



ASIA MAIOR

Vol. XXXIII / 2022

Asia in 2022: The impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on local crises

Edited by
Michelguglielmo Torri
Filippo Boni
Diego Maiorano

viella



CENTRO STUDI PER I POPOLI EXTRA-EUROPEI “CESARE BONACOSSA” - UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA

ASIA MAIOR

The Journal of the Italian think tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989

Vol. XXXIII / 2022

Asia in 2022: The impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on local crises

Edited by
Michelguglielmo Torri
Filippo Boni
Diego Maiorano

viella

Asia Maior. The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989.

Copyright © 2023 - Viella s.r.l. & Associazione Asia Maior

ISBN 979-12-5496-365-0 (Paper) ISBN 979-12-5496-366-7 (Online)

ISSN 2385-2526 (Paper) ISSN 2612-6680 (Online)

Annual journal - Vol. XXXIII, 2022

This journal is published jointly by the think tank Asia Maior (Associazione Asia Maior) & the CSPE - Centro Studi per i Popoli Extra-europei «Cesare Bonacossa», University of Pavia

Asia Maior: The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989 is an open-access journal, whose issues and single articles can be freely downloaded from the think tank webpage: www.asiamaior.org.

The reference year is the one on which the analyses of the volume are focused. Each *Asia Maior* volume is always published in the year following the one indicated on the cover.

Paper version	Italy	€ 50.00	Abroad	€ 65.00
Subscription	abbonamenti@viella.it		www.viella.it	

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-chief (direttore responsabile):

Michelguglielmo Torri, University of Turin.

Co-editors:

Filippo Boni, The Open University.

Diego Maiorano, The University of Naples «L'Orientale».

Associate editors:

Axel Berkofsky, University of Pavia;

Giulio Pugliese, University of Oxford and European University Institute;

Emanuela Mangiarotti, University of Pavia;

Pierluigi Valsecchi, University of Pavia.

Consulting editors:

Elisabetta Basile, University of Rome «Sapienza»;

Kerry Brown, King's College London;

Peter Brian Ramsay Carey, Oxford University;

Rosa Caroli, University of Venice;

Jaewoo Choo, Kyung Hee University (Seoul, South Korea);

Jamie Seth Davidson, National University of Singapore;

Ritu Dewan, Indian Association for Women Studies;

Laura De Giorgi, University of Venice;

Kevin Hewison, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill;
Lucia Husenicova, University Matej Bel (Banská Bystrica, Slovakia);
David C. Kang, Maria Crutcher Professor of International Relations, University of Southern California;
Rohit Karki, Kathmandu School of Law;
Jeff Kingston, Temple University – Japan Campus;
Mirjam Künkler, Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study – Uppsala;
Noemi Lanna, University of Naples «L'Orientale»;
James Manor, School of Advanced Studies – University of London;
Aditya Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Mridula Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Parimala Rao, University of Delhi;
Guido Samarani, University of Venice;
Marisa Siddivò, University of Naples «L'Orientale»;
Eswaran Sridharan, Institute for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania;
Arun Swamy, University of Guam;
Akio Takahara, University of Tokyo;
Edsel Tupaz, Harvard University alumnus, Ateneo de Manila University and Far Eastern University;
Sten Widmalm, Uppsala University;
Ather Zia, University of Northern Colorado;

Book reviews editors:

Elena Valdameri, ETH Zürich;
Aurelio Insisa, University of Hong Kong;
Luciano Zaccara, Qatar University.

Graphic project:

Nicola Mocchi.

Before being published in *Asia Maior*, all articles, whether commissioned or unsolicited, after being first evaluated by the Journal's editors, are then submitted to a double-blind peer review involving up to three anonymous referees. Coherently with the spirit of the double-blind peer review process, *Asia Maior* does not make public the name of the reviewers. However, the reviewers' names – and, if need be, the whole correspondence between the journal's editors and the reviewer/s – can be disclosed to interested institutions, upon a formal request made directly to the Editor in Chief of the journal.

Articles meant for publication should be sent to Michelguglielmo Torri (mg.torri@gmail.com), Filippo Boni (filippo.boni@open.ac.uk), Diego Maiorano (dmaiorano@unior.it); book reviews should be sent to Elena Valdameri (elena.valdameri@gess.ethz.ch).



ASSOCIAZIONE ASIA MAIOR

Steering Committee: Filippo Boni, Marzia Casolari, Matteo Fumagalli, Michelguglielmo Torri (President).

Scientific Board: Guido Abbattista (Università di Trieste), Domenico Amirante (Università «Federico II», Napoli), Elisabetta Basile (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Luigi Bonanate (Università di Torino), Claudio Cecchi (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Alessandro Colombo (Università di Milano), Anton Giulio Maria de Robertis (Università di Bari), Thierry Di Costanzo (Université de Strasbourg), Max Guderzo (Università di Siena), Giorgio Milanetti (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Paolo Puddinu (Università di Sassari), Adriano Rossi (Università «L'Orientale», Napoli), Giuseppe Sacco (Università «Roma Tre», Roma), Guido Samarani (Università «Ca' Foscari», Venezia), Filippo Sabetti (McGill University, Montréal), Gianni Vaggi (Università di Pavia).



CSPE - Centro Studi per i Popoli extra-europei
"Cesare Bonacossa" - Università di Pavia

Steering Committee: Axel Berkofsky, Arturo Colombo, Antonio Morone, Giulia Rossolillo, Gianni Vaggi, Pierluigi Valsecchi (President), Massimo Zaccaria.



viella

libreria editrice

via delle Alpi, 32

I-00198 ROMA

tel. 06 84 17 758

fax 06 85 35 39 60

www.viella.it

CONTENTS

IX	MICHELUGUGLIELMO TORRI, <i>Foreword. Asia in 2022: The consequences of the war in Ukraine, US-China rivalry, democratic decline and popular protests</i>
1	SILVIA MENEGAZZI, <i>China 2022: The 20th party congress and popular discontent in Xi Jinping's China</i>
23	GIULIA SCIORATI, <i>China 2021-2022: A foreign policy of «re-branding»</i>
43	MARCO MILANI & ANTONIO FIORI, <i>Korean peninsula 2022: Stuck between new leadership and old practices</i>
79	COREY WALLACE & GIULIO PUGLIESE, <i>Japan 2022: Putin and Abe Shocks thwart Kishida's enjoyment of three golden years despite major defence overhaul</i>
131	AURELIO INSISA, <i>Taiwan 2022: Cross-Strait security spirals further down</i>
157	CLAUDIA ASTARITA, <i>Hong Kong 2021-2022: A new life in the shadow of China</i>
177	RIWANTO TIRTOSUDARMO & PETER B.R. CAREY, <i>Indonesia 2019-2022: The authoritarian turn as leitmotif of president Jokowi's second term</i>
215	GEOFFREY C. GUNN, <i>Timor-Leste 2021-2022: Electoral change and economic reset</i>
233	SALEENA SALEEM, <i>Malaysia 2022: 15th general elections and deepening political polarisation</i>
249	EDOARDO SIANI, <i>Thailand 2022: The «post-pandemic» era</i>
261	MATTEO FUMAGALLI, <i>Myanmar 2022: Fragmented sovereignties and the escalation of violence in multiple warscapes</i>
281	SILVIA TIERI, <i>Bangladesh 2022: Challenging post-pandemic times</i>
299	DIEGO MAIORANO, <i>India 2022: Political realignments in a BJP-dominated system</i>
327	MICHELUGUGLIELMO TORRI, <i>India 2021-2022: Playing against China on different chessboards</i>
371	DIEGO ABENANTE, <i>Sri Lanka 2022: The aragalaya protest movement and the Rajapaksas' fall from power</i>
387	MARCO CORSI, <i>Pakistan 2022: The geopolitics of Imran Khan's fall and the fledgling government of Shehbaz Sharif</i>
411	FILIPPO BONI, <i>Afghanistan 2022: Life under the Taliban</i>
425	GIORGIA PERLETTA, <i>Iran 2022: Domestic challenges to state legitimacy and isolation in the global arena</i>
447	CARLO FRAPPI, <i>Armenia 2022: Looking for a way out of the Nagorno-Karabakh impasse</i>
479	<i>Review article</i>
505	<i>Reviews</i>
573	<i>Appendix</i>

ARMENIA 2022: LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH
IMPASSE

Carlo Frappi

Ca' Foscari University, Venice
carlo.frappi@unive.it

In 2022, the Republic of Armenia struggled with a complex set of challenges and opportunities; a by-product of the precarious path towards a peace agreement with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, following the 2020 escalation, and from the reverberations of the war in Ukraine. Yerevan faced Baku's coercive bargaining strategies coupled with Russia's partial yet significant misalignment from a bilateral alliance that dictates Armenia's national security. As a result, security considerations were front and centre of Armenia's strategic thinking. However, the rapidly changing parameters of regional politics and the re-engagement of Euro-Atlantic actors in the Southern Caucasus have also widened Yerevan's diplomatic leeway and led the way to a new understanding of security policy. Hence Yerevan's more pragmatic approach to conflict resolution and its more realistic assessment of the limitations of the Armenian-Russian alliance. Accordingly, Armenia pursued its own security interests through diplomatic engagement with multiple partners. It was consistent with the country's Armenia-centred foreign policy vision, which focuses on its developmental prospects rather than existential threats coming from irreconcilable enemies. Looking for a way out of the Nagorno-Karabakh impasse seems to have led Yerevan to a foreign policy paradigm shift based upon a new conception of national interest.

KEYWORDS – Armenian Foreign Policy; Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; Southern Caucasus; Russia; European Union.

1. Introduction

Over the last two years, the pillars of Armenia's post-Soviet foreign policy were shaken to their core. This was primarily as a result of the country's defeat at the hands of Azerbaijan following the September-November 2020 war over Nagorno-Karabakh. In a matter of 44 days, Yerevan lost a great part of the territory conquered in the 1992-94 conflict, when the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh had been established. That same conflict had resulted in Yerevan's sense of strategic advantage over Baku and in unquestioned trust in its main ally and security provider, Russia.

It is hard to overstate the magnitude of change that the 2020 defeat brought to Armenia's post-independence strategy. The conflict with Azerbaijan over the Armenian-populated enclave in Azerbaijani territory may well be seen as the single factor which exerted the highest impact on the evolution of the country's foreign and domestic policy. The conflict over

Nagorno-Karabakh started in 1988 when the Soviet Union still existed, thereby turning into an inter-state war following the latter's collapse. The conflict impinged not only upon Yerevan's threats-opportunities assessment and foreign policy choices, but also on complex and interconnected nation- and state-building processes. Moreover, the decades-long conflict – at an impasse before an inconclusive OSCE-led mediation effort – has sustained the relevance of the Nagorno-Karabakh question over time. The latter has become the main intervening variable between the external environment and Armenia's foreign policy making. Consequently, in the last two years Yerevan has been struggling to re-adapt its new posture against the backdrop of a regional context made all the more volatile by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The conflict has indeed emboldened Azerbaijan's attempt to impose by force the terms of peace and further eroded Moscow's security guarantees. At the same time, however, it provided Armenia with new diplomatic leeway as Euro-Atlantic stakeholders have re-engaged, attempting to promote a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh question.

