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Armenia after the Elections: A Strategic Pivot and Prospects for Peace

Elections in Armenia are most often portrayed from an international perspective as a contest between the pro-Western government and the pro-Russian opposition. Similarly, the prospects for restructuring the country's security architecture and its long-term geostrategy are interpreted in this two-dimensional manner. Nevertheless, the outlook for further regional change is far more complex.

The election result and the issue of constitutional reform. In the parliamentary elections held on Sunday, 7 June, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party emerged victorious, securing 49.74 per cent of the vote. Two opposition parties also secured seats in parliament – Strong Armenia, led by the Russian-Armenian oligarch Samvel Karapetyan, and the Armenia Alliance, led by former President Robert Kocharyan. The election results confirmed deep political polarisation. Importantly, this polarisation is not entirely representative of social divisions. Both groups in parliament will likely form a consolidated, absolute opposition, rejecting all actions taken by Pashinyan's team in both domestic and foreign policy. The election result is significant in the context of the changing dynamics of the regional landscape in terms of security, infrastructure, and development projects, and, in a broader perspective, the medium- and long-term presence of regional powers and superpowers in the Caucasus. The Armenian political system provides for a mechanism known as the 'stable majority'. This enables a party or coalition that secures more than 50% but less than 52% of the seats to form a government on its own. Consequently, the Civil Contract will hold 64 seats in the 105-member chamber. However, a stable majority is not sufficient to amend the constitution – this requires at least two-thirds of the seats (in this case, 70), regardless of whether the amendments are proposed by parliament or result from a citizens' initiative.

A phased project to reform Armenia's regional policy. The issue of constitutional reform is crucial in the context of the peace process with Azerbaijan and also has a direct bearing on the long-term prospects for reassessing Armenia's position within the regional geostrategic framework (including in terms of infrastructure, politics, trade, and security). At present, Baku is making the continuation of talks with Yerevan conditional upon the removal from the preamble of the Armenian constitution of the reference to the 1990 declaration of independence, which, in the Azerbaijani interpretation, embodies the idea of the unity of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, thereby calling into question the mutual recognition of territorial integrity. Regardless of the Washington Declaration of August 2025, which sets out the roadmap for the peace process, this has so far been a sine qua non condition set by Azerbaijan for the continuation of talks¹. The Armenian side regularly emphasises that the issue of constitutional reform is an internal matter and must not be subject to external interference; nevertheless, securing a constitutional majority that would enable changes or amendments to be made was the government's most ambitious plan ahead of the elections. As this has not been achieved, the scope for negotiation appears limited, particularly given that, since the election, the Azerbaijani media has been emphasising that this precondition has not changed and will not change.

If Baku does indeed maintain its non-negotiable stance, the peace process may be postponed, which is dangerous not only for Pashinyan's government but also poses an existential threat to Armenia itself. At present, the normalisation of Armenian-Turkish relations hinges on the success of the peace negotiations. Contrary to the widely held belief in Yerevan, the settlement of bilateral relations is not a matter of the utmost importance from Ankara's perspective; similarly, in the broader context, the Caucasus are merely one of many spheres of influence and points of reference. Consequently, for years, Ankara has based its policy towards Armenia on Baku. For

¹ In addition to the issue of the mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the parties also undertook to refrain from retaliatory measures and to establish infrastructure links.

Armenia, this is a deeply problematic issue, and fruitless attempts to decouple the question of relations with Azerbaijan from the normalisation of relations with Turkey have been, and remain, a constant feature of the Armenian government's approach, from Levon Ter-Petrosyan to Nikol Pashinyan². Nevertheless, it cannot be ruled out that Turkey may begin to exert pressure on Baku, despite having delegated responsibility for the Caucasus, as protracted negotiations could enable Moscow to redefine and consolidate its grand strategy towards Armenia and the Caucasus. Ankara's strong position in the region, which has gradually been built up since the Second Karabakh War and which led to Russia's loss of its hegemonic position, could be threatened by a renewed increase in the Kremlin's involvement. This is particularly significant in the context of potential peace in Ukraine, which could enable Russia to become more involved in other regions it regards as being within its own sphere of influence. Consequently, it cannot be ruled out that the phased nature of the peace process and the normalisation of relations with Turkey may be subject to renegotiation in the near future. One possible scenario is the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border to direct trade and third-country nationals, preceding a peace treaty with Azerbaijan. Such an opening could serve as a symbol of goodwill and support for a geostrategic shift in Armenia and have a tangible positive impact on the residents of cross-border regions.

