonomy. Although Iran is an Islamic country, as an ancient civilization it is quite a tolerant country – it has a good policy toward Christianity, Armenian churches are well preserved there, and there is no infringement against the Armenian Apostolic Church. Economically they have autonomy thus, in the sense of civilization and strategy, I consider Iran to be one of Armenia's main partners in the region"* (Martirosyan, 2014).

### **Political Parties' Seek Friendly Relations with Georgia**

Overall, Armenian parties in parliament seek to bolster relations with Georgia, although some concerns exist over the conditions in Georgia's predominately Armenian region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, which Armenians refer to it as Javakhk, as well as the preservation of the historic heritage of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Georgia.

There is also a wide spread understanding that, by joining the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, Armenia has chosen a different path than Georgia, which signed the EU Association Agreement. A member of the ruling **RPA**, Khosrov Harutyunyan, thinks that Georgians do not view Armenians as their partners. *"This is temporary. With time, the Georgian authorities will move their*

*attention in the direction of Armenia"* (Harutyunyan, 2015). The MP added that concern exists that the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti could be manipulated to create conflict between Tbilisi and Yerevan.

MP Shirak Torsyan, who also serves as a member of the party's board, believes Georgia joining NATO could lead to problems with ethnic Armenians living in the country, since they will not tolerate the presence of Turkish troops in the region where they live. *"I assure you that separatist sentiments have been ruled out in Javakhk. Javakhk Armenians are a barrier for Armenia against further threats by Turkey. Therefore, the Georgian government should take care of them so that they will not want to receive Russian citizenship. The quality of life and social conditions should be improved,"* (Torosyan, 2014).

In Armenian-Georgian relationships, **PAP** also prioritizes Georgia's treatment of ethnic Armenians living in its borders, particularly Tbilisi's policy towards Javakhk Armenians – including their security and rights, as well as the solution of their socio-economic, religious and cultural problems ("Prosperious Armenia" party, 2011). *"Relations with this country are very important. Regardless if it is good or bad, Georgia is our partner and that is not being questioned. Georgia has chosen another path for development but that is not an obstacle for brother nations. In the future, our cooperation should deepen and the opportunities should increase,"* Mikayel Melkumyan told us (Melkumyan, 2015).

A member of the **ANC**, Arman Musinyan, said that Georgia is Armenia's main route to the rest of the world. *"There is a big Armenian community there. In 2008, when war broke out in South Ossetia, Armenia's economy came to standstill in ten days. Georgia thinks that military-political cooperation with Russia is not in its interests. That is their choice. However, this policy creates tension in Russian-Georgian relations, which is not beneficial for us,"* he said (Musinyan, 2015).

Regarding relations with Armenia's northern neighbor **ARF-D** agrees that ties with Georgia were closely related to the issues facing Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti and other regions of Georgia. *"The party stands for the territorial integrity of Georgia and existence of strong Javakhk (Samtskhe-Javakheti), which should be able to play a direct role in the determination of its own destiny... This will promote*

*relations between Armenia and Georgia,"* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun, 2011). Party MP Artsvik Minasyan underscored the fact that while Armenian-Georgian relations are strategically important, they are based on relations with Javakhk. *"In this phase, our main goal should be the preservation of the Armenian Javakhk or Armenians' identity in Javakhk. If we manage to solve this problem and if Georgia recognizes the core of our brotherhood, and Javakhk, we can jointly solve many strategic problems and goals. Members of the Georgian political elite already understand that, without Armenians, they cannot have a strong Christian country in the region. Agreement on economic relations will not lead to political proximity,"* (Minasyan, 2015).

The **ROL** Election Program notes *"Sustainability and democracy in Georgia is aligned with our national interests."* A senior member of the party, Mher Shahgeldyan, confirmed that Armenia is interested in a dialogue with Georgia in all areas – and seeks constructive relations between Tbilisi and Moscow. He noted that Georgia is important not only in terms of transit, but also taking into account the country's large Armenian community. *"The two nations have lived next to each other for centuries and are obliged to move forward and establish regional peace by helping each other,"* (Shahgeldyan, 2014).

**The Heritage** party believes that friendly relations with Georgia should be based on mutual trust, and political cooperation needs to match the pace of economic cooperation. This should be possible based on the two countries' interest in EU membership, according to one member of the party, Hovsep Khurshudyan (Khurshudyan, 2015). However, another party official said Armenian authorities need to "implement the correct policy", i.e. a pro-Western strategy, in order to have "few obstacles" with Georgia. *"Georgia pursues its own interests in relations with Armenia but it does not create any problems. We have a big community in Georgia and the country's authorities treat them with respect, which is also an advantageous condition. If Armenia's authorities implement the proper policy they will have few obstacles with Georgian partners,"* said Armen Martirosyan, the vice president of the party (Martirosyan, 2014).



## **Political Parties Advocate Friendly Relations with the USA**

According to the respondents, Armenia has maintained friendly relations with the US but stops short of military cooperation due to Yerevan's ties with Moscow. In addition, the large Armenian Diaspora has an influence on relations between Armenia and the US: the US is the only country outside of Armenia that provides financial assistance to Karabakh, although it does not formally recognize it. The US is also actively involved in the OSCE Minsk Group, the international mechanism aimed at avoiding a new war over Karabakh.

The **RPA** views Armenian-US relations in terms of economic cooperation: *"Armenia can offer few things to America (in terms of investment opportunities) but even here we have a good partnership with them. The sale of "Vorotan" hydroelectric station to an American company will deepen those relations,"* ruling party MP Khosrov Harutyunyan said (Harutyunyan, 2015). He added that the Armenian government has always encouraged American capital investments in Armenia to counter the Turkish-Azeri blockade against Yerevan.

The **PAP** says a parallel is developing between beneficial relations with the West and the strengthening of Armenia's security. The party leadership said that relations with Washington should be directed towards *"USA's comprehensive involvement in the realization of democratic and socio-economic reforms; the resolution of regional security problems; the establishment of a stable and long-term peace in South Caucasus; and, finally, the assurance of Armenia's participation in regional and international programs which are realized or coordinated by the USA,"* stated Stepan Margaryan (Margaryan, 2014). Another member of the party, Mikayel Melkumyan, said that the USA is an important partner. *"Our partnership will sustain itself regardless of what political route Armenia has chosen,"* (Melkumyan, 2015).

MP Alexander Arzumanyan said that USA officials want to see a strong and prosperous Armenia. *"It is very important for us. Even though Armenian officials have not made an acceptable choice for them, the USA still wants to develop our country. Americans are very important partners for us in the international arena. Also, we*

*should not forget that there is a large Armenian community in the USA," (Arzumanyan, 2014). An MP from the ARF-D, Artsvik Minasyan, believes it is important that Armenia determine the type of cooperation with the US it feels is acceptable. "We can cooperate in the fields involving democracy, justice, economic, social spheres, accepting it as a superpower country without repeating the mistakes of other countries—or becoming a target for the USA as Russia's strategic partner. Taking into consideration the large Armenian community in the USA, we should also engage Armenians living there," (Minasyan, 2015).*

**The ROL** believes relations with the USA are important and should be expanded. *"We must involve American capital and liberal traditions in our economy. We have a powerful and organized Diaspora in USA, which can certainly ease our country's path in the international arena, support the development of our economy, advocate Armenian interests, balance anti-Armenian activity and act as a bridge between the two nations,"* Heghine Bisharyan said (Bisharyan, 2014). She added that the USA "ensures security in the region" through its mediating role in the Karabakh conflict resolution process.

**Heritage** believes cooperation with new partner countries such as EU and NATO, and especially the USA, is crucial for the country for many reasons, including improving the army and preparing for security challenges. *"Currently, there are difficulties related to the influence of Russia. The USA is an understanding partner, thus our partnership must deepen. It is possible to have autonomous relations with the USA. I would like America to be economically engaged in Armenia through either its companies or by financing Armenian ones. Our cooperation should increase,"* stated Armen Martirosyan (Martirosyan, 2014).

### **Political Parties Say Balance Necessary in Relations with Russia**

Russia is obviously considered a reliable partner. However, respondents state that there is a need to balance relations with Moscow in order to create a real strategic partnership. The **RPA** highlighted Russia's constructive role in strengthening regional

security, particularly in the settlement process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. *"Today, Armenia and Russia's strategic partnership is based, not only on mutually beneficial cooperation, but also on the centuries-old friendship between two brotherly peoples, our cultural and spiritual intimacy,"* said the vice speaker of the parliament, Eduard Sharmazanov (Sharmazanov, 2013).

He also highlighted growing bilateral trade-economic ties, investment promotion, and effective cooperation in the humanitarian sphere. Another party MP stressed that Armenian-Russian relations are mutually beneficial in the long term. *"This is a relation deriving from bilateral interests. It is a problem that the Russian elite thinks that Armenia is nothing without Russians. This is dangerous for bilateral long-term and stable ties. Russians think that Armenians have no other choice or alternative, but is it so? Is not the EU proposing partnership and is not China ready to deepen mutually beneficial relations? Russia is the country whose security issues correspond with Armenian's interest,"* Khosrov Harutyunyan from the ruling party said (Harutyunyan, 2015). He added that it would be difficult for Russia to maintain its influence in the South Caucasus without Armenia. *"They are mutually advantageous relations. Let me highlight that Russia continues to arm Azerbaijan."*

The **PAP** believes that the further development of Armenian-Russian relations, as mentioned in PAP program, *"should be based on mutually-beneficial political, socio-economic, military, regional security, spiritual-cultural cooperation and principles of military partnership"* ("Prosperious Armenia" party, 2011). *"There are many circumstances connecting Armenia and Russia. Armenian goods are in high demand in the Russian market. Our partnership with Russia can be expanded but the question is how do Russians perceive Armenia. We should take steps in this regard to reach a level of equality, not of obligation, between partners,"* the PAP's Mikayel Melkumyan said (Melkumyan, 2015). He also highlighted the importance of Armenian-Russian military and technical cooperation as a main component of Armenia's national security.

The **ANC** sees Russia as Armenia's primary partner. *"Russia is the most influential country in the South Caucasus. For Russia this territory is a sphere of strategic vital interests. It is an OSCE Minsk group co-chair country, which is very important for the NKR conflict*

*settlement. Armenia's economy system is largely integrated with Russia. There are 3 million Armenians in Russia. Armenia also depends on it economically. The authorities transformed equal Armenian-Russian relations into a master-vassal relationship, which is a problem,"* party member Arman Musinyan said (Musinyan, 2015).

A member of the **ARF-D**, Artsvik Minasyan, stressed concerns about the large Russian arms sales to Azerbaijan, saying that they could damage traditionally close Russian-Armenian relations. *We have been too yielding on our positions, and as a result, we have started to think that, if we turn something down, we may be punished. It is not like that. We will be respected if we show a certain position. We should provide for Armenia's participation in economic and political life, thus increasing Armenia's weight and changing perceptions. Let us consider Russia as a strategic partner and not with another definition as if Armenia cannot escape to anywhere. We should break this stereotype held by the Russia's authorities"* (Minasyan, 2015).

The consistent development of relations with Russia remains a significant priority for the **ROL** party. *"Armenia's cooperation with Europe or Russia stems from our interests. Both sides understand that we have a lot to give to one other,"* stated the party's vice president, Mher Shahgeldyan (Shahgeldyan, 2014). He added that his political force stands for deeper and more developed relations with Moscow. *"Needless to say, as a strategic partner, we are dealing with Russia in different ways. Our number one priority is security, so how can we ignore the fact that Russian troops are a tour borders, how can we ignore the fact that our main strategic enterprises are joint ventures? In addition, finally, how can we expect a developed economy and industry to grow with high prices of gas and expensive electricity? All of this will happen by deepening relations with Russia,"* stated MP Hovhannes Margaryan (Margaryan, 2015).

Although **Heritage** believes it is necessary to maintain close cooperation with Russia, the party says relations should be reestablished based on respect and common interests. The party spokespersons said Moscow is implementing a policy that does not consider Armenian interests and current relations are based only on economic interests. *"It creates a serious problem. Russia has an*

*important issue, its presence in the Caucasus, and if it loses Armenia, it will lose the whole Caucasus and have problems. By understanding this, Armenia should seek to establish a mutually beneficial partnership with Russia. Armenia must be free in its choice for geopolitical relations. We should avoid situations similar to the EU Association Agreement," Armen Martirosyan told us (Martirosyan, 2014).*

### **Political Parties View of the Diaspora**

Armenian political parties consider the Diaspora as a continuation of the country. A member of the **RPA**, Khosrov Harutyunyan, describes the Diaspora as an "effective ambassador". *"It is not just an economic source: every investment is important for our country and money has no nationality, interest is an interest. Armenia's business environment should be beneficial for everyone. The country of Armenia has the potential to – and should – serve as the backbone of the Diaspora"* (Harutyunyan, 2015).

**The PAP** believes the Diaspora assists the economy – and can also help resolve political issues. *"The Armenian lobby is a powerful thing. Armenia-Diaspora relations will deepen in the future; the parties will be more cooperative if they get to know each other better. The functions of the Ministry of Diaspora should be increased but that should make sense and be calculated,"* states the respondent from the PAP, Mikayel Melkumyan (Melkumyan, 2015).