The aim of this article is to analyze Armenian policies in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in order to assess the magnitude of the foreign policy paradigm shift that occurred in 2022 and the current drive toward and Armenia-centered foreign policy.

The article proceeds as follows. The first part frames the post-Soviet evolution of Armenian politics, with its challenges and opportunities. As such, the article enquires into the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict's impact on Armenia's state- and nation-building processes, along with an analysis of the repercussions of the decades-long «no peace, no war» condition on Yerevan's policy-making. The second part of the article is dedicated to the main trends of Armenia's foreign policy in 2022. By looking at the repercussions of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the Janus-faced regional context is analysed to find the main drivers of Yerevan's foreign policy change.

2. Armenian state- and nation-building processes through the lenses of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh has contributed uniquely to the creation of Armenia's modern notions of statehood and national identity. In fact, the struggle for the region's self-determination not only overlapped timewise with the country's state- and nation-building process, but it also intertwined to a great extent with both, making the Armenian case unique in the post-Soviet space. Said uniqueness is largely due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict role on the country's path to independence as well as on the formation and legitimation of its elite. Ignited as *internal* self-determination issue within the federal Soviet structure, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue turned into an independentist struggle vis-à-vis Baku's unwillingness to question

its sovereignty over the *oblast*. This happened against a backdrop shaped by Moscow's inability to manage the emergence of «mirroring nationalisms» [Cornell 2001: 32-39] out of the Soviet Union's multi-ethnic matrix. Thus, contrary to what has happened in similar instances of ethno-territorial conflicts in the former Soviet Union, Armenia's irredentist cause preceded – rather than followed – the «Parade of Sovereignties» [Kahn 2000] that shook the foundations of the federal Soviet structure between 1989 and 1990, ultimately causing its collapse.¹ The uniqueness of the Armenian case also results from the role the struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh played in re-uniting the geographically dispersed Armenian communities, providing a unity of purpose to a quintessentially diaspora nation.

Never dormant under decades-long Soviet rule [Papazian 2001], irredentism over Nagorno-Karabakh rapidly attracted wide popular support and triggered mass mobilization in Armenia proper. This, in turn, helps to understand the impact exerted by the conflict on the country's institution-building and elite-formation processes. As the USSR's administrative crisis laid the groundwork for the affirmation of power centres alternative to the Communist Party, the emergence of mass nationalist movements «burst the very bounds of the old politics [...] and rapidly undermined the power of local communist parties» [Sunny 1993: 128]. As such, the Karabakh cause rapidly became the main catalyst for discontent and dissent. The «Karabakh Committee», established in 1988 in support of the annexationist cause, ended up championing all the socio-political grievances and instances advanced by the oppositions. It almost naturally evolved into the Pan-Armenian National Movement (ANM), which won the mid-1990 elections to the Supreme Soviet and saw its leader, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, elected as Chairman of the Supreme Council of Armenia. The transition from the leadership of the SSR to that of independent Armenia was a swift one. In October 1991, a month after the declaration of independence, Ter-Petrosyan was elected as the first President of the newly independent Republic. Moreover, the Nagorno-Karabakh's legitimizing role continued over time and was further strengthened by the lack of a peace agreement between the warring factions. Ter-Petrosyan was replaced by Robert Kocharyan (1998-2008), who – like his successor, Serzh Sargsyan (2008-2018) – was a native of Nagorno-Karabakh and a war veteran. The so-called «Karabakh Party» would eventually hold the reins of government until the 2018 «Velvet Revolution». Hence, Armenia became the only nation in the post-Soviet Caucasus and Central Asia area where the nationalist opposition grown at the dawn of independence held onto power for the ensuing twenty-five years.

1. As Hughes and Sasse [2002: 29] put it, in the Nagorno-Karabakh case the de-institutionalization of the Soviet administrative structures came from *below* and not from *above*, as the demand for secession was the result of internal nationalist irredentism rather than a reaction to nationalizing policies of the Azerbaijan SSR's titular nationality.

The extraordinary potential for aggregation of the Karabakh cause was due to the central role it had already played in the development of Armenian nationalism during Soviet era. It was also the result of its close association with some of the most important elements of Armenian identity. According to Razmik Panossian [2002], Armenia's modern national identity is built around three different – yet not mutually exclusive – narratives, based upon as many national discourses and eposes. The first narrative, building upon the conversion to Christianity in 301, conceives «Armenian-ness» as rooted in the notion that Armenia was the world's first Christian nation, highlighting religion's role in perpetuating distinctive national features against successive assimilation attempts. The second narrative, building upon the myth of the genesis of the Armenians in 2492 BC, argues that the Armenian nation is rooted in its race and language, representing a continuum since pre-Christian times. The third narrative, particularly preeminent in the Diaspora, argues that being an Armenian means being a survivor – or a descendent of survivors – of the 1915 Genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Empire's Young Turk regime. This narrative of survival represents a founding element of Armenia's contemporary national identity, deeply ingrained in the previous two narratives, too.

As in mid-1998 inter-communal violence followed what had started as a merely administrative fight, animosity vis-à-vis the Azerbaijani-Turks² over the Armenian-populated enclave resonated with the diverse national narratives. It set off each narrative's «exposed nerves» – as a conflict between Christianity and Islam, as a primordial struggle for sovereignty over the homeland, or as yet another episode in a decades-long struggle against extermination attempts perpetrated by the Turks [Panossian 2002: 139]. Looking at the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict through the 1915 Genocide lenses³ became common practice across all components of the nation, whether they were Armenian citizens, Karabakh Armenians, or Armenians from the Diaspora. This happened not only because the underlying *epos* of «survival» and «victimhood» is deeply ingrained in the notion of Armenian-ness,⁴ but also because, since the mid-1960s, the memory and commemoration of the *Metz Yeghen* (the «Great Evil») has emerged as the cornerstone of national cohesiveness

2. According to Armenians, the difference between Azerbaijanis and Turks, belonging to the same ethno-linguistic lineage, is at least blurred. In Suny's words [200: 57], «local [Karabakh] Armenians referred to Azerbaijanis exclusively as 'the Turks'. Azeri is, of course, a Turkic language, but the appellation 'Turk' in this context was a transference of the qualities of Ottoman Turks to present-day Azerbaijanis, rather than a reference to linguistic affiliations».

3. On the Genocide's role in shaping events and national narratives in Armenia and Azerbaijan, see Cheterian 2018.

4. First and foremost, the *epos*' strength results from the centuries-long dispersion of Armenians worldwide, who became a stateless nation, subject to physical and cultural annihilation, after the 1375 fall of the Cilicia Kingdom and until 1991 (except for the independent years between 1918 and 1920).

both in the USSR and among diasporic communities. Moreover, since the 1970s, the Genocide also became a vector for the Diaspora's political mobilization in the struggle for recognition by hosts countries.

Reignited by the self-determination cause, survival and victimhood eposes grew preeminent in the nation-building process as a result of the first violent clashes and, particularly, of the pogroms and ethnic cleansing against Armenians between 1988 and 1990 in Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku. The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh became only the last episode of an historical struggle for survival against the risk of annihilation at Turkish hands, starting from the mid-1890s Hamidian massacres in Anatolia, transiting through the 1905-07 Armenian-Tatar war in the Southern Caucasus, and culminating in the Genocide. As Marina Kurkchian [2005: 154] put it, «in the Armenian perception, the identification of Soviet Azerbaijan with Ottoman Turkey was quickly made».⁵ This, in turn, had a direct effect on the creation of the national identity paradigm. Indeed, the reactivation of the collective memory around the Genocide paved the way for the creation of the notion of Armenian-ness built essentially on the «othering» of the Turks. This resulted in an ethnic and holistic understanding of the nation that would include all its components, both within and outside of its newly-conquered statehood.

This understanding of nationhood had a number of significant consequences when applied to the promotion of national interests and the protection of national security.⁶ Othering the Turks entailed an ethno-nationalistic understanding of nationhood which empowered the radical fringes of the Armenian political spectrum, both at home and in the Diaspora. This happened at the expense of the more pragmatic segments of the ANM leadership, guided by Ter-Petrosyan. During the Republic's formative years, the national(ist) narrative built around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a decisive factor in empowering the promoters of Armenian «exceptionalism» in their confrontation with the advocates of a «normal state». The former group, building upon the *uniqueness* of a universal nation, entrusted Armenia with a «special mission», including «the rectification of all historical injustices [and] the reward for all martyrdoms» [Libaridian 1999: 81]. The advocates of a «normal state», instead, promoted the view of a state «subscribing to a civic definition of nationhood and rejecting the notion that

5. Highlighting the nexus between the «survival»-«victimhood» national eposes and the cycle of violence around Nagorno-Karabakh, Kurkchian [2005: 154] also recalls how «The Sumgait attacks were presented in Armenia as a 'Pan-Turkish threat to the whole nation' or as 'the Turkish model of behaviour when dealing with Christian Armenians'».

6. We start here from the assumption that the meaning and scope of national interest – and the resulting national security paradigm – are mutable and shall be evaluated in contingent and historically connoted terms. Moreover, both national interest and the national security paradigm relate, in turn, to the protection of values considered of vital importance for the survival of the State. See Wolfers 1952.

Armenians living all over the world should somehow be integrated into a single polity» [Grigoryan 2018: 848]. They also pursued an «Armenia first» strategy» [Broers 2019: 96], striving to build normal relations with neighbours, including Turkey.⁷

While the war over Nagorno-Karabakh had a decisive influence in the formative years of the post-Soviet Armenian state and nation, its *sine-die* protraction after the 1994 ceasefire agreement had pertinacious effects on the independent path walked thenceforth. On the one hand, the «no-war, no-peace» condition crystallized both the power structure defined at the dawn of independence and the national paradigm built around the conflict with the Azerbaijani Turks. On the other, as the military victory and *de facto* secession of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan was not sanctioned *de jure* either by a peace treaty or an international recognition of the self-proclaimed Republic,⁸ the protraction of the conflict left both state- and nation-building essentially incomplete, feeding into what Steele [2008] calls «ontological insecurity». As a result, a «mutilated sovereignty syndrome» took roots in Armenia, reinvigorating the traditional «survival» narrative and fostering a security-based understanding of national interests. This, in turn, had pernicious repercussions on the country's foreign and domestic policies.

2.1. *Nagorno-Karabakh and the security-first approach to foreign and security policy*

Fostered by the perception of an existential threat coming from the «Turks», «ontological insecurity» generated a security-first approach to foreign policy, easily identifiable in the successive National Security Doctrines [Ceccorulli

7. The narrow room for manoeuvre available to the pragmatists in their attempt to move beyond what Suny [2000: 156] called a «powerful and binding national discourse» had already emerged on the eve of independence, around the debate on the provisions of the August 1990 Declaration of Independence. Here, the opportunity not to introduce references to the international campaign for the recognition of the Genocide – seen by Ter-Petrosyan as inappropriate from a diplomatic point of view [Astourian 2005: 84] – fell victim to an overwhelming vote of the Supreme Soviet, which included the provision in the document, along with a reference to Turkish Eastern Anatolia as «Western Armenia» [GRA 1990, art. 11]. Therefore, the «Armenian Cause» or «Hay Tad» – i.e., an ideology encompassing the acknowledgement of the Genocide, the fight against Turkish negationism, seen as the «final stage of Genocide» [Kasbarian 2018: 123], and a revanchist attitude over the lost Armenian homeland – found its way into the Republic's founding documents.

