

Revisiting EU-Armenia Relations Amid Changing Geopolitical Realities: What Future to Expect?

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Executive Summary

In the mosaic of challenging developments and power shifts in the South Caucasus, revisiting Armenia's foreign policy paradigm and making a transition from resistance to resilience is of utmost importance. In this regard, resilience assumes the revisiting of bilateral relations with leading international and regional actors, the list of which includes, but is not limited to, the EU, Russia, and the US. On the one hand, the reformulation of a foreign policy paradigm will allow a strengthening of the potential for tackling the security challenges and balancing the interests of the above-mentioned actors in the region through the prism of Armenia's national interests. On the other hand, it will reinforce the state and society's capacity by delivering sustainable development through democratization and the strengthening of the rule of law.

This paper is aimed at revealing underlying obstacles in EU-Armenia bilateral relations and at developing an attempt to come up with several workable recommendations, thus enhancing opportunities for Armenia's European integration in the post-war period. The analysis is

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structured on re-evaluating the difficult path they are taking together, including the successes and drawbacks. This approach allows for escape from the 'zero-sum' game model and the review of mutual expectations and needs in strategic and regional issues. This policy paper is designed for government officials, the EU Delegation to Armenia, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and researchers.

Key Words: South Caucasus, EU, Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, CEPA, Russia, foreign policy, security policy.

Introduction

The Artsakh War of 2020 significantly changed the geopolitical situation in the South Caucasus, resulting in a transformation of expectations, aspirations, and intentions of regional and international actors - such as Russia, the EU, the US, Iran, and Turkey (Carnegiemoscow.org 2021). However, the dynamism of regional developments and power shifts has gained momentum with Russia's war in Ukraine, resulting in open confrontation and strained relations between Russia and the West. The evolving situation puts Armenia in a difficult position, moving to a more challenging stage the prospects for the development of bilateral relations between Armenia and leading international actors (Russia, EU, the US) directly involved in the regional developments.

It is difficult to foresee how the Russia-Ukraine War might end and to objectively assess its impact on regional developments in the South Caucasus; however, the conflict between Russia and the West will most probably continue under the new realities. In this context, arguably, Armenia needs to minimize its position as the outsider in regional politics, and strengthen its positions in negotiations, thus generating possibilities for counteracting those interests that act strongly against its regional interests. Therefore, it is pertinent for Armenia to overcome misunderstandings in EU-Armenia bilateral relations, and to deepen the partnership in critical areas to restore the atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding of its needs and expectations, especially on the most sensitive issues. These issues include, but are not limited to, the reform agenda, domestic politics in terms of opposition-government relations, society's perception of the role of the EU at the local and regional level, and the prospects of development of both Armenia's and the EU's vision on regional politics.

This policy paper analyzes EU-Armenia relations in the context of changing realities in the South Caucasus, aspiring to provide an alternative view on the obstacles hindering the

formation of a resilient partnership. This does not attempt to give forecasts but rather focuses on strengthening relations to accommodate future developments in the region in whatever unexpected form they may take (Holling 1973). Supporting this idea, a resilient partnership might also imply the capacity to enable a period of compromised interplay, i.e., building a consensus in the frame of the diversity of perceptions and views on stability and security in the region.

CEPA Agreement: Difficult Path to Systematic Reforms

Armenia's decision of September 3, 2013, to join the Custom's Union certainly overshadowed bilateral relations and caused significant damage to the atmosphere of trust between the EU and Armenia. Official Yerevan's decision was caused by the prospects of strengthening cooperation in foreign policy, maintaining regional stability and security, reinforcing cooperation in political-military and military-technical areas, and deepening economic integration between Armenia and the Russian Federation (President. am 2013). According to Elmar Brok, the German chairman of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, "a small country like Armenia was blackmailed to make such a decision" (Azatutyun 2013). The President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, in turn, expressed his deep disappointment and described Armenia's decision as one made under external pressure (Tert.am 2013).

