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**THE FEATURES OF ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN
TERMS OF SMALL STATES' CONCEPT AND THEORY
OF REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEXES**

**Master thesis
Astghik MNATSAKANYAN**

Research Director: Prof. Dr. Matthias JOPP
Member of the Jury: Dr. Soeren KEIL

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ABSTRACT

This work reveals the peculiarities of Armenia's foreign policy as a small state operating in the post-Soviet Regional Security Complex, and country's relations with regional and extra-regional actors. Moreover, it unveils the impact of the post-Soviet space in limiting Armenia's opportunities to adopt the desired and expedient political course. Various professional sources were studied during the research: books, scientific articles, information publications, official statements, *etc.*

Based on observed materials, the study provides a comprehensive overview of Small State's concept and Regional Security Complex theory, their definitions and interpretation approaches, and foreign policy strategies adopted by small states in general, and Armenia in particular.

Moreover, this examination evaluates Armenia's relationships with other countries, specifically Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Georgia, Russia, and a pivotal extra-regional figure- the European Union. It identifies these actors' roles in the security and survival context, emphasizing the consequences of overdependence on the great power Russia in the context of the double political-economic blockade imposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey on a small, landlocked Armenia.

Keywords: Small state, Armenia, Regional Security Complex, foreign policy, South Caucasus, Armenia-Russia, Armenia-the EU.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Association Agreement
CEPA	Comprehensive and Enhanced Cooperation Agreement
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Community
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSP+	Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NK	Nagorno-Karabakh
NSS	National Security Strategy
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
RSC	Regional Security Complex
RSO	Regional Security Order
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of the Independent States and Georgia)
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
US	United States

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the topic

Although small states have existed in human history for a long time, until the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, the study of small states was overlooked by international relations specialists as small powers were not considered important actors in the global arena. As Nasra (2010) notices, early works mainly concentrate on exploring the small states' survival possibilities among big powers.

With the big wave of 1960s decolonisation, which entailed the formation of numerous small states, scholars have become more interested in this sphere of research. The attention further was enhanced with the world's order transformation and the emergence of new small states in the wake of the Cold War's end and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Subsequently, tractates have started to emphasize not only the definition of the concept of the small state but also the analysis of their behavioural characteristics.

We should also stress that the international system is mostly composed of small states or so-called small powers. One can easily assume that actors who are not considered great powers are small states (Thorhallsson & Wivel, 2006).

However, in reality, this issue is more complicated than it seems to be. There are still many disagreements and uncertainties both theoretically and practically regarding the concept of small state, the peculiarities of their foreign policy behaviour, and the factors impacting the latter. The significance of studying small states is also conditioned by the fact that their behaviour differs

substantially from that of large ones (Neemia, 1995, p. 79). They are much more vulnerable, especially in terms of foreign policy and diplomacy.

Level analysis have always been used to scrutinize the external and internal factors influencing small states' foreign policy. In the context of external variables, specialists (Kassimeris, 2009; Bailes, Thayer & Thorhallsson, 2016) usually refer to the international system in general. Albeit, in our view, small states' external security threats and opportunities are primarily confined to its immediate neighbouring territory. Thus, the impact of the regional subsystems is much more critical for their foreign policy.

The best analytical framework for studying the regional environment is, from our perspective, the theory of regional security complexes (RSCs) and the concept of regional security orders (RSOs).

Theoretically, our study will help us find the essential characteristics of a small state's foreign policy behaviour in a certain RSC, and ascertain the main factors determining a small state's choice of the particular foreign policy strategy. From a practical point of view, this study will contribute to better understanding and analysing the post-Soviet regional and security factors which determine Armenia's foreign policy as a small, vulnerable state.

It should be noted that the choice of the observed country is conditioned by the fact that Armenia is quite a compelling case of a small, landlocked state functioning in the unadventurous conflict formation post-Soviet RSC.

The South Caucasus, a regional security subcomplex in which Armenia is located, is on the geopolitically essential stage. Settled at the crossroads of the

West and the East, North and South, this region is always influenced by the external world, especially by a dominant regional player Russia.

Competition for the region, along with security and economic challenges, usually determines the political course's nature of the countries there. Indeed, these are the factors that affect Armenia's foreign policy capabilities and limitations too.

To overcome obstacles conditioned by the challenging geopolitical neighbourhood, Armenia has adopted complementary-multi-vector, balanced foreign policy. Nevertheless, our thesis argues that, in reality, its foreign policy is more prone to bandwagoning rather than balancing.

The objectives and research question of the thesis

This thesis aims to elicit and analyse the specific features of Armenia's foreign policy based on the concept of small states and the theory of RSC and RSO, considering Armenia's geographical and geopolitical location.

Therefore, the research question of the thesis will be: *How does being a small state in the post-Soviet RSC affect Armenia's foreign policy?*

To achieve this goal, first of all, we intend to study Armenia's size based on the conceptual approaches of small states and to identify and interpret characteristics of the post-Soviet RSC, and Armenia's role in it. Furthermore, we evaluate RSC's impacts on Armenia's foreign policy.

Afterwards, we scrutinize features of the observed state's foreign policy with some of the regional actors (Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Georgia) in

terms of small states' concept, foreign policy strategies, and the theories of RSC and RSO.

Moreover, we analyse Armenia-European Union (EU) relations and their possible dynamics in the light of Armenia being a small state in the post-Soviet security complex.

The object of the research paper is Armenia's foreign policy, and the subject matter is the latter's features from the perspective of small states' concept and the theory of RSC.

The methodological basis of the research and the scientific elaboration of the subject matter

The methodological basis of this work is the systemic approach, including both qualitative and quantitative methods. Following the example of the observed country, we have presented the peculiarities of the foreign policy of a small state operating in an unfavourable RSC.

To achieve our goal, besides applying theoretical frameworks of small states and RSCs, we have used other specific methods such as descriptive, comparative and historical-comparative, empirical, document analysis (including statements, statistics, surveys, interviews, policy papers, and official strategies), and discourse analysis methods to examine the problem.

Specifically, to study conceptual approaches of small states and RSC, and to explore why Armenia is a small state and how can being in the post-Soviet security complex impact on its foreign policy capabilities, we have used descriptive, comparative, and document analysis methods.

In respect of the states' classification, their types, the definition and interpretation of the concept of small state, significant contributions have been made by Tom Crowards, Robert Keohane, Baldur Thorhallsson, Anders Wivel, Raimo Väyrynen, *etc.*¹

To reveal the strategies of small state foreign policy, we have based on the books and articles by Kenneth Waltz, Stephen Walt, Olav Knudsen, Christos Kassimeris, Sivananda Patnaik, and Sverrir Steinsson/Baldur Thorhallsson.²

Relying on the researches of Barry Buzan/Ole Wæver, the founders of the RSC theory, as well as on the study of RSO by Robert Stewart-Ingersoll/Derrick Frazier, we have presented the essence of the RSCs, their types, structural features, and other characteristics.

While appraising the foreign policy behaviour of Armenia, and its actual relations with other countries, in particular Russia, Turkey, Iran, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, we have used historical-comparative, empirical, document, and discourse analysis. We have evaluated the nature of Armenia's policy towards these countries, the security, economic and historical problems related to them, and the impact of Russia as a great power of the post-Soviet RSC.

We also applied these methods to outline the EU's interest in the region, Armenia-EU relations, their dynamics, and the reasons behind the former's

¹ See, for example, in Crowards, T. (2002). Defining the category of 'small' states, *Journal of International Development*, 14, Michigan, ProQuest Central, pp. 143-179; Keohane, R. (2006). Lilliputians' dilemmas: Small States in International Politics. In Ingebritsen C., Neumann I., Gstöhl s., & Beyer j. (eds.), *Small States in International Relations*. SEATTLE: University of Washington Press, pp. 55-76; Thorhallsson, B. (2006). The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives. *European Integration*, 28(1), 2006, pp. 7-31 and other authors discussed in Chapter 1.

² The author's following works are of great importance: Walt, S.M. (2013). *The Origins of Alliance*, O. (1996). *Analysing Small-State Security: The Role of External Factors*, Kassimeris, C. (2009). *The Foreign Policy of Small Powers, etc.*

choices concerning the Union. The examination of this extra-regional actor is because Russia is one of the major obstacles on the European path of Armenia. Thus, the adverse effects of the post-Soviet space on the small state Armenia are demonstrated in this relation.

For these two chapters, we have used both the National Security Strategy (NSS) of Armenia, the statements made by both Armenian and foreign officials, and articles, books, and papers by various authors. Remarkably, we consider studies by Alexander Markarov/Narek Galstyan/Grigor Harutyunyan, Richard Giragosian, Jarosław Kardaś, Simoglou Alexandros, Mikayel Hovhannisyan, Nicu Popescu, Laure Delcour, Sergey Minasyan, Elena Pokalova, Aram Terzyan, Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Thomas De Waal, *etc.*³

In contrast to the already existing work in this field, our research focuses not only on the study of just the theoretical or practical part of the problem but also on combining them with a comprehensive approach to the issue. There is no shortage of studies on individual parts of our work, especially relations with other countries. However, there is a minimal comprehensive approach to the issue, and the study of Armenia's foreign policy capabilities from our adopted position is still not covered sufficiently.

Nevertheless, like all other studies, our work is no exception to certain limitations. We have not covered the sections for extra-regional actors like the United States (US) and China. It should be stressed here that we do not question their interests in the South Caucasus, competition with the great power of the post-Soviet RSC Russia, and their influence on Armenian foreign policy. Albeit,

³Besides the mentioned authors' works, various scholars' books and articles have been examined within this thesis to reveal all patterns of relations with observed countries. All materials are included in the Bibliography section.

given that they are not immediate regional players and considering the limited volume of the thesis, we leave it to another study.