8. It is worth mentioning that the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh is not recognised by Yerevan. This resulted from former President Ter-Petrosyan's resolve not to give the conflict an inter-state nature. Such position, confirmed by his successors, responded also to the logic of granting Yerevan the full negotiating representation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, with the endorsement of Minsk Group mediators.

et al., 2017]. In other words, the protracted conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh became the main perceptual filter through which national elites came to interpret regional politics. Moreover, «ontological insecurity», built upon a powerful and binding national narrative, strengthened a deterministic view of the human and physical factors of Armenian geopolitics. Accordingly, the national threat assessment was shaped first and foremost by the perception of an immanent menace resulting from both history and geography, whereby Armenia is squeezed in-between irreconcilable enemies who pose an existential threat to both nation and state.

Going beyond such a perception proved impossible and politically counterproductive, as demonstrated by the 1998 ousting of Ter-Petrosyan. He had strived to find a compromise solution on Nagorno-Karabakh for the sake of normalizing relations with both Azerbaijan and Turkey, consistently with the peace plan proposed by the OSCE. His policy, nonetheless, had been met with fierce resistance – and betrayal accusations – on the home front, in the Diaspora, and in Karabakh itself, triggering an alignment among nationalist oppositions which ultimately led to Ter-Petrosyan's resignation. His replacement with a representative of the so-called Karabakh Party, Robert Kocharyan, drew clear red lines for the future of Armenian foreign policy and negotiating positions on Nagorno-Karabakh. A new maximalist position was thereby introduced, marking the transition from a «compliant» to an «augmented» Armenia [Broers 2019]; in other words, from a flexible attitude open to the restitution of the occupied territories around the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave to an uncompromising way of thinking which envisioned these territories as an integral and inalienable part of the self-proclaimed Republic.

As a consequence, Yerevan's foreign and security policies were shaped according to a «balance of threat» logic – whereby states enter alliances primarily to balance against threats [Walt 1990]. In the perpetual struggle for *survival*, Russia resumed the traditional role of *saviour*, not only for the «hidden hand» [Goltz 1993] extended to Armenians during the 1988-1994 war, but also for the subsequent role played by the Russian-Armenian alliance⁹ in deterring the perceived joint Turkish-Azerbaijani threat. Deterrence potential, in turn, became the rationale for Yerevan's approach to the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, built primarily upon the pursuit of military

9. The Armenian-Russian military alliance is based on the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance signed in 1997. However, Russian troops never left Armenian soil after 1991. Their deployment in the country was sanctioned by a series of agreements signed between 1992 and 1995 for the establishment of a military base in Gyumri, which was renewed again in 2010 for another 49 years, and for the patrolling of the border with Turkey and Iran [Nazaretyan 2021]. Moreover, the alliance with Russia – which is by far the first among the country's arms supplier – also has a multilateral dimension, as Armenia has joined the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty (CST) since its inception in 1992, becoming one of the founding members of the resulting Organization (CSTO) a decade later.

and technical parity against the enemy.¹⁰ It was a strategy aimed at the preservation of the *status quo*, and the «conversion of the time factor into a power resource in the political struggle» [Minasyan 2008: 71].

According to the balance of threat theory, the scope of alliances depends upon the scale of threat perception – and particularly upon the enemies' offensive capabilities and aggressive intentions [Walt 1990: 24-6]. This theory helps explain not only Armenian-Russia alliance formation, but also its progressive widening as a result of the strengthening of the Turkish-Azerbaijani axis. The latter, sealed during the 1992-94 Nagorno-Karabakh war, when Ankara closed the border and froze diplomatic relations with Armenia, has steadily widened and deepened ever since. Moreover, since the mid-2000s, energy rents allowed Baku to significantly increase investments in defence procurement,¹¹ which grew alongside a revanchist rhetoric – as Baku never hid its resolve to revert to military means to restore sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, should the negotiation prove useless. Finally, in the second decade of this century, Armenia's threat perception increased due to the «abandonment risk» implicit in the Russian-Azerbaijani rapprochement which, in turn, emboldened Baku's coercive approach to the issue.¹²

The progressive deepening of the Armenian-Russian military alliance resulted into two contradictory trends in Yerevan's foreign and security policies. On the one hand, paradoxically, the alliance with Moscow has engendered a vicious circle, whereby the «abandonment risk» made Russia both the main guarantor of and the highest threat to Armenian national security [Shirinyan 2019]. On the other hand, the primacy of security in Yerevan's strategic thinking and the resulting tendency to *bandwagon* with Moscow were the main obstacles to the effective pursuit of a multi-vectorial diplomatic course, consistent with the doctrine of «complementarity». In fact, the principle of «complementarity» has been effectively replaced in foreign policy by an opposite practice of «supplementarity», whereby «Armenia's

10. According to the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, between 1993 and 2021 Russia's share of total Armenian arms imports was 87.8%, amounting to US\$ 832 million. However, the figure doesn't fully reflect the total amount of arms transfer, since Russian supplies to Armenia often came at reduced prices or in the form of military aid.

11. According to SIPRI, in the decade following the inauguration of the Main Export Oil Pipeline to Western markets, Azerbaijan's military spending grew tenfold. By 2013, Baku's military expenditure was higher than the Armenian Government's overall spending.

12. The «abandonment risk» was particularly visible in Moscow's neutrality after the flare-up of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in April 2016, when an Azerbaijani attack resulted in geographically limited yet politically significant territorial gains for the first time. Dealing a blow to Armenia's invincibility myth and feeding into a renewed sense of vulnerability, the «abandonment risk» resulted in a progressive deepening of military cooperation with Russia.

foreign policy commitments need to be synchronized with Russian preferences» [Vasilyan 2016: 41].¹³

The assumption whereby the primacy of security leads Yerevan to draw «a red line that no leader can cross, regardless of pro-Western orientation» [Iskandaryan 2019: 3] in its relations with the Kremlin was confirmed by Nikol Pashinyan, current Prime Minister and the leader of the 2018 «Velvet Revolution», which opened a new chapter in the country's post-Soviet history and transition towards democracy. Pashinyan, despite its previous anti-Russian rhetoric, once in power was rather quick in reassuring Moscow of his administration's loyalty to the alliance. He emphasized the eminently internal nature and origin of the Armenian Revolution, thereby distancing his government from the previous «Colour revolutions» in the post-Soviet area [Terzyan 2020: 7-10]. Arguably, reassuring Moscow of Armenian loyalty¹⁴ was instrumental in pushing domestic reforms, which represented the main reason behind the Revolution.

2.2. Nagorno-Karabakh as an obstacle on Armenia's post-Soviet transition and economic development

Notwithstanding international stakeholders' high expectations around transition toward democracy and the free market in the aftermath of independence, especially under Kocharyan and Sargsyan, Armenia grew into a «competitive authoritarian» system combining a democratic guise with authoritarian practices and informal rules [Levitsky & Way 2010: 207-13] plagued by deep socio-economic problems. The direct and indirect influence of Nagorno-Karabakh and of the resulting primacy of security over these trends may be assessed from four different although connected perspectives.

First and foremost, the struggle for self-determination and the following need to protect the military victory were critical in determining not only the leaderships' legitimation but also the results of the intra-elite power struggle – as demonstrated by the complete economic and political takeover of the country by the 'Karabakh Party' after 1998. The war resulted in the

13. This trend became manifest in 2013 with Yerevan's «U-turn» on the path leading to the signing of an Association Agreement with the EU. After a meeting between Sargsyan and Putin, Armenia interrupted the Agreement negotiations, opting instead to join the Russian-led Customs Union and, in 2015, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Significantly, the Armenian President justified the decision on the grounds that separating economic and security cooperation was unfeasible [POR 2013].

14. It is worth mentioning that the reassurance of Armenia's loyalty led to Pashinyan's decisions, which ran counter to his democratic credentials. This was the case, for example, with the deployment of an Armenian contingent in the CSTO peace-keeping operation launched in January 2022 to quell the riots threatening the Kazakhstani regime.

emergence of commodity-based cartels closely associated with the military, which benefitted from a favourable tax system. These cartels eventually became the pillar of resilient clientelist networks in a kleptocratic economy shaped by the primacies of oligarchies [Broers 2021a; Grigoryan 2018]. Moreover, even at a time when the Nagorno-Karabakh issue lost its mass mobilization potential, it nonetheless helped the regime's consolidation and durability. Elites in power, especially in the face of a declining electoral legitimacy, used the conflict as a political resource to reinforce their position against competitors [Cheterian 2012] and as a «go-to» reason for justifying the continued and mounting socioeconomic problems and political problems» [Ghaplanyan 2017: 122].

All in all, during Kocharyan and Sargsyan's tenures, the Nagorno-Karabakh's legitimization role receded – along with the regime's overall legitimacy – and authoritarian stability came to rest primarily over co-optation and repression strategies [Broers 2019; Shubladze & Khundadze 2017]. Nonetheless, it retained its potential and came back to the centre of national discourse after the Velvet Revolution. As a matter of fact, until the 2020 war Pashinyan reverted to a strong Karabakh-based nationalist rhetoric, consistent with his populist profile and aimed at strengthening his government's legitimization [Sahakyan 2022].

Second, the primacy bestowed upon security triggered a convergence of interests between the elites in power and the Diaspora in the West, which may also explain the regime's longevity. Chiefly concerned with foreign and security policy, the Diaspora took a favorable position vis-à-vis the regime, ultimately gave it both legitimacy and financial support [Cavoukian 2019].

Third, in a vicious circle between the external and internal domain of Armenian politics, Russia's security guarantor role also took on a domestic dimension, as Moscow came to play the role of democracy's «black knight» [Natalizia 2019] and promoter of «authoritarian stability» [Cameron & Orenstein 2012]. This trend was particularly visible during the Kocharyan administration, when the alliance helped shield the country from the risk of contagion coming from the Colour Revolutions occurring in the post-Soviet space.¹⁵ Moreover, besides providing the regime with a source of external legitimacy, Russia was also called to contribute to domestic stability and security through economic means [Ghaplanyan 2017: 52].