However, mutual willingness to continue negotiations with the EU in a new framework for bilateral relations has proven fruitful. This concluded in 2017 with the signing of a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) which entered into force on 1 March 2021 (Ec.europa.eu 2021). It is certainly not comparable to an association agreement - that implies a very broad framework for economic and political cooperation - although, the CEPA has become a great achievement, deepening the partnership between the EU and Armenia regardless of external factors. It is worth mentioning that CEPA is not just a fully ratified legal document between the EU and Armenia. It is also a strategy for the reform process, the successful implementation of which depends mainly on continuous multi-sectoral interaction with all possible political and civil society actors.

Initial achievements have been made in the areas of rule of law and democratization. In this regard, of high importance are the following: the 2022-2026 Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms and the action plan stemming from that (Primeminister. am 2022), as well as the launch

of the works on a new 2023-2026 Anti-Corruption Strategy and a proper roadmap of actions initiated by the Ministry of Justice (Moj. am 2022). Notably, civil society organizations have questioned these strategies, viewing them as a continuation or partial repetition of the strategies of 2019 (Transparency. am 2022). However, according to the interview with EU Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin conducted within this research, "despite the remaining shortcomings and challenges, significant progress is recorded in judicial, anti-corruption and police reforms" (Wiktorin 2022), which justifies the continuation of budgetary support to the Armenian Government. Apart from the reforms mentioned above, several achievements have been recorded in aviation, employment, and education.

Taking on board the reforms mentioned above, due to the EU's continuous support, Armenia's Government is able to demonstrate a strong will to move forward with the reform agenda. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to realize the full potential of bilateral relations to provide systematic changes. In this sense, challenges related to Armenia's domestic political situation (internal) acting as obstacles might be highlighted in terms of hindering democratization and strengthening the rule of law in Armenia.

Among the internal challenges is the quality of communication between the opposition and the ruling party. The 44-day Artsakh War, followed by the November 9 statement, resulted in a burst of negative emotions among the public. There were ongoing mass demonstrations demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister which generated an internal political crisis that, unfortunately, has not yet been overcome. Even though snap parliamentary elections took place in 2021 to seek to solve the crisis, the unstable domestic political situation continues to this day. Although the opposition parties recognized the results of the elections and took their parliamentary mandates, they started boycotting parliamentary sessions and also refused to participate in the work of the commission investigating the circumstances of the 44-day Artsakh War. In this context, one should note the poor performance of parliament: according to the "National Assembly Monitoring," the number of legislative initiatives has been declining compared to past years, which is unprecedented in comparison with the last ten years (Parliamentmonitoring. am 2022).

Having not yet overcome the consequences of the 2020 war, another obstacle is that, Azerbaijan's large-scale military operation of September 13-14, 2022 (Evnreport.com 2022) resulted in more than 200 Armenian deaths and in the occupation of Armenia's sovereign territories has raised questions about the effectiveness of the work carried out in peace talks between the parties involved. This has led to the redistribution of priorities in foreign policy areas and domestic politics, as well as to the destabilization in the region.

Indeed, the EU's support is fundamental in guiding Armenia in maintaining the rule of law and democratization. However, the issues related to protecting the country's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity take precedence over the reform agenda.

In addition, implementing the reform process and providing quality in the proposed reforms requires that all the actors involved take internally justified, consolidated responsibility. As noted by Khvorostiankina, "reforms, being viewed as an internal need and benefit, might lead to progress, thus gaining EU's support to achieve upcoming objectives." (Khvorostiankina, 2022). Unfortunately, for now, it is rather difficult to achieve consolidated responsibility at the level of domestic politics, as battle lines are drawn between the Government and the opposition parties.

Currently, Armenia's political parties - both the ruling party and the opposition in general - need to acknowledge democracy as the only game in town, thus neutralizing any serious attempt to overthrow the democratic regime and questioning the reform process. According to EU Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin, the "political environment in Armenia is polarized and marred by inflammatory rhetoric", and in this sense, efforts are essential "to restore the communication between political parties of government and of opposition." In this context, it seems that the EU delegation to Armenia needs to bring more inclusivity into Armenia's political landscape by organizing trilateral workshops and discussions, thus avoiding the marginalization of both the ruling party and the opposition from the reform agenda. From the perspective of forming a consensus, this would be the best way to demonstrate the experience and show the role models of those EU members whose democracies are developed.