Structure of the thesis

The work consists of an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter, with its three subchapters, is dedicated to the conceptual approaches revealing the theoretical perspectives of small states, their foreign policy behaviour, and RSCs. Applying the latter to our case study Armenia we expose its size and outline main foreign policy strategies more or the less used by the country.

For the following chapter, the first one serves as a base to explain Armenia's foreign policy's official doctrine and its real behavioural patterns towards presented regional and extra-regional actors. Composed of six subchapters, it thoroughly examines the reasons for adopted complementarity policy and then discloses the limits of its usage. With respective subchapters, this thesis shows the political, security, and economic aspects of Armenia's relationship with Russia, Iran, Georgia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. It further assesses the effects of the country's Russian overdependence on its manoeuvring and balancing possibilities.

The last chapter, including two subchapters, reveals the core interests of the EU in the South Caucasus and Armenia-EU cooperation in light of the presence of opposing Russia.

CHAPTER 1. SMALL STATES IN THE REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEXES: THE CASE OF ARMENIA

*'In a world where a big fish eats small fish, and small fish eats shrimps,
Singapore has to become a poisonous shrimp '.*

-Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore

1.1. The Conceptual Approaches Identifying Small States: Why Is Armenia a Small State?

There are many disagreements and uncertainties regarding the concept of 'small state' on both theoretical and practical levels. In general, different specialists present various criteria for the classification of states.

It is often under debate what factors are crucial to identifying and classifying states. Should the classification be based on the geographical, demographic, economic, military, and other indicators of the states, or should their political resources, institutional structure, and role in the international arena be emphasized?

Accordingly, two main approaches to the states' classification can be distinguished: quantitative and qualitative. The first considers the size of the state's territory, population, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and other similar indices. Specialists set certain thresholds for measurement and rely on quantitative data. Contrary to the first one, the second approach emphasizes the state's position and influence in international relations, its self-perception, and other states' attitude towards its role and importance.

In addition to these concepts, specialists often apply the complex version, using both quantitative and qualitative data.

One of the examples of the absolute-quantitative approach is the classification of states offered by Vital (1967). In his classic work 'The Inequality of States: a study of the small power in international relations', he bases on the number of population and level of economic development to classify states. He divides small states into two categories:

- Economically developed small countries (maximum population of 10-15 mln)
- Economically developing small countries (maximum population threshold is 20-30 mln).

Crowards (2002) offers another approach. He outlines three criteria for the classification of states: *population size, land area, and total income measured as GDP*.

He points out that although there is no universal approach to defining small states, usually, the population is considered to be the main factor, as the size of the state's internal market and the human capital are conditioned by it. Afterwards, along with this criterion, he also considers the size of the state's territory and GDP as important factors. Based on the criteria mentioned above, he specifies five types of states: *micro (dwarf), small, medium-small, medium-large, large* (see more details in **Table 1**).

The results obtained by his examination show that 79 countries out of 188 (including microstates) belong to the category of small states (Crowards, 2002).

Table 1*Crowards' model of states' classification*

The type of the state	Characteristics
Micro(dwarf)	Population size` < 0,5 mln Land area` < 7,000 km ² GDP < US \$0,7 bn
Small	Population size- 0,5-2,7 mln Land area-7,000-40,000 km ² GDP- US \$0,7-2,5 bn
Medium-small	Population size-2,7-6,7 mln Land area- 40,000-125,000 km ² GDP` US\$ 2,5-7 bn
Medium-large	Population size- 6,7-12 mln Land area- 125,000-250,000 km ² GDP- US \$7-19 bn
Large	Population size >12 mln Land area >250,000 km ² GDP > US \$19 bn

Note. The table is adapted on the thresholds and criteria set by Crowards (2002), pp. 144-159.

Another categorization is introduced by East (1973), who selects criteria like land size, Population, GDP volume (or other indicators characterizing overall productivity), and military might for states' classification.

Utilizing Comparative Research on the Events of Nations (CREON), he presents the similarities and differences of foreign policies of small and big powers for the period of 1959-1968. He classifies observed 32 states into four main groups; small developing, small developed, large developing, and large developed.

He considers states as developed if their GDP per capita exceeds US\$ 401. As the criteria for largeness, he also states the population size of more than 23,7mln.

The results of his examinations show that no matter how developed the small states, they usually tend to be more passive in the international level than big

ones. Furthermore, he confirms that small states are more likely to cooperate with other countries and to become members of international organizations.

The author also concludes that in the global arena, small states are apt to the 'verbal' rather 'non-verbal' (actions) behaviour (East, 1973). In other words, small states are usually in favour of speaking on the international stage (i.e., to make certain statements and comments about various events, treats, and offers). On the contrary, big powers usually act, such as utilizing military power, giving loans, *etc.*

The World Bank (2019) suggests another quantitative definition of a small state. In particular, a country with a population of fewer than 1.5 mln is considered a small state. Moreover, almost 1/4 of the member states belong to this group.

The British Association of Nations provides a similar definition. It delineates small states as countries characterized by vulnerability to natural disasters and global economic crises, limited human capital and institutional capacity, and with a population under 1.5 mln (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2014).

Criekemans and Duran's (2010, pp. 31-32) viewpoint is the illustration of the next-qualitative approach identifying small states. They emphasize the differentiation of small states should not be based on the absolute size of their population or the volume of GDP, but on the fact that they are weak in asymmetric relationships. The authors note that unlike large and medium-sized countries, small states do not own enough economic, political, and military resources to influence world politics.

Among the qualitative approaches, Keohane's (2006) classification is of great importance. At the heart of it are the perceptions of the political elites about

the country's systemic role. Accordingly, he distinguishes four types of states: *large, secondary, medium, and small*.

Large or great are the states whose leaders believe that their country alone can have a decisive influence on the international system (systemic-decisive state). Secondary are the countries whose leaders consider they cannot have a decisive influence on the international system alone (systemic-influential).

There are medium or average states that, in the opinion of their leaders, cannot function alone. Nevertheless, in small groups, they assume they can have a significant impact (systemic-influential), and small states whose leaders believe that they cannot have a considerable impact on the international system neither alone nor in small groups (systemic-inefficient) (Keohane, 2006).

It should also be stressed that the classification of states within both quantitative and qualitative approaches can be carried out by absolute (when that state is 'measured' in isolation, based only on certain thresholds) and comparative (when that state is 'measured' in comparison with others) principles.

The qualitative and quantitative methods cannot separately draw a complete picture of small powers' roles in world politics due to limited to several characteristics.

The complex approaches somewhat ease this gap. Worthwhile categorization of small states offered by Väyrynen (1983) distinguishes objective and subjective, as well as internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) criteria. As internal-objective variables, he reviews the territory of the country, the population, and the GDP.

For the internal-subjective part, he specifies the public and the politicians' self-perception. The volume of interactions with the outside world and the attitude of external actors are considered respectively external-objective and external-subjective variables.

Another example in this category is put forward by Thorhallsson (2006). He singles out the following six categories that shape the behaviour of states, and are on the foundation of their classification: *fixed size* (state's territory and population), *sovereignty* (the state's ability to exercise sovereignty over its territory, as well as its representation on the international stage), *political size* (military and administrative capabilities, unity in internal and external affairs), *economic size* (GDP, internal market size and development success), *perceptual size* (attitude of internal and external actors towards the state), and *preference size* (the ambitions and priorities of the ruling elite on the international stage).

He also highlights that within above-mentioned factors 'action-capacity' and 'vulnerability' are crucial for determining small states' behaviour externally and internally (Thorhallsson, 2006, p. 14).

The approaches mentioned above give us an overall understanding of how thinkers variously construe and define it.

Although small states cannot have the same influence on the global stage as the great powers, it does not portend that they cannot affect the international system at all or that small also means weak. Hence, the essence and features of small states can be revealed by studying their behavioural patterns and determiners, as well as the characteristics distinguishing them from other states.

To fathom the peculiarities and impetuses of small states' foreign policy behaviour, we believe that Wivel's classification is applicable. He introduces following main criteria: *absolute* (area size, population, GDP size), *comparative* (absolute standards in global or regional comparison), *situational* (small in a specific situation, not in general), *behavioural* (small states have unique foreign policy behaviour), *perceptual* (leaders consider that the country has a minor role on the international stage), and *issue-related* (small states focus on a limited number of specific issues) (Thorhallsson & Wivel, 2006).

To bring out absolute and comparative criterion, we can use quantifiable variables offered by previously mentioned authors, to be more specific, by Crowards. To expose the political elite's opinion about a country's role in global scale (perceptual criteria), and to understand the critical issues for the governors both expressed officially and practically (the issue-related criteria), we can use qualitative data analysis method. Examining the state's behaviour in certain situations will show us how it mostly manifests itself. However, the last behavioural part needs more detailed information about the country's foreign policy and factors conditioning it.

Based on these variables, we can unveil states' size and substance wholly and accurately.

Let us 'measure' the size of Armenia now. **Table 2** shows which of Croward's proposed criteria Armenia ranks among.

Table 2*Armenia's 'size' according to Croward's model*

Criteria/characteristics	Numerical value	Type/size of the country
Area (km ²)	29.743	Small
Population size (mln)	2. 965.300	Medium-small
GDP (US\$)	13.30 bn	Medium-large

Note. Data for the land area in President.am (2020a), for population size in Armstat (2019a), and for GDP in Tradingeconomics. (2020a).