*"The Diaspora does not exist as a single body; there are communities that have their own problems. Relations with the Diaspora should lead to the country's prosperity: many Armenians come to do business here, and we have the resources to encourage the preservation of national identity,"* the **ANC** spokesman, Arman Musinyan, said (Musinyan, 2015). *"The interest of all Armenians should be the existence of a strong, powerful Armenian Republic. If we are able to make our country prosperous and the Diaspora is also engaged in that task, what more could we want?"* he added.

A major Armenian political force in Diaspora, the **ARF-D**, believes that the slogan "One Homeland, one Nation" should become reality, not merely a political declaration. *"The Diaspora should be*

*engaged in Armenia's domestic policies. It should also take part in the formation of the country's government in order to consider itself as a part of the country. The Diaspora should participate in the activities of the Defense Army. It should be given the opportunity to serve in the Armenian Army,"* stated Giro Manoyan, an ARF-D Bureau member (Manoyan, 2013). Another member of the party, Artsvik Minasyan, said Armenia represents the interests of all Armenians. *"Regardless of whether an Armenian lives in Armenia or in Diaspora, Armenia should pursue the preservation of his/her interest"* (Minasyan, 2015). The senior official added that the Armenian government could not represent the interests of the entire Diaspora. However, Yerevan should at least be the guarantee of their safety.

Creating favorable conditions for Diaspora investors and providing assistance to protect Armenians in the Diaspora are priorities for the **ROL** party. The party's program focuses on the need to consolidate the potential of the three corners of "Armenian triangle" (Armenia, NKR and the Diaspora) to rebuild infrastructure and enhance the potential for national coordination. *"The State must promote a public-targeted repatriation program and provide diplomatic and cultural support for Diaspora Armenians, and support their social and economic interests"* ("Rule of Law" party, 2011). Senior leadership in the party also believes that the government is obliged to encourage and promote Diaspora investments and protect their legitimate rights and interests. *"The Diaspora is our continuation. During our decades of independence, we have not properly utilized the Diaspora's potential. This land belongs to all Armenians and they are entitled to equal rights for citizenship. Of course, we can do more to engage the Diaspora's potential. For instance, the government must maintain language studies abroad and increase the number of Diaspora students in higher educational institutions in Armenia. That is how we can gradually build a strong format for integration,"* party spokesperson Arthur Misakyan said (Misakyan, 2015).

The vice president of the **Heritage** party, Armen Martirosyan, believes that it is time for Armenia to help the Diaspora. *"It has its own problems. The people are in need of urgent assistance. For instance, Syrian Armenians need psychological and financial*

*support. Today Armenia cannot afford such assistance. We should also avoid any assimilation of the Diaspora, which is dangerous. Unfortunately, currently the Diaspora is just a source of support for Armenia. In order to maintain a powerful Diaspora, Armenia needs both financial and human resources, as well as technological development,"* (Martirosyan, 2014).

### **Political Parties Split over CSTO**

Opinions are split among Armenian political parties over membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). **ARPA** MP said the organization suffers from over reliance on Russia. *"For Central Asian countries, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is not interesting at all. The only uniting party in the organization is Russia and this is a problem. The political realization of CSTO must still be developed,"* Khosrov Harutyunyan said (Harutyunyan, 2015). He added that members are not united around issues that are important for their allies.

**PAP** believes that cooperation within the CSTO should not be artificial; it must have real significance for the parties, which is not currently the case. *"Its superficiality hinders intensive cooperation,"* Mikayel Melkumyan told us (Melkumyan, 2015). **The ANC** defines Yerevan's relations with the CSTO as an element of wider Armenian-Russian relations. *"They mainly solve the issue of border protection. Besides, there are other military alliances in Armenia-Russia relations. CSTO is one of the three,"* said Arman Musinyan, the ANC spokesman (Musinyan, 2015).

*"Armenia doesn't have an alternative,"* according to Artsvik Minasyan, a MP from **ARF-D**, who noted that this is due to the lack of other military alliances that Yerevan can join. *"NATO cannot be perceived as such an alternative since there are hostile relations between NATO and CSTO. If we manage to increase our role, CSTO can be used in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution as well,"* he said (Minasyan, 2015).

The **ROL** party, which used to strongly advocate for Armenia's integration to NATO, now believes that CSTO membership aligns with Armenia's interests and is consistent with

the country's national security priorities. The leader<sup>28</sup> of the party, Arthur Baghdasaryan, believes that Armenia-CSTO is basically the "military component of Armenia-Russia relations."

The party's vice president Mher Shahgeldyan underlined that CSTO has a very important role in this region. *"The CSTO military component is of vital importance for our country. Armenia's main political priorities are peace, stability and the normalization of relations with its neighbors. However, destructive policies have prevented the solution of those problems. Azerbaijan and Turkey's destructive approach toward the solution of problems in the South Caucasus doesn't mean we have to give up hope that the region will develop in a spirit of peace and agreement in the future,"* the official said (Shahgeldyan, 2014). He added that all problems in the region should be understood correctly by the organization and *"we will be able to create a joint mechanism with our allies to solve these problems."*

Unlike pro-CSTO political parties, the pro-western **Heritage** maintains the alliance is not beneficial because many of its members pursue anti-Armenian policies. *"Within its scope they discuss questions that are not proper for a military-political alliance. In matters of defense, we should rely on international cooperation. The EU does not have a defense system, thus if it is possible to establish defensive cooperation with individual EU members in a bilateral format, I am in favor of it. I also prefer to cooperate with China on this issue,"* stated Armen Martirosyan, a senior Heritage leader (Martirosyan, 2014).

### **Political Parties Largely Positive on NATO**

Armenian parties, including the ruling party, believe the country should pursue close cooperation with NATO – as long as it does not undermine relations with Russia or CSTO ally members. Members of the parties note that deepening ties with NATO help Armenia to not only to "modernize" its armed forces but also to act

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<sup>28</sup> Arthur Baghdasaryan occupied the position of Secretary of National Security Council from 2008-2014 and nowadays presides over the CSTO Academy of Armenia.



as a bridge between the U.S.-led alliance and the CSTO. Most respondents underscored that, even as a CSTO member, Armenia has also cooperated with NATO to strengthen international peace and security as part of international peacekeeping missions. Armenia's foreign policy is also directed at developing friendly relations with the US and strengthening specific relations with France.

Eduard Sharmazanov, from the ruling **RPA**, said that Armenia pursues active and effective relations with the North-Atlantic Alliance, adding that cooperation with NATO is important since eventually Russia-West relations will improve, certain transformations will take place that could benefit Armenia. *"We are given an opportunity to be on the border between these two organizations since we cooperate with the CSTO, and we are making full use of that border status so that there is an exchange of experience from one organization to the other,"* the vice speaker of the parliament said (Sharmazanov, 2013).

The **PAP's** Mikayel Melkumyan noted, however, that the future of Armenia's relations with NATO is far from clear. *"You know, it is hard to expect relations will further develop in the current situation. You are well aware of the peacekeeping activity in which our country is involved. The obstacles for cooperation depend on Russia; I do not see other problems. I think that NATO understands Armenia's decision and will support our country as much as they can, but it would be incorrect to expect more from this cooperation"* (Melkumyan, 2015).

**ANC** believes that Armenia-NATO relations have a limited future. *"Today we have already reached its limit,"* the party spokesman Arman Musinyan said (Musinyan, 2015). The biggest obstacle for Armenia-NATO cooperation, according to a member of the **ARF-D's** political council, its supreme body, is Armenia's membership of the CSTO. *"NATO can be an interesting partner as well but Turkey's current role causes concerns for us,"* stated Artsvik Minasyan (Minasyan, 2015). *"The further development of Armenia-NATO relationships is based on Armenia's interests"* noted a **ROL** party representative, Mher Shahgeldyan, who stressed that now it is important that Yerevan maintains effective political understanding and cooperation with NATO. In Armenia-NATO relationships, implementation of the country's Individual Partnership Action Plan

and Armenia's role in peacekeeping processes stems from Yerevan's national interests. *"Our partnership with NATO is one of the most important components of regional security,"* (Shahgeldyan, 2014).

**Heritage** maintains that the sphere of cooperation with NATO may expand in the future. *"There are obstacles for more developed relations: Armenia's membership of CSTO, Armenia-Russia cooperation. These are great issues in NATO-Armenia relations,"* told us Armen Martirosyan (Martirosyan, 2014).

### **Political Parties Say Relations with Middle East Need to Be Preserved**

There is consensus among Armenian political parties that ties with the Middle East, especially with Iran and Syria, are important for the country's economic and political development. Khosrov Harutyunyan from **the RPA** believes that historic Armenian communities in the Middle East help the country maintain relations in the region. *"Armenia should preserve good relations with Middle Eastern countries. We have a strong heritage there and we should remember that it represents a big market,"* (Harutyunyan, 2015). "Further developments in that region may create some expectations for certain relations. Currently it is difficult for me to tell what kind of cooperation it will be," stated **PAP** representative Mikayel Melkumyan (Melkumyan, 2015).

A senior member of the **ANC** party, Arman Musinyan, said that Armenian communities in the Middle East are a significant part of relations with these countries. *"Those relations have no special place in Armenia's foreign policy. Maybe they can have potential in the economic sphere. As for important relations, we can highlight two countries: Iran and Syria."* (Musinyan, 2015)

**ARF-D** noted that the existence of the terrorist organization, the Islamic State, creates an additional challenge for Armenia's relations with the region. *"The immediate solution of the conflict and Syrian crisis is in our interests. We have thousands of Armenians, as well as cultural heritage sites in that region. In addition, as we are at the crossroads of the region, we need to implement a stable and long-term policy with those countries,"* Artsvik Minasyan told us

(Minasyan, 2015).

The **ROL** party also pays special attention to the Diaspora in the Middle East and highlights the importance of the "Armenian factor" in those societies. *"Armenian communities are a bridge for promoting relations between Armenia and Middle Eastern countries. The organized inter-community institutional structure allows them to maintain their national roots; language, culture, and religion. They do not live in ghettos. They are fully integrated in their host societies, occupying high social positions and, thus, have contributed in building good relations with countries in that region,"* the party's vice president Mher Shahgeldyan said (Shahgeldyan, 2014). He added that ROL completely supports a strategy of establishing high-level economic and political relations with the Middle East.

Having good relations with all Islamic countries is a principal issue for **Heritage**, but the strongest relations should be with countries that are already home to Armenian communities. *"Those countries do not exercise an anti-Armenian policy, which is already positive. We can have real progress in our cultural, economic, educational spheres if we cooperate with those countries,"* stated Armen Martirosyan (Martirosyan, 2014).

### **Characteristics of Armenia's Foreign Policy**

Officially, Armenia's foreign policy has several goals: it is aimed at strengthening the country's external security; maintaining favorable external conditions for the development of the country; presenting the positions of Armenia on the international arena; increasing the efficiency of protecting the interests of Armenia and its citizens abroad; deepening Armenia's engagement in international organizations and processes; strengthening cooperation with friendly and partner states; resolving regional problems; and creating an atmosphere of cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RA, n.d.).

During the qualitative survey, representatives from the six parliament factions spoke about their priorities and evaluated current challenges and tendencies in the country's foreign policy.

## Foreign Policy Priorities

The ruling party's program identifies four main foreign policy priorities: the regulation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; international recognition of the Armenian Genocide; the full integration of Armenia into the European family; and further development of relations with its strategic partners. This priority was modified by the **RPA** when it defended its decision to join the EAEU (Pre-Electoral Program of "Republican" party, 2013). The **PAP** foreign policy priorities focus on the recognition for the right of self-determination for the people of Karabakh; the coordinated development of Armenia-Diaspora relations and the international recognition of Armenian Genocide ("Prosperious Armenia" party, 2011).

The **ANC** believes that Armenian foreign policy must be directed at strengthening and deepening good-neighborly relations with Russia, Georgia and Iran, and making constructive efforts toward reconciliation with Turkey and Azerbaijan. The party advocates over coming Armenia's political and economic isolation, and increasing the country's involvement in international and regional economic organizations ("Armenian National Congress" party, 2013).

**The ANC** backs the right of self-determination for Artsakh Armenians but, unlike their colleagues, the party supports compromise solutions for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The **ARF-D's** priorities call for the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide; the return of territories Armenia lost in the Ottoman Empire; a resolution to the Karabakh conflict; and strengthening the national identity of the Diaspora (Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutyun, 2011). **The ROL** party advocates active engagement in European structures in order to gain membership to the EU, as well as the consistent development of friendly relationships with Russia and deepening relationships with USA ("Rule of Law" party, 2011).

The opposition **Heritage** Party aims to put foreign policy principles on the proper track for a sovereign nation. In this way, Armenia could eliminate the threat of being annexed to any country,

the party believes. The party also advocates cooperation with European organizations; establishing bilateral relations with European countries; EU integration; and cooperation with Russia, the CIS, Western and Asian countries ("Heritage" party, 2012).

### **Factors Influencing Foreign Policy**

Overall respondents said many factors influence Armenia's foreign policy, including the geographic realities; the regional situation and relations with neighbors; global developments; the country's small size; the lack of resources; the existence of the Diaspora and the uniqueness of the Armenian nation.