This consideration helps introduce the fourth and last way whereby the Nagorno-Karabakh issue has influenced Armenia's post-Soviet transition. Ever since the ousting of Ter-Petrosyan and the failure to elevate economic opportunities over security needs, security took precedence over economic development in the pursuit of national interest. As a result, since the debt-for-equity agreement of 2002, Russian public and private com-

15. For an in-depth discussion on the lack of revolutionary contagion, see Zol-yan 2010.

panies have assumed substantial control of the Armenian economy's main strategic sectors – from energy to transport, from telecommunications to mining, finance, and insurance. Combined with Russia's lion share in Armenian foreign trade, investments, and remittance inflows, this further widened the power asymmetry between Russia and Armenia, with their relations coming to resemble a patron-client dynamic. Kocharyan's recipe for economic development ended up decidedly pushing «Armenia into Russia's embrace» [Iskyan 2004, 24 March], thereby compromising the sustainability of the nation's growth model. As a matter of fact, not only did the Armenian economy become closely linked to – and dependent upon – Russia's, but also economic growth in Armenia did not alleviate, but rather increased, the population's economic hardship and the disparities in income and regional development [Ghaplanyan 2017: 52-3]. Moreover, Yerevan's growth strategy favoured the strategic polarization unfolding in the Southern Caucasus, characterized by the Azerbaijani energy rents reinvestment strategy, aimed at choking Armenia, isolating it from regional infrastructure development [PRA 2019] and worsening Yerevan's structural vulnerability resulting from Armenia's land-locked condition.

3. The Russian-Ukrainian War: Setting the stage for current social, political and economic challenges

Due to the relevance that Nagorno-Karabakh has had over Armenian politics since independence, the 2020 military debacle came as a national trauma and exposed the contradiction of the security-first approach in the country's policy-making. However, the stage for current socio-political, economic, and diplomatic challenge was set by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, started on 24 February 2022. The war came with muted repercussions on Armenia: on the one hand, it exacerbated challenges and risks resulting from the 44 Days War while, on the other, it also opened an unexpected window of diplomatic opportunities to solve the contradictions in Yerevan's traditional approach to the solution of the conflict.

The war between Russia and Ukraine erupted in a domestic and regional context shaped by three main trends unfolding since the 2020 war. Domestically, the 44 Days War exacerbated political and institutional polarization resulting from the 2018 Revolution. Pashinyan, accused of having lost Karabakh and betrayed the national cause, came under fierce criticism by the nationalist opposition and segments of national institutions close to the former regime. Yet, despite the military debacle, the Prime Minister was able to retain a significant consensus and, somehow unexpectedly [Poghosyan 2021], the ruling Civil Contract party won the majority of votes in a June 2021 snap parliamentary election, called under the opposition's pressure. The elections not only renovated the mandate for change behind

the Velvet Revolution, but also confirmed the overall improvement of the electoral process unfolding since 2018.¹⁶

Secondly, the 44 Days War tipped the balance of power between Armenia and Azerbaijan to the benefit of the latter, reversing their bargaining leverage and approach to the negotiations. The war exposed the fallacy in Armenia's main assumptions about the conflict resolution, including the idea that the conservation of the *status quo* would ensure a strategic advantage as well as the trust in the deterrence potential of the alliance with Russia. Moreover, along with the districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, after the war Yerevan lost its main bargaining chip to further the region's self-determination principle. As a result, the previous grounds for conflict resolution put forward by the OSCE Minsk Group and Russia lost their *raison d'être*. Furthermore, Azerbaijan took on a maximalist approach, withdrawing from any compromise solutions regarding the enclave's final status.

Finally, at a regional level, the war confirmed Moscow's regional primacy, reinforced by the deployment of a peace-keeping unit to Nagorno-Karabakh, which represents the last security guarantee for Karabakh Armenians and a significant leverage in relations with Baku. Russia's primacy was also emboldened by the paralysis of the Minsk Group and by the relative disengagement of the Euro-Atlantic powers, which kept the conflict at arm's length. Moreover, Russian's leverage was not eroded, but rather fostered, by the largely symbolic deployment of a Turkish contingent in a joint monitoring mission. Indeed, the Turkish-Russian initiative brought to the Southern Caucasus a common understanding and practice of conflict management that had already been tested in other battlefields. While bearing different strategic goals, Moscow and Ankara came together in a tactical assertion of a «regional ownership principle» [Frappi 2018], which entails the marginalization of extra-regional powers and international mediation mechanisms from conflict management.

While the first two above-mentioned trends were either confirmed or fostered by the war in Ukraine, Russian regional primacy was instead manifestly eroded by the invasion, with significant repercussions on Armenia's foreign and domestic policies.

3.1 *The Janus-faced post-conflict landscape*

Ever since the signing of the cease-fire declaration in November 2020, the post-conflict landscape is manifestly Janus-faced. It is both shaped by encouraging trends towards the resolution of the conflict and by concrete risks of renewed escalation that could drag Armenia and Azerbaijan in open

16. The OSCE's Observation Mission certified that the elections «were competitive and generally well-managed» and that «fundamental rights and freedoms were generally respected» [OSCE - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2021: 1].

inter-state confrontation. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its diminished leverage have made the landscape all the more volatile. This, in turn, has emboldened the search for dialogue but also aggravated bilateral tensions. This trend was detectable, in 2022, in the constant swinging between negotiation rounds and military clashes. During the year, five meetings were held between Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President, Ilham Aliyev: three in Brussels, hosted by the European Council's President, Charles Michel, on April 6, May 22, and August 31. Another one took place in Prague on October 6 on the sidelines of the European Political Community Summit and at a joint EU-French initiative. Finally, the last one occurred in Sochi, under Russian mediation, on the 31st of October.¹⁷ At the same time, however, violent clashes occurred on three different occasions. The first two, in March and at the beginning of August, came as a result of Azerbaijani military operations against strategic locations in the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. The third, the deadliest confrontation since the 2020 war, took place from the 13th to the 15th of September along the border between the two countries. It was a clear escalation of the conflict, with Azerbaijani military operations conducted along a 200km front that led to the occupation of strategic positions inside Armenian territory.¹⁸

The Janus-faced post-conflict landscape is primarily the result of Azerbaijan's «coercive bargaining strategy» [Broers 2021b]. Accordingly, coercive pressures are applied on Armenia, along with a revanchist narrative, to advance Baku's maximalist view to the conflict resolution agenda and outcome. Thus, taking control of strategically advantageous positions through «surgical» military actions in Nagorno-Karabakh or Armenia proper ensures Baku's upper-hand at the negotiating table as well as military advantages in a war scenario. Moreover, Azerbaijan's coercive tactics also took on a hybrid nature, as Baku began targeting lifeline communication lines between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. On top of interrupting gas transits along a pipeline that crosses Azerbaijani-controlled territory in March and December 2022, on the 12th of December the sole road connecting the two territories along the so-called Lachin Corridor was blocked (and remained such at the time of writing) by Azerbaijani environmental activists with national authorities' blessing.

Baku's coercive bargaining strategy grew stronger throughout 2022 due to the erosion of Moscow's leverage over the parties – as evidenced by

17. In 2022, Armenia and Azerbaijan also pursued direct and at times unmediated negotiations involving not only their respective foreign ministers – who held their first meeting in Tbilisi in July – but also Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of the Security Council of Armenia, and Hikmet Hajiyev, the head of Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration of Azerbaijan.

18. As a result of the military operations conducted since mid-2021, it is estimated that the Armenian territory currently under Azerbaijani control ranges between 127 and 145 square kilometres [Toal & Seferian 2022, 25 November].

the collapse of a Russian-mediated cease-fire during the September clashes – as well as to the overall weakening of its deterrence potential. First, the Nagorno-Karabakh-based Russian peacekeepers failed to deter Baku from applying military and hybrid pressures over the enclave. Second, Russia has refrained to act, both directly and through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), following Azerbaijan's offensive into Armenian territory despite Yerevan's requests for help [RFE 2022b]. This, in turn, led to a crisis of confidence between Moscow and Yerevan. Armenia grew increasingly critical of both Russia and CSTO in 2022, as exemplified by its refusal to sign the final declaration of the CSTO's November Summit [Mejlmuyan 2022] and to host the Organization's annual flagship exercises [Kucera 2023].

Faced with Baku's coercive bargaining strategy, reduced bargaining power, and weakened Russian deterrence potential, the Armenian government took a seemingly constructive approach to the negotiations. Coupled with the abandonment of a nationalistic rhetoric, this marked the return to a «compliant Armenia», keen to reach a compromise solution at the detriment of previously drawn red lines. This refers, in particular, to the attempt to simultaneously safeguard the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination and Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, through an *internal* understanding of the right to self-determination rather than an *external* one. Indeed, the government's basic understanding of the negotiation process, clarified by Pashinyan in an April speech to the Parliament, revolves around the *de-territorialization* of the issue as the Karabakh dispute is «not a matter of territory but of rights» [PMRA 2022]. This naturally entails the need to «lower the benchmark» on the status of the region, consistently with the international community's expectations and requests. Interestingly, the resolution of the conflict was framed within the Government wider resolve to pursue good relations with all neighboring countries – including Turkey – through a «maximally balanced foreign policy [...] in the state interests of the Republic of Armenia». The reference – added to a January 2022 interview where Pashinyan refused the pursue of the «Armenian Cause» [‘Armenia has never pursued’ 2022] – seemingly linked the Prime Minister's understanding of national interest to the post-independence dichotomy and debate between the ‘normal state’ vision versus exceptionalism, embracing the former at the expense of the latter.

Pashinyan's speech – praised by EU representatives as «important and far-sighted» [JAMnews 2022a] yet strongly criticized by the nationalist opposition at home, by the diaspora, and by Stepanakert *de facto* authorities – confirmed Yerevan's relinquishment of maximalist positions as well as its abandonment of a nationalist rhetoric. This marked a significant realignment between rhetoric and diplomatic initiatives, as the Prime Minister broke with his predecessors' habit to capitalise on a stubborn and uncompromising nationalist rhetoric for domestic consumption while pursuing a more compromising stance at the negotiating table. This, in turn, has often

led to the government becoming hostage «to the nationalist slogan and sentiments» [Abasov & Khachatryan 2005: 17].

The issue of the enclave's future status was officially put on the negotiation table in a six-point peace proposal addressed in May 2022 to Azerbaijan, in response to Baku's five-point proposal received two months prior. Yerevan accepted it in principle as for the recognition of respective sovereignty and territorial integrity, the demarcation of the border, and the unblocking of transport links [TRT Azərbaycan 2022]. However, Armenia also added that «guaranteeing the security of Karabakh Armenians, respecting their rights and freedoms, and determining the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh are fundamental for the Armenian side» [Dovich 2022]. The future status of the enclave remains the main contention point between Yerevan and Baku, as the latter firmly opposes *any* self-determination right – not only *external*, but also *internal*.¹⁹

The second bone of contention regards the delimitation and demarcation of the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, contributing to extreme volatility on the ground.²⁰ In 2022, the EU effectively took the lead of that process, which had started in the aftermath of the war under Russian auspices [Arka 2021]. After facilitating the long-awaited launch of a joint Armenian-Azerbaijani commission for this purpose last May,²¹ the EU achieved in Prague what could be considered the most important agreement of the year. Breaking the stalemate over reference maps, under the joint EU-French mediation, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed upon border delimitation based on documents of the Commonwealth of Independent States [European Council 2022b] and, therefore, to the Soviet administrative divisions. For the first time, during the Prague negotiations both Azerbaijan and Armenia explicitly recognised their respective borders, marking a breakthrough in the negotiation process and overhauling Yerevan's previous ambiguities on the issue.²² However, the process of demarcation still

19. Portraying «Karabakh» (the toponym «Nagorno-Karabakh» has been banned from official discourse) as one of the constituent parts of the Republic, Baku denies the need to grant it any special administrative prerogative. Baku also rejects any international involvement in the issue, which it regards as a purely internal affair [PRA 2022a; Valiyev 2022].