Table 3*Armenia's size in the regional comparison according to Croward's model*

Country	Land area (km ²)	Population size	GDP (US\$, bn)	Type/size of the country
Armenia	29,743	2,965,300	13,30	Medium-small+
Georgia	69,740 ^a	4,500,000	20	Medium-small+
Azerbaijan	75,140	9,942,334	57	Medium-large+
Turkey	785,347	82,605,000	740	Large
Iran	1,648,195	84,923,314	485	Large
Russia	17,098,246	146,748,000	1,750	Large

Note. Data for Armenia from Table 2, for Georgia's land area and population size in Georgia (2020a) and for GDP in Trading Economics. (2020b), for Azerbaijan's land area in Silayev *et al.* (2019); MFA of the Republic of Artsakh (2020) population in World Bank Data (2020), and for GDP in Tradingeconomics. (2020c), for Turkey's land area and population in Encyclopaedia Britannica (2020), and for GDP in Tradingeconomics. (2020d), for Iran's land area and population Cia.gov. (2020) and for GDP in Tradingeconomics. (2020e), for Russia's population in Federal State Statistics Service (2020), for land area in UN (2016), and for GDP in Tradingeconomics. (2020f).

^aWe do not consider the actual size of The Republic of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan's territory

As **Table 2** indicates, Armenia is a medium-small state. However, this size matters even more while in comparison to other regional states' sizes. Thus, it is necessary to interpret the latter, as well. From **Table 3**, it is evident that Armenia is the smallest one in the region by all criteria.

For perceptual criteria, the analysis of political elite representatives' several speeches and interviews has proven that in their perception, Armenian is a small country.

Back in 2016, former president Serzh Sargsyan in his interview to Dmitri Kiselyov- the General Director of the International News Agency 'Rossiya Segodnya', talking about the possibility of establishing a new Russian military base claimed that for a small country like Armenia one is enough (Sputnik, 2016).

Another example is the 2019 interview of the current prime-minister Nikol Pashinyan to the Gulf News, where he said: 'Well, I agree, we are a small country. However, we are a nation with a wide and global network, which makes us great.' (Pashinyan, 2019).

A similar idea was expressed by the president Armen Sarkissian during his working visit to Israel in 2020. He mentioned that 'Armenia is a small country, but a global nation,' referring to the substantial potential Armenians have worldwide in various activity spheres due to its Diaspora. (President.am, 2020b).

Statements about being a global nation are also the reflection of the Diaspora diplomacy. With the implementation of this trick, a small state uses its Diaspora as a direct or indirect means of its international influence, actively maintaining and developing ties with it and encouraging the growth of Diaspora's influence within the host state (Ho & McConnell, 2019). The diaspora functions as a connecting bridge between the host country and homeland. Armenia, having more people resided outside than inside the country⁴, has had communities and prominent public figures in almost every corner of the world and has used their

⁴ To some estimates, almost ten mln Armenians are living abroad (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017).

capability to lobby for issues like recognition of Armenian Genocide, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

To understand the country's main issues, we can look at what guides it uses to develop its strategies and the problems the latter aims to solve. For Armenia's case, we can look at the central vectors set in the programme of the Armenian Government (2019) and the country's National Security Strategy (NSS, 2007).

In general, the strategic goal of small states is to survive and maintain their sovereignty and autonomy as much as possible. It can be achievable by strengthening internal capabilities and promoting external support. Furthermore, the geography of small states' foreign policy interests and concerns are limited to their region strongly related to their physical and political security and survival.

After the examination of the documents stated above, it becomes clear that the main concerns of Armenia are related to its practical needs, such as survival among the double blockade and external and internal security threats, alleviation of sensitivity and vulnerability to the changes of the external environment, and the elimination of dependence on great powers. Simply put, it is mainly interested in solving narrower issues, as is typical to small states.

As for behavioural criterion, it is more complicated demanding to scrutinize the specifics of small states' foreign policy and the factors impacting it both in theory and practice.

1.2 The Peculiarities of the Small States Foreign Policies and Regional Security Complexes: Does the Latter Matter?

Since we reveal the concept of smallness, now it is time to present how it defines and influences foreign policy, and then identify Armenia's foreign policy. Professional literature often mentions some common features of foreign policy behaviour. Some authors (Patnaik, 2014; Steinsson & Thorhallsson, 2017) note that the smaller the state, the greater the probability of its autonomy's external limitation, and consequently the greater the dependence on the external environment (also in the economic sphere as small states have small markets) and more limited weight and activity on the international stage. By comparison with big powers, where domestic needs shape the essence of the foreign policy, small states' vulnerability to the surrounding external environment and the international system, and the relations with great powers are their foreign policy's chief decisive factors (Elman, 1995; Steinsson & Thorhallsson, 2017).

Under these conditions, small states usually seek cooperation and want to establish good relations with the dominant powers at the international level while trying to diversify their list of key partners. At the regional level, they seek greater autonomy from the major powers through balancing strategies (as non-union and alliance) (Patnaik, 2014). We can say that a small country's ultimate aim is a 'defensive way of life' aiming to avoid, mitigate, or delay the conflict.

Furthermore, they support international peace and stability, which helps them 'to achieve better outcomes' (Steinsson & Thorhallsson, 2017, p. 20). They are inclined to the utilization of the group power, particularly to the active participation in international organizations and peacekeeping missions, supporting international norms and principles as it reduces the costs of foreign

policy, the importance of the traditional components of force, and allows influencing the international security agenda and making ground for financial and economic benefits (East, 1973; Plischke, 1979; Kassimeris, 2009; Long, 2017).

As is clear from the discussion above for small states' survival and development, the existence of politically stable, secure, and economically open global systems with international organizations capable of mitigating power inequality is vital.

The above-mentioned common factors do play their role if countries function in similar environments. Nonetheless, the picture is different when they operate in diverse regional contexts. We believe that small states' foreign policy behaviour is mainly situational and depends on the nature of their regional environment. Generally, the main reasons determining small states' foreign affairs are divided into external and internal groups. External factors include the small states' geographical location, the type of the International System and Regional context (RSC) in which it functions, the distribution of power among the states that are part of the complex, and the nature of their relations (Rosenau, 1966; Snyder, 2013). Internal factors include small states' capacities, material and non-material resources, the position of the ruling elite (the latter ideas, identities, and preferences), and the nature of decision-making processes (Elman, 1995; Gvalia, G., *et al.*, 2013).

Scholars (Rosenau, 1966; Kassimeris, 2009; Bailes, Thayer & Thorhallsson, 2016) mostly refer to the international system whenever they discuss external elements conditioning small states' foreign policy. However, we assume that the RSC has a closer and direct impact on the state and possesses greater emphasis

on its security and foreign policy. Here we are faced with the question: what are the RSCs? Found by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (2003), the RSC theory characterizes it as a group of states so interconnected with security concerns that to examine or settle them independently is impossible and not expedient. They are seen 'through the lens of security' (Buzan & Wæver, p. 44). RSCs possess certain geographic boundaries that are not supposed to coincide with the geographic regions. They maintain a specific social structure regarding the amity and enmity among members and the distribution of power in a group. Buzan and Wæver also differentiate subcomplexes (with the same characteristic as the RSCs just smaller and entrenched solidly in them, i.e., the Caucasus⁵, Central Asia).

These authors offer a valuable typology of RSCs according to the nature of the relations between the states shaping them. They distinguish three types: conflict formation (like the post-Soviet space defined by open hostility and armed conflicts), security regime (such as Southeast Asia, where conflicts are contained in the RSCs as states adhere to international norms and institutions), and security community (like the European complex, where wars are unimaginable due to states' close interconnections).

According to the proportion and distribution of power, four types of RSCs are indicated (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 62):

- Standard, when polarity is determined by the number of regional powers, appropriately unipolar, bipolar or multipolar complexes are identified (examples are South Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia)

⁵ With its northern (Chechnya, Dagestan, *etc.*) and southern (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) parts, it is seen as an "insulating mini-complex" in a sense. Insulators are the countries or mini-complexes located in a crossing zone of various RSCs and still not belonging to any of them (i.e., Turkey). Mini-complexes possess similar features as the RSCs, though they are smaller in power and territory than nearby RSCs, and non-state actors can be significantly involved in some processes. See Buzan & Wæver (2003, pp. 350, 419, 484-485)

- Centred, with four subtypes
 - Superpower- unipolar, the centre of which is a superpower, like North America
 - Great power- unipolar, the centre of which is a great power, like post-Soviet space
 - Regional power- unipolar, the centre of which is a regional power. This type is a hypothetical one, thus no example in reality.
 - Institutional- Region acts as a united player, like the EU
- Great Power, bipolar or multipolar order, where the centre are the great powers, like East Asia,
- Supercomplexes, which are characterized by consistent security interplay between great powers, like East and South Asia. Authors also display a very loose and weak European supercomplex covering the EU-European and post-Soviet space with interactions between Russia and the EU as great powers.⁶

While talking about states' capabilities on the regional scale, Buzan & Wæver (2003) explain that in contrast to the small states locked in one RSC and continually being influenced by the latter's internal processes, large powers can easily switch from one RSC to another. Furthermore, they affect the internal dynamics of the complex rather than being impacted. One of the influence's tools is the penetration (for example, by creating a military-political or economic-political alliance with small or medium-sized powers of that complex, like Russia's penetration in Armenia's policy both within bilateral and regional frameworks).

⁶ For further information See in Buzan & Wæver (2003, pp. 343-344, 350).

Furthermore, another scholar, a former student of Buzan, Oskanian (2010, p. 86) in his adapted version of the RSC theory, states that in the centred unipolar RSC, the penetration of the great power has the 'automatic' nature. He further argues that in the South Caucasus, the patterns of the great powers' penetration are 'competitive-multipolar' (*ibid*, p. 4), since with Russia multiple great powers, like the USA, the EU, Iran, Turkey and nowadays even China, compete for the region.