A member of the **RPA** said, *"The most negative factors are the absence of the outlet to the sea and neighbors who threaten our development. Being a small country is not an issue for me. One of the engines of foreign policy is integration in international processes. Instead of rejecting global developments, we should react to them in the right way,"* Khosrov Harutyunyan said (Harutyunyan, 2015). He added that globalization and global developments are making it more difficult to choose which alliances to join. *"Today even the US authorities are not able to confront globalization realities by themselves. Armenia was able to choose its path for integration. And we chose EAEU, which I think was a right and reasonable decision,"* Harutyunyan said.

Members of the **PAP** note the blockade is a challenge. *"Today political stability is impossible as our region is full of threats. Armenia is not isolated from global developments. We can benefit from being a small country. The Diaspora is also a positive factor, as it has significant resources, which can contribute to the development of Armenia,"* stated Mikayel Melkumyan (Melkumyan, 2015). *"Armenian foreign policy lacks the characteristics of national identity. Today states with different religions have good relations with each other. All the other factors: language, religion, cultural heritage, etc., have a serious influence on foreign policy,"* **ANC** spokesperson Arman Musinyan said (Musinyan, 2015). He highlighted the political axiom that foreign policy is the continuation of internal policy. *"So domestic policy is also an important factor.*

*The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is the main challenge for Armenia. The country's foreign policy should devote its efforts to resolving this problem," he added.*

An MP from the **ARF-D** party stressed Armenia's inherent challenges - a small state with no access to the sea. *"The Diaspora influences Armenia's foreign policy, but it is another matter how we consider the role of the Diaspora. The Diaspora is dedicated to the Armenian cause and is aimed at preserving our national identity. It is not an accident that the Armenian Diaspora was the first to protest against the Armenian- Turkish protocols,"* stated Artsvik Minasyan (Minasyan, 2015). *"The development of any nation requires more active engagement in global development processes, while also ensuring the protection of self-identity and the security of state sovereignty,"* stated **ROL's** vice president (Shahgeldyan, 2014). *"Armenia has a lack of natural recourses, that's why we must attract the international community with our liberal, powerful and independent economic climate, and with our democratic and functional political and social institutions,"* stated Mher Shahgeldyan (Shahgeldyan, 2014). He stressed that these circumstances have drastically reduced Armenia's room to maneuver in foreign policy.

The vice-president of the **Heritage** party agreed that closed borders with two of Armenia's four neighbors hurt the country's ability to develop. *"Basically we are in a land blockade. Georgia has its problems with Russia, which of course impact Armenia. Besides, the development of the Islamic State in the region is another problem. In many cases, global developments are decisive. The Diaspora is valuable for our foreign policy. The territorial capacity and the intellectual potential of two Armenian states, Armenia and NKR, are enough to conduct an effective foreign policy,"* states Armen Martirosyan (Martirosyan, 2014).

## The Primary Challenges for Foreign Policy

What are the most important challenges for Armenian foreign policy? The majority of the political parties questioned see the Karabakh conflict and relations with neighboring countries as the biggest tests facing the country today. The ruling **RPA** sees the establishment of normal relations with neighboring countries as the most pressing problem. *"Relations with Turkey and the conflict with Azerbaijan are challenges, as well. Through the process of democratization, both Baku and Ankara can earn a positive image in the international community. That principle is also important for relations with NATO and Russia,"* stated Khosrov Harutyunyan (Harutyunyan, 2015). The ruling party member believes that the main priorities of country's foreign policy are correct. *"We have been able to maintain relations with EU, which became possible due to our efforts as Europeans. The maintenance of good relations with Europe, and the strengthening of cooperation with China and Iran, are rational too,"* (Harutyunyan, 2015).

**PAP** considers the peaceful settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as the international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide, to be the major challenges facing Armenia's foreign policy. A member of the party, Mikayel Melkumyan, said that while the current government is working to address those two issues, *"it is another matter how effective these activities are. To effectively solve the challenges of our foreign policy, we need to be more disciplined in relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey"* (Melkumyan, 2015).

The **ANC** views regulating the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as the country's biggest challenge. The second is the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations and the third is the ability to build proper relations with major international powers, according to the party. *"In order to overcome those challenges, political courage is needed because authorities who choose the path of solving the problems tend to lose power,"* stated ANC party spokesperson Arman Musinyan (Musinyan, 2015). The **ARF-D** also believes international recognition for the Armenian Genocide and Nagorno-Karabakh should be the main priorities of Armenia's foreign policy. *"The state lacks a national ideology concept. This drawback allows other*

*countries to repress us and we are not able give them a deft response. In foreign policy, the major role should be given to increasing the professionalism of diplomatic missions and every embassy or diplomatic representation should have its plan of actions to express its interests,"* stated Artsvik Minasyan, a leader in the ARF-D party (Minasyan, 2015).

Artur Baghdasaryan, the leader and founder of the **ROL** party, stated that today the main challenge for the country's foreign policy is the fact that Armenia is not included in regional projects. He blamed Azerbaijan and Turkey for "excluding" Yerevan from regional infrastructure projects like energy pipelines. The former governmental coalition partner also criticized the current authorities over their lack of initiatives in foreign policy. *"In particular, now we don't have dependable people who can implement strategic programs with Russia. The same applies to the West. Armenia-EU relations are in a deep deadlock. Now, authorities hurry for revitalization,"* he said (Hartak.am, 2016).

Senior officials in the **Heritage** party argue that Armenia's main foreign policy challenge is relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey, which have isolated the country. Preserving the country's sovereignty is also vital: *"Relations with Russia should not lead to dependence. The other challenges are Armenia's integration to the EAEU and its decision to abandon the Association Agreement with the EU,"* Armen Martirosyan, the party's vice president, said (Martirosyan, 2014). He added that government's current policy falls short when it concerns challenges facing Armenia. *"In relations with Azerbaijan, Armenia is extremely cautious, which has lead to Azerbaijan's obscene activities. Until recently, Russian military assistance to Azerbaijan was not worrying for Armenian authorities and it is only now that this issue starts to concern them. In our relations with Turkey, we have protocols that strengthened Turkey but gave Armenia nothing,"* (Martirosyan, 2014).



## Principles of foreign policy

Officially Armenian foreign policy is based on complementarity and engagement principles (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RA, n.d.). How valid are those principles and how consistently does Armenia follow those principles?

*"A multidirectional policy is justified and reasonable,"* according party member Khosrov Harutyunyan (Harutyunyan, 2015). He added that, for instance, relations between the EU and Armenia cannot evolve due to the country's ties with Russia. This means the country needs to find foreign policy strategies that compliment - not contradict - one another. *"The principle of a counterblow should be used properly in our military area,"* he stated, noting that the Russian military base in Armenia *"comes out of our national interests, it guarantees our security"* (Harutyunyan, 2015).

**PAP** considers the complementarity principle to be an objective choice. *"Our neighboring countries dictate our partnerships. Azerbaijan is preparing for war, which leads to a military situation. Our partners in the EU understand Armenia's decision. Armenia's membership in the EAEU was unexpected for our EU partners but, according to my calculations, this new market will also be profitable for us, considering the fact that it will take less time for Armenia to meet EAEU standards,"* party MP Mikayel Melkumyan said (Melkumyan, 2015).

He added that "security" is a principle, which has vital role in Armenia's relations with partners. At the same time, the Party official spoke incredulously about whether authorities implement a foreign policy based on national interest. *"Because of current poor economic condition, the authorities are worried about strengthening their posture rather than following national interests. I can hardly find any examples of implementation of national interest; there are no such examples,"* (Melkumyan, 2015).

**ANC** agrees that the principle of "balancing" is indispensable for Armenia. But the party questions how the government is implementing the policy. *"The balance was broken when we spoke in favor of the Association Agreement, but the situation got worse because, in the end, we chose Russia, putting us in a position of dependence (on Moscow). The balance was broken,"* according to

Arman Musinyan (Musinyan, 2015).

He added that Yerevan should establish good neighborly relations with all neighboring countries. *"Fifty percent of country's trade comes from its neighbors, and that is just the economic part. There is also the area of security. If you have good relations with neighbors, there is no threat to your security. Armenia should establish good relations with all the great powers in the world, including Russia, EU, USA, China, etc.; we should be able to combine two different security systems, such as NATO-CSTO. As a country we are more allied with CSTO, but that does not exclude good relations with NATO,"* (Musinyan, 2015).

The **ARF-D** believes foreign policy should be derived from Armenia's national interests and national ideology. *"There is no complementarity principle [in action] now, but some of its elements exist. The implementation of engagement continues, but there are both advantages and disadvantages. We cannot separate our foreign policy from the aims of our security policy. Our membership with the EAEU was inevitable. The alternative, signing the (EU) Association Agreement, was not really an alternative. Our involvement was forced. But now, if we are a member of EAEU, which is itself a geopolitical rather than economical union, the complementarity principle cannot be considered as a policy,"* stated Artsvik Minasyan (Minasyan, 2015).

The **ROL** leadership prioritizes an innovative and flexible foreign policy. *"The headline of our foreign relations must be the following: the improvement of a strategic partnership with Russia; widening of political and military cooperation within CIS and CSTO; increasing the level of our security; the implementation of anew association partnership within the EU neighborhood policy and NATO's Individual Partnership Action Plan. If we don't see such satisfactory and effective results, then we can't speak about any principle in our foreign policy,"* stated the ROL leadership (Hartak.am, 2016). They also believe that Armenia should pursue a proactive foreign policy, and not just be content with the status quo.

A senior member of **Heritage**, Armen Martirosyan, thinks that Armenia has neither a complementary, nor a diversified foreign policy. At this moment, he believes, Armenia is under Russia's command, serving foreign interests. *"Armenian foreign policy should*

*be aimed at the protection of state interests; state interests should not suffer if the need arises to change our government,"* (Martirosyan, 2014). *"Our authorities are incapable of solving any issue concerning the protection of our interests,"* said Martirosyan (Martirosyan, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

In summary, our research outlines the position of Armenia political parties towards the country's neighbors, as well as regional and global power centers. We sought to show their position and beliefs towards external actors; to show how they characterize and view Armenia's "friends," "allies" and/or "enemies"; and to reveal the correlation between parliamentary discourse and public attitudes in this field. Armenian political elites believe that they – as representatives of the nation – share some similarities with their neighbors, but exist in unique circumstances. For more clarity we have divided the research results into categories and broken them down by each party's position:

### **All parties (five opposition parties and one ruling party) agree that**

- Armenia has to survive in unique geographic and geopolitical circumstances that include a lack of natural resources;
- The country has been forced to live with closed borders, which isolates it from regional economic projects;
- The government must implement a balanced and complementary policy toward regional states and superpowers;
- The consequences of the Armenian Genocide still exist, which affects states and influences the country's development;
- Armenia is involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to guarantee the security of the Karabakh population and to balance the Turk-Azerbaijani "blockade " against Armenia;
- Armenia believes the OSCE Minsk group is the only legal and competent body that has an internationally authorized mandate

- for the peaceful regulation of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict;
- Armenia seeks good relations with its neighbors and supports a future with open and transparent relations with them, especially Turkey; Armenia has a diverse, dynamic and powerful Diaspora, which is the country's informal "visible hand" abroad and an advocate of national and state interests;

### **The parties disagree over relations with neighbors and military alliances:**

#### **I. Armenia's friends**

- The ruling Republican and five opposition parties recognize the fact that, as Armenia's "strategic and security partner", Russia enjoys a high level of political, economic and military-technical relations with Yerevan. In addition, Russia is seen as an "ally", who jointly controls the Armenian border;
- All parties agree that Armenia benefits from inexpensive Russian military assistance, but they are upset by Moscow-Baku arms deals;
- Two opposition parties, the ANC and Heritage, advocate "more equal relations" with Russia and believe Yerevan is too dependent on Moscow;
- Two other opposition parties, the ARF-D and PAP, believe the authorities can work more efficiently and increase Russian investments in the Armenian economy;
- The ruling party sees Georgia as a friendly state and opposition parties agree Armenia needs good relations with Georgia; they maintain Tbilisi must improve living conditions for ethnic Armenians living in the country.
- All political forces agree Iran plays an important role for Armenia, and they view Tehran as a "good friend";
- Armenia has friendly relations with Europe, USA, Asian and Middle Eastern countries. But the opposition parties believe the government is not doing enough to support relations with these countries;

## II. **Armenia's enemies**

### **Turkey**

- Every parliamentary party has a different view on how Armenia should handle relations with Ankara. However, all of them maintain that while the recognition of Armenian Genocide is not a precondition for normalization of relation, it can't be removed from the Armenian agenda;
- ANC maintains it is essential that Turkey recognizes the Genocide, but the issue must be removed from the agenda for the sake of the normalization of relations;
- All parties agree that Armenia and Turkey can overcome their tragic history if Ankara ends its hostile policy towards Armenia; improves democracy and the freedom of speech in its own country; and opens its border with Armenia;
- All parties agree that Turkey cannot play a role in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict due to its close relations with Azerbaijan;
- The parties have very different opinions about territorial claims in historically Armenian parts of Turkey. ARF-D advocates suing Ankara over Yerevan's claims to territory while other parties, including the RPA, the PAP and the ROL, say it is "premature" to discuss the issue.

