

Anti-Armenian Foreign Policy of Armenian Nationalists

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*On July 23, Armenian **Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan** presented Yerevan's position on the tension on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the process of peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.*

“The co-chairs countries of the OSCE Minsk group have made a great contribution to the resumption of the ceasefire. In this regard, the participation of the Russian Federation was particularly effective, which was shown at the level of both the Ministry of foreign Affairs and the General Staff of the Armed forces [of Russia]. ” – said Pashinyan.

In his statement, the Prime Minister expressed the main trends of Armenia's foreign policy: the development of cooperation with the West in close strategic partnership with Russia. However, this statement rather seems to be superficial and demonstrative, because in recent years Yerevan has done everything possible to weaken its close ties with Moscow.

The conflict on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border [escalated](#) on July 12, when military personnel of the two countries clashed near the Tovuz region of Azerbaijan. Since then, the situation has remained very tense. Tovuz district is a strategic area for Azerbaijan. There are three major energy pipelines: the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan gas pipeline, the Baku — Tbilisi — Erzerum gas pipeline, and the Baku — Supsa oil pipeline, which runs into the black sea ports of Georgia. In addition, the Baku — Tbilisi — Kars railway and the Baku — Tbilisi highway are located there. If in this conflict Baku receives a [large support](#) from Turkey, both political and military, it seems that Armenia should count on Russia's help. However, Moscow is in no hurry to intervene in the conflict and emphasized the importance of a diplomatic solution. The Russian position is preceded by many reasons, and one of them is the anti - Russian policy of the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan.



On May 8, 2018, after three weeks of demonstrations and protests, a young opposition Deputy Pashinyan, assumed the post of Prime Minister of Armenia.

Despite the fact that the population of Armenia is less than 3 million people, the protests initiated by Pashinyan attracted tens of thousands of protesters. They led to the resignation of Sargsyan, who, after having been President for 10 years, carried out a constitutional reform, transferring power from President to Prime Minister, and tried to stay in power by taking the position of Prime Minister. This caused indignation of the population. In addition, the residents of Armenia were dissatisfied with the increasingly deteriorating economic

situation: the devaluation of the ruble led to a decrease in remittances from Russia and an influx of Armenians from abroad, who faced difficulties to find work. Meanwhile, Republican-linked structures effectively monopolized imports in many import sectors, prompting accusations of corruption.



Acting Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan leads a March in Yerevan, November 24, 2018.

Apparently inspired by Gandhi's example, Pashinyan went by foot from Gyumri, Armenia's second largest city, to the capital, Yerevan. The journey took two weeks, and it made Pashinyan looking like an ordinary man of the people: he had a gray beard, and he changed his suit to a camouflage t-shirt and cargo pants. Pashinyan managed to mobilize young students and activists, and actively used social networks to promote the movement.



Source: www.stratfor.com

In order not to disappoint the forces that brought him to power, the new Prime Minister had to quickly change the course of Armenia's foreign policy.

The war in Nagorno-Karabakh, which officially ended in 1994, strengthened Armenia's ties with its main ally, Russia, which ensured the country's security. Yerevan concluded a number of international agreements and agreements with Moscow, which primarily affected the military sphere:

- Armenia received two targeted loans in the amount of 200 and 100 million dollars with a minimum interest rate (3% per year) for the purchase of modern weapons at domestic Russian prices, which is 3-5 times cheaper than prices on world markets;
- Armenia became the only country to which Russia has provided the Iskander mobile short-range ballistic missile system;
- Russia and Armenia signed agreements on the creation of a joint air defense system and a common group of troops;
- joint Russian-Armenian defense production using modern technologies was developed in Gyumri;
- the countries closely interacted in the field of strategic intelligence;
- Armenia has agreed to maintain the 102nd Russian military base in Gyumri, four guards of the Border Troops Department of the FSB of Russia and the Russian Air Force base "Erebuni" in Yerevan.



Illustrative Image

Yerevan supported the formation of the CSTO and from the first days of its functioning became its reliable member. In 2013, Armenia joined the Customs Union and then the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in order to cooperate closer with Russia, primarily in the interests of strengthening its national security. The strategic partnership is supported by the interaction of the two countries in key sectors of the economy: nuclear, gas, electricity, transport, etc.

However, over the past few years, Yerevan has begun to ignore the fact that Russia is the only country capable of ensuring Armenia's security and sovereignty.

Yerevan, apparently, expects that Moscow will not give up military bases on the territory of Armenia and will be ready to make concessions to preserve them. However, the strategic significance of the Armenian foothold for Russia has significantly [decreased](#) due to the expansion of Russian military infrastructure in the Middle East, including naval and air bases in Syria. Also in the political dimension, the role of Armenia decreased, as Russia and Turkey had improved their bilateral relations. Moreover, the economic significance of the Armenian market is insignificant both for the Russian state and for Russian private companies.

Thus, given that Moscow is much less interested in strategic partnership than Yerevan, Pashinyan, continuing the anti-Russian course of his policy, is sacrificing the national security of his own country. For a long time, Armenia has pursued a nationalist foreign policy that was significantly at odds with the foreign policy position of its formal strategic ally. Furthermore, while enjoying Russian military protection, Armenia has declined to support Russia over key issues on the international agenda.