The other significant theoretical framework to be discussed here is the RSO, initially created by Patrick Morgan and later upgraded by Robert Stewart-Ingersoll and Derrick Frazier. Scholars (Stewart-Ingersoll & Frazier, 2010) corroborate the structure and nature of the RSCs, and the security orders dynamics are heavily influenced by the regional powers' foreign policy orientations, their undertaken role, and reaction towards the security threats within the RSCs. To ensure their influence and control over security issues, they create collective rules, principles, and mechanisms in the given RSC. Accordingly, scholars classify five types of RSOs: *hegemonic, collective security, power-restraining power, concert, and unstructured*. Hegemonic security order means a unipolar system with the dominance of the power establishing specific frameworks of rules and principles serving its interests and imposing them on every other state of the region. Collective security applies to the bipolar or multipolar region, where the most powerful actors try to counteract the common threats with joint efforts and responsibility. Both in a unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar system, there is a possibility of power-restraining power security order when states strive for a "stable distribution of powers" (Morgan, 1997, p. 33, as cited in Stewart-Ingersoll & Frazier, 2010, p. 68).

In a unipolar region, however, this type of security order means that even possessing essential capacities to dominate in the region, the regional power still faces some restrictions and obstacles in doing so.

Regions with concert security order demonstrate a steady and continuous interconnection between actors regarding the security issues. The name of the authors' last categorization- unstructured, is already revealing its characteristics, such as the lack of central power and particular rules and institutions.

Regional powers set distinct security orders which, in turn, conditions and modifies the policy of small states vulnerable and sensitive towards external dynamics. To have a room for manoeuvring in foreign policy and an opportunity to ensure a country's development, more favourable for small states are the RSCs like the EU-European RSC- security community with the centred institutional structure based on the concert security order. We have outstanding examples of small states, like Switzerland and Austria, without even having access to the sea, but being part of the favourable RSC, are ranked correspondingly as the second and twentieth among the most developed countries by HDI (UNDP, 2019).

Relatively suitable can be the security regime with the standard-multipolar structure based on the collective security order, like South-eastern Asia. The most disadvantageous are the conflict formations with power-generating power and hegemony security orders, like the post-Soviet RSC.

It is noteworthy to refer here Knudsen's (1996) six key variables of small states foreign policy:

1. *The strategic importance of a small state's geographical location for the great power*, related to the capability of the great power, taking control over the small one because of its interest.
2. *The degree of tensions (the possibility of armed conflicts) between great powers*, as to rule out the possibility of a small power falling under the influence of another great power, strict restrictions and methods is more likely in times of the high tensions.
3. *A phase of the power cycle of the nearest great power*, as whenever it is in the power reduction phase, the aspiration to restore its power will become a stronger threat to a small state's security than ever before.
4. *The history of the relations between the small state and the nearest great power*, as the collective memory creates certain prejudices and can build or destroy trust among nations.
5. *Other opposing great power(s) policy towards the small state*, as the latter, are the primary targets for rival great powers, whenever the tensions are high, and there is a need for deterrence.
6. *The existence of multilateral frameworks of security cooperation*, such as intergovernmental institutions or regional organisations, can stabilize power disparity and ensure the small states' security.

As we can see later in our work, these variables are fully applicable in the case of Armenia-Russia relations.

Besides the RSC, a significant role for a small state foreign policy has its geographic location, specifically the access to the open waters.

For centuries, many bloody wars have been waged to secure territorial access to the sea. Why is this so crucial for a state? Authors (Kishor, 1994; Lahiri & Masjidi, 2012; Samiullah, 2016) point up various challenges faced by the landlocked countries, including difficulties to participate in international trade, remoteness from the global markets and high transportation costs, strong dependence on the neighbouring transit states, a dual vulnerability to both of their inner landlock status and the transit state's development level, and military limitations. Besides, whenever a small landlocked country is placed in an unstable region full of conflicts and disputes, like in the case of Armenia, the challenges it faces are doubled (Samiullah, 2016).

There are 49 landlocked countries in the world now.⁷ It should be stressed among the states with the lowest Human Development Indices (HDI) 7 are landlocked countries (UNDP, 2019).

We want to recall as internal and external factors possess significance to some extent and are strongly interconnected, none of them should take the stage. However, the external determinants have a primary role as can obstruct or, conversely, promote the development of a small state. On the other hand, we accept that their weight becomes heavier if a country undergoes internal problems.

1.3. The Foreign Policy Strategies of Small States

After uncovering small states' foreign policy characteristics, and the role of RSCs, time is ripe to discuss some of the strategies that small states usually apply within the context of rival great powers in a given RSC. They can be

⁷ This number includes five *de facto* states, which are unrecognized or partially recognized. In general, 44 United Nations members are landlocked countries, 16 located in Africa, 14 in Europe, 12 in Asia, and 2 in South America (Geoffrey, 2019).

utilized in the relations towards the nearest dominant power/superpower and towards the countries that pose a threat to the state's security and have a relatively equal share of the same weight. Implemented strategies predominantly mitigate small states' vulnerabilities, and are dependent not on their wishes, but their capabilities.

One of the strategies usually described as beneficial for small states is neutrality. It refers to the small state's neutral position when it refuses to choose one of the global power competition's sides to maintain its territorial integrity and sovereignty. In this case, the small state hopes that big powers will ignore him or accept his neutrality. This strategy firmly depends on the location of the small states enabling them to adopt this strategy.

Moreover, to guarantee a small state's neutrality, its declared position must be approved by the nearby large states. Striking examples are Austria and Finland, which could remain neutral during the Cold War due to the Soviet Union's acceptance (Simpson, 2018).

The other way of small states' strategy is alignment as an external form of balancing. To ensure their protection and counteract the threat of a large force or coalition, small states often ally with another great power or a block of states. It can give them the necessary help and resources for survival, although defining some responsibilities and restraining independence.

This balancing usually refers to the balance of threat where the threat level is strongly related to the aggregate power, geographic proximity, and offensive

intentions of the nearby states (Walt, 1987).⁸ This strategy is acceptable as long as the benefits from the membership exceed the deprivation.

There are two forms of external balancing: hard and soft both in the form of the alliances (which we have discussed above) and individual one.

Hard balancing aims at eliminating the possibility of rapid conquest by the enemy (not necessarily a great power) which threatens its security and preventing the letter's attack (Chong, 2003). In contrast to the hard balancing, soft balancing is based on non-military means using diplomatic and economic mechanisms, and international organizations and norms (Bock & Henneberg, 2013).

Furthermore, Bailes, Thayer, & Thorhallsson (2016) speak about alliance shelter theory arguing that traditional alignment was initially formed to explain the foreign policy behaviour of great powers. They take into consideration not only security shelters but also political, economic, and societal ones, considering them as important as the traditional shelter since it reveals the impact of domestic factors in making the alignment choice. According to this approach, small states tend to restrain their sovereignty and join various regional and international organizations as they have a strong need in 'diplomatic, military, and administrative assistance.' The latter predetermine the opportunities of the small states' development and well-being (Steinsson, & Thorhallsson, 2017, p. 10).

⁸ The original idea of balancing is the balance against a power, which assumes that to prevent the domination of one of the states, other players should join and act together. However, Stephen Walt (2013, p. 17), in his book 'The Origins of the Alliances' states that in the case of balance of threat, the main force behind the allying is the expected danger to the state's security rather than the rising power.

Another commonly used strategy is bandwagoning, which small states frequently adopt towards the dominant great power. When confronting is more expensive and costly than the benefits expected from bandwagoning, small states prefer to combine their efforts with more powerful ones, realizing that they will share together-gained benefits disproportionately (Waltz, 1975; Walt, 1987). The 'client' state has to build its policy in line with the requirements of the 'patron' country. Kassimeris (2009) asserts that this can be mutually beneficial when describing the patron-client relationship between great and small powers. Nevertheless, it can sharply restrict a small state's sovereignty, especially during peaceful times. Already being under the shelter of the great power, a small state will have to countenance the large representation of a patron country in its territory, for example, in the presence of a military base.

There are also other types of foreign policy strategies, like strategic hedging, balking, blackmailing, *etc.* Considering their non-applicability in the case of Armenia and the limited space of our thesis, we do not want to burden our readers with further theoretical and empirical explanations.

CHAPTER 2. COMPLEMENTARITY: ARMENIA'S RELATIONS WITH MAIN REGIONAL ACTORS

'Rather than portraying each other as accessories of the South or the North, as allies of the East or the West, or as each other's adversaries and competitors, let us instead define ourselves and mold our policies in the spirit of multidimensional partnerships, in the direction of complementarity. Armenia continues to abide by this policy, conducting even-handed relations with all countries which have political or economic interests in the Caucasus'.

-Vartan Oskanian, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

2.1. Why Complementarity?

Many scholars, like Steinsson and Thorhallsson (2017), assume that small states usually choose multilateralism as the most convenient strategy to communicate with the world, since it gives an opportunity, to some extent, to deter the big states' aspirations. Indubitably, all actors are aware of this path's necessity to keep their sovereignty and role in the world. The pending question is whether all small states, possess equal feasibility to move in this direction, and what are the limits, and obstacles it faces in doing so.

Based on the conceptual approaches discussed in the previous chapter, we have shown that Armenia is indeed a small state. It is in a very challenging geopolitical area-South Caucasus, which has always been an apple of discord. As Markarov, Galstyan, and Grigoryan (2016) describe, on this 'geopolitical chessboard,' their strong interests have both regional powers like Russia, Iran, and Turkey and extra-regional actors like the USA and European countries.

Moreover, China, with its increasing economic presence in the region and 'One belt, one road' programme⁹ has also started to play a more active role.

This relatively small region has always been in the crossroads of East and West's geopolitical interests due to its strategic significance. It serves as a connecting link with Central Asia and the Middle East, creating opportunities for influence and peace-keeping in the latter. Additionally, the concentration of many natural resources, including vast reserves of oil and gas, makes it more tempted for various actors.

In the beginning, the conflict was conditioned on the one hand by Russia's desire to enter the Southern seas, and on the other hand, West's desire, particularly England, to oppose it in any way possible. Tsarist, and later Soviet Russia, realizing the importance of the region, in general, was able to solve geopolitical issues in its favour during this period. Even after the collapse of the USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), this conflict did not disappear.