Considering the paramount importance of the CEPA to the success of reforms, Armenia's government in its turn needs to be comprehensive and consistent in its actions to ensure their timely implementation. In this sense, priorities should be the strengthening of the capacity of civil society in the provision of control over the approximation of Armenia's legislation to the EU Acquis; regular delivery of sectoral expertise to decision-makers; as well as increasing the transparency and visibility of applied reforms.

EU as a Security Partner to Armenia

For both the EU and Armenia the signing of the CEPA has become a tool for counteraction against Russia's influence in the region. For the EU, it has created a space that allows avoidance of a possible retreat in the South Caucasus in terms of its strategic and political influence. As

for Armenia, despite the fact that, immediately after making a decision to join the Customs Union the future of EU-Armenia relations was questioned and qualified as a relationship without a European perspective (Azatutyun 2013), what can be seen is not only mutual efforts in the implementation of the reform process but also the EU's active engagement in the conflict resolution process. As Andrea Wiktorin has mentioned, "the EU is also an important security partner for Armenia, in particular for its conflict resolution efforts" (Wiktorin 2022). I believe the above-mentioned qualitative shift in EU-Armenia relations has taken place not as a result of success in the reform process, but rather against the background of the West's aspirations to minimize Russia's influence in the region.

It is worth mentioning that in terms of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia has clear expectations from the EU in terms of its strong normative support and stated commitment to a peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict. Since the CEPA agreement reflects also the EU's positioning over the peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict in the framework of the negotiations led by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs and is based on the recognition of principles (refraining from the threat or use of force, the territorial integrity of States, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples), enshrined in the UN Charter and the OSCE Helsinki Final Act and "reflected in all declarations issued within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship since the 16th OSCE Ministerial Council of 2008" (Mfa.am 2017). However, the situation changed drastically after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The EU has demonstrated considerable agility by moving into the space left open by the non-official disbandment of the OSCE Minsk Group and has actively engaged in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution process, thus compromising Russia's image as a security guarantor. Still, constructive dialogue between the EU and Armenia depends on a mutually agreed agenda in Armenia's foreign and security policy, particularly the incorporation in it of the peace talks with Azerbaijan and Turkey, as well as the possible transformations of bilateral relations with regional actors (the EU, US, and Russia).

In this context, the EU's efforts to achieve a lasting and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, particularly trilateral meetings with the President of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister of Armenia headed by European Council President Charles Michel to discuss the situation in the South Caucasus are of significant importance. Nevertheless, taking into regard President Michel's four statements as a result of 4 trilateral meetings that took place accordingly on December 14, 2021 (consilium.europa.eu 2021), April 6, 2022 (consilium.europa.eu 2022), May 23, 2022 (consilium.europa.eu 2022), and August 31, 2022 (consilium.europa.eu 2022), one might record a transformation of the wording of the statements, announcing the end of the

conflict and emphasizing the need to overcome the consequences of the conflict. According to the statements, the framework of discussed issues is limited to humanitarian issues (release of remaining detainees and the issue of missing persons), border delimitation and demarcation issues, and restoring communications infrastructure between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The lack of clear formulations on substantial issues, such as the Artsakh people's right to self-determination, the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the provision of guarantees for safe and secure living for the Armenian people indicates the substantial violation of the equality of the parties in the negotiations over the conflict settlement (Poghosyan 2022).

Assumingly, these statements might be viewed as a logical continuation of the OSCE Minsk group c-chairs' statements immediately after the war of 2020. If in the beginning, statements included formulations such as "final comprehensive and sustainable settlement on the basis of the elements and principles well-known to the sides," then the scope of discussed issues in the latest statements was limited to "humanitarian issues, relocation of troops and to the need to begin negotiations on delimitation and demarcation of the border peacefully."

The evolved situation is beneficial mostly for Azerbaijan seeking to remove from the agenda the core issues of the conflict - the Artsakh people's right to self-determination and the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh. As a result of the so-called "peace talks" followed by the Artsakh War of 2020, currently one is witnessing an occupation of Armenia's sovereign territories and a humanitarian catastrophe in Artsakh, which weakens the EU's normative support and commitment to conflict settlement. Moreover, the ongoing blocking Armenia-Artsakh lifeline road has challenged the international legal order thus questioning the viability of international norms and principles, which is a consequence of impunity of Azerbaijani activities by the international community. Surely, the Armenian government is responsible side for the evolved situation, particularly for not being able to clearly formulate Armenia's expectations from the international community, as well as the inviolable red lines for Armenia and Artsakh. Though, it is also the EU's responsibility as a mediator and a security partner to disable "the legitimization of the use of violence as a strategy of coercive kinetic diplomacy" (Ohanyan 2022). Otherwise, the current period of growing illiberalism in the process of peacebuilding in the region most probably will lead to another military escalation.