### **Azerbaijan**

- All parties maintain that Nagorno-Karabakh will never be part of Azerbaijan and cannot return to the status it had in the Soviet Union;
- Although NKR representatives do not participate in the conflict resolution negotiations, the final decision belongs to the Karabakh people, who have voted for independence twice by referendum; Yerevan is only the "security provider" for NKR during negotiations;
- Armenia can only establish a neighborly policy with Azerbaijan if Baku accepts the fact that the Armenian population of NKR has the legal and internationally recognized right to self-determination;
- The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can only be resolved through the peaceful framework of the OSCE Minsk group;

- Azerbaijan is violating the fragile ceasefire with Armenia and NKR as well as the negotiations, and refuses to engage in confidence building measures between the conflict sides;
- The ruling RPA and opposition ARF-D state that Karabakh is an extension of Armenia. They state that the recognition of NKR independence by Yerevan is a straightforward process. The opposition ANC believes that the Armenian government must withdraw from the negotiations and allow Karabakh to take its place. The Heritage party believes Armenia must recognize Karabakh as part of Armenia.

### III. **Armenia Seeks Balanced Relations with "Security Guards"**

- All parties agree that Armenia's membership in the CSTO is necessary to guarantee the military security of the state;
- NATO is Armenia's "neighbor," and an influent and effective military union in the region. The tight and close relations with this organization strengthens Armenia's security and interests;
- The parties differ in their position on NATO: while Heritage believes NATO membership could help strengthen Armenia's security, the other parties do not support joining the military alliance at this time.

### IV. **Armenia's "European" and "Eurasian" agendas**

- All parties believe that Armenians are oriented toward the European value system, but they maintain their own at the same time;
- European tools and measurements of development are "strategic instruments" for shaping more democratic institutions and processes;
- Positions on Russia, however, differ. While the ruling party and several opposition parties believe Armenia's geographic proximity to Russia dictates the country's "pragmatic" relationship with Moscow, two parties - ANC and Heritage - maintain that the government's policy of being both European and Eurasian is flawed.

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## **ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

### **Introduction**

The meaning of public mood in foreign policy decision-making is one of the most controversial and one of the most interesting subjects of scientific debate. A great many studies are devoted to the study of the influence of public opinion on foreign policy decision-making<sup>29</sup>. In this context, there are several influential factors: the issues, time, the foreign policy agenda, external actors, the types of decisions, the types of political regime, etc. (Mintz, A., DeRouen, K. Jr., 2010).

In the case of Armenia, we are dealing with a number of specific factors. Its geopolitical state influences the country's foreign policy in many ways: Armenia as a small, land-locked, economically "fragile" country in a complex and troubled neighbourhood, which is subject to competition between regional and world powers. These factors have a decisive impact not only on the adoption of government decisions, but also on the formation of public opinion on specific foreign policy issues.

Moreover, most of these issues (the country's foreign policy orientation, relations with regional neighbours) are securitized – Armenia's current foreign policy is extremely politicized and seen as one of the most important components of national security. This fact directly or indirectly affects public preferences in foreign policy matters. This might explain why proposals that would radically change the country's foreign policy are seen as marginal, and it is widely believed that major changes could lead to internal political

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<sup>29</sup> It is logical that in a democracy, the public has more access to important information about the government's foreign policy, as well as more opportunities to use direct (mass actions) or indirect (media) influence to pressure foreign policy decision-making. In addition, at times of crisis, the public is more mobilized and the government is more inclined to enlist public support and avoid domestic conflicts.

destabilization and could ultimately weaken the country's external security.

This study seeks to understand the center of "geopolitical gravity" for the population of Armenia; who Armenians define as the country's main friend and enemy; how the public views the country's major partners; and society's views on the country's relations with its allies and enemies. Many studies on the influence of public opinion on foreign policy decisions are based on experiences in developed democracies, and emphasize the ability of the people to influence policy from the "bottom-up". Armenia, however, is still a country in transition and public opinion lacks the power to have any real influence on foreign policy making.

There is no reason to believe that Armenia's foreign policy will change in the near future, or that Armenian society<sup>30</sup> will create an effective mechanism to influence policy makers over their foreign policy decision. The unity shown in the April 2016 clashes with Azeri forces over Nagorno-Karabakh indicated, however, that when under attack, Armenian society and political elites can put aside all internal differences and quickly mobilize to provide human, material, political, and psychological assistance to the government to help fight against foreign threats.

There were several significant implications from the April clashes: first, Armenian society was disappointed by the level of support exhibited by some of its allies; consequently, these countries have lost a degree of public trust. While we do not believe that this will change the hierarchy and the balance of public preferences in the selection of Armenia's main friends and enemies, it will cause more citizens to believe that Armenia does not have any external allies.

Understanding the public attitudes towards official foreign policy is important both for academic and practical reasons. In addition, it is also an indicator of the level of public support for the government's decisions and initiatives. This can serve as the basis or a means to legitimate official policy. The main source of data for this

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<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of this article, Armenian society refers to the population of the Republic of Armenia. Armenians living in Karabakh are referred to as Karabakh society and Armenians living abroad are referred to as Diaspora Armenians.

study is the public opinion surveys conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre – the Caucasus Barometer (CB); Eurasian Development Bank’s Centre for Integration Studies Integration Barometer (IB) and the EU Neighbourhood Barometer (EU NB), as well as the data from Barometer.am (YB) and APR Group (APRG).

There are advantages and disadvantages to using these research tools. The advantage of **CB** is its huge online database, which includes data from 2008 to the present, which allows the comparison of the public's responses. There are two main disadvantages to using this tool, however: on some important issues (such as country’s main friends and enemies), this tool registers only single answers, and the CB does not include all the issues that are necessary for the scope of our study.

The **IB** database also includes surveys’ results since 2011. Its main advantage is that it registers multiple answers. The disadvantages are that the social and demographic survey data are only partially available, and here, too, some important issues were not included in the survey itself. The **EU NB** provides details comparative data relating to the EU. However, this narrow focus is also a disadvantage. In addition, the ability to detect correlations with socio-demographic data is absent. The **YB** provides an opportunity to identify correlations with socio-demographic data, but the surveys are relatively new (since 2014) and only include responses from residents of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. The **APRG** survey provides detailed data, but only concerning the country’s orientation towards Russia and the West. In addition, this study was conducted only twice - in 2014 and 2015, and it there is not enough data to identify trends.

The disadvantages of these instruments made the comparison of results and / or addition of missing data very difficult and sometimes even impossible. Nevertheless, the data available has enabled us to identify a valuable overall picture of the public mood and trends on some important foreign policy issues.

## General Geopolitical Orientation

As noted above, officially, Armenia conducts a complementary foreign policy. It is worth noting that the public surveys indicate Armenian society supports the country's foreign policy and the general provisions of the National Security Strategy. In comparison with other post-Soviet countries, Armenia has an average index of attraction<sup>31</sup> in relation to post-Soviet space and the European Union, according to IB - 2015 (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 84-92). However, **Table 1** clearly shows that, in **political** matters, public opinion in Armenia over the past four years has been tightly focused on post-Soviet space: in these matters the CIS has maintained a stable dominance over other centres of gravity. Concerning the **economy**, however, Armenians lean toward Europe. The study also highlights that, in **socio-cultural** terms, Armenia, along with Ukraine, is one of the most "self-sufficient" countries in post-Soviet space: in these countries, the number of respondents who are not interested in other cultures is higher than the number of respondents interested in cultures of other countries.

A comparison of the structure of the cumulative indexes of attraction uncovers two interesting trends. First, it is obvious that a "competition" is underway between the three spaces: an increase in the index of attraction to the CIS means a reduction of indexes of the EU and "other countries." Conversely, a decrease in the index of attraction to the CIS means an increase of the indexes of the EU and "other countries." Second, although the index of the CIS is always higher than that of other centres, the index itself is not stable: the index registered high levels of attraction to the CIS in Armenia in 2012 and 2014, but the number fell in both 2013 and 2015.

The index shows that Armenia is *politically* highly oriented on the post-Soviet space, which, in this case, means Russia. *Culturally*, however, the country's orientation is slightly more pro-European and

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<sup>31</sup> According to the IB methodology, the cumulative index of attraction consists of three separate indices of attraction toward the EU, CIS and "Other countries" - political, economic and cultural. Each of these indexes, in its turn, is based on respondents' answers to three relevant group of questions.

economically, Armenia is pro-CIS.

**Table 1. Armenia's Indexes of Attraction to Different Categories of Countries\***

		Year	Centres of Attraction			
			CIS	EU	Other	None
Spheres of Attraction	Political	2012	<b>0.63</b>	0.20	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.09</i>
		2013	<b>0.56</b>	0.18	0.10	0.16
		2014	<b>0.65</b>	<i>0.09</i>	<i>0.05</i>	0.20
		2015	<b>0.58</b>	0.16	<i>0.07</i>	0.20
	Economic	2012	0.29	0.30	0.23	0.17
		2013	0.29	0.33	0.30	<i>0.09</i>
		2014	0.34	0.28	0.26	0.12
		2015	0.30	0.30	0.30	<i>0.10</i>
	Socio-Cultural	2012	0.33	0.34	0.16	0.17
		2013	0.31	0.35	0.21	0.13
		2014	0.33	0.30	0.18	0.19
		2015	0.30	0.33	0.20	0.16
Cumulative		2012	<b>0.42</b>	0.28	0.16	0.15
		2013	0.38	0.29	0.21	0.12
		2014	<b>0.44</b>	0.23	0.16	0.17
		2015	0.39	0.26	0.19	0.15

\* **Bold** marked numbers are the highest and *italic* marked numbers are the lowest.

### Armenia's Main Friends

As noted above, in the **political dimension**<sup>32</sup>, Armenia's population is predominately focused on *post-Soviet space*. According to the IB-2015, this is the region where Armenia's citizens identify the country's major ally – as well as two of its main enemies. The vast majority of the population perceive post-Soviet countries as friends that can help in times of need. More specifically, 86% of respondents consider Russia to be a friendly country, which will be

<sup>32</sup> Public perception of friendliness and hostility of other countries, the vectors of political and military cooperation etc.

helpful at difficult times. France came in at a distant second, with 30% of respondents, and neighbouring Georgia came in third, with 27% of respondents (see *Table 2*).

**Table 2. IB 2012-2015: Country's main friend (%)**

	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Russia</b>	90	91	87	86
<b>France</b>	45	37	14	30
<b>Georgia</b>	19	21	15	27
<b>None</b>	4	4	10	10

However, *Table 2* indicates the rankings are far from stable: first, over the past three years Russia's rating has been falling. This trend became increasingly visible after Armenia joined the Russian-led Customs Union, and it has continued even after the country joined the Eurasian Economic Union. Second, 2012-2014, France's positive rating fell, but in 2015 its ranking doubled among respondents. Third, Georgia's ranking is unstable: in 2014 the country's rating fell by 6 points, but in 2015 its ranking increased by 12 percent.

These trends were reflected in the CB 2011-2015 surveys. For example, according to CB-2015 data, 75 percent of respondents believe Russia is Armenia's closest friend – the lowest rate since 2011(see *Table 3*)<sup>33</sup>.

**Table 3. CB 2011-2015: Country's main friend (%)**

	2011	2012	2013	2015	Change
<b>Russia</b>	81	77	83	75	-6
<b>France</b>	7	9	5	5	-2
<b>Georgia</b>	4	2	2	<5 <sup>34</sup>	<5
<b>None</b>	4	4	4	11	+7

*Sources:* (Caucasus Barometer 2011 Armenia (1), 2013);

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<sup>33</sup> Probably, the differences of IB and CB ratings could be explained by the fact, that "Integration-Barometer" permits simultaneously multiple answers, and "Caucasus-Barometer" registers only one answer.

<sup>34</sup> In CB 2015, Georgia, USA, Germany, Iran and other countries were grouped to "Other", which together received only 5%.

(Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (4), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (11), 2013) (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (2), 2016)

The surveys also found that Armenians tend to trust post-Soviet countries for military assistance. The IB-2015 found Armenia (82 percent) is second only to Kyrgyzstan among 12 post-Soviet countries that look to Russia for military-political support in times of war. France and the USA came in at a distant second and third, with 14 percent and 9 percent respectively.

The survey results also indicate that, for the majority of respondents, Armenia is a security consumer, not a security provider: for instance, just 46 percent of Armenians believe the country should help Russia militarily in times of war. The number is even less for Georgia – 10 percent – and France – 7 percent. Moreover, 49 percent of respondents do not think that any foreign country merits Armenia’s political and military support (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 34-35) (see *Table 4*).

**Table 4. Armenia Can Expect/Needs to Provide Support From/To These Countries (%)**

		<b>Expect support from</b>	<b>Provide support to</b>
<b>Post-Soviet</b>	2012	88	63
	2013	87	59
	2014	82	58
	2015	84	49
<b>European</b>	2012	23	10
	2013	30	12
	2014	13	5
	2015	15	8
<b>Other</b>	2012	9	5
	2013	25	9
	2014	12	4
	2015	11	4
<b>No one/DK</b>	2012	8	28
	2013	9	44
	2014	16	40
	2015	15	49



It is interesting to note that Russia has maintained its role as Armenia's most trusted ally despite the fact that it is the main supplier of weapons to Azerbaijan – Armenia's military adversary. (Wezeman P.D., Wezeman S.T., 2015, p. 7)

While the public has increasingly shown its concern about this situation, especially against the background of periodic clashes between Azeri and Armenian forces, only a small percent of respondents say Yerevan should break its relations with Moscow over this issue. (Barometer.am (3), 2015) (see **Table 5**).