The South Caucasus, also known as Trans-Caucasia¹⁰, itself is not a homogeneous region. Compounding countries -Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia differ in cultural, religious, and ethnic terms. Besides three internationally recognized main actors, there are three *de facto* existing though internationally not recognized states- Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Tensions are both between the sovereign states of the region (Armenia-Azerbaijan in the case of Artsakh) and great regional power

⁹ Often referred to as the 21st Century Silk Road. This is a Chinese investment programme adopted in 2013 and intended to develop connectivity both with land (both roads and rails) and sea routes covering more than 70 countries.

¹⁰ The question of the location's name is very debatable as it is originally the Armenian Highlands, a unique, independent, and much bigger geographical area than the Caucasus. It is located to the south of the Caucasus region. Moreover, as the territory is under Russia /to the south, beyond the Caucasus mountains/, the rendering of Russian term Zakavkazyie/Trans Caucasus was artificially introduced.

and a member of a regional security subcomplex (Russia-Georgia in the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia).

Along with the highly complex, conflicting, and militarized region, other aggravating circumstances for Armenia are the lack of sea access, the closed borders with two (out of four) immediate neighbouring states, Turkey to the West and Azerbaijan to the East, the conflicting relations with the latter ones, and country's economic and political blockade by them. Considering the weakly developed trade and economic relations with Iran (Southern neighbour), above named circumstances create a heavy dependence on the transit route through Georgia (Northern neighbour) and complete reliance on the strategically Russia in military, energy, railway, communications, labour migration, investment and remittances spheres.

After gaining independence from the USSR on September 21, 1991, one of Armenia's priorities was the development and implementation of a foreign policy reflecting its needs and the best ways of surviving in already described circumstances.

The selection of priorities in foreign policy has not always been smooth, as in many cases, as the foreign policy directly attached to security and survival. The focus was on building a self-defence system without foreign aid and maintaining a balance in relations with neighbouring and influential though not directly neighbouring countries.

Officially, Armenia adopted a multi-vector foreign policy yet in 2007 with the NSS. In academic literature, multi-vectorism is perceived as cooperation with all

great powers¹¹ in furtherance of balancing their representation in essential strategic areas, and avoiding overdependence on any of them to ensure the states' sovereignty (Gnedina, 2015; Glastyan, 2019).

Nevertheless, scholars do not have a universal opinion of the true nature of this approach. Some scholars (Hanks, 2009; Kurç, 2018) consider it as the result of purely pragmatic needs of the state. Others, like Gnedina (2015, p. 1008), do not discern it as beneficial since it prevents a state from deepening the cooperation with one of the encountering powers and is 'ideologically vacuous.'

In NSS, the principles of *complementarity* and *engagement* are outlined as cornerstones of Armenian multi-vector foreign policy.

Complementarity claims that Armenia seeks to develop its relations with all regional and extra-regional powers, somehow pursuing any interest in the region for keeping the region's balance.

Engagement assumes the participation in 'the regional and international integrations' in compliance with Armenia's interests (NSS, 2007, p. 10)

As a reaffirmation of the complementary policy conduction's potential, NSS provides examples like 'Armenia's strategic partnership with Russia, its adoption of a European model of development, mutually beneficial cooperation with Iran and the United States, membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and its intensification of the cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance' (*ibid*).

¹¹ Scholars mostly refer to this policy as a result of the competition between Russia and the EU (see, for example in Gnedina, 2015, p. 1008, and Kurç, 2018, p. 317).

At the declarative level, of course, everything seems to be smooth. However, is the policy pursued by Armenia in reality multi-vector? While expecting to sign the Association Agreement with the EU, Armenia's U-shift towards the Russian made Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) put Armenia's multi-vector policy under question. We argue that Armenian foreign policy, in general, is single-vector bandwagoning rather than multi-vector balancing due to the strong dominance of Russia- the only declared strategic partner.

In 2018, after the Velvet Revolution, many had expected considerable transformations in the country's foreign policy based on the previous statements of the present Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. One of the latter's example was his speech about the resolution proposed by his faction Way Out (in Armenian Yelq) to leave the EAEU (Eurasianet, 2019).

Nonetheless, when Pashinyan came to power, he reaffirmed his predecessors' foreign policy, noting that the revolution was exclusively the result of internal problems and did not presume any changes in the foreign affairs' trajectory (Arminfo, 2018) and that Armenia does not have any intention 'to sit at the two chairs at once' (The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, 2019).

2.2. Alliance Between Islamic Republic of Iran and Christian Armenia

In the conditions of the double economic and political blockade and isolation posed by Turkey and Azerbaijan, the only ways connecting Armenia to the external world remain Iran and Georgia. However, the relations with these states are different.

The Armenian-Iranian relationship dates back to time immemorial, as two ancient nations have always been in constant interactions. Although these relations were not very glossy and were full of conflicts and seizures in the past, since the creation of the current Armenian Republic and establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, these countries have not faced any significant problems in their political, economic, and cultural cooperation. Moreover, both sides have always highlighted the mutual strategic importance of the partnership. For example, during his visit to Yerevan to attend the summit of the EAEU, Iranian president Hassan Rouhani separately met Armenian prime minister Pashinyan, reiterating Iran's will and desire to boost the collaboration among two nations. In his turn, Pashinyan reconfirmed that 'we need to cooperate for many more centuries and millennia' (Azatutyun, 2019).

At first glance, the friendly relations between Armenia, the first country that adopted Christianity as an official religion, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, often described as an Islamic theocracy (Alexandros, 2005), can be perceived as an enigma. Withal, there are firm geopolitical and economic motives beyond the curtain.

First of all, there is a large Armenian community in Iran settled there since the time of Shah Abbas' relocations.¹² To some estimates, there are up to 60000¹³ Iranian-Armenians nowadays in the country mainly concentrated in Tehran (Armenakyan, 2017). Despite religious differences, Armenians enjoy quite a lot of freedom to protect and preserve their cultural, linguistic and

¹² During the long period of its existence, Armenia has always been a bone of contention, first being divided between Byzantine and Sasanian Empires (387-1555), and then between the Ottoman (Western Armenia) and Safavid Empires (Eastern Armenia).

Eastern Armenia was located in the territory of the Iranian Empire until 1828 when the Russian Empire took control of the territory with the Turkmenchay Treaty.

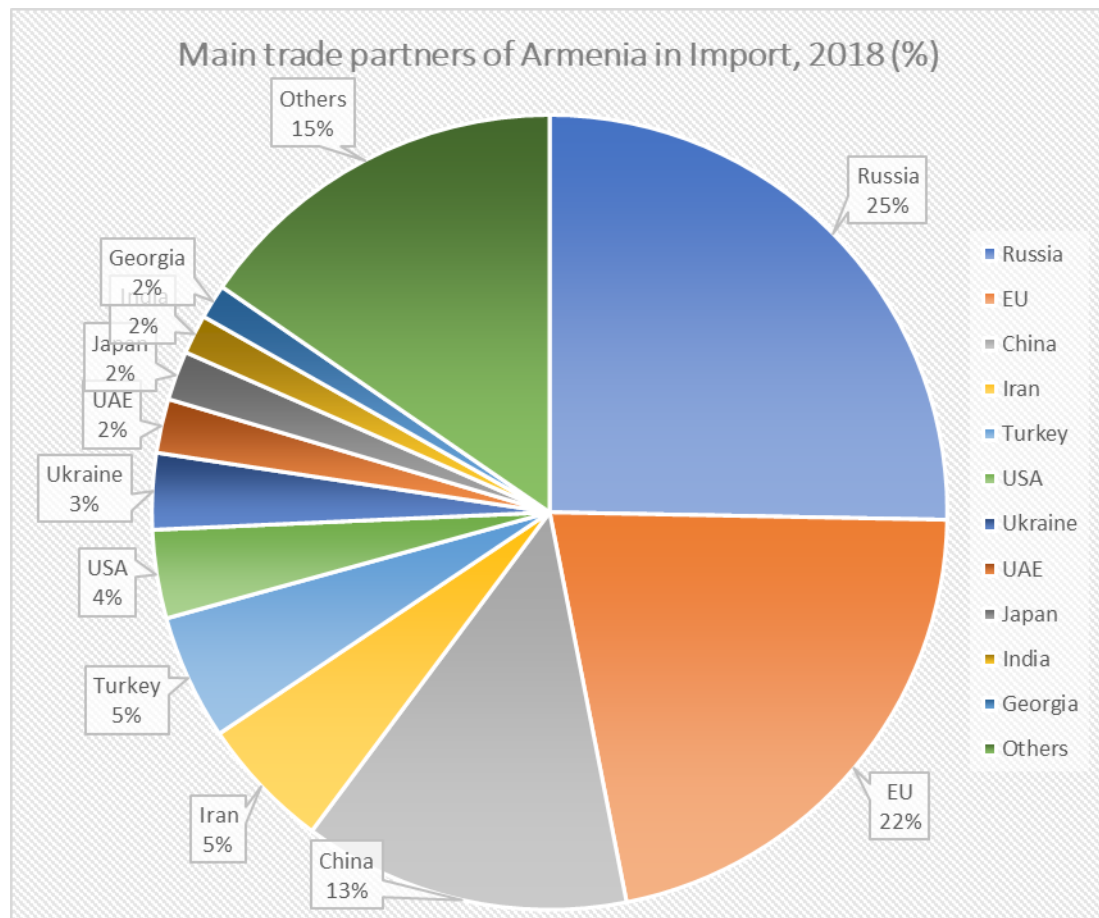
¹³ The number can be even higher since there are no official statistics nowadays, and previous data shows that before the Iranian Revolution, there were 200000 Armenians in Iran.

religious identity, and historical monuments. There are about 200 Armenian Apostolic Churches in the country, daily and weekly newspapers in Armenian language, like Alik and Arax, and many Armenian schools (Iskandaryan, 2019).