20. Consistently with its coercive bargaining strategy, Azerbaijan used the lack of a demarcated border as a justification for the encroachment into Armenian territory. See Hajiyeva 2022.

21. In 2022, the Delimitation and Border Security Commissions met three times: the first, shortly after the Brussels meeting, on the border between Armenia and the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan; the second and the third in Moscow and Brussels respectively, on 30 August and 3 November.

22. Until the Prague meeting, Yerevan did never explicitly commit to the recognition of the border, maintaining that the latter resulted indirectly from the 1992 Armenian ratification of the treaty establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States. This argumentation was also maintained in the six-point plan presented to Azerbaijan in May 2022 [Dovich 2022].

presents significant sources of friction. Since the beginning of the negotiations, Armenia insisted that preliminary security measures across the border were a precondition to start the delimitation and demarcation process. In Sochi, at the end of October, Pashinyan put forward this principle again, proposing the establishment of a demilitarized zone under international guarantees around Nagorno-Karabakh and along the border between the two countries as well as the withdrawal of Azerbaijani units from the Armenian territories that fell under Baku's control after the 2020 ceasefire [RFE 2022c]. The proposal is hardly acceptable to Baku, which insists that no precondition shall be put before the process.

The border issue, in turn, is strictly connected to the third main bone of contention, resulting from the 2020 cease-fire provision whereby all transport links in the region shall be unblocked, including between Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan exclave through Armenian territory [PMRA 2020]. As a confirmation of the Janus-faced post-conflict landscape, the provision simultaneously stands as the main incentive for the belligerents to solve the dispute and as the most concrete threat to the peace process itself. Indeed, the opening of communications may reverse the polarization trend in regional infrastructure politics to the benefit of all the stakeholders. However, at the same time, the lack of agreement on their status prompted Azerbaijan to repeatedly threaten to occupy the southern strip of the country, where infrastructure is supposed to go through to reach Nakhichevan and further to Turkey.²³ The contention point results from the status that is to be granted to the communication line. Yerevan maintains that the latter shall be «under its full control and operated in accordance with the legislation of Armenia» [JAMnews 2022b]. Azerbaijan, in turn, proposed an extraterritorial status for the communication line – with the use of the term ‘corridor’, strongly rebuked by Yerevan – which would be under Russian control and would have the same status as the Lachin Corridor, linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian-Azerbaijan negotiations are taking place in a mediation framework that grew increasingly fragmented and competitive in 2022. The presumption of compatibility of the European and Russian mediation activities built in 2021 before European Council's President Michel's first initiatives fell victim of growing strategic polarization. As a result, Moscow came to understand Brussels' mediation as a «geopolitical game» at the Kremlin's

23. It is worth mentioning that the occupation threat coincided with Baku's outspoken irredentist position over Southern Armenia (as well as Yerevan). Mirroring Armenia's historical complaints over Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku blames Soviet authorities for the 1920 decision to sever Zangezur from Azerbaijan, annexing an «historical [Azerbaijani] land» to Armenia «without any grounds whatsoever» and thereby committing an «act of enmity and injustice» [PRA 2022b]. Arguably, the September encroachment into Armenian territory may be seen as strictly connected to the aforementioned threat. See Broers 2021b and Mgdetsyan 2022.

expense [News.am 2022a]. The fault line in Moscow-West relations marked a definitive crisis of the Russia-US-France jointly co-chaired OSCE Minsk Group, which for all intents and purposes is still the only multilateral mechanism *de jure* in charge of mediation between the parties. While not unwelcomed by Baku – maintaining that the mechanism is no longer requested as Nagorno-Karabakh has already been reincorporated into Azerbaijani territory [PRA 2022a] – the Group’s crisis delivered a blow to Armenia, which explicitly referred to the desire to negotiate under its mediation in its six-point peace plan [Dovich 2022].

Without a multilateral mechanism entrusted to mediate between the parties and defuse tensions on the ground, the EU progressively raised the profile of its contribution to conflict management. Having broken Russia’s *de facto* monopoly over peace negotiations,²⁴ after the September clashes Brussels also took on the burden of de-escalation. In Prague, an agreement was reached for the deployment of a temporary civilian EU mission on the Armenian side of the border, tasked with analyzing and reporting « the situation in the region around the international border [...], with a view to contributing to the restoration of peace and security in the area, to the building of confidence and to the delimitation of the international border between the two States» [OJEU 2022]. Moreover, following the ‘European Monitoring Capacity in Armenia’ two-months mission, in mid-December the European Council decided, at Armenia’s request, to deploy a transitional planning assistance team with a view to plan and prepare a possible long-term civilian mission. The latter was eventually established, by decision of the EU Foreign Affairs Council, on the 23rd of January 2023.

3.3 Pursuing an «Armenia-centered» foreign policy

While security considerations remained paramount for Armenia in 2022, the year marked a significant departure from the responses previously given to the national security dilemma. The weakening of Russia’s security guarantee forced Armenia to protect itself through diplomacy rather than by military means, making deterrence dependent upon third parties’ diplomatic pressures over Azerbaijan and thereby pursuing what Nerses Kopyan [2022] called the «diplomatization of security».

Armenia’s drive towards diplomatic coalition-building was, in turn, favored by the trends unfolding at system-level as a result of the war in Ukraine. Despite fears running high in the country [ICG 2022: 3], the main

24. EU’s newly gained leading role in negotiations doesn’t result merely from the EU Council Presidency’s initiative. The latter has been compounded by regular contacts between the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, and the foreign ministers of both sides as well as by the engagement of Toivo Klaar, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, who hosted meetings between Grigoryan and Hajiyev.

Western stakeholders proved to be not as distracted by the war as to turn a blind eye to the Southern Caucasus. On the contrary, both France and the US came to view the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict through the lenses of the ongoing struggle against Russia's destabilization in Europe scenario, stepping up their diplomatic efforts toward conflict resolution and de-escalation. Both countries openly support the EU's mediation initiative and have been acting as facilitators. Moreover, both countries reacted promptly and resolutely after Azerbaijan's escalation in September, validating the Armenian deterrence-through-diplomacy logic. Washington played a decisive role in brokering the ceasefire and, although it didn't go as far as to condemn the Azerbaijani aggression – as Paris did [France24 2022] – nonetheless it resolutely asked Baku to move its troops to previously-held positions and reaffirmed the inadmissibility of the use of force to solve the issue [U.S. Department of State 2022a]. Amid repeated gestures of solidarity to Armenia, France's main contribution to Yerevan's diplomatization of security came from Paris' attempt to bring the Nagorno-Karabakh issue at the UN Security Council, with a view to re-engage the latter in the Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute [AFA 2022]. France activated the Council twice, in September and December, after hostilities were ignited again on the border and before the blockade of the Lachin Corridor. The Lachin crisis, in turn, resulted in a new wave of outspoken denunciations of Azerbaijani coercive tactics from the US, the EU, and France, reinforcing Armenia's perception that the main international players have abandoned the traditional 'both-sidism', leaning towards Yerevan.²⁵

Armenia's 'soft' approach towards deterrence also presided over the strengthening of its partnership with Iran, a traditional key asset for Yerevan to escape its geographical and infrastructural isolation. As Teheran grew increasingly uneasy about the Azerbaijani-Turkish upper-hand in regional politics and about the resurgence of Azerbaijani irredentism over the Azeri-populated northern part of the country, it came to share Armenian anxieties about Baku's coercive initiatives. In particular, as regards the risk of a military occupation of the corridor linking Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan

25. This was particularly the case before the resolutions adopted by EU and French legislative bodies. The European Parliament approved two significant resolutions: the 10 March 2022 resolution, connected to the sensitive issue of Karabakh's cultural heritage, «strongly condemns Azerbaijan's continued policy of erasing and denying the Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, in violation of international law» [European Parliament 2022]. The second one, adopted on 19 January 2023 and aimed at addressing the «Humanitarian consequences of the blockade in Nagorno-Karabakh», denounced «the tragic humanitarian consequences of the blockade of the Lachin corridor» and condemned Russian peacekeepers' inaction, urging Baku to «immediately reopen» the corridor [European Parliament 2023]. For their part, the French Senate and National Assembly approved two analogous resolutions during the fall of 2022 which, condemning Azerbaijan for the aggression against Armenia, called on the government to adopt sanctions against it.

through Southern Armenia, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan that Iran would oppose any attempt to block the Iranian-Armenian border [RFE 2022a] while President Ebrahim Raisi told Aliyev that any change in either borders or south-north transit routes would be intolerable for Teheran [Al Mayadeen 2022]. Furthermore, in a concrete demonstration of support, after the September clashes, Armenia and Iran agreed upon the opening of a Consulate general in the town of Kapan, on the border with Azerbaijan in the southern region of Syunik, where the lines of communication foreseen by the 2020 ceasefire should transit.

Besides responding to the *deterrence-through-diplomacy* logic, diplomatic coalition-building and maximally balanced foreign policy also serve arms procurement and diversification in foreign trade. Both have grown urgent due to systemic shifts and the need to reduce Yerevan's dependency on Russia. The latter proved to be particularly counterproductive in terms of arms procurement, as Moscow not only didn't refurbish an Armenian weapons stockpile severely depleted by the 2020 war, but also froze arm supplies to its ally [Kopalyan 2022]. Furthermore, arms procurement has been made all the more complicated by Yerevan's Western partners' constrains. Inhibited by a 1992 OSCE request for a voluntary embargo «on arms deliveries to forces engaged in combat in the Nagorno-Karabakh area» [SIPRI 2018], they also indirectly hinder security cooperation with Iran, which was recently labelled by the White House as a «threat to the [Southern Caucasus] region», where it exerts a «destabilizing influence» [U.S. Department of State 2022b]. This, in turn, pushes Yerevan into Asian powers' embrace – namely China and India – to refill and modernize its weapons stockpile. Discussions with Beijing around deepened cooperation in the defense sector indeed started in November [Armenpress 2022], while the partnership with New Delhi significantly improved throughout the year. Following visits to India in June and October by representatives of the Ministry of Defense, Armenia signed two arms and ammunition purchase deals worth \$400 million [Wion 2022; Bhan 2022]. Remarkably, under *deterrence-through-diplomacy* logic, India was the only country along with Armenia to explicitly refer to Azerbaijan as the «aggressor side» [United Nations 2022] in the UNSC meeting that occurred after the September escalation.

Diversification of foreign trade partners is a pressing matter both for Armenia and the government consensus, which – still strong in fall 2022²⁶ – mainly rests on domestic performances. Though Armenia may have ben-

26. According to a nationwide poll conducted by CRRC-Armenia on behalf of the International Republican Institute's Center for Insights in Survey Research and published in October 2022, the percentage of Armenians holding a highly or somewhat favourable opinion of Pashinyan was 53%, with an 8% increase compared to the 2021 poll. See CISR 2022: 13.

efited from the turmoil in Russia in the short-term,²⁷ the mid- and long-term risks associated with it are not insignificant. This is because Yerevan's high exposure to trade and investments with Moscow makes the country particularly vulnerable, especially since the unexpected resilience shown by the Russian economy in 2022 is not estimated to last long. Moreover, a diversified export strategy is, along with the widening of the export base, the pillar of the government's economic development strategy, which envisions exports as a key driver for economic growth and sustainability [Akepanidta-worn *et al.* 2022]. This has led to a push towards sustained economic diplomacy, which has also been suggested by the International Monetary Fund as a tool to tackle the risks Armenia faces at the external, domestic, and structural levels [International Monetary Fund 2022: 36,38].