Development perspectives of EU-Armenian relations in a changing region

In the circumstances of recent regional developments followed by the Artsakh War of 2020, the establishment of constructive relations between the EU and Armenia is urgent. However, it appears that after the Artsakh war of 2020, EU-Armenia relations are developing in the frame of an open contest between the West and Russia for maintaining and enlarging one's influence in the region. Moreover, Russia's war in Ukraine, leading to the overstrain of relations between Russia and the West puts Armenia in a rather tricky situation moving the prospects for the development of bilateral relations between Armenia and leading international actors (Russia, EU, the US) directly involved in the regional developments to a more challenging stage. Last, but not least, the open confrontation between the West and Russia directly affects the negotiations over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resulting in the development of negotiation formats conflicting with one another.

Noteworthy, the current situation negatively affects the future of the strategic partnership between the EU and Armenia. I believe, EU-Armenia relations have two layers: the first layer includes the reforms' agenda and partnership in a number of spheres, and the second layer reflects Armenia's capacity to counteract Russia's influence in the region. This creates an artificial conditionality in the frame of EU-Armenia relations making the first layer dependent on the second one. The logic and the agenda on substantial issues in the frame of negotiations over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are bright evidence of the latter.

The paper supports the idea that among Armenia's political leaders, Pashinyan is the most acceptable player to the international community, i.e., the EU, Russia, and the US. The following is based on the logic of the construction of relations with Russia and Western partners over the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict followed the Second Artsakh War of 2020, particularly Pashinyan's aspiration to combine contradictory interests into one bowl under the heading of complementary politics. However, these actors (Russia, the US, EU) view the advancement of their regional interests and their connectedness with Pashinyan's role fundamentally differently. Moreover, it is naive to rely on the possibility "to sit in two chairs" especially when the agreements and promises coordinated with Western partners are being strongly criticized by Russia. The recent statement of Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, on the obstruction, by the Western powers, of Russia's efforts to end the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan should be mentioned (Mediamax.am 2023). Last, but not least, resorting to complimentary politics at the time of Russia's war in Ukraine and tense relations between the West and Russia seems to be unrealistic, to put it mildly.

Pashinyan has become an important player for Russia, especially after the November 9 statement agreeing to the deployment for a period of a minimum of five years of its peacekeeping mission along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Lachin corridor. It was supposed to strengthen Russia's role in the region as a security guarantor (Primeminister.am 2020), though starting from December 12, 2022, "a group of Azerbaijanis in civilian clothes, posing as alleged environmental activists blocked the only lifeline road (Lachin corridor) connecting Artsakh to Armenia, and to the world..." (Ombuds.am 2023). Apparently, this has led to "the potential collapse of Nagorno Karabakh's security architecture that Russia has assumed responsibility over due to the November 9 statement. (Evnreport.com 2022).

The current situation has intensified the diplomatic struggle between the West and Russia. Pashinyan has delivered a counter-balance to Russia's mediation efforts in the negotiation process by agreeing to the deployment of an EU observation mission, which will work not only alongside the Armenia-Azerbaijan border (as it was last year from October 20 till December 19 (Eas.europa.eu 2022)) but also will patrol the entire territory of Armenia according to the preliminary information (Azatutyun.am 2023). Noteworthy is that prior to the blocking of the Lachin corridor, the EU was not intended to extend the mandate of the EU observation mission. Moreover, according to Borrell's statement in the meeting of EU foreign ministers on December 12, 2022, the deployment of a civilian mission could have been considered if the sides reach such an agreement in 2023 (Azatutyun.am 2022). However, taking advantage of the situation, on December 19, 2022, the head of diplomacy of the European Union, Joseph Borrell declared the new stage of the EU's involvement in the South Caucasus.