Secondly, economic relations with Iran can contribute to Armenia's capabilities to mitigate the Russian overdependence trap. **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** show Iran is among the top 10 trade partners of Armenia both in exports and imports purchasing correspondingly 3.9% and 5% of the total share.

Figure 1

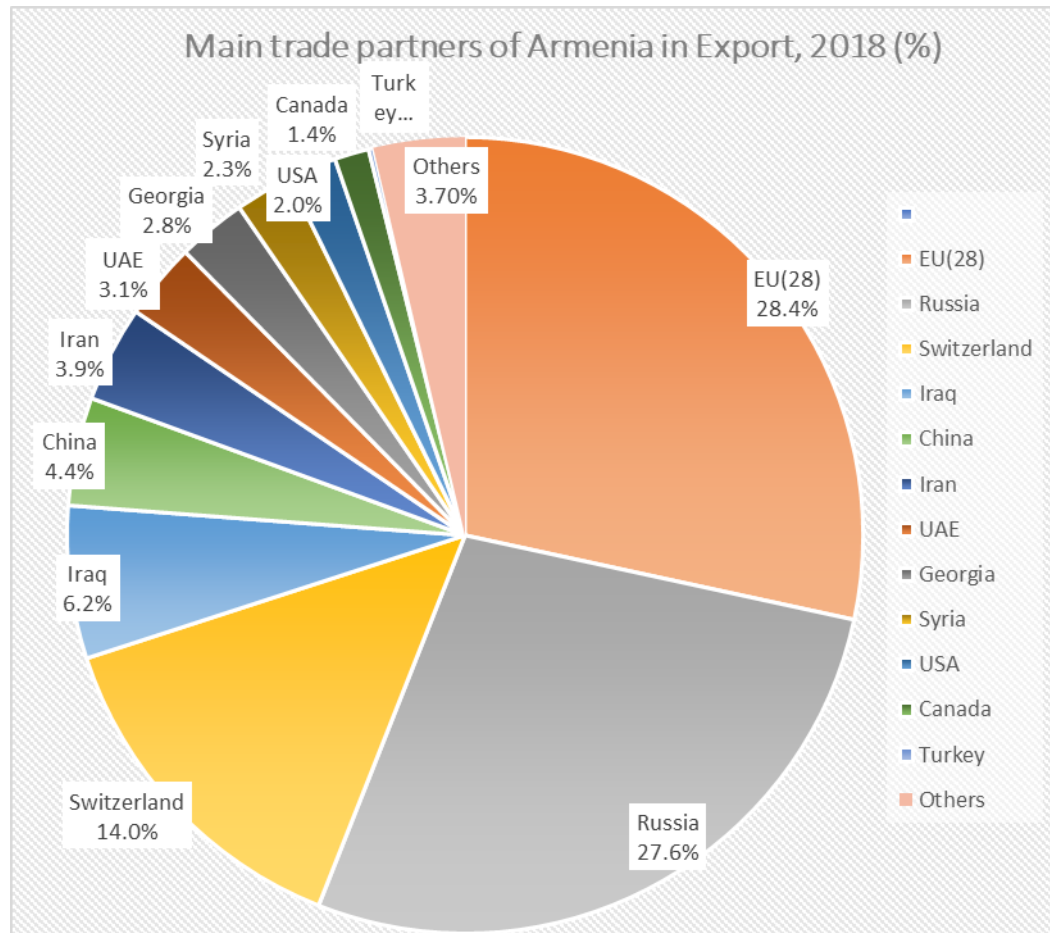
Main trade partners of Armenia in Import, 2018



Note. Data is taken from Armstat (2019b).

Figure 2

Main trade partners of Armenia in Export, 2018.



Note. Data is taken from Armstat (2019b).

This economic cooperation is mutually beneficial as it is a way for Armenia to diversify its economic, foreign, and security policy. The Georgian-Russian war in 2008 showed the vulnerability of Georgian getaway and the necessity to utilize the Iranian route more intensively. On the other hand, for Iran, Armenia can serve as a hub connecting countries to both European and EAEU broader markets (Giragosian, 2015; Markarov, Galstyan, & Grigoryan, 2016).

In this context, the creation of the 'Meghri' multisectoral free trade zone in the area adjacent Armenian-Iranian border in 2017 is eminently important.

Moreover, with the implementation of joint programmes, like the establishment of Armenia-Iran railway, oil pipelines, enhancement of hydroelectricity cooperation, and increase in provided gas volume, Armenia can diversify its sources of energy supplies and routes of receiving them. Nowadays, only 20% of Armenian gas is coming from Iran due to Russia's immense pressure, not letting Armenia fully utilize the alternative gas-route, since it can make relief for Armenia to alleviate Russian leverages. Untapped potential to become a transit country for exporting Iranian gas to Georgia and further to Europe remains.

Furthermore, programmes like the creation of railway and oil pipelines require substantial financial investments which the country cannot afford.

Additional difficulties for deeper economic cooperation have created sanctions imposed on Iran from the Western world. The US announced new sanctions in January 2020, when tensions between the two countries escalated in the wake of the US-led strike in Baghdad following the death of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. Nevertheless, as Armenian MP Melkumyan stated, these sanctions will not affect the joint energy project as it is a barter (providing electricity instead of the received gas,) and sanctions are related to the payment system, thus creating various difficulties, especially for the banking system (Sputnik, 2020) .

Besides economic pragmatism, states have strong political interests in their relations. For both parts, the other country perceived as the most stable and reliable partner.

Scholars (Priego, 2007; Markarov, Galstyan, & Grigoryan, 2016; Mirzoyan, 2019) often refer to this alliance as a 'strategic' or 'natural' one, because their

compatible interests are the reason for this seemingly unusual friendly relationship. Specifically, two of Armenia's primary opponents have problems with Iran. On the one hand, Turkey is one of the mighty regional powers. On the other hand, despite being a Shia Muslim country, Azerbaijan is the principal partner of Israel, one of the arch-enemies of Iran. Azerbaijan mostly buys Israeli weapons (almost 60% of Azerbaijan armament is from Israel [SIPRI, 2020b]). Moreover, tensions between Azerbaijan and Iran are related to the latter's claim on some of the Iranian territories.

Another highly significant factor for Armenia is Tehran's balanced approach towards the vital security issue Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Tehran is one of the few countries in the Muslim world that does not pay tribute to Azerbaijan's efforts to present the Artsakh conflict under a religious veil but maintains a constructive neutral stance. Regional peace is crucial for Iran as a country exporting natural resources. Likewise, the need to prevent pan-Turkism aspirations has driven Iran to curb the Turkey-Azerbaijan tandem.¹⁴

2.3 Georgia As a Vital Neighbour: Friends or Rivalries?

Armenia's other lifeline is its northern neighbour Georgia. It seems that the relations between these countries, closer in terms of religion and culture, and both possessing soviet heritage in one way or another, should have been more stable. Nevertheless, relations with Tbilisi are not so fluid and unambiguous, unlike Tehran.

¹⁴ In contrast to pan-Turkism, believed as a threat to the Iranians' territorial integrity and identity, pan-Iranism idea emerged at the beginning of the 20th century.

Several circumstances condition the difficulties of Armenian-Georgian relations. First of all, various authors (Minasyan, 2015; Babajanyan, 2019) point out the opposing positions and attitudes of these two neighbours towards the powerful regional actors. On the one hand, Armenia is closely cooperating with Russia in bilateral (individual agreement on strategic alliance) and multilateral (CSTO) formats. The only land connection for Armenia to this strategic military-political ally passes through Georgia.

On the other hand, Georgia has strained relations with Russia over the latter's position on South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which in 2008 led to a Russo-Georgian war with negative consequences for Armenia. In particular, during that time, the Georgian-Russian checkpoint Stepantsminda-Upper Lars was closed, putting Armenia in a difficult situation, with more than 70% of cargo transportation taking place through this section (Gasparyan, 2018).

Agreeing with other experts (Mikhelidze, 2009; Minasyan; 2015), it should be recalled that despite substantial economic losses (estimated about \$ 670 million [Mikhelidze, 2009, p.34]), Armenia was able to maintain its neutral position on this issue.

The consequences of the previous crisis and the possibility of new Georgian-Russian tensions frighten Armenia, as it will again jeopardize Armenian transit, including the operation of the gas pipeline from Russia. In the conditions of the closed Abkhazian railways, the only way for Armenia to connect with the outside world from Georgia is this checkpoint. That is why Armenia periodically looks for alternative routes, negotiating over the Abkhazian path's opening without any success so far (Davtyan, 2017).

Additionally, since the Rose Revolution of 2003, Georgia has made a definite change in its foreign policy, directing its vector to the West. Both Georgian authorities and the public have repeatedly reaffirmed their desire to join Euro-Atlantic military and political formations, such as NATO and the EU. Recently a poll by the National Democratic Institution and CRRG-Georgia showed that 77% and 74% of respondents were in favour of joining the EU and NATO, respectively (NDI, 2019).

A remark should be made that Armenia's pro-Russian orientation is conditioned more by its security and survival imperatives than by its ideological and value system leaning. Although geopolitical forces seem to be pushing countries to opposite lines, in reality, the two societies are directed towards European cultural and democratic traditions.

Another problem is the different approaches of the parties to the regional conflicts, and preferences of the underlying principles of their solutions. Georgia guides by the territorial integrity principle, claiming that Abkhazia and South Ossetia are part of Georgia. Whereas, for Armenia, in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict's case, the landmark principle is the right of self-determination (Minasyan, 2015; Babajanyan, 2019, Le Grix, 2019).

Another obstacle on the way to Armenian-Georgian relations is Georgia's close cooperation with two Armenia enemies, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Of course, It is in Georgia's pragmatic interests, but the danger posed to Armenia is those countries' continued attempts to deepen Armenia's economic and political isolation through the implementation of joint programs with Georgia.