Building upon the Armenia-EU Comprehensive Extended Partnership Agreement (CEPA) entered into force in March 2021, the EU emerged as Yerevan's key partner as regards economic diplomacy. Albeit not a free-trade agreement – as a consequence of Armenia's EEU membership – the CEPA nonetheless facilitates trade. Moreover, it bears the potential to increase bilateral economic exchanges with relevant margins for growth and to foster Yerevan's diversification prospects.²⁸ Besides trade, the connectivity and energy cooperation tracks established under the CEPA are particularly relevant to Armenia,²⁹ especially around sustainable growth and efforts to

27. After rebounding in 2021, following the 2020 recession, Armenia's 2022 GDP marked a 14% year-on-year growth. All the main economic indicators pointed to the fact that turmoil coming out of Russia in 2022 benefitted Armenia. Between January and October, bilateral trade grew by 86.4%, mainly due to a 2.5-fold increase in exports [Hovhannisyan 2022b]. From January to November, remittances from Russia – whose influx is traditionally high due to the widespread presence of Armenian workers in the country – quadrupled to almost US\$ 3.2 billion, accounting for over two-thirds of the year's total [RFE 2023]. Moreover, the national economy benefited from the influx of Russian migrants, which increased consumption levels, albeit also pushing up inflation. The influx of skilled workers was particularly beneficial to the IT sector, as 50,000 individuals moved to the country and 850 companies with Russian capital and 350 individual entrepreneurs registered in Armenia [Hovhannisyan 2022a].

28. The positive trends in bilateral economic exchanges recorded in 2021 were confirmed in 2022. Between January and October, EU-Armenian economic exchange experienced a 39.2% growth. In the same period, however, the value of EU-Armenian economic exchange (US\$ 1.8 billion) was significantly lower than the one with Russia (US\$ 3.8 billion) [Arka 2022].

29. In the energy sector, the EU promotes strengthened governance and liberalization, the adoption of energy efficiency measures aimed at reducing consumption, and the development of renewables – which is also useful to decommission the obsolete Metsamor nuclear power plant and replace it with alternative and sustainable resources [European Commission 2022: 13]. In the transportation sector, cooperation within the EU Trans-European Transport Network is particularly significant as it can put an end to Armenia's infrastructure isolation by involving the country in the developing Europe-Asia connectivity schemes, which see the Southern Caucasus as a crucial region [Jansen & Ahamad Madatali 2022: 19]. Cooperation in the transport sector has

limit Armenia's vulnerability vis-à-vis over-dependence on Russia. All in all, the economic dimension of the EU's regional projection adds up to its enhanced role as mediator and still-in-the-making security provider, confirming Brussels' resolve and capability to pursue a comprehensive approach to the Nagorno-Karabakh.

The most significant step taken by the government in the direction of an Armenia-centred foreign policy is arguably the renewed normalization attempt with Turkey. As a matter of fact, the process' significance results not only from the material benefits it may ensure to Armenia, but also from its symbolic scope, as it affects the main pillars of the Republic's state- and nation-building. Following up from the 2021 bilateral contacts, the normalization process was officially launched in Moscow in January 2022 and followed by three other meetings that occurred throughout the year by special national envoys. Pashinyan's pragmatic approach to normalization resembles the logic followed – and the means put forward – almost twenty years ago by Ter-Petrosyan. Similarly, it starts from Armenia's developmental needs, which require a reopening of borders and trade with neighbouring Turkey [Business media 2022]. Furthermore, the resolve to pursue the normalization process «without preconditions» [ROTMFA 2022] recalls Ter-Petrosyan's attempt to side-line the divisive Genocide issue, over which – in his own words [2018: 74] – «the only possible approach is to agree to disagree». At the same time, building upon previous failures – and, particularly, the derailment of the process initiated in 2008 with the Zurich Protocols – it follows a 'small steps' approach to normalization, which avoids complex package solutions requiring slippery parliamentary pronouncements. Therefore, though the process has slowly proceeded and led to limited results thus far,³⁰ the latter are nonetheless significant in bringing about a breakthrough in the bilateral relations. This is epitomized by the Armenian minister of foreign affairs' first visit in over a decade to Turkey and by the bilateral

particular significance also in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, as the EU has both the economic potential and the political credibility to foster a win-win solution to the trans-Caucasian connectivity issue. The inclusion of this matter in the EU-mediated Armenian-Azerbaijani colloquia is strictly connected to the commitment to work together within an «Economic Advisory Group» aimed to «advance economic development for the benefit of both countries» [European Council 2022a].

30. In early 2022, Armenia unilaterally removed the year-long ban on the import of Turkish goods, adopted in October 2020 as a retaliation for Ankara's support to Azerbaijan during the 44 Days War. While direct flight resumed between the two countries at the beginning of the year, the major results of the normalization process were achieved at the fourth special envoys' meeting, held in Vienna in July. Here an agreement was reached on the resumption of cargo flights, which eventually started at the beginning of January 2023. Significantly, it was also agreed to open the border to third-countries citizens for touristic purposes as early as possible. While the latter undertake has yet to materialize, nonetheless Armenia already started to improve the road and bridges leading to the border with Turkey.

meeting between Pashinyan and Erdoğan that took place last October on the sideline of the Prague Summit.

Removing the formal motivation behind the closure of the border and the lack of bilateral relations – i.e., Armenia's occupation of the Azerbaijani districts around the Karabakh enclave – the 44 Days War (27 September – 10 November 2020) set the context for the rapprochement between Yerevan and Ankara. However, Nagorno-Karabakh was also the main deterrent for the normalization of relations, as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan maintained that the solution to the dispute represents a precondition for full rapprochement [TRT Haber 2022], while Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, in turn, complained that Ankara was «synchronizing» the normalization process with Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks [News.am 2022b].

4. *Conclusions*

Under different perspectives, Armenian politics has long been held captive of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, as the need to protect the 1992-94 military victory shaped the threats-opportunity perceptions and the resulting decision-making in both the domestic and foreign policy arenas. In particular, the country's ontological sense of insecurity triggered by a mutilated victory reignited Armenian geopolitical determinism along with a «besieged fortress syndrome» that progressively pushed the country into Russia's choking embrace. As a matter of fact, a complex strategic trilemma has emerged along Armenian foreign policy's three pillars: the need to support Karabakh independence, the need to ensure security to the Republic, and the attempt to pursue a multi-vectorial foreign policy. It was a trilemma which was eventually solved by pursuing the first two aims to the detriment of the latter. Moreover, an interpretation of national interests that privileged security over development undermined the transition and favoured the development of a competitive authoritarian system.

The 2020 war and the repercussions of the Russo-Ukrainian war have profoundly changed the regional context and the parameters for Armenian foreign and security policies. The Western powers' re-engagement in the region and, particularly, the EU's breaking of the de facto monopoly hitherto exercised over the conflict-resolution process by Moscow together with Brussels' comprehensive approach to the dispute have led the way to new and somehow unexpected opportunities for foreign policy change. Opportunities that the government seems determined to seize, pursuing an Armenia-first agenda to the detriment of previously drawn red lines.

Forced by the weakened credibility of the Armenian-Russian alliance, a new understanding of security and deterrence has unfolded. It is an understanding built upon international engagement and coalition-building

rather than on military means. Conjunctural security strategies do not appear to have been abandoned; nonetheless they are seemingly pursued along with a more pragmatic long-term vision and approach to foreign policy. This is grounded on an Armenian-centred course which entails the return to a multi-vectorial and inclusive practice of foreign relations, which may lead Yerevan out of its «besieged fortress» mentality. Moreover, foreign policy change, albeit strictly subject to the pursuit of the national interest, seems to also be driven by the resolve to strike a balance between security and development that favours the latter.

Taking a wider look, Pashinyan's drive for a foreign policy change seems to resurrect the dated yet relevant *exceptionalism* versus *normalism* dispute. Overcoming long-standing inertia, the vision of Armenia as a «normal state» seems to grow commonplace, fostered and legitimized by the majority of Armenian citizens, who have entrusted the government with a clear and exceptionally resilient mandate for change.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1988, February. The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) authorities appeals to the USSR Supreme Soviet to transfer the Oblast to Armenia SSR. In Yerevan, hundred thousand take to the streets in support of the request, while the Karabakh Committee is formed.
- 1988, February-March. A cycle of intercommunal violence starts in the Nagorno-Karabakh area (Askeran) with the killing of two Azerbaijani. It soon expands to Azerbaijan proper, where the first anti-Armenian pogrom is held in Sumgait. Intercommunal violence results in the flow of refugees from Azerbaijan to Armenia and vice versa (including from NKAO proper).
- 1988, July. USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium rejects NKAO's request of transfer to Armenia SSR, after its Soviet had voted for secession. Yerevan's Supreme Soviet had endorsed Stepanakert's request in June, voting in favor of the annexation; a resolution of Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet, in turn, rejected the request as unacceptable and condemned Armenian interference in the SSR's domestic affairs.
- 1989, November. The first congress of the Pan-Armenian National Movement (ANM) is held in Yerevan. Levon Ter-Petrosyan is elected as chairman.
- 1990, May. The ANM secures about 35% of the seats in the first multiparty election for the Supreme Soviet. ANM leads the majority of the Assembly while in August Ter-Petrosyan is elected as its president, and hence as head of State, ending Communist rule.
- 1990, August. Armenian parliament issues a declaration of sovereignty. Nagorno-Karabakh is hereby considered as an integral part of the Republic.
- 1991, March. Having boycotted Gorbachev's referendum on a new Union Treaty, Armenian Supreme Soviet announces its own referendum on independence, to be held in September. 94.4% would vote in favour of independence.