It is worth mentioning, that the deployment of the EU's observer mission is of high significance for Armenia in terms of preventing threats of new hostilities. However, "tangible steps are needed to bring back the EU as the leading facilitator of Armenia - Azerbaijan negotiations," particularly after the de-facto cancelation of the Brussels format by Azerbaijan last year in December (Civilnet.am 2023).

Assumingly, within the EU there is an understanding that the deployment of the EU's observation mission will generate new risks and challenges in the region. It is no coincidence that according to the preliminary information the Armenian government is expected to take the responsibility of managing contacts or incidents between EU observers and Russian units, as well as to give necessary privileges to observers (Armedia.am). Last, but not least, not only Russia but also Iran has concerns about the deployment of the EU's observation mission alongside the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. It is fundamental for Iran to exclude the West's

presence on the Armenian-Iranian border (Bekaryan 2022). In this context, to neutralize the possible risks and challenges it is essential for the EU and Armenia to clarify the scope of functions and powers and to make it clear for the regional actors mentioned above.

Most likely, the achievement of peace treaties between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Armenia and Turkey is crucial for the EU and the US. Although there is a ratified agreement for a Russian military base in Gyumri until 2044 (Evnreport.com 2021), it appears the signing of peace treaties between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Armenia and Turkey will question the necessity for Russia to have a military presence in Armenia and Artsakh in general. Nonetheless, it is unrealistic to think that a short-term settlement might ensure lasting peace and stability in the region at the expense of neglecting and violating the red lines of one of the parties.

Although Russia's ambition is to achieve stability in the region thus enabling the unblocking of the economic and transport links in the region and establishing control over them according to the trilateral agreement of November 9. Concerning the final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, i.e., determination of the status quo of Nagorno-Karabakh and provision of security guarantees to the people living there, it is essential for Russia to prolong the settlement of the conflict as much as possible, thus creating an opportunity to extend the presence of the peacekeeping mission in Artsakh.

Currently, for both the West and Russia, the priority is the strengthening of one's capacity to resolve the situation over the Lachin corridor as well as restoring leadership in the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan as soon as the corridor will be unblocked. This is evidenced by active discussions taking place during these days such as Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's conversation with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov on the more than month-long blockade of the Lachin corridor (Azatutyun.am 2023), United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken's conversation with Armenia's Prime Minister Pashinyan regarding the situation over the Nagorno-Karabakh (State.gov 2023), Blinken's talks with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavushoglu on the number of issues in Syria, Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, and Caucasus (State.gov 2023).

Concerning Armenia's role and obligations in the negotiations, there is a need to diversify the following directions – Armenia's official positioning and expected positioning.

In terms of official positioning, the Armenian government has shown minimum resistance to the proposed agenda on the final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict regardless it is a Western or Russian-facilitated version. In this sense, Armenia's Prime minister's speech in the parliament on the need to lower the bar on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh (dictated by the

international community) should be emphasized (1lurer.am). According to Pashinyan, Armenia's government's position has been transformed, particularly if in the beginning the priority was given to the issue of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, from which the issue of security was supposed to be derived; currently, the priority is given to the issue of secure living of people of Nagorno-Karabakh, from which the status should be derived (Azatutyun.am 2022). It might be assumed that Armenian government accepts international community's "proposal" to lower the bar and to move away from the agenda the issues of the Artsakh people's right to self-determination and the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh, thus satisfying Azerbaijan's ambitions in this regard. It is quite obvious, that this approach is challenging for both Armenia and Artsakh. As a result, currently, more than a month Artsakh faces a humanitarian catastrophe, the resolution of which is still questioned. I believe the international community has an understanding of the situation, that the objective of blocking of the Lachin corridor is the intention to carry out ethnic cleansing of Armenians living in Artsakh (em.armradio.am 2022).

Concerning Armenia's expected positioning in the negotiations, in the current situation Armenian government should put forward the principle of remedial secession, which "seems to remain a possible way out of the dreadful situation created around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (Tatikyan 2021; Karapetyan 2023). The Armenian government is expected to express the strong necessity of reconceptualization of the negotiation agenda. Otherwise, leaving unpunished another crime of Azerbaijan might lead to irreversible consequences.