**Table 5. As a response to the fact, that Russia sells weapons to Azerbaijan, Armenian authorities should ... (%)**

Negotiate this issue with Russia	47.3
Not to react at all	34.4
Condemn Russia officially	7.4
Demand from Russia some compensation	5.5
Break off relations with Russia	2.3
Don't know	3.2

There are some signs that the situation could change following the April 2016 four-day war between Armenian and Azeri forces. While 66 percent of respondents expected Russian support if Azerbaijan attacked Nagorno-Karabakh, according to the 2015 Barometer.am (Barometer.am (5), 2015), April events clearly show, that Armenian society had unreasonably high expectations from Russia, especially after Russia stated it would continue selling weapons to Azerbaijan even following the clashes (Reuters, 2016).

### **Armenia's Main Enemies**

All public opinion surveys indicate Armenia's citizens consistently perceive two enemies threatening the country – Azerbaijan and Turkey – which aligns with the official position.

The public's view differs, however, in how they assess the two countries' degree of hostility: the public assessment of the degree of "hostility" of Azerbaijan is higher than that of Turkey: given the possibility of multiple answers (IB, YB), "indexes of

hostility" for these countries are higher and closer.

When respondents can only choose one answer (CB), the majority perceives Azerbaijan as the country's main enemy. As shown in **Table 6**, the results of the CB survey (2012-2015) indicate that more than half of the respondents consider only Azerbaijan to be Armenia's biggest enemy. The IB (2012-2015) and the 2014 YB survey results show, however, that with the possibility of multiple answers, the overwhelming majority considers both countries as hostile to Armenia.

**Table 6. Armenia's Main Enemy (%)**

	<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>CB 2012</b>	63	32
<b>IB 2012</b>	94	71
<b>CB 2013</b>	66	28
<b>IB 2013</b>	94	66
<b>IB 2014</b>	92	67
<b>IB 2015</b>	90	72
<b>CB 2015</b>	76	18
<b>YB 2014 (1<sup>st</sup> answer)</b>	68	20
<b>YB 2014 (2<sup>nd</sup> answer)</b>	27	71

**Sources:** (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (3), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (10), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (3), 2016); (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015); (Barometer.am (4), 2014)

The perception of Azerbaijan and Turkey as hostile countries is shared across all groups, regardless of gender, age or background.

Moreover, according to a special survey conducted by the CRRC in 2014 (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 19), 77 percent of respondents believes that Turkey pursues a hostile policy toward Armenia, and 82 percent of respondents believes that Turkey cannot be trusted. Only 25 percent of respondents said that Turkey's foreign policy toward Armenia is more favourable today than it was 100 years ago (see **Table 7**).

**Table 7. Attitude towards following statements regarding Turkey (%)**

	Fully agree	Rather agree	Equally dis/agree	Rather not agree	Don't agree at all
Turkey cannot be trusted	70	12	7	4	7
Turkey pursues hostile policies towards Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh	57	20	10	7	6
Turkey's official policy differs from the position of the Turkish people	20	26	32	11	11

However, a comparison of the results of CB (2010) and CRRC (2014) (Grigoryan A., 2015) indicates certain changes in public perceptions: For example, the number of those who believe that Turks have a positive attitude towards Armenians has nearly doubled. In addition, the number of respondents who believe that Turks have a neutral attitude toward them increased by about 10 percent, and the number who answered that Turks have a negative attitude toward Armenians decreased<sup>35</sup> almost by 20 percent. (see *Table 8*)

**Table 8. Turkey's population's general attitude towards Armenians (%)**

	CB 2010	CRRC 2014
<b>Absolutely negative</b>	32	19
<b>Rather negative</b>	30	25
<b>Neutral</b>	15	26
<b>Rather positive</b>	14	29
<b>Very positive</b>	3	2

<sup>35</sup> There is no data on how public perception has changed since the April clashes (BBC, 2016) although Turkish support for Azerbaijan might have behavior of Turkey during the four-day war.

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2010 Armenia (2), 2013); (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 20)

Responses to the surveys also indicate that distrust in society toward Azerbaijanis and citizens of Turkey runs deeper than just issues of security. The CB survey data from 2009 to 2013 show that a stable majority of respondents does not support doing business with Azerbaijanis and Turks, and a stable majority opposes marriages with them (see *Table 9*). It is noteworthy that Azerbaijanis and Turks are the only nations with which the majority of respondents disapprove business dealings.

**Table 9. Attitude towards business and marriage with Turks and Azerbaijanis (%)**

	CB 2010		CB 2011		CB 2012		CB 2013		CB 2015	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
<b>Business with Turks</b>	45	53	40	57	39	59	31	67	28	69
<b>Business with Azerbaijanis</b>	34	64	32	64	32	66	22	76	18	79
<b>Woman marrying Turks</b>	8	91	9	90	7	92	4	95	5	94
<b>Woman marrying Azerbaijanis</b>	9	91	9	90	7	92	4	96	5	94

*Source:* The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. "Caucasus Barometer Armenia" 2010-2015. "Approval of doing business with Turks/Azerbaijanis" & "Approval of women marrying Turks/Azerbaijanis", Retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets/>, accessed on 15 May, 2016

## The Normalization of Relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan

Based on the survey results, Armenians are sceptical about the likelihood that the relations between Armenia and Turkey will normalize in the near future.

For example, comparison of the data of public opinion surveys reveals that the number of those who oppose the **opening of the Armenian-Turkish border** in Armenia has decreased over the last four years (see *Table 10*). The data analysis indicates that Armenian society perceives the possible economic benefits from border opening are more important than its possible threats for national security. According to CB, in 2012 more respondents supported the opening of borders, compared to 58 percent in 2010 and 46 percent in 2012 who feared it would negatively affect Armenia's national security.

However, according to YB data, only 20 percent of the respondents from Yerevan expect the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border in the next five years (Barometer.am (6), 2015).

**Table 10. Support of opening border with Turkey with no precondition (%)**

	CB 2010	CB 2012	CRRC 2014
<b>Don't support at all</b>	31	22	22
<b>Rather don't support</b>	13	13	11
<b>Neutral</b>	11	16	15
<b>Rather support</b>	26	21	36
<b>Fully support</b>	16	19	15

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2010 Armenia (1), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (5), 2013); (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 16)

Public attitudes towards the issue of compensation by Turkey, once it recognizes **Armenian genocide**, are also noteworthy. If the authorities decide to pursue legal claims against Turkey, it appears

that the society has already decided what it wants from Ankara. In *Table 11*, we see public perceptions on what Armenia should **demand** from Turkey, what is **expected to receive** and what it **will receive**.

**Table 11. What to demand and expect and will be received from Turkey? (%)**

	Demand	Expect		Receive	
	YB 2014	ACNIS 2005	CRRC 2014	ACNIS 2005	CB 2012
<b>Financial</b>	5	4	9	-	51
<b>Territorial</b>	30	20	28	74	34
<b>Material</b>	1	5	1	-	-
<b>Monument's restoration</b>	-	-	1	-	44
<b>Recognition/Moral</b>	7	27	42	43	-
<b>All of the above</b>	51	40	-	-	-
<b>Nothing</b>	6	-	-	-	-

*Source:* (ACNIS, 2005, p. 12); (Barometer.am (3), 2014); (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (1), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (2), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (6), 2013); (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 21); (Barometer.am (1), 2014)

Even though the surveys asked slightly different things, it is possible to draw some conclusions by comparing the results. First, the absolute majority of respondents are in favour of bringing together all types of claims ("all of the above"), although it is unclear how likely they believe such an outcome is in reality.

Second, the vast majority of respondents believe it is likely that Armenia will receive financial compensation, although it is not considered a major demand. This also applies to the demand of restoration or preservation of Armenian cultural heritage, which is also not included in the list of the main claims from Turkey. Third, about 30 percent of respondents believe that Armenia should demand territorial compensation. They also expect that this requirement will be fulfilled. However, almost 95 percent of respondents from

Yerevan do not expect that Turkey will recognize the Armenian Genocide in the next five years (Barometer.am (6), 2015).

The public opinion on the future of Armenian-Turkish relations is also interesting. Comparing similar data from ACNIS (ACNIS, 2005, p. 15) and CRRC (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 23) (*Table 12*), we can conclude that, first, during 2005-2014, public interest in diplomatic and economic relations changed dramatically: Interest in the political sphere has sharply decreased while interest in trade and some economic areas has increased (in general by 53 percent). Second, the interest in cultural cooperation also increased (in general by 15 percent). Third, in the military sphere, there are no significant changes. Finally, there was a four percent decreased in the number of those who support the development of relations with Turkey in all fields.

**Table 12. Preferable Spheres of Armenian-Turkish Relations (%)**

	ACNIS 2005	CRRC 2014
<b>Diplomatic/Political</b>	46	16
<b>Economic</b>	22	27
<b>Cultural</b>	1	8
<b>Military</b>	2	3
<b>Comprehensive</b>	12	8

*Note:* CRRC 2014 lists also several economic sectors (Transport-12%, Energy-9%, Tourism-5%), and two cultural sectors (Science-4% and Education-3%), and also the Environment (5%).

Armenians also distrust Turkey’s involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. According to CB (Caucasus Barometer 2011 Armenia (2), 2013), almost 70 percent of those questioned opposed any Turkish involvement in the **Karabakh conflict settlement**, and only eight percent believed Turkey should have a small role in the peace process. A relative majority (41 percent), however, believes that the normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations will have a positive impact on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Three quarters of the respondents said that Azerbaijan has a great influence on Armenian-Turkish relations (Grigoryan A., 2015, pp. 18,

33). While just 10 percent of those questioned believed the Karabakh conflict can be settled in the next five years, the majority of respondents in both Armenia and Azerbaijan said a negotiated settlement is possible (Barometer.am (4), 2015).

Unlike Armenians, however, Azerbaijanis are less inclined to rule out the possibility of a new military conflict (see **Table 13**). Middle-aged respondents from Armenia appear to have the most confidence that the conflict can be resolved through negotiations. It is also interesting that respondents from Yerevan not only prefer negotiations, but also support internationally mediated negotiations (72 percent) for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Only nine percent of Yerevan residents believe a military solution of the conflict is the most likely option (Barometer.am (1), 2015).

**Table 13. Likely to find a solution to the Karabakh conflict through ... (%)**

	Very unlikely	Rather unlikely	Rather likely	Very likely	DK
<b>Peaceful negotiation (Armenia)</b>	16	15	26	28	15
<b>Peaceful negotiation (Azerbaijan)</b>	22	17	20	35	7
<b>Force (Armenia)</b>	33	27	12	8	20
<b>Force (Azerbaijan)</b>	29	23	13	20	15

**Source:** (Caucasus Barometer 2013 regional dataset (2), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 regional dataset (1), 2013)

The survey also showed that a vast majority of respondents' favour Karabakh becoming part of Armenia, although for many respondents the option of an independent state is also acceptable (see **Table 14**).



**Table 14. Karabakh's Future Status**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Part of Azerbaijan</b>	2	95	4
<b>Independent State</b>	74	24	2
<b>Part of Armenia</b>	90	7	3

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (7), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (8), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (9), 2013)

### **Socio-Cultural and Economic Orientations**

According to IB-2015 (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 58-80), according to the **socio-cultural dimension**, as mentioned above, Armenia's society is mainly *"self-sufficient"* (see **Table 15**): a relative majority is not interested in the main components of foreign socio-cultural attraction<sup>36</sup>. However, preference is given to entertainment, education and vacations in European countries. This is true even considering the fact that the absolute majority of respondents have not travelled abroad in the past five years. The overwhelming majority has permanent social contacts (relatives, friends, and partners) in the former USSR (mainly in Russia); just 24 percent have ties to European countries, mainly France and Germany.

Even though Armenians speak Russian better than other foreign languages, they still prefer tourists from European countries rather than those from Russia. (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (1), 2016)

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<sup>36</sup> The survey indicates under this index the interest in cultural products, education, personal communication with representatives of other countries, the personal experience of visiting these countries, tourist orientation and preferences in the sphere of tourist exchange with other countries etc.

**Table 15. Interest in History, Culture and Geography (%)**

	Post-Soviet countries	EU countries	Other countries	None
<b>2012</b>	35	29	14	42
<b>2013</b>	30	32	21	44
<b>2014</b>	28	28	14	44
<b>2015</b>	21	30	15	50

*By the economic criteria*<sup>37</sup>, the respondents from Armenia are orientated to both post-Soviet and European labour markets. Nearly twice as many respondents prefer to work at home (40 percent).

Only about 20 percent of those surveyed are interested in relocating to the post-Soviet space (mainly Russia) and Europe, and the absolute majority (58 percent) does not prefer any foreign country. The relative majority of respondents (40 percent) indicated that they were equally accepting of labour migrants or students from any country. Armenians prefer doing business with fellow Armenians and Russians, however, according to the CB-2015. The survey also indicated that Armenians value business relations with Europeans, Americans, Georgians and Iranians. Respondents prefer goods and products from post-Soviet countries to imports from Europe or other countries. (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 36-57)

### **The Other "Others": Public Attitudes to International Organizations**

The studies indicate that there is broad public support for Armenia's multi-vector foreign policy. In this context, public attitudes to various international organizations (especially "western"-the EU and NATO, and "northern" – the CIS, CSTO and the EAEU) are of peculiar interest.