Mainly, projects like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, and the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway 'intentionally bypass Armenia's territory' (Markarov, Galstyan, & Grigoryan; 2016, p. 121).

The danger of Georgia-Turkey-Azerbaijan's three-dimensional expanding cooperation is not only limited to economic components. It bears political content as well, casting doubt on Georgia's dilapidated neutrality in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and putting Armenia's security at risk.

One more subject of controversy in the Armenian-Georgian relations is the latter's position towards Armenians, the second largest ethnic minority in Georgia after the Azerbaijanis (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2016), as well as the disputes over the possession of some historical, cultural and spiritual monuments.

In Georgia, Armenians have mainly concentrated in the Samtskhe-Javakheti (known as Javakhk) area, but there are also a large number of Armenians in Tbilisi, Adjara, and Abkhazia.

Though Georgia is a multi-ethnic country, it intentionally conducts the "Georganisation" policy, attempting to assimilate and suppress minorities (Babajanyan, 2019). Many authors (Sebanadze, 2001, p.1, Metreveli, 2016, p. 1) have described the Javakheti region as a possible and expected conflict zone due to its tight connection to Armenia and minority rights' violations which can generate riots. Nevertheless, this has not happened so far, and the main problems of the Armenian minority are more basic related to the protection of

their identity, including limited access to education in their native language, elimination of the Armenian history programme from schools, *etc.*

In addition to these problems, the low socio-economic conditions increase Armenians' eviction risks, which can be a real threat against the background of the rising number and, thus, the influence of the Azeri minority.

Problems appear on the cultural ground as well, including the abolition of cultural heritage and the disputes of Armenian Apostolic and Georgian Orthodox Churches over several monuments.

However, the cooperation with Georgia, overall, is vital for landlocked Armenia, as it receives the closest exit to the sea through Georgian ports. That is why the latter offers to deepen bilateral relations without any third party's intervention (Shirinyan, 2019).

We should also not forget that both Armenia and Georgia have high chances to become a transit country in the presence of the North-South transport corridor and its energy component, increasing their role in the region. As a result, they will obtain both political and economic benefits. In particular, Georgia will have the opportunity to connect its ports to Iran, and Armenia to ease the Turkish-Azerbaijani blockade (Davtyan, 2017).

Furthermore, the choice of the different security dimensions, which is the cause of controversy and mistrust, actually can be the basis of new opportunities for both countries. Mainly, being a member of the EAEU, Armenia provides an opportunity for Georgia to enter that market. Besides, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the Meghri free trade zone, Georgia can deepen economic ties with Iran. For its part, Georgia has signed the Deep and

Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU, which could open more prospects for Armenia.

2.4. Armenia-Russia Relations: Overdependence on Russia.

Russia, as a great hegemonic power of the post-Soviet RSC, historically has been involved in the subcomplex South Caucasus's regional developments, and security processes. It has participated in transportation and delivery of energy, the creation of transport routes, and the resolution of existing conflicts. Russia's involvement in the regional developments should be reviewed in two dimensions.

On the one hand, as an immediate neighbour of the South Caucasus, together with Iran and Turkey, it is a direct participant in regional processes and defends its traditional interests. On the other hand, like the US and many European countries, Russia views the South Caucasus in a broader geopolitical context and has an interest in the development prospects (Nation, 2015; Kardaś, 2016).

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian-Armenian relations have been of closed allied nature. This 'strategic partnership' has been conducted in bilateral and multilateral frameworks, as we mentioned previously. Armenia is the only country in the South Caucasus which participates in the Russian-led security and economic schemes- the CIS (since 1992), the CSTO (member since 2002), the EAEU (since 2015).

In the early years of Armenia's existence, participation in such schemes was seen as a prerequisite for having good relations with Russia, as well as for receiving assistance from it during the Artsakh war. That is to say; it was exclusively conditioned by Armenia's security (Grigoryan, 2014). Considering the

geopolitical and geographical situation, it is not difficult to understand why security plays so much role in Armenia's foreign policy agenda. As Iskandaryan (2013, p.14) states, '... whenever Armenia has to choose between security and anything at all, it has to choose security'.

In the following years, Russia's gradually increasing influence has created security, political and economic overdependence of a small, landlocked Armenia.

Armenia and Russia have conducted more than 250 various agreements (MFA, 2019a). The cornerstone of the partnership is the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance of August 29, 1997. Afterwards, adopted on September 26, 2006, the Declaration on the Allied partnership between the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation oriented towards the 21st Century confirmed the determination to multiply the friendship and cooperation between two nations ensuring guaranteed security both regionally and globally (*Ibid*).

Furthermore, since 1995 Armenia has hosted the 102nd Russian military base with its 'Erebuni' military airport and Russian border guards controlling Armenia's borders with Turkey and Iran. We should accentuate that after the failure of Armenia-Turkey negotiations in 2010, the agreement initially conducted for 25 years was prolonged until 2044, and enhanced the geographical and strategic area of responsibility, including the whole territory of Armenia (President of Russia, 2010).

In this regard, the creation of the Russian-Armenian joint air defence system in 2016 for five years is equally important.

Additionally, Russia is Armenia's primary arms supplier. The latter, due to being a member of the organizations as mentioned earlier, buys weapons at the same price as in the Russian domestic market. While selling weapons to its strategic partner, Russia also provides military equipment to the latter's opponent, Azerbaijan, in the framework of 'just business' (Navikova, 2019). Indeed, this does not correspond to the spirit of a 'friendly' ally, but we must not forget that Armenia still has no realistic alternative.

Armenian overreliance on Russia is entrenched with other strategically essential aspects, like energy security and telecommunications. The volume of gas distributed by Russian company Gazprom Armenia is about 80% of the country's total gas (Energy Charter, 2017, p. 11). Electric Power Grids of Armenia until 2015 was controlled by Russian INTER RAO company. Later, it has been owned by the Tashir group representing Russian capital.

Russia also possesses railway (South Caucasus Railways)¹⁵ and telecommunication (VivaCell MTS, etc.) infrastructures, which further strengthens its economic presence in the country. The Russian capital is involved in other areas too, such as mining and metallurgy ("GeoProMining", "GeoProMining Gold", "Na-Rus", etc.), banking ("VTB Armenia", "Ameriabank"), and so on.

In 2013, under the great pressure from Moscow, the expected Association Agreement (AA) and DCFTA were not signed, and Yerevan joined first the Customs Union then the EAEU. This turnaround was firmly conditioned with Armenia's energy insecurity, and as Sargsyan declared, 'We cannot sign the Free

¹⁵ In 2008, the Armenian government transferred 100% of Armenian Railways to Russian Railways for 30 years with a possible ten-year extension.

trade agreement [DCFTA] and increase the gas price and electricity fee three times' (Quoted from Terzyan, 2018, p. 238).

Having the biggest share of Armenia's imports (see **Figure 1**) and remaining the leading trade partner in total since 2015 (Armstat, 2020), Russia possesses another game-card against Armenia's any manifestation of 'deviant' behaviour. With the common trade area created by the EAEU, Armenia has some advantages, like cheap armaments and some construction investments. However, they are again mostly connected to Russia rather than the EAEU itself since trade with other members like Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan remains at a deficient level (Giragosian, 2019). Armenia's membership in the EAEU has not yet caused positive changes in Armenia due to Russia's economic crisis and the institutional weakness of the organization. Giragosian (2019) affirms that sooner it can create even more difficulties rather than bringing benefits due to the increase in specific customs duties.

Another influential factor that restrains Armenia's manoeuvre space in the foreign policy and keeps Armenia in the orbit of Russian influence is the presence of the largest Armenian diaspora in Russia up to 2.5mln people. This often-underestimated factor has a tremendous impact, especially in the conditions of the learnt lessons from Georgia, related to the treatment of Georgians in Russia after the country's shift to the West, and Russians' growing xenophobia and racism towards foreigners (Terzyan, 2019).

Moreover, Russia is home not only to Armenians who have settled permanently but also to large numbers of temporary labour migrants. Armenia's economy is dependent on the latter's remittances. According to the World Bank (2020)

remittances, 80% of which are coming from Russia (Hovhannisyan, 2019) accounted for more than 12% of GDP in 2018.

In essence, despite all benefits Armenia receives within its strong partnership with Russia, it is very much asymmetrical and exceedingly circumscribes Armenia's alternatives in foreign policy. It leaves the 'client' Armenia in the condition of heavy dependence on its 'patron' Russia. We can say that Armenian foreign policy fits the framework of bandwagoning more than the logic of balancing on which should the claimed complementarity be based.

2.5. Relations with Turkey: Difficulties of Facing the Truth

Armenian-Turkish relations have been an influential component of both national and regional issues since the independence of Armenia. Though Turkey recognized the independence of Armenia yet on December 6, 1991, diplomatic relations have not been conducted. The first Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan, during the meeting with Turkish Ambassador to the USSR Volkan Vural in April 1991, stressed the readiness to make friends and that Armenia did not have any territorial claim (European Stability Initiative, 2009). Nevertheless, Turkey's non-establishment of diplomatic relations is linked to the official refusal of the previously Western Armenia (now the eastern part of Turkey) as in the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Armenia of 1990 there is a mention about it. Specifically, Ankara requires the recognition of the current border agreed with the Kars Treaty, 1921 (Markarov, Galstyan, & Grigoryan, 2016).

In 1993, in the wake of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Turkey, supporting its 'kinship brotherhood'¹⁶, closed both land and air borders. It should be mentioned here that, concerned about the success of the Armenian forces, Turkey in early September 1993 deployed more than 50,000 troops along the Armenian-Turkish border. In an interview of those days, Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller threatened to 'go to the Turkish parliament and declare war on Armenia if Armenians touch Nakhichevan.' (Bishku, 2001, p. 17). The dual blockade and hard security threats¹⁷ from both borders again led Armenia to rely on Russia, accepting the Russian military base on its territory (Shirinyan, 2019). However, in 1995 Turkey opened the air corridor due to international strains (MFA, 2019b).