- 1991, October. Ter-Petrosyan wins 83% of the votes in the presidential elections and becomes the first President of independent Armenia.
- 1991, December. As the USSR brakes up, Armenia joins the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On December 10th Nagorno-Karabakh holds a referendum on independence, with 99,9% of the voters supporting the secession from Azerbaijan. In November, Azerbaijan had revoked the autonomous status of the region.
- 1992, May. In Tashkent, Armenia signs the CIS Treaty on Collective Security along with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- 1992, August-September. Yerevan and Moscow sign two treaties providing the legal basis for the Russian military presence in Armenia and for the deployment of Russian border guards along the borders with Turkey and Iran.
- 1992, February-May. Armenians gain the upper hand in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, now turned into an open inter-state war. Most of the enclave is conquered, while the control of the Lachin corridor is secured.
- 1992, June. Consistently with a mandate approved in March by the Council of Ministers of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), formal negotiations open in Rome under the auspices of the CSCE Minsk Group.
- 1993, March. Armenian forces launch an offensive resulting, by the end of the Summer, in the capture of large portions of Azerbaijani territory around Nagorno-Karabakh. As a retaliation, in April Turkey closes the border with Armenia. Between April and November, the UN Security Council adopts four resolutions condemning the «invasion» and asking the unilateral withdrawal from «recently occupied» territories, reaffirming the respect for the principles of territorial integrity, inviolability of international borders, and inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory.
- 1994, May. Following Minsk Group's fruitless efforts to maintain cease-fires and to bring the parties together for peace talks, a cease-fire agreement is signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh representatives, under Russian auspices. At that time, Armenian forces controlled around 15% of Azerbaijan's territory. The conflict had claimed more than 20,000 lives and resulted in the internal displacement of around 600,000 Azerbaijanis.
- 1994, August. In a trip to the US, Ter-Petrosyan outlines his understanding of the peace process. Building upon the need to pursue a realist and prudent foreign policy course, he maintains that a comprehensive peace plan would require compromises, including Armenian withdraw from the territories captured outside Nagorno-Karabakh proper.
- 1994, December. Robert Kocharyan is elected President of Nagorno-Karabakh *de facto* Republic. He will be re-elected by popular vote in November 1996 and will hold the position until his appointment as Armenian Prime Minister, in March 1997.
- 1995, July. A national referendum adopts a new constitution establishing a semi-presidential system.
- 1996, September. In a disputed presidential election, Ter-Petrosyan secures 51% of the votes and is elected for a second term.
- 1996, December. At the OSCE Lisbon Summit, the chairman-in-office issues a statement on the principles for conflict resolution, entrusting Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and the «highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan» for Nagorno-Karabakh.

- 1997, February. A tripartite Co-chairmanship of the Minsk Group is established including Russia, France, and United States.
- 1998, February. Ter-Petrosyan resigns, after endorsing a Minsk Group «step-by-step» peace proposal opposed by Nagorno-Karabakh authorities and rejected by Armenia's National Security Council. In March, Kocharyan is elected President.
- 1999, April. Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents meet for the first time since 1993 in Washington. The meeting marks the beginning of negotiations culminating in the inconclusive 2001 peace talks hosted by the US President in Key West, Florida.
- 2002, October. Armenia joins Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan in signing the CSTO Charter, transforming the military alliance established under the Collective Security Treaty into an international organization.
- 2003, March. Kocharyan wins contested presidential elections, while a pro-presidential coalition including nationalist parties secures the majority of the seats in the May parliamentary elections.
- 2004, July. The Minsk Group announces it will not put forward any new peace proposals to Armenia and Azerbaijan, which bear the primary responsibility for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. A series of high-level meetings between the parties will follow in the coming years.
- 2007, November. On the sideline of the Madrid OSCE Ministerial Council, the Minsk Group Co-chairs present a preliminary version of the Basic Principles for a settlement of the conflict. The so-called «Madrid Principles» call for inter alia: (a) the return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan; (b) an interim status for the enclave pending a future determination of its final status through a referendum; (c) a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh; (d) the right of IDPs and refugees to return to their former places of residence; (e) international security guarantees, including a peacekeeping operation.
- 2008, February. In a disputed election resulting in widespread anti-government riots, the Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan – born in Nagorno-Karabakh and former head of the *de facto* Republic's Defence Army – is elected President of Armenia.
- 2009, July. At the LAquila Summit of the Eight, US, French and Russian presidents endorse an updated version of the «Madrid Principles». Despite lack of progresses on implementation, the Principles would thereby remain the most advanced proposal put forward by the Minsk Group.
- 2009, October. Armenian and Turkish foreign ministers sign the Zurich Protocols aimed at normalizing relations between the countries. The Protocols will face staunch opposition in both countries as well as in Azerbaijan – for side-lining the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. They will never reach respective parliaments for ratification.
- 2010, August. Yerevan and Moscow reach an agreement over the extension to 2044 of the 1994 treaty providing the legal base for the use of the Russian Gyumri military base in Armenia.
- 2013, February. Sargsyan is elected for his second and by law last term as President of the Republic.
- 2013, September. After a meeting in Moscow with Vladimir Putin, President Sargsyan announces the decision to join the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, and to be part of the nascent Eurasian Economic Union. The

- decision interrupts the process of signing a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement with the EU, whose negotiations had been concluded in July.
- 2015, December. A new Constitution establishing a parliamentary system is approved by referendum.
- 2016, April. The largest flare-up of the conflict since 1994 occurs along the southern part of the line of contact. After four days of military confrontation, a ceasefire is reached on the 5th of in Moscow. For the first time, Azerbaijan gains control over strategic hilltops in the enclave.
- 2018, April-May. A series of anti-government protests start in Armenia in response to the possibility of Sargsyan running for the prime minister' post, notwithstanding a previous commitment on the contrary. The so-called Velvet Revolution leads to the parliamentary election of Nikol Pashinyan as Prime Minister on May the 8th. In snap parliamentary elections held in December, Pashinyan's My Step Alliance will secure 70% of the vote.
- 2019, August. Notwithstanding the expectations raised by the reopening of Yerevan-Baku dialogue in the aftermath of the Velvet revolution, Pashinyan pays a visit to Stepanakert and calls for unification between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.
- 2020, September. As a reaction to an alleged Armenian offensive, on the 27th Azerbaijan initiates a full-scale offensive along the entire line of contact. The war will last 44 days and will end on November 9th with a cease-fire declaration mediated by Moscow. Baku gains control of the districts around Nagorno-Karabakh while making significant inroads in the enclave itself. A Russian peacekeeping force is deployed for a (renewable) five years term along the line of contact and the Lachin corridor.
- 2021, January. The first post-war meeting between Pashinyan and Aliyev is hosted by Putin in Moscow, with Russia taking the lead of the mediation process.
- 2021, June. Snap parliamentary elections are held after Pashinyan's resignation amid widespread critics over the conduct of the 44 Days war. Pashinyan's Civil Contract party secures 54% of the vote and 71 out of 107 seats in the National Assembly.
- 2021, September. Armenian-Turkish dialogue over normalization process resumes. In mid-December Ankara and Yerevan announce the appointment of special envoys to negotiate the normalization, who will meet four times in 2022.
- 2021, December. The trilateral meeting of the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and Pashinyan marks the beginning of EU involvement in mediation over Nagorno-Karabakh.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abasov, Ali, & Haroutiun Khachatryan, 2005, *Karabakh Conflict: Variants of Settlement: Concepts and Reality*, 3rd edition, Baku and Yerevan: Areat, Noyan Tapan.
- [AFA 2022] Ambassade de France en Arménie, 2022, 30 December. 'Vœux de l'Ambassadrice de France en Arménie à l'occasion du Nouvel An', 2022, *Ambassade de France en Arménie*, 30 December.

- Akepanidwtaworn, Klakow, Lili Karapetyan, Nathalie Reyes & Yulia Ustyugova, 2022, 'Raising Armenia's Export Potential', IMF Working Papers WP/22/214.
- Al Mayadeen, 2022, 13 October, 'Raisi: Changes in transit routes with Armenia not tolerable', 2022, *Al Mayadeen*, 13 October.
- Arka, 2021, 29 December, 'Armenia and Azerbaijan to set up commission to engage in delimitation and demarcation of their border – Russian deputy minister', 2021, *Arka*, 29 December.
- Arka, 2022, 5 December, 'Armenia's foreign trade grows by 66.4% in 10 months to \$10.9 bln', *Arka*, 5 December 2022.
- Armenpress, 2022, 11 November, 'Armenia, China discuss perspectives of expanding defense cooperation', *Armenpress*, 11 November 2022.
- Astourian, Stephan, 2005, 'State, homeland, and diaspora: The Armenian and Azerbaijani cases', in Touraj Atabaki & Sanjyot Mehendale (eds.), *Central Asia and the Caucasus Transnationalism and diaspora*, New York: Routledge, 80-112.
- Bhan, Aditya, 2022, 'Armenia-India relations: Budding partnership benefits New Delhi', *Observer Research Foundation*, 16 December.
- Broers, Laurence, 2019, *Armenia and Azerbaijan. Anatomy of a Rivalry*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Broers, Laurence, 2021a, 'How Serzh Sargsyan and the Republican Party of Armenia lost control of a competitive authoritarian system', in Laurence Broers, & Anna Ohanyan (eds.), *Armenia's Velvet Revolution. Authoritarian Decline and Civil Resistance in a Multipolar World*, London and New York: Tauris, 73-99.
- Broers, Laurence, 2021b, 'Augmented Azerbaijan? The return of Azerbaijani irredentism', *Eurasianet*, 5 August.
- Business Media, 2022, 25 January, 'Pashinyan: Growth in Armenian-Turkish trade will have a positive impact on Armenia's economy', 2022, *Business Media*, 25 January.
- Cameron, David R. & Mitchell A. Orenstein, 2012, 'Post-Soviet Authoritarianism: The Influence of Russia in Its «Near Abroad»', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 28(1): 1-44.
- Cavoukian, Kristin, 2021, 'Democratization and diaspora. The Velvet Revolution and the Armenian nation abroad', in Laurence Broers, & Anna Ohanyan (eds.), *Armenia's Velvet Revolution. Authoritarian Decline and Civil Resistance in a Multipolar World*, London and New York: Tauris, 201-230.
- Ceccorulli, Michela, Carlo Frappi & Sonia Lucarelli, 2017, 'On regional security governance once again: how analysis of the Southern Caucasus can advance the concept', *European Security*, 26(1): 59-78.
- Cheterian, Vicken, 2012, 'The Origins and Trajectory of the Caucasian Conflicts', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64(9): 1625-1649.
- Cheterian, Vicken, 2018, 'The Uses and Abuses of History: Genocide and the Making of the Karabakh Conflict', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 70(6): 884-903.
- [CISR 2022] Center for Insights in Survey Research, 2022, 19 October 'Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, June 2022', 2022, CISR – Center for Insights in Survey Research, 19 October.
- Cornell, Svante, 2001, *Small Nations and Great Powers. A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Richmond: Curzon Press.
- Dovich, Mark, 2022, 'Armenia makes public its six-point peace proposal to Azerbaijan', *Civilnet*, 14 May.
- European Commission, 2022, 'Partnership Implementation Report on Armenia', SWD(2022) 154 final, 17 May.