What future to expect?

Azerbaijan's recent military operation against Armenia's sovereign territory, as well as an ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Artsakh, makes the EU's aspiration of establishing long-lasting peace and stability in the region unrealistic. Both Armenia and the EU should work towards the strengthening of mutual understanding of the inviolability of Armenia's territorial integrity, and the principle of the Artsakh people's right to self-determination without excluding the probability of a new large-scale war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

On this matter, the Armenian Government should demonstrate persistence in seeking to achieve the EU's precise and targeted positioning in restraining Azerbaijan's maximalist demands and activities. Furthermore, practical steps should be taken to re-conceptualize the agenda of negotiations, particularly the priority should become not the signing of the "peace agreement" at any cost, but foremost the resolution of humanitarian issues and the

determination of principles of demarcation and delimitation processes. In this regard, the EU's efforts in urging Azerbaijan to return to its initial pre-May 11 positions might be considered a significant contribution to the conflict resolution process. The formation of a consensus between the EU and Armenia is crucial in terms of the EU's vision on partnership prospects with Armenia in the area of security, in particular for its conflict resolution efforts (Wiktorin 2022). Although expectations from the EU in terms of restraining Azerbaijan's maximalist demands and policies are considered desirable however, it seems to be hardly achieved due to the EU's efforts to diversify its energy policy, thus reducing dependency on Russia in terms of gas supply.

In this context, the EU's agreement with Azerbaijan to double the delivery of gas (Ec.europa.eu 2022) causes concern regarding biases in the EU's approach to the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as the EU's efforts to urge Azerbaijan to withdraw its armed forces from the sovereign territory of Armenia. As Alexander E. Gale mentioned, "Authoritarian regimes have a tendency to wield energy exports as a tool for foreign policy leverage" (Mirrorspectator.com 2022). This is the case, when energy dependence influences the quality of the EU's interactions beyond its borders, affecting the image of the EU as a bastion of liberal democracy and rule of law. Therefore, it may be concluded the development of a resilient partnership between the EU and Armenia strongly depends on the ability to counteract the existing and dynamically developing risks in the frame of constructing bilateral relations under changing realities in the region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Regrettably, Armenia has reached a point of no return, which means it can no longer be resilient at the crossroads of the clash of interests between Russia and the West. Therefore, to put it another way, the resilience of EU-Armenia relations depends on the restoration of a trust-based dialogue on the one hand and on respect for mutual interests on the other hand.

For the Government of Armenia

- To avoid any further increase in polarization and inflammatory rhetoric in society, thus creating a space for consolidation at this critical stage in history. In this regard, it is crucial that efforts should be made to restore public solidarity.

- To be proactive in delivering comprehensive information regarding the transformations around Armenia and Artsakh, emphasizing Armenia's needs and interests in relation to the needs and interests of regional and international actors. This might be achieved through parliamentary diplomacy, persistent work with international and well-recognized media outlets, civil society platforms, academic conferences, working forums, close communications with the Embassies and Consulates, etc.
- To strengthen diplomatic efforts to ensure that the regional actors accept Armenia's inviolable red lines, such as territorial integrity, sovereignty, independence, right to self-determination, provision of guarantees for the safe and secure living of Artsakh people, the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

For the European Union

- To work closely with Armenia's civil society organizations to strengthen their potential and capacity to provide control over the approximation of Armenia's legislation to the EU Acquis and deliver sectoral expertise to the Government. In this regard, of high importance is the organization of professional sectors and policy group meetings to boost the proactive engagement of CSOs.
- To keep putting efforts into restraining Azerbaijan's maximalist demands and execute the necessary measures to urge Azerbaijan to return to its initial pre-May 11 positions.
- To continue working with the Armenian Government in the direction of security, creating a space for the respect of mutual interests. In this sense, the EU and Armenia should work towards the setting of the scope of functions and powers of the EU observer mission, clarification of the framework of possible incidents Armenia should be responsible for, the specification of the format of contacts of EU observers with Russian units, as well as the definition of privileges Armenia should give to EU observers. The following steps are important from the perspective of strengthening the trust between the EU and Armenia and deepening and transferring of EU-Armenia bilateral relations to a qualitatively new stage.

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