Archive PHOTOLURE/ITAR-TASS/Mkhitar Khachatryan

In 2014 Armenia voted against the UN resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, but did not officially recognize the reunification of Crimea with Russia, aiming not to spoil relations with the West. Today, Ukraine has paid off with Armenia, supporting Azerbaijan in the recent conflict. In response to the statements of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry on the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, protesters poured borsch (a traditional Ukrainian dish) over the building of the Ukrainian Embassy in Yerevan.

The arrests of the first President of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Robert Kocharian, who was loyal to the pro-Russian foreign policy, became widely known. The new government arrested him three times over the March 2008 crackdown.

A few days ago, on July 16, the Armenian Parliament adopted the law "on audiovisual media" by an overwhelming majority (79 against 17). Among other things, the law implied the removal of all foreign-language channels from the free state broadcasting network, which significantly restricted the broadcasting of Russian TV channels. According to the National Commission on Television and Radio Broadcasting, these channels pose a threat to the national security of Armenia. By ostentatiously restricting access to Russian channels, representatives of the new Armenian government are dealing another blow to relations with Moscow.

"Against the background of Armenia's statements about the allied, fraternal nature of our strategic relations, the thesis about "Russian TV channels that pose a threat to national security" is perplexing," the Russian Embassy in Yerevan said.

One of the factors that influenced the turn of Armenia's foreign policy was the creation of a legal regime favorable for the active development of various public

organizations funded mainly by the West. These NGOs already have the ability to attack the key national security agency – National Security Service of Armenia, to lobby for initiatives that contradict traditional values of Armenia, and even to launch activities in Nagorno-Karabakh. One of their main aims is to undermine the stability of Russian-Armenian allied relations. All of the above facts confirm that pro-Western NGOs in Armenia are actively engaged in activities that contradict the national interests of the country.

Foreign organizations such as the Soros Foundation, the European Foundation for Support of Democracy, and the American National Foundation for Support of Democracy fund the following NGOs in Armenia: Right SIDE of Lilit Martirosyan, Union of informed citizens of Daniel Ioannisyan, Helsinki Civic Assembly in Vanadzor of Arthur Sakunts, For Equal Rights of Gayane Abrahamyan, Asparez of Levon Barseghyan, etc.

Many representatives of the so-called fifth column in Armenia today not only freely promote their political initiatives, but are also actively involved in the development of draft laws and other documents of national importance. The projects of these organizations are characterized as anti-Russians. Their focus is on finding negative consequences of Armenia's membership in the EEU in the socio-economic and security spheres, as well as promoting the idea that Armenia's military-political cooperation with Russia and the CSTO does not ensure the implementation of the country's fundamental interests.



Source: USAID

At the same time, financial support from the United States for Armenia is one of the largest in the world. The US Agency for International Development, an independent agency of the United States federal government that is primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance, invested \$106 million in the health sector of Armenia to combat COVID-19. In general, according to his data, Armenia has already received more than 27 million dollars from the US in 2020, while the majority of this amount, 12 million, was invested in the sector of governance.

Large investment from the US is due to various factors. The United States is home to a representative and influential Armenian Diaspora (more than 1.5 million people), which has high economic, financial, technological, institutional, informational, scientific and lobbying resources. Today, as the conflict on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border escalated, thousands of Armenians staged protests near the Azerbaijani Embassy in Los Angeles, which led to clashes with Azerbaijanis. This confirmed not only the large size of the Armenian Diaspora, which lives mainly in California, but also their political activity.

3000-4000 [#Armenians](#) attacked to 75 civil [#Azerbaijani](#) supporters.
7 Azerbaijanians are in the hospitals. They also robbed mobile phones and did other barbarities. See video [#AzerbaijanWantsJustice#LosAngelesProtest](#)
[#LosAngeles#StopArmenianAggression](#) pic.twitter.com/jGRhEMdCFQ

— Naila Seyidova (@NailaSeyidova) [July 22, 2020](#)

The American Diaspora is the most important potential of Armenian diplomacy for

expanding ties with the United States, exerting a beneficial influence on painful issues, and is a key part of the global Armenian factor. **The Armenian lobby in the United States actively works to protect the interests of the Armenian Diaspora, the Republic of Armenia, and the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. Today, it is one of the most effective ethnic lobbies in America, and it has the following goals:**

- Recognition of the Armenian genocide;
- Recognition of independence and assistance to the NKR;
- The provision of U.S. assistance to Armenia;
- Blocking arms deals with Turkey;
- Fighting against the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project;
- Fighting against the Baku — Tbilisi — Kars project.

Today's lobby is represented by the Armenian national Committee of America (ANCA), which has 45 branches in 25 States, as well as representative offices in Europe. The "Armenian Assembly of America" (AAA) operates separately from ANKA. The house of representatives has a bipartisan group of congressmen on Armenian issues, the Armenian Caucus, which initiates consideration of Armenian issues. There is also an Armenian Council in the Democratic Party (Armenian-American Democratic Leadership Council) and an Armenian Council in the Republican Party (Armenian-American Republican Council).