Various studies reveal the profound *lack of awareness* about international organizations in the society, however. Specifically, in

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<sup>37</sup> Consumer preferences, preferable vectors of temporary labour and long-term migrations, as well as immigration, of investment sources and business activity, scientific and technological cooperation, etc.

2009, more than 60 percent of those surveyed said they were not informed about the EU (Caucasus Barometer 2009 Armenia (3), 2013) In fact, many even believed Armenia was already a member of the EU (Caucasus Barometer 2009 Armenia (5), 2013). While most respondents knew what the CIS was (Caucasus Barometer 2009 Armenia (2), 2013), a 2013 study indicated that the vast majority of the respondents (nearly 70 percent) did not exactly know what the EAEU was (Manukyan S. et al., 2013, pp. 20-21).

The lack of awareness was indirectly confirmed by data from the 2015 YB study. According to these results, while more than 80 percent of respondents from Yerevan considered themselves to be well informed about the EU (Barometer.am (7), 2015), around 40 percent of them still deemed Armenia to be a member of the EU (Barometer.am (2), 2015). There was a similar misconception about Armenia's cooperation with international organization like NATO and CSTO: approximately half of respondents from Yerevan did not know that Armenia is a founding member of the CSTO (Barometer.am (8), 2015).

Second, comparison of public opinion survey data shows some changes in *public trust and confidence* towards the "West" (EU and NATO) and "North" (the CIS and EAEU). Thus, according to WVS-2011 (World Values Survey , 2011), the EU and the CIS had comparable ratings: both organizations had the confidence of the relative majority of respondents. However, the changes in public trust towards the EU are obvious in other surveys (see *Table 16*).

**Table 16. Public Trust Toward the EU in 2012-2015 (%)**

	EU NB 2012	EU NB 2014	Difference	CB 2013	CB 2015	Difference
<b>Tend to trust</b>	63	45	-18	28	28	0
<b>Tend not to trust</b>	31	51	+20	29	27	-2
<b>Neither trust not distrust</b>	-	-	-	31	29	-2
<b>DK</b>	6	4	-2	14	17	+3

**Source:** (EU Neighbourhood Barometer - EAST, 2012); (EU Neighbourhood Barometer - EAST, 2014); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (4), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (4), 2016)

Moreover, the results of the EU NB 2012 (EU Neighbourhood Barometer - EAST, 2012) and 2014 (EU Neighbourhood Barometer - EAST, 2014) indicate a growing number of Armenians view the EU negatively: In 2012, 49 percent of respondents viewed the EU positively, compared to 17 percent with a negative view. In 2014, however, just 40 percent had a positive view while those who viewed it negatively rose by eight percent (25 percent). The number of people with a neutral opinion about the EU also increased (32 percent in total in 2014).

Third, despite the low level of public awareness, studies reveal a high orientation in the selection of the *preferred international organizations*. For example, the results of the APR Group's 2014 and 2015 surveys indicate that respondents prefer Russian-led organizations (see *Table 17*). The survey results showed some differences between age groups: respondents over the age of 45 were more supportive of Armenia's Eurasian choice, while those between the age of 18-25 were more inclined toward Europe (APR Group, 2015).

**Table 17. Armenia's Desirable Membership to International Organizations (%)**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>European (EU)</b>	24.8	24.3
<b>Pro-Russian (CU)</b>	38.4	36.1
<b>Both</b>	11.8	12.6
<b>None</b>	10.1	8.3
<b>DK</b>	15	18.2

When asked to choose between the EU and CIS, the vast majority of respondents opted for cooperation with the CIS (60 percent for CIS, compared to 25 percent for the EU) (Caucasus Barometer 2009 Armenia (1), 2013). However, despite the fact, that in 2013 the majority – 55 percent – supported Armenia's membership in the EAEU, the relative majority (40 percent) was also in favour of

Armenia's membership in the EU (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (1), 2013). A similar pattern was also the case with NATO until 2013, when support declined significantly (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (3), 2013).

The latest data available indicates that public opinion has not changed: in 2015, the majority of respondents supported Armenia's membership in the EAEU but were also in favour of the EU. Support for NATO remained low, with just 23 percent registering support for the military alliance (see *Table 18*).

**Table 18. Support of Armenia's membership in ...**

	CB 2013	CB 2015	Change	CB 2013	CB 2015	Change	CB 2013	CB 2015	Change
<b>Support</b>	55	55	0	40	39	-1	26	23	-3
<b>Don't support</b>	13	12	-1	23	22	-1	28	27	-1
<b>Indifference</b>	21	23	+2	25	27	+2	30	32	+2
<b>Don't know</b>	11	10	-1	11	12	+1	16	17	+1
	<b>The EAEU</b>			<b>The EU</b>			<b>The NATO</b>		

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (2), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (1), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (3), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (6), 2016); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (7), 2016); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (5), 2016)

Armenians between the ages of 18-35, living in urban areas, were more inclined to support membership in EU and NATO, according to the survey. IB – 2015, too, shows that the absolute majority supports Armenia's Eurasian integration: 56 percent of respondents were for Armenia's membership into Russia-led EAEU (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 97, 98).

Armenia's level of public support for the EAEU is average compared to that registered in other member countries. In Armenia, however, the only integration initiative within the EAEU that was supported by the majority of the respondents was the proposed single

currency (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, p. 99) (see *Table 19*).

**Table 19. Do you support the following integration initiatives within the EAEU? (%)**

	Yes	No	DK
<b>Single Currency</b>	55	35	10
<b>Common Laws</b>	48	40	12
<b>Common Army</b>	46	44	11
<b>Common Ruling Bodies</b>	47	38	15

The survey provides interesting insight into how the public perceives the government’s Eurasian choice. While 37 percent believe joining the EAEU is economically beneficial, 29 percent said Armenia opted for the Russian-led union due to pressure from Moscow. In addition, 16 percent believed it was due to Karabakh conflict and 10 percent said the country was acting according to the interests of the oligarchs, according to the YB 2014 data (Barometer.am (2), 2014).

Based on the responses, it is not surprising that Armenian society has exhibited a strong preference for complimentary *cooperation* with the EU and Russia (see *Table 20*). Russia is seen as the most attractive partner in the fight against external threats, as well as in industry, and the EU is more popular as a partner in the humanitarian sphere, as well as in science and education. There was also support for cooperation with both the EU and Russia in certain sectors, particularly in the field of science, education and industry (Manukyan S. et al., 2013, pp. 20-21).

**Table 20. Preferential Partners by Sphere of Cooperation (%)**

	Russia	EU	Both
<b>Human rights</b>	25	52	6
<b>Science</b>	28	47	15
<b>Industry</b>	50	24	17
<b>Karabakh issue</b>	64	14	5
<b>External security</b>	72	10	3

In addition, according to the EU NB-2012, there was a widespread public perception that the EU should play a greater role

in trade (89 percent) and economic development (86 percent), education (81 percent), regional cooperation (79 percent), and democracy (76 percent). In general, it seems that Armenia's society traditionally perceives the EU as one of the country's main partners and highlights the EU's activity in the field of development and promotion of peace and stability in the region. While public support for Armenia's cooperation with the EU has declined in recent years (see **Table 21**), the vast majority of respondents still support cooperation with the EU.

**Table 21. The EU's Importance for Armenia (%)**

	2012	2014	Difference
<b>The EU is an important partner of Armenia</b>	86	67	-19
<b>The EU brings peace and stability in the region</b>	75	50	-25
<b>The EU contributes to the development of Armenia</b>	78	58	-20
<b>The EU has the appropriate level of involvement in Armenia</b>	66	53	-13

## Conclusion

1. Armenia has an average *cumulative geopolitical orientation* to the post-Soviet space: this space is more attractive for citizens than European countries or elsewhere. Even though the indexes show Armenians lean slightly more toward European countries than post-Soviet ones in terms of *socio-cultural* issues, the data also indicates that Armenia is a culturally "self-sufficient" country. Armenia's overall *economic indicators* show a multilateral or balanced orientation: respondents prefer Russian products, the Russian labour market and Russians as business partners, but, according to surveys, they prefer tourists, temporary workers and students from Europe. The picture is radically different in *politics*. Politically, Armenia is strongly oriented toward the post-Soviet space. In the realm of military-political cooperation, the vast majority of respondents from

Armenia prefer post-Soviet space. Political issues are clearly the dominant factor for Armenia's public orientation.

- 1.1 A detailed analysis of the data has revealed that Russia is the main factor for orientation toward post-Soviet space in terms of politics, culture and economics. It is Russia, and not the post-Soviet space in general, that is the "center of attraction" for Armenian society. Consequently, for the society in practice there is no "post-Soviet" or "Eurasian" choice, but simply a "Russian" choice in foreign policy.
- 1.2 The overwhelming majority of respondents view Russia as a *friend*, followed by France and then Georgia.
- 1.3 However, this image of Russia has been gradually changing over the past few years. Following the military clashes in April 2016, it is expected that Russia's positive image and its public support as country's main friend will continue to decrease, although this country, at least for the near future, will probably retain its leading position in public opinion as Armenia's biggest ally. In parallel, we can expect a significant increase of the percentage of respondents who believe that Armenia has no allies.
- 1.4 As for *preferred spheres of Armenia's cooperation with its main partners*, Russia is the preferable partner against external enemies and in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the EU is the preferred partner in the field of science and protection of human rights. In addition, European tourists, students and migrant workers are seen as more attractive and beneficial to the country.
2. Public attitudes toward Azerbaijan and Turkey do not differ significantly from Armenia's official position. The studies included in this analysis clearly indicate the public considers both countries to be *hostile* to Armenia, and there is a deep and total mistrust of Turks and Azerbaijanis. This way of thinking has not changed significantly during the last five years, even throughout the process of Armenian-Turkish alleged rapprochement. Moreover, the majority of the Armenia's population currently does not support the initiative for reconciliation.
3. The vast majority of respondents suffer from a lack of



awareness about the EU and the CIS/EAEU; many even believe that Armenia is a member of the EU. Trust in the EU is declining, however: in 2011, both post-Soviet and European spaces were viewed positively, but trust toward the EU fell in 2014. Despite widespread unawareness, the vast majority of the Armenia's population is interested in Armenia's relations with both the "West" and "North."

- 3.1 The vast majority of respondents support Armenia's membership in the EAEU and a relative majority supports country's membership in the EU, as well.
- 3.2 The EU has a traditionally positive or neutral image across Armenia's population. However, this positive image is gradually declining.
- 3.3 When forced to choose between Russia and the West, the vast majority of the population (in all age groups) chooses the "Northern" direction. However, in the case of an "and-and" option, the number of supporters of Armenia's cooperation with the two poles (even Armenia's membership in organizations of both geopolitical spaces) increases. Nevertheless, even in this case, the predominance of the "Northern" factor remains.
- 3.4 The number of "Northern" supporters is higher among the older generation, and supporters of the "Western" space are mostly young people. However, even a relative majority of young people chooses the "Northern" direction when forced to choose just one option.

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**“DISRUPTING” OR “COMPLEMENTING”: DIASPORA’S  
IDENTITY AGENDA IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGING  
ARMENIAN FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES**

**Introduction**

Studying the structure and revealing the power of the Armenian Diaspora<sup>38</sup>—which is the most well organized community of Armenians around the world<sup>39</sup>—is complicated. The Armenian Diaspora is not a monolithic body and it is mainly focused on cultural, political and socio-economic issues. It’s impossible to coordinate Diaspora activity and govern it from one center<sup>40</sup>. We can argue that a Diaspora’s diverse culture and

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<sup>38</sup> In this article we’ll classify the Armenian Diaspora into four “communities”. The Armenians of Turkey, the majority of whom suffered from the Genocide and do not consider themselves as a Diaspora. The Georgian Armenians – especially Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti – and Iranian Armenians are in a similar situation: most of them are the descendents of Armenians deported from Eastern Armenia by Shah Abbas in the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century. We called the second category the Diaspora formed after the Genocide “Primary” or “Post-Genocide Diaspora”. The third community is made up of Soviet Armenian citizens, who are dissidents from the USSR and who found shelter in Europe and the USA. The final group is the Post-Independence (1991-on) Diaspora communities, which were formed in CIS countries, especially in the Russian Federation.

<sup>39</sup> There are more than 10 million Armenians living around the world. More than 7 million Armenians live in the Diaspora, and 3.5 million Armenians live in Armenia.

<sup>40</sup>For the purpose of this paper, we define Diaspora as presented in Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth’s *“Diasporas and International Relations Theory:”* “People with a common origin who reside more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland—whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control. Diaspora members identify themselves, or are identified by others—inside and out-side their homeland—as part of the homeland’s national community, and as such are often called upon to participate, or are entangled, in homeland-related affairs,” *International Organization, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Summer, 2003), pp. 449-479.*

ideology make the expatriate community a viable and effective part of the nation, especially if the Diaspora exists in a liberal and open society.

A survey of experts, analysts, Armenian and Diaspora political elite, supported these theses<sup>41</sup>.