At the same time, it seems reasonable to assume that the US will also play a key role in capitalising on this window of opportunity. In this context, the TRIPP corridor (Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity) is of crucial importance. Despite the commercial nature of the investment, its implementation will unequivocally strengthen Washington's position not only in the Caucasus but also in Western Eurasia, including the Middle East – a region of critical importance from the US perspective. At the same time, the project appears to be of personal significance to President Trump's administration. Although it is currently recognised that the project enjoys cross-party consensus and its implementation is not exclusively a Republican initiative, a potential Democratic victory in the November 2026 congressional elections could delay or complicate the process of redrawing the map of the Caucasus.

The elephant in the room – the Russian factor. Armenia's approach to its relations with Russia and its presence within economic and military structures led by the Kremlin can be described as follows: minimising dependence without provoking direct confrontation. Prior to the elections, Prime Minister Pashinyan received unprecedented support from Western leaders, which might suggest that Europe and the US expect an acceleration in integration with the West. Nevertheless, it appears that there is currently an understanding in Brussels and Washington of Armenia's complex geopolitical position and, consequently, of the need to pursue a balanced policy. Thus, the second element of the geostrategic agenda for change, alongside regional normalisation, is a policy of multi-vector balancing³; this is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. Pashinyan, whilst emphasising a long-term commitment to deepening integration with the West, recognises the potential risks associated with an unequivocally pro-Western reorientation. This concerns, above all, the West's limited ability to guarantee security, which will be of crucial importance at least until the situation in the region has fully normalised. Furthermore, the Armenian economy's deep dependence on Russia cannot be reduced in the short term. Consequently, a diversified foreign policy represents the most balanced strategy under the current circumstances.

While this is purely a short-term solution stemming from bloc rivalry, Pashinyan seems to be aware of these circumstances; it is likely that Armenia will continue to maintain its frozen membership of the CSTO and will eventually withdraw from the organisation. This stems from the recognition that the alliance failed to fulfil its purpose in 2022 and 2023, in the face of Azerbaijani attacks on Armenian territory, leading to a significant decline in confidence in Russian security guarantees. Pashinyan will, however, need to seek external security guarantees,

² This continuation can be seen, amongst other things, in the short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful rapprochement during Serzh Sargsyan's presidency, referred to as 'football diplomacy', in 2008–2009.

³ This multi-vectorial approach is evident, for example, in the diversification of armaments and the decision to source them from countries outside the West–Russia framework, such as India.

as the country's withdrawal from the CSTO will be regarded by Moscow as a hostile act⁴. Consequently, the prospect of Armenia being expelled from the organisation by a decision of the member states is becoming even more likely. At the same time, Pashinyan points out that infrastructure initiatives carried out as part of regional normalisation will also benefit Russia, which is intended to mitigate the consequences for Armenia of leaving this asymmetric defence and the economic alliance.

Withdrawal from the Eurasian Economic Union appears to be a more complicated matter, owing to Armenia's economic dependence on the Russian market. Even during the election campaign, Moscow sought to exploit this issue by imposing a ban on imports of Armenian products (primarily foodstuffs); however, this backfired. At the same time, the EAEU treaty does not specify a formal withdrawal mechanism. Once initiated, the process would likely be subject to protracted negotiations. Consequently, Armenia's potential withdrawal from the EAEU in favour of deeper integration with the EU is clearly a political issue. Armenia has declared its intention to remain in the Eurasian Economic Union for as long as possible, whilst gradually diversifying its economy. At the same time, the ultimate goal is to leave the EUG. The fundamental question, therefore, is when will Russia decide that it does not intend to participate in Armenia's economic development if the country intends to leave the union's structures in the future anyway. This is undoubtedly a potential flashpoint for the next phase of the Armenian-Russian conflict.

Conclusions. From Armenia's perspective, undertaking a multi-stage process of restructuring its security architecture and geostrategy is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it will enable economic diversification, reduce transport costs, and also allow Yerevan to capitalise on the South Caucasus's strategic location at the heart of the Middle Corridor. It will also deepen regional integration, thereby reducing or eliminating the existential threat to the state's survival. It will reinforce the geostrategic shift and the consistent pursuit of full autonomy and sovereignty from Russia and subsequently enable further deepening of integration with the European Union and NATO in the long term. In the short term, however, it will enable security guarantees to be achieved through economic diversification. Regardless of the sequence and order of events or the influence of individual actors on further transformations, a new impetus for further action is currently essential, as the window of opportunity will not remain so wide open indefinitely. The upcoming NATO summit in Ankara this July will certainly be a potential opportunity to accelerate this process. Completing the process is in the interests of all parties involved, whilst stagnation can only benefit one power – the Russian Federation.

⁴ In recent days, conflicting statements on this possibility have been made by Sergey Lavrov, who claimed that it is possible to expel a state that does not pay its contributions and does not attend summits, and by the organisation's Secretary-General, Taalatbek Masadykov, who stated that the decision to withdraw rests with the Armenian government and people.