The Armenian lobby is making significant progress. In addition to significant financial support, in 1992, they managed to influence the adoption of the famous 907 amendment to the "freedom support Act", which prohibited assistance to Azerbaijan. The amendment had a short-term effect, but in the end it brought America more losses than profits.



Memorial of the victims of the Ottoman Empire murders in 1915

In October 2019, the United States recognized the mass deportations and killings of Armenians on the territory of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as an act of genocide. This issue, which was actively promoted by the Armenian lobby, was of great political significance. If earlier the US avoided calling these events genocide because of the position of Turkey, its key NATO ally, the resolution was adopted at a time when American Congress was dissatisfied with Turkey's policy - in particular, the operation against the Kurds in Northern Syria. But this was not just because of the invasion of Syria. Turkey's desire to improve its relations with Russia, the purchase of Russian weapons, in particular the S-400 air defense system, and the deal to build a nuclear power plant in Turkey, played a major role.

A narrow group of the elite that is currently in power in Armenia is closely affiliated with the neo-liberal democratic forces of the United States. Today, Pashinyan must be hoping for the coming to power of globalist Democrats after the elections in November this year, which will allow him to strengthen support from abroad for anti-Russian discourse, as well as attract significantly larger financial injections into civil society organizations and institutions that are aimed at undermining Armenian-Russian relations.

In addition to bilateral interaction with the Western countries, Armenia does not refuse to cooperate with the NATO bloc in the context of studies, exercises, trainings, and peacekeeping actions, and apparently hopes for the development of the military-technical component of relations.

Since 2002, Armenia has been involved in the planning and analysis of the NATO Partnership for peace program, which expands the opportunities for interaction with the Alliance. In 2003, Armenian military personnel participated in the NATO peacekeeping operation as part of a Greek battalion. From 2005 to 2008, a group of Armenian military personnel was in Iraq as part of the NATO mission's humanitarian tasks. In 2010, Yerevan sent a group of 40 peacekeepers to Afghanistan. Later, the Armenian peacekeeping contingent was increased three times (to 130 people). Yerevan also signed the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, which is the basis for further cooperation with the Alliance.

Pashinyan also actively seeks to bring the country closer to the European Union. Armenia, being a member of the Eastern Partnership Program, signed in 2017 with the EU the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU. If earlier cooperation with the European Union was complementary to Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, after Pashinyan came to power, discussions about leaving the Eurasian economic Union are increasingly promoted among the country's leadership mainly at the behest of the pro-Western NGOs.

In the recent conflict on the border with Azerbaijan, Yerevan did not resort to the assistance of the CSTO, but stated that in order to achieve peace with Baku, "an international system of reliable monitoring of compliance with the ceasefire regime should be established". In addition, he claimed that it was necessary to continue negotiations "within the framework of the OSCE Minsk group", which in addition to Russia includes the United States and France, which are Turkey's NATO allies.

In turn, the United States is certainly interested in maintaining its influence in South Caucasus. However, Azerbaijan is could be a more valuable partner in the region than Armenia.



Illustrative Image

Back in 1994, the "Contract of the century" was signed in Baku. It represented a series of agreements for a period of 30 years with a number of major multinational companies for the joint exploitation of oil deposits in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian sea. It was signed thanks to the trust placed in the independent state of Azerbaijan by the major world powers. In fact, this event laid the foundation for cooperation between the United States and Azerbaijan, after which Baku became a profitable economic partner of influential Western States, primarily of the United States.

US interests in Azerbaijan are linked to the expansion of influence in the Caspian region, the creation of safe transit zones for transportation and the development of energy resources. For the United States, this task is beneficial from the point of view of energy security, trade, economic and strategic partnership. The potential of Caspian oil and gas could partly offset Europe's dependence on Russia and directly affect Europe's security and US obligations within NATO. At the same time, it is obvious that the Americans ' interest in the Caspian region is aimed at strengthening regional security, deterring potential rivals, Russia and Iran, and promoting its interests.

Armenia's nationalist foreign policy is very similar to the developments in Ukraine in 2013. Despite the Armenian population's claim of fraternity with the Russian people, the country's leadership is leading it not only to lose its main partner in the international arena, but also to sacrifice its national interests to the dream of potential European integration.

The chosen course is not profitable for Armenia even in the short term, because western countries will not help Yerevan in today's conflict and will certainly not oppose Azerbaijan, which is supported by Turkey. At the same time, given the involvement of the OSCE Minsk group in the conflict, where France has a special influence, it is possible that the tension on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border may continue for a long period. It is likely that the West, for example France, is interested in escalating the conflict, because it distracts Erdogan from military operations in Libya, where the Turkish-backed Government of National Unity is actively preparing for a battle with the Libyan National Army for control of the city of Sirte. At the same time, France tacitly supports Haftar, who heads the LNA. Thus, Nikol Pashinyan is ready to sacrifice the national interests of the country, its security, as well as the lives of its own citizens to realize the short-term interests of aliens.

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