We'll not discuss here the genesis of the Armenian Diaspora or its problems. But we will explore the political inclinations of Armenian officials, the unrecognized republic of Nagorno Karabakh, and the Diaspora – referred to in this paper as the “united triplet” – examining their political convictions and attitudes toward issues like inter-national dialogue; political and economic aid to the two Armenian states; culture; and history. We will also consider the united triplet's views on the Diaspora's role in Armenian foreign policy and Diaspora agendas regarding Yerevan's international relationships.

### **Phrases of Transformation in the Diaspora Agenda**

The main problem facing Diaspora Armenians is the preservation of national identity. Over the span of one century, they have established schools, churches, cultural homes and pan-Armenian organizations in host countries. After the independence of their native land, they undertook significant, but cautious, steps to reach a new level of cooperation with their ancestral land. This new concept inspired many politicians, both in Armenia and abroad, to declare that the Diaspora was the nation's “black gold,” a reference to Azerbaijan's oil and gas pipelines to the Black Sea.

The independence of Soviet Armenia, the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the question of financial, moral and territorial compensation for victims of the Genocide were

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<sup>41</sup>The survey was conducted as a case study to measure the role and factor of national identity on supposed the role and factor of national identity on state foreign policy. The 50 respondents were representatives of internal and foreign decision making bodies from Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR) and five Diaspora communities-France, Lebanon, Syria, USA and Russia. The survey questionnaire consisted of four parts: the components of identity, foreign policy orientation, Armenia-NKR-Diaspora relations and lobbying within networks.

the main goals of Armenian groups<sup>42</sup> in the Diaspora before Armenia regained its sovereignty. International recognition of the Armenian Genocide has traditionally been one of the Diaspora's main causes. Two early victories by the Diaspora were the 1965 recognition by Uruguay and the Soviet Union's decision to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Genocide.<sup>43</sup>

In the mid-1980s, Diaspora lobbying efforts grew: they initiated a major lobbying movement after the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Armenian Genocide<sup>44</sup>. Armenian ethnic lobbying groups became successful once they earned the confidence of their compatriots, proving they are able and ready to advocate the Genocide's international recognition and raise the problem of Western Armenian confiscated properties.

The Diaspora found additional reasons to support Armenia after the tragic 1988 earthquake and Azerbaijani pogrom<sup>45</sup> against Armenians in Kirovabad, Baku and Sumgait. While ideological differences and Soviet prohibitions prevented large-scale cooperation, the Diaspora was fully involved in the rehabilitation and

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<sup>42</sup> Armenian Diaspora is not a monolithic hierarchy but has a compact structure. For more than a century, it formed strong self-governing institutional systems in host countries. The chief "brain centers" are: the Church; the traditional political parties—"Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun" (ARF-D), "Social-Democratic Hnchak Party" (Hnchak), "Armenian Liberal Party" (Ramkavar); as well as many cultural, sport, charitable unions and associations and lobbying groups. These groups and parties have different visions and expectations regarding Armenian claims, however.

<sup>43</sup> For 70 years, relations between Diaspora communities and the Motherland were restricted to cultural exchanges. The largest Armenian political party-ARF-D – which had a significant number of supporters and followers abroad –was outlawed in Armenia due to its anti-Soviet policy.

<sup>44</sup> See the full text at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/euro/pcc/aag-/pcc\\_meeting/resolutions/1987\\_07\\_20.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/euro/pcc/aag-/pcc_meeting/resolutions/1987_07_20.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Pogroms took place in Baku, Sumgait, Kirovabad and other Azerbaijani cities in response to Nagorno Karabakh Armenians' request on "unifying with Motherland Armenia."

reconstruction recovery process<sup>46</sup>. The Diaspora's agenda grew further following Armenia's independence in 1991. While Genocide recognition was the “chief goal” of Diaspora organizations for more than eight decades, post-independence priorities focused on two main problems: Armenia's economic recovery and the international realization of Nagorno Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination.

The Diaspora also made considerable contributions to the Karabakh war effort<sup>47</sup>, which overwhelmed Armenia's nascent economy.<sup>48</sup> The Diaspora exerted influence on the governments in their adopted countries, lobbying for financial aid for the Armenian economy. For instance, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) leadership argued that foreign assistance would help Armenia become economically viable – allowing it to become a catalyst for development throughout the Caucasus and all of the Newly Independent States<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> M. Aghababian, M. Melkumyan, (1996): “*After Earthquake Reconstruction in Armenia*”, Elsevier Science Ltd, paper No. 2173, p 6.

<sup>47</sup>Diaspora contribution in the Karabakh war was not symbolic ... According to various estimations, more than 500 Diaspora Armenians participated in the war. See Ashot Petrosyan, “*Diaspora Armenians in Karabakh war,*” (2001) Yerevan, p16. The Diaspora lobby in the US played a big role in getting the House of Representatives to pass Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act (*Public Law 102-511, Washington DC, 24 October 1992, see at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ115/html/PLAW-107publ115.htm>*), which banned all the US government assistance to the Azerbaijani government.

<sup>48</sup> Armenian Diaspora communities around the world have contributed to Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) to Armenia. Furthermore, the number of businesses established by/connected with Diaspora investors has been significant since independence. About 69% of all foreign investors that invested directly in the Armenian economy in 1994-2004 were connected to the Diaspora. The latter are estimated to have invested around \$275 million from 1998 to 2004, which was an estimated 25% of total FDI in Armenia in that period. See more at: <http://ev.am/brainwork/foreign-investments-and-diaspora/current%20situation-of-the-diaspora-connected-fdis-in-Armenia>

<sup>49</sup> The ANCA helped secure \$50 million for Armenia in the 2000-2014 Fiscal Years foreign aid bill. According to Aram Hamparian, the ANCA Executive Director, this helped to offset the devastating effects of the

## **Yerevan's Changing Priorities and Attitude toward Diaspora**

### **1990-1998. “Strangers’ Meeting” or the Period of State Building**

The level of Diaspora engagement with Armenia has varied, depending on the political regime in power in the country<sup>50</sup>. During the first term of President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the first president of the new independent state, relations with the Diaspora were problematic and complicated. While he sought help from Diaspora groups to bolster the post-war economy<sup>51</sup> and state building processes, he took steps to limit their involvement in Armenia's domestic and foreign politics. He tried to neutralize the ideological and organizational presence of the Diaspora in the motherland – a step that was not supported by the majority of Armenian political parties and international human rights activists in Armenia<sup>52</sup>. The

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Turkish and Azerbaijani blockades and to continue Armenia's political and economic transition. “Specifically, these funds will be used to develop the economy and infrastructure, further strengthen democratic institutions, and meet the country's current development and humanitarian needs”,-stated Hamparian in an interview with us on 06.07.2013.

<sup>50</sup> We'll explore Armenia-Diaspora relations during the three Presidents' ruling terms: Levon Ter-Petrosyan (1991-1998), Robert Kocharyan (1998-2008) and Serzh Sargsyan (2008-till now).

<sup>51</sup> For instance, during the blockade, Diaspora lobbyists assisted Armenia with the delivery of basic goods and fuel using airplanes. During the winter of 1992-93, the United Armenian Fund (UAF) managed to raise \$7 million all over the world via the Diaspora. They helped provide electricity and distributed 500 tons of flour in the regions of Armenia, in addition to providing bread-baking plants with flour and power. See at: [http://ev.am/sites/default/files/DIASPORA-ARMENIA%20CASE\\_Revised-Mar2010-130312.pdf](http://ev.am/sites/default/files/DIASPORA-ARMENIA%20CASE_Revised-Mar2010-130312.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> The “Freedom in the World”: Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties-1995-1996”-*Report of Amnesty International*, “*Freedom House Assesses Human Rights Violations in Armenia*,” September 30, 1996- found that in 1995 the country was becoming more authoritarian. See more at: <http://www.arfd.info/1996/09/30/amnesty-international-freedom-house-assess-human-rights-violations-in-armenia/>.

president moved to ban the ARF-D political party, which was known for its strong ties to the Diaspora<sup>53</sup>.

Ter-Petrosyan sought to undermine the Diaspora's right to participate in Armenian politics on the grounds of "national ideology," which he described as a "false political category"<sup>54</sup> in an address to the Supreme Council. The president stressed that rule of law and civil society were crucial to state building – implying that Diaspora communities were not welcome<sup>55</sup>. Ter-Petrosyan suspended efforts to bring state foreign policy in line with Diaspora views.

In particular, the Diaspora prioritized the recognition of the Genocide, while under Ter-Petrosyan, Armenia reached out to Turkey and announced it was ready to normalize relations. Under Ter Perosyan's administration, the government declared that Yerevan had no territorial demands on Turkey, saying that the Diaspora should draft its own Genocide Agenda, and recognition should not be a cornerstone of Armenia's foreign policy<sup>56</sup>. The president's policy

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<sup>53</sup>The court banned ARF-D activity in the country and confiscated its property, grounding the ruling in the "Law on Political Organizations." On December 28, 1994, President Team spokesman in one of his famous television speeches banned the ARF-D, which was the leading opposition party, along with "Yerkir" ("Homeland") daily, the country's largest daily newspaper. See at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20061206144311/http://www.arf.am/English/history/004history.htm>.

<sup>54</sup>President's speech from the floor of the Supreme council "Referendum is the best way of adopting Constitution," published in the official newspaper "*Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*" (*Republic of Armenia*), April 26, 1994.

<sup>55</sup>"*Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*", *ibid*, p2.

<sup>56</sup> During various meetings and negotiations with international figures and Turkish political and diplomatic elite representatives, Ter-Petrosyan and his team spokesman said Yerevan was interested in new relations with Ankara without any preconditions, even the issue of Genocide recognition. Gerard Libaridian, the former supervisor to the Ter-Petrosyan, argues that the politicization of the genocide by the Diaspora "had served, wittingly or unwittingly, to create the mentality and psychology that Turkey, through its no recognition of the Genocide, is likely to repeat it, that Turkey is the eternal enemy. If Turkey is the eternal enemy, then Russia is the eternally necessary friend. And this then creates pressures on your policy of independence". See at

coincided with the draft plan he presented at the 1989 Founding Congress for the Armenian National Congress party. The plan stressed that the Armenian people had to rely on their own strength, not on the strength of someone else or any sponsors. *“It’s a political delusion that a nation has permanent enemies or permanent friends, but not permanent national interests.”*<sup>57</sup>

This policy put Ter-Pertosyan directly at odds with the Diaspora communities. Tension between the Armenian government and the Diaspora increased after Ter-Pertosyan backed a "compromise" version of conflict resolution over Karabakh<sup>58</sup>.

### **1998-2007. “Mutual Recognition” or Period of Associated Integration**

Relations with the Diaspora improved under the government of Robert Kocharyan, Ter-Pertosyan's successor. Contrary to the country's first president, Kocharyan sought to balance Diaspora investments in the Armenian economy with the Diaspora's "ideological entrance" into the country. In frequent speeches to Diaspora communities, Kocharyan urged investment in the “sustainable development of its [the Armenian] economy by developing human capital and forming a knowledge-based

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[http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=322&debate\\_ID=2&slide\\_ID=6#\\_ftnref7](http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=322&debate_ID=2&slide_ID=6#_ftnref7).

<sup>57</sup> The author of this idea is Pan-Armenian National Movement senior leader, philologist, Academic Rafayel Ishkhanyan, who was the supporter of building relations with Turkey. See R. Ishkhanyan, *“Երրորդ ուժի բացառական օրենքը”* (*“The Rule of Exclusion of Third Force”*), “Azat Khosq”, Yerevan, 1991, p 18.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Kocharyan stated this in his speech at the Bertelsmann Foundation in Berlin on November 16, 2006. See more at: <http://2rd.am/hy/16-11-2006-Nakhagah-Robert-Kocharyani-elujty-Bertelsman-Himnadramum-Berlin>.

<sup>4</sup> See the official release of President’s visit to Latin American countries on 2-9 May, 2002: <http://2rd.am/hy/Jamanakacic-ashkharhum-heravorutyuny-khochyndot-che>.

economy.”<sup>59</sup> He also initiated the first Armenia-Diaspora conference and Pan-Armenian games, which helped mend relations between the authorities and the expatriate communities. Speaking in Brazil, the president called the Diaspora an invaluable asset for Armenia.<sup>2</sup> According to him, the Diaspora had proven to be an indispensable bridge between Armenia and its host countries. “I am proud that most of them have acquired a reputation of loyal citizens, hardworking people and successful businessmen. There is no doubt that if Armenians can do it elsewhere, they can do it in their own home,” stated Kocharyan.

Under the Kocharyan government, Yerevan created several Diaspora business and economic forums. The conferences proved to be a vital format for Armenian businesses, officials and the Diaspora to meet and discuss crucial issues and investments. In his opening speech at the 2003 economic forum in Yerevan, Kocharyan underscored the importance of the Diaspora for Armenia. About 150 Diaspora involved in business participated in the forum<sup>61</sup>.

The Diaspora agreed with many of Kocharyan’s positions, especially concerning the Genocide and the resolution of the Karabakh conflict<sup>62</sup>. Under Kocharyan's government many European Parliaments adopted resolutions condemning Ottoman Turkey’s Genocide against Armenians. The Diaspora still found the government's policy toward Genocide recognition weak, however, especially the Armenian-Turkish TARC<sup>63</sup> commission. While not all

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<sup>59</sup> See more at: [http://ev.am/sites/default/files/DIASPORA-ARMENIA%20CASE\\_Revised-Mar2010-130312.pdf](http://ev.am/sites/default/files/DIASPORA-ARMENIA%20CASE_Revised-Mar2010-130312.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See more at: [http://ev.am/sites/default/files/DIASPORA-ARMENIA%20CASE\\_Revised-Mar2010-130312.pdf](http://ev.am/sites/default/files/DIASPORA-ARMENIA%20CASE_Revised-Mar2010-130312.pdf).