- European Council, 2022(a), 'Press statement by President Michel of the European Council following a trilateral meeting with President Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia', 23 May.
- European Council, 2022(b), 'Statement following quadrilateral meeting between President Aliyev, Prime Minister Pashinyan, President Macron and President Michel', 6 October.
- European Parliament, 2022, 'Destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh', P9_TA(2022)0080, 10 March.
- European Parliament, 2023, 'Humanitarian consequences of the blockade in Nagorno-Karabakh', P9_TA(2023)0012, 19 January.
- [FCN 2022] *First Channel News*, 2022, 24 January, 'Armenia has never pursued a policy of Armenian Cause: Nikol Pashinyan', *First Channel News*, 24 January 2022.
- France24, 2022, 14 October, 'Putin, Baku criticise Macron for 'unacceptable' Karabakh remarks', 2022, *France24*, 14 October.
- Frappi, Carlo, 2018, 'The Russo-Turkish Entente: A Tactical Embrace Along Strategic and Geopolitical Convergences', in Talbot, Valeria (ed.), *Turkey: Towards a Eurasian Shift?*, Milan: ISPI, 2018, 45-69.
- Ghaplanyan, Irina, 2017, *Post-Soviet Armenia: the New National Elite and the New National Narrative*, London: Taylor and Francis.
- Goltz, Thomas, 2003, 'Letter from Eurasia: Russia's Hidden Hand', *Foreign Policy*, 92: 98-104
- [GRA 1990] Government of the Republic of Armenia, *Armenian Declaration of Independence*, 23 August 1990.
- Grigoryan, Arman, 2018, 'The Karabakh conflict and Armenia's failed transition', *Nationalities Papers*, 46(5): 844-860.
- Hajjiyeva, Gunay, 2022, 'President Aliyev Calls for Delimitation of Azerbaijan-Armenia Border to Prevent Further Escalations', *Caspian News*, 25 September.
- Hovhannisyan, Alina, 2022a, 'Kerobyan: More than 50,000 Russian IT specialists arrived in Armenia', *ArmInfo*, 7 September.
- Hovhannisyan, Alina, 2022b, 'EDB analysts expect 12% growth in mutual trade in EAEU by end of 2022', *ArmInfo*, 26 December.
- Hughes, James & Gwendolyn Sasse, 2022, 'Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in Post-Soviet Transition States', in James Hughes & Gwendolyn Sasse (eds.), *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union. Regions in Conflict*, London: Frank Cass, 1-35.
- [ICG 2022] *International Crisis Group*, 2022, 28 September, 'Upholding the ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan', 2022, *International Crisis Group*, 28 September.
- International Monetary Fund, 2022, 'Republic of Armenia. Sixth Review Under the Stand-By Arrangement', IMF Country Report No.22/130, Washington DC: IMF.
- Iskandaryan, Alexander, 2019, 'Armenia-Russia Relations: The Revolution on the Map', *Russian Analytical Digest*, 232: 2-4.
- Iskyan, Kim, 2004, 'Armenia into Russia's embrace', *The Moscow Times*, 24 March.
- JAMnews, 2022a, 14 April 'Opinions from Armenia: Can we consider PM Pashinyan's statements as «far-sighted» or «contradictory»?', 2022, *JAMnews*, 14 April.
- JAMnews, 2022b, 1 November, 'Fourth meeting with Putin: did Aliyev and Pashinyan hold their ground?'
- Jansen, Talander Hugo, & Hannah Nafize Ahamad Madatali, 2022, 'EU relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan', European Parliamentary Research Service, European Implementation Assessment.

- Kahn, Jeff, 2000, 'The Parade of Sovereignties: Establishing the Vocabulary of the New Russian Federalism', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 16(1): 58-8.
- Kasbarian, Sossie, 2018, 'The Politics of Memory and Commemoration: Armenian Diasporic Reflections on 2015', *Nationalities Papers* 46(1): 123-143.
- Kopalyan, Nerses, 2002, 'Diplomatization of Security', *EVN Security Report*, September.
- Kucera, Joshua, 2023, 'Armenia refuses to host CSTO exercises', *Eurasianet*, 10 January.
- Kurkchian, Marina, 2005, 'The Karabagh conflict From Soviet past to post-Soviet uncertainty', in Edmund Herzig & Marina Kurkchian (eds.), *The Armenians: Past and Present in the Making of National Identity*, Richmond: Taylor & Francis, 147-165.
- Levitsky, Steven & Lucan A. Way, 2010, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Libaridian, Gerard J., 1999, *The challenge of statehood: Armenian political thinking since independence*, Watertown: Blue Crane Books.
- Mejlumyan, Ani, 2022, 'Pashinyan refuses to sign CSTO declaration after bloc's failure to help Armenia', *Intellinews*, 25 November.
- Mgdesyan, Arshaluis, 2022, 'Attacks on Armenia highlight ongoing disputes over «corridor» for Azerbaijan', *Eurasianet*, 14 September.
- Minasyan, Sergey, 2008, 'Armenia in Karabakh, Karabakh in Armenia: the Karabakh factor in Armenia's Foreign and Domestic Policy', in Alexander Iskandaryan (ed.), *The Caucasus Neighborhood: Turkey and the South Caucasus*, Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 63-72.
- Natalizia, Gabriele, 2019, 'Black knight as a strategic choice? Causes and modes of Russia's support to the authoritarianism in Southern Caucasus', *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 49: 175-191.
- Nazaretyan, Hovhannes, 2021, 'Russia's Increasing Military Presence in Armenia', *EVN Report*, 4 March.
- News.am, 2022a, 25 May. 'Moscow sees persistent attempts by EU to intervene in agreements between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia', 2022, *News.am*, 25 May.
- News.am, 2022b, 25 May, 'Armenian MFA: Ankara synchronizes the Armenian-Turkish process with the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations', *News.am*, 25 May 2022.
- OJEU - Official Journal of the European Union, 2022, 'Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1970', L270/93, 18 October.
- OSCE - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2021, 'Republic of Armenia early parliamentary elections 20 June 2021', ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, Warsaw, 27 October.
- Panossian, Razmik, 2002, 'The Past as Nation: Three Dimensions of Armenian Identity', *Geopolitics*, 7(2): 121-146.
- Papazian, Lalig, 2002, 'A People's Will: Armenian Irredentism over Nagorno-Karabagh', in Levon Chorbajian (ed.), *The Making of Nagorno-Karabagh. From Secession to Republic*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, 54-94.
- [PMRA 2020] Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, 2020, 'Statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the President of the Russian Federation', 2020, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Press release, 10 November.
- [PMRA 2022] The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, 2022, 13 April 'Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's speech at the National Assembly during the discussion of the performance report of the Government Action Plan for 2021', 2022, The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, 13 April.

- Poghosyan, Benyamin, 2021, 'An election with many surprises', *Commonspace.eu*, 21 June.
- [POR 2013] President of Russia, 2013, 3 September, 'Press statements following Russian-Armenian talks', 2013, President of Russia, 3 September.
- [PRA 2019] President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2019, 11 January, 'Nazirlər Kabinetinin 2018-ci ilin sosial-iqtisadi inkişafının yekunlarına və qarşıda duran vəzifələrə həsr olunan iclasında İlham Əliyevin giriş nitqi' (Opening speech by Ilham Aliyev at the meeting of Cabinet of Ministers dedicated to results of socioeconomic development of 2018 and objectives for future), (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 11 January 2019, <https://president.az/az/articles/view/31514>).
- [PRA 2022a] President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2022, 12 January, 'İlham Əliyev yerli televiziya kanallarına müsahibə verib' (Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by local TV channels), President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 12 January 2022, (<https://president.az/az/articles/view/55243>).
- [PRA 2022b] President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2022, 27 May, 'Zəngilan rayonunda «Ağıllı kənd» layihəsinin birinci mərhələsi üzrə açılış mərasimində İlham Əliyevin nitqi' (Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the opening ceremony of first stage of «Smart Village» project in Zangilan district), President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 27 May 2022, (<https://president.az/az/articles/view/56524>).
- [RFE 2022a] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2022, 19 July 'Khamenei Warns Against Attempts To 'Block' Armenian-Iranian Border'.
- [RFE 2022b] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 2022, 13 September, 'Armenia Appeals To Russia For Military Aid'.
- [RFE 2022c] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 2022, 10 November, 'Armenia Proposes Demilitarized Zone Around Karabakh, Along Border With Azerbaijan', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 10 November 2022.
- [RFE 2023] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2023, 27 January 'Russia's Cash Outflow Sends Armenian Bank Profits Skyrocketing', 2023, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 27 January.
- [ROTMFA 2022] Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022, 12 March, 'Press Release Regarding the Bilateral Meeting of H.E. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye, and H.E. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Armenia on 12 March 2022 at the Margin of Antalya Diplomacy Forum', 2022, Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 March.
- Sahakyan, Narek, 2022, 'Searching for Democracy, Finding Nationalism: The First Republic of Armenia in the Post-Revolutionary Discourse of 2018', *Caucasus Survey* 10(1): 76–99.
- Shirinyan, Anahit, 2019, 'Armenia's Foreign Policy Balancing in an Age of Uncertainty', Royal Institute of International Affairs, London.
- Shubladze, Rati, & Tsisana Khumdadze, 2017, 'Balancing the three pillars of stability in Armenia and Georgia', *Caucasus Survey*, 5(3): 301–322.
- [SIPRI 2018] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2018, 2 September, 'OSCE arms embargo on Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)', 2018, *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2 September.
- Steele, Brent J., 2008, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self Identity and the IR State*, New York: Routledge.

- Suny, Ronald Grigor, 1993, *The Revenge of the Past. Nationalism Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor, 2000, 'Provisional Stabilities: The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia', *International Security*, 24(3): 139-178
- Ter-Petrosian, Levon, 2018, *Armenia's Future, Relations with Turkey, and the Karabagh Conflict*, Cham: Springer.
- Terzyan, Aram, 2020, 'New Government, New Discourse and Old Constraints: Armenia After the «Velvet Revolution»', Center for East European and Russian Studies, Post-Soviet Politics Research Papers 3/2020.
- Toal, Gerard & Nareg Seferian, 2022, 'Suddenly a borderland: The new borderization between Armenia and Azerbaijan', *Eurasianet*, 25 November.
- TRT Azərbaycan, 14 March 2022, 'Azərbaycan XİN Ermənistanla təqdim olunan təklifləri açıqlayıb' (The MFA of Azerbaijan revealed the proposals presented to Armenia), *TRT Azərbaycan*, 14 March 2022, (www.trt.net.tr/azerbaycan/turk-dunyasi).
- TRT Haber, 2022, 25 July, 'Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Herkesten attıkları imzalara sahip çıkmalarını bekliyoruz', 2022 (President Erdoğan: We expect everyone to respect their signatures), (*TRT Haber*, 25 July, www.trthaber.com/haber).
- U.S. Department of State, 2022a, 'Department Press Briefing', 26 September.
- U.S. Department of State, 2022b, 'Department Press Briefing', 10 November.
- United Nations, 2022, 'Amid Fighting between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Assistant Secretary-General Urges Both Parties Commit to Lasting Peace Treaty, in Security Council Briefing', SC/15031, 15 September.
- Valiyev, Cavid, 2022, 'The Karabakh issue: An internal matter for Azerbaijan', 23 October.
- Vasilyan, Syuzanna, 2016, '«Swinging on a Pendulum»: Armenia in the Eurasian Economic Union and with the European Union', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61(4): 32–46.
- Walt, Stephen M., 1990, *The Origins of Alliances*, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Wion, 2022, 29 September 'India to export Pinaka rocket launchers, ammunition to Armenia in \$250m deal', 2022, *Wion*, 29 September.
- Wolfers, Arnold, 1952, 'National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol', *Political Science Quarterly*, 67(4): 481-502.
- Zolyan, Mikayel, 2010, 'Armenia', in Donnacha Ó Beacháin and Abel Polese (eds.), *The colour revolutions in the former Soviet republics: successes and failures*, New York: Routledge, 83–100.