<sup>62</sup> Diaspora parties backed Kocharyan’s presidency also because of his “strategy” toward Karabakh conflict resolution. Contrary to Ter-Petrosyan’s solution of “Phase version,” Kocharyan promoted the “Package version” solution, which was supported by Diaspora. See Khachik Galstyan, (2005), *“The Perspectives of Karabakh Conflict Resolution,”* 21th Dar, Vol. 4(10), pp. 63-82.

<sup>63</sup> “Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission” (TARC) was set up in Geneva on 9 July 2001 and had six Turkish and four Armenian members, who



Diaspora groups were against the TARC<sup>64</sup>, the influential ANCA stated that decisions by the commission could endanger 40 years of lobbying for the US House of Representatives to recognize the Genocide<sup>65</sup>.

One issue that the Diaspora and Armenian political parties were in total agreement on was the question of dual citizenship. The constitution foresaw Armenian citizenship for anyone of Armenian origin, based on provisions defined by law. Dual citizens were guaranteed all the rights given to Armenian citizens, as well as all duties and responsibilities<sup>66</sup>. The constitution also laid out provisions to create a Ministry of the Diaspora. The Diaspora figured prominently in Armenia's National Security strategy, a marked departure from the policy of earlier administrations.

Analysis shows that the National Security Strategy focuses on two major issues that could threaten the identity of Armenians living abroad: the destruction of culture (language, religion, etc...) and Diaspora Armenians' apathy toward their ancestral home, which could be a result of their exclusion from the homeland's domestic affairs. This indicates that the Armenian government was concerned about a possible conflict between the two actors - Armenians living in Homeland and those who live abroad, which could threaten the essence and existence of the state. The National Security strategy

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were well-known people, former diplomats, ministers, scholars and others who had occupied positions. See <http://www1.american.edu/cgp/TARC/tor.htm>.

<sup>64</sup>Diaspora communities, mainly political parties and Lobbying groups, had different attitude toward this issue. ANCA condemned the passive attitude of Yerevan statesmen over the US State Department's initiative (2000-2004) for TARC, which, in its point of view, includes fears about the dialogue between Turkish and Armenian historians on issues like the proof and reality of Armenian Genocide. The AAA, which is one of the biggest Armenian organizations in the US, supported the TARC. Hrair Hovnanian, the biggest sponsor of AAA, stated: *"This is the first multi-disciplinary, comprehensive attempt to reconcile differences between two neighbours, separated by bitterness and mistrust, and as such, it is a major advance."* See at: <http://www.eraren.org/index.php?Page=Dergilcerik&IcerikNo=166&Lisan=en>.

<sup>29</sup> After the State Department's "intervention," the resolution didn't pass.

<sup>66</sup>Dual citizenship was authorised after the Constitutional amendment of the Armenian Citizenship Law No. 75-N on February 26, 2007.

attempts to cement relations between the country and the Diaspora by tying it to the Karabakh conflict: “Armenia embraces all systemic demonstrations of Diaspora involvement in the solution of vital problems facing Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.”<sup>67</sup>

The strategy states that the decline of national and cultural identity in the Diaspora was an external threat for the state and any weakening of Armenia-Diaspora ties and the absence of mutually enriching contacts might threaten the fundamental values of Armenian National Security. “The Republic of Armenia attaches great importance to the preservation of national identity in the Armenian Diaspora. Well-organized and efficiently integrated Diaspora communities are important contributors to the overall increase in Armenia’s international involvement.”<sup>68</sup> The strategy’s focus on supporting the Diaspora illustrates the changing relationship between Yerevan and the Diaspora. The document stresses the need to help the Diaspora maintain its Armenian roots – an indication that relations between the state and Diaspora communities evolved following the war, from a country that “begs for charity from the rich Diaspora” to the state as an “equal” which can improve, promote, maintain and enrich the Diaspora identity agenda<sup>69</sup>.

With this document, Armenia tried to consolidate relations with the Diaspora, underscored by a special chapter (*the Third Chapter*) on those relations. For instance, the section on “fundamental values” includes references to the Diaspora: “RA [The Republic of Armenia] strives to preserve and develop the identity of the Armenian nation, within both Armenia and throughout its Diaspora; developing and implementing a comprehensive concept of

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid, p, 7.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid, p, 4.

<sup>69</sup>The “Law on Education Developing State Program 2001-2005” outlines the cooperation borders between State officials and the Diaspora to improve the linguistic abilities of Diasporan pedagogues, to retrain them for a short time in the homeland and provide Diaspora schools and colleges with Armenian language teaching programs, history books and syllabuses. From 2008 to date Armenian Ministries of Education and Diaspora provided Diaspora schools with more than 60 thousand pieces of such kind books. See the Law on Armenian Parliament website: <http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1422&lang=arm>.

Armenia-Diaspora relations, with a broader mobilization of the potential of the Armenian Diaspora.”<sup>70</sup>

The strategy goes on to stress the role of the Diaspora in creating a "unique bridge between Armenia and the international community, as Armenian community organizations worldwide support the development of bilateral ties with different countries, and foster Armenia's global integration and consolidation of democracy.”<sup>71</sup>

### **2008-2015. “Anxious Engagement” or Steps of Integration**

On February 19, 2008, Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan, who was backed by incumbent President Robert Kocharyan, won Armenia's presidential election in the first round according to official results<sup>72</sup>. Although some Diaspora circles expressed concerns about the election results, they sent congratulatory messages to the new elected president<sup>73</sup>. Homeland-Diaspora relations during Kocharyan's rule evolved to the level of “security status,” but ties between the government and the Diaspora were far from stable when Sargsyan came to power. The new president had promised to "cement" ties with the Diaspora and restore balance in the relationship between the state and Armenians living abroad. The government's policy of reengagement with Turkey, however,

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid, p, 1.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, p, 8.

<sup>72</sup>Sargsyan was declared the winner with 52.8 percent of the vote. Team spokesman, Armenia's first President and the main opposition candidate came in second with 21.5 percent of the vote.

<sup>73</sup>Diaspora communities demonstrated a rather lenient approach toward the events in Armenia, as evident from a joint statement made by five leading U.S. Diaspora groups on March 18. (Signatories included the AAA, AGBU, ANCA, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern/Western) and Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Eastern/Western). *Statement is available at <http://www.pf-armenia.org>, News and Reports section*). Interestingly enough, for the AAA this was a departure from its traditionally stronger focus on human rights and democracy in Armenia, including criticism of past elections.

disrupted those plans.<sup>74</sup>

The new talks with Turkey eventually led to the Armenian-Turkish Protocols<sup>75</sup>, which were not welcomed by the Diaspora because it could danger its campaign for international recognition of the Genocide, as well as the status of Karabakh<sup>76</sup>. The Diaspora responded by creating the “Stop the Protocols” campaign, in Yerevan and abroad. They highlighted the fact that the protocols had created serious concern and frustration among the Diaspora communities. They highlighted their objections toward the idea of negotiating over historical matters, and stressed that the recognition of the Armenian Genocide was a precondition to any negotiation. They also noted that recognizing borders and territorial integrity meant “renouncing our struggle for justice.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> After TARC’s “Final Conclusion” report, for three years secret negotiations between Armenian and Turkish envoys were held in European capitals, especially in Genève, on the normalization of relations. The Armenian MFA often preferred not to speak about the meetings, but Turkish media periodically spoke of such meetings.

<sup>75</sup>In April 22, 2009, Zurich, Switzerland, Armenian and Turkish ministers of Foreign Affairs, with the participation and mediation of EU, the USA and Russia, signed two protocols; “Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey” and “Protocol on Development of Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey.” See the full texts of the Protocols: [http://www.armeniapedia.org/images/2/21/Armenia-turkey\\_protocol.pdf](http://www.armeniapedia.org/images/2/21/Armenia-turkey_protocol.pdf).

<sup>76</sup>ANCA published a special press release highlighting some words and phrases in the full text of the Protocols and mentioned dangers behind 20 of the key provisions in those two documents. See the ANCA text version at: [http://www.anca.org/assets/pdf/misc/protocols\\_explained.pdf](http://www.anca.org/assets/pdf/misc/protocols_explained.pdf).

<sup>77</sup>“For instance, the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF) has issued a statement opposing the protocols between Armenia and Turkey,” -reported “Nouvelles d’Arménie”, the newspaper published by the Armenian community in France. The statement says in part: “The Armenian Genocide is not negotiable and it cannot be examined by a sub-intergovernmental commission. History is already written, no one can deny this fact acknowledged as genocide by historians, lawyers, international institutions, and over 20 states, including France”. The CCAF therefore requested clarification on the 5th paragraph of the Protocol on establishing diplomatic relations that the two countries, “affirm their mutual

Religious leaders urged the government to clarify its position for the Diaspora. “The wave of concern over the possible Armenia-Turkish diplomatic relations has swept over the Armenian Diaspora throughout the world. Most of all, we are concerned over the recognition of the Armenian Genocide committed by Ottoman Turkey, and the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process,” noted Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, in a letter addressed to the Armenian authorities<sup>78</sup>. Aram I submitted a 7-point proposal to the Armenian authorities, stressing the necessity for a cautious approach to establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey. “President Serzh Sargsyan must dispel all the doubts of the million-strong Armenian Diaspora,” stated Aram I<sup>79</sup>.

The Diaspora's protests worked: Sargsyan took steps to ease their fears and build stronger relations between the Diaspora communities and the government. In the spring of 2008, he initiated reforms to coordinate a productive state policy on Armenia-Diaspora relations. One of the reforms included finally creating the Diaspora Ministry, which started functioning as part of the government on October 1, 2008. The Ministry was put in charge of drafting and implementing the government's policies to strengthen ties between Armenia and the Diaspora; developing cooperation with non-governmental organizations; preserving Armenian national identity; and realizing the potential of relations with the Diaspora, draft of the repatriation programs, in addition to other responsibilities<sup>80</sup>.

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recognition of their existing border as defined by relevant treaties in international law”. The organization also stated that the right to self-determination, the right to participate in the political settlement of the conflict, ensured security, live peacefully on their land directly should be clearly recognized to the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. See the full text at CCAF official website; <http://www.ccaf.info/item.php?r=3&id=416>.

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?187639-Aram-I-Appeals-To-Sargsyan-On-Armenia-Turkish-Protocols>

<sup>79</sup> Similar appeals have been made by major effective political parties and lobbying groups both in Armenia and host countries.

<sup>80</sup> As mentioned in its duties, the Ministry will draft and implement prospective pan-Armenian programs aimed at developing ties between Armenia and the Diaspora and the rise of the reputation of Armenia and the Armenian people. The Ministry will also contribute to the implementation of pan-Armenian educational programs and development of public

## Conclusion

In summary, after the creation of the dual citizenship institute, Diaspora engagement became more evident during the administration of the country's third president. As a result, the Diaspora has started to speak openly about problems in Armenia, including corruption, human rights violence, fraud and problems of democratization. The Diaspora also implied that, besides financial presence, it wants lawful status in its historic homeland. Although the Diaspora has had some concerns about domestic policy, its attitude toward Armenia's security priorities is now more in line with the current government's agenda, especially concerning relations with Turkey, Azerbaijan, supporting the self-determination right of Nagorno Karabakh population, and maintaining national identity abroad<sup>81</sup>. This new stage in relations with the Diaspora has become more evident as the expatriate communities started to influence on the government's agenda. The major testimony to the Diaspora's influence was the adoption of the Pan-Armenian Declaration on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide<sup>82</sup>.

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Armenian schools in the Diaspora; it will support activities aimed at preservation, protection, development and broadening of national identity, culture and heritage, establish and radicalize Armenian national identity among Armenians speaking a different language or those who belong to a different religion, as well as support the repatriation of Armenians of the Diaspora and the pilgrimage of Armenian youth to the Homeland. The Ministry will support the participation of businessmen of the Diaspora in economic programs of the Republic of Armenia; form a political, economic, cultural, juridical and spiritual environment for the productive participation of the Armenian Diaspora in the solution of national issues and strengthening of Armenian statehood. For further information on Ministry's priorities see the official website of the Ministry of Diaspora of RA at: <http://www.mindiaspora.am/en/index>.

<sup>81</sup> One of the main demands of the Diaspora powerful organizations was the cancellation of Armenian-Turkish protocols. They even initiated a campaign called "Stop the Protocols" and organized a collection of signatures against the signature and ratification of the Protocols.

<sup>82</sup> Following the session of the State Commission on Coordination of the events for the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian

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Genocide, which had regional committees in Diaspora communities and included Major Pan-Armenian political, religious, cultural, charitable organizations from Homeland and Diaspora, President Sargsyan read the Declaration at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex. The document delineated statehood and Diaspora demands from Turkey and international community. See the full text of the Declaration at Armenian Genocide museum-institute official website; <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/29.01.2015-hrchakagir.php>.

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