Turkey's policy is also conditioned by the denial of the greatest crimes against humanity, the Armenian Genocide. In 1915 more than 1.5 mln Armenians fell victim to the Young Turks' Pan-Turkic policy. According to a much earlier plan, under the guise of World War I, Turks were able to carry out this atrocity (Aleksanyan, 2016; Cheterian, 2017). The international community's silence and 'their eyes' closure' hereat, lead to another genocide -Holocaust during World War II.¹⁸

The first time Armenians broke this silence was in 1965 when commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Genocide (Aybak, 2016). Since then, Turkey has pursued a policy of denial and open hostility with its adverse consequences for the country itself, especially for becoming the EU member (Şenyuva, & Üstün, 2009).

¹⁶ Both the populations and political elites in those countries mainly perceive the other as a kinship brother due to linguistic, historical, and cultural connections. See more in Julia Aybeniz Ensrud (2019).

¹⁷ Hard security relates to the traditional perception of the external military threats, while soft security is conditioned to the internal non-military threats. See more in Fatić, (2002).

¹⁸ While addressing concerns about the international community's response to the Holocaust, Hitler once said: 'Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?' See in Lochner (1943), p.2.

It should be pointed out that other powers usually wield this ace in the hole against Turkey whenever they wish to constrain and blackmail the latter. The latest striking example is the resolution recognising Armenian Genocide adopted by the US Senate since these two partners of NATO had some contradictions regarding the Syrian case.

In 1998, with the election of the new President Kocharyan, the international community's recognition of the Armenian Genocide was set as one of Armenia's foreign policy agenda priorities. Later on, it was incorporated in the NSS too. The adjustment of the 'modus' for the implementation of the Armenian Genocide's denial policy in the Turkish public and political discourses and the search for new methods and tricks have followed these events.

The main obstacle on the normalization path of Armenia-Turkey relations are the preconditions set by Turkey, including the renunciation of the Genocide's international recognition and its alleged compensations, and the withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the so-called 'occupied' territories transferring the control to Azerbaijan.

Whereas there have been many endeavours for normalizing the relations since the 1990s, a bigger sound got the latest attempt, known as 'football diplomacy'. At the invitation of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, in 2008, Turkish President Abdullah Gul came to Yerevan to participate in the soccer match between the two countries' teams. The next year was a period of intense discussions and negotiations behind closed doors.

Such progress in the normalization of relations was conditioned by regional and domestic political situations. On the one hand, the Russian-Georgian war

enhanced the opportunity for Turkey to enlarge its influence in the region, increased aspirations to become a platform for regional stability. Moreover, the comparability of Turkey's new Zero Problems with neighbours and Armenia's complementarity policies was fertile ground for such developments. Additional factors, such as the necessity to find an alternative of the Georgian transit route and mitigate the imposed blockades and the requirement to ensure the government's legitimacy in Armenia, diverted attention from the domestic spectrum to foreign policy, were also in favour (Giragosian, 2009; Shougarian, 2016).

At the heart of all this, of course, were the mutual economic interests. Even now, in the case of closed borders, Armenia-Turkey trade relations occurred (See **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). Thus, open borders will contribute to boosting them.

As a result of negotiations, the parties signed two protocols in Geneva on October 10, 2009, through the Swiss mediation. As further events have shown, Turkey was ready to carry negotiations, but not to fulfil the undertaken obligations. In parallel with the need to ratify the protocols, Turkey again put forward its preconditions (Azatutyun, 2009), while Armenia has repeatedly stressed that normalization of relations will be possible only without them (Shahinyan, 2019). Turkey's position was also mostly influenced by Azerbaijan's hazards to increase gas prices and use Russia as an alternative transit for oil and gas (Balci, 2014).

In 2010 Sargsyan suspended the ratification process, as there was no action from Turkey towards ratification. In the end, Sargsyan officially recalled the protocols because of the lack of Turkish's determination in 2015, finally nulling them in 2018 (Public Radio of Armenia, 2015; ArmenianWeekly, 2018).

The new government formed as a result of the Velvet Revolution has reaffirmed the formers' position of normalization without preconditions (Public Radio of Armenia, 2018).

In addition to all the discussed obstacles of the relationships' normalisation, it should be noted that intra-society views are very contradictory, as the majority of Turks cannot face the truth, and name the massacres of Armenians anything, not genocide. At the same time, the collective historical memory of Armenians continues to prevail against the background of Turkey's denial.

Altogether, Armenia's policy towards Turkey fits in the framework of individual balancing. Nevertheless, Turkey's unfavourable policy regarding Armenia, the Genocide's denial, and the state's strategic partnership with Azerbaijan possess a vital security threat for Armenia, making the latter more vulnerable both economically and politically and limiting its leverages in the relations with Russia.

2.6. The Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) Conflict and Its Importance for Armenia's Foreign and Security Policy

The Artsakh conflict has been a security issue for Armenia for more than two decades. In order to understand its role and significance, and the grounds for the position of the Armenians in this ethnic conflict, it is necessary to make a historical reference to the Soviet years and even a little bit earlier.¹⁹ As Buzan (1991, p. 189) states, the patterns of amity and enmity of RSCs, as well as the

¹⁹ For more on the perspectives of both sides on the earlier history, see Geukjian (2013), pp. 1-44.

subcomplexes, derive from 'border disputes, interests in ethnically related populations, and ideological alignments to longstanding historical links, whether positive or negative.' The latter ones are influenced by the historical path-dependence (Buzan, 2003).

Tens relations between Armenians and Azeris because of the accumulated ethnic, religious, and economic differences, led to the mass ethnic clashes yet in 1905-1906 (Geukjian, 2013). In 1921, the Artsakh region, where Armenians were the absolute majority, accounting for about 95% of the total population, was illegally annexed to Soviet Azerbaijan. In 1923, an autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) was formed in Soviet Azerbaijan's territory (*ibid*).

During this period, the presence of Azerbaijani people began to expand both economically and in terms of population. After 1985, in the context of the USSR's new *Perestroika* (reconstruction) policy, many national issues, which had been hidden for decades, came out of the water. Among them were the Karabakh Armenians' claims and desire to withdraw the Autonomous Region of NK from Azerbaijan and reunite with Soviet Armenia. Hundreds of thousands of rallies and demonstrations in Soviet Armenia began with speeches of solidarity with the Armenians of Artsakh, and in 1988 the Artsakh movement started.

Until 1991 military clashes have been mainly local, with a comprehensive blockade, looting of state and private property, and other violations. After that, it turned into a great war.

Without going into details about the massacres of Armenians in Baku (1988), Sumgait (1990) and Maragha (1992), and the hostilities of the 1991-1994 war in general, it should be mentioned that the war ended with the indefinite ceasefire

agreement signed on May 12, 1994, by Stepanakert, Yerevan and Baku as parties of the conflict.

All historic events determine the principles of the preferable solutions for both sides related to the status of the disputed territory. Armenia sees the solution within the national self-determination principle, while Azerbaijan, without being the legal successor of its Soviet heritage,²⁰ perceives the problem's solution according to the territorial integrity principle.

As many academics (De Waal, 2003; Pokalova, 2015) state, the conflict afterwards entered the 'frozen' zone. Nevertheless, we can argue to what extent it is frozen. The constant wars and hostilities have ceased (not counting the four-day war in April 2016). However, the escalations along the borders with subversive penetrations continue causing losses from both sides. Furthermore, according to the latest available data, two sides' societies discern each other as the major enemies (more details in **Table 4** and **Table 5**).

Table 4

Armenian society's perception about its enemies and friends

Main enemies of the country (answer)	Frequency of the distribution (%)	Main friends of the countries (answers)	Frequency of the distribution (%)
Azerbaijan	76	Russia	63
Turkey	18	France	5
Russia	2	Iran	4
Other	2	Georgia	3
None	1	USA	1
Don't know/Refusal	2	Other	2
		None	17
		Don't know/Refusal	5

Note. Data is taken from The Caucasus Research Resource Centres. (2017), which is the latest available data for the country.

²⁰ With the Constitutional Act on State Independence of Azerbaijan adopted on October 18, 1991, the country invalidates all acts of the Soviet Union, including the act of 1921 of Karabakh's annexation. On legal aspects of the issue, see more in Avakian (2005).

Table 5*Azerbaijani society's perception about its enemies and friends*

Main enemies of the country (answer)	Frequency of the distribution (%)	Main friends of the country (answers)	Frequency of the distribution (%)
Armenia	90*	Turkey	91
Russia	7	Russia	1
Other	2	Iran	1
None	0	Other	1
Do not know/Refusal	1	None	1
		Do not know/Refusal	5

Note. Data is taken from The Caucasus Research Resource Centres. (2013), which is the latest available data for the country.

*The data can have been changed after the April war of 2016 enhancing the level of the anti-Armenian perceptions.

Moreover, Armenophobia is entrenched not merely in the notions of ordinary citizens but also in the perceptions of the political elites and scientific community.²¹ Positioning Armenians as the 'perfect enemy', Azerbaijan's government usually tries to condition the escapes of the domestic policy and the current socio-economic situation with that (Elibegova, 2017). We cannot claim that Armenian authorities never used the external threat as a tool to maintain power since governments worldwide use these tricks more or less. Nevertheless, countries' situation is quite different and incomparable in terms of geographic and economic opportunities. Thus, the real level of the enemy's threat, the latter's impact on the socio-economic conditions of the countries, and the possibility of being on their own rather than bandwagoning to someone else are quite distinctive. To understand it, we can look to the Global militarization index of the states, which shows the ratio of military spending's

²¹ Examples of such statements can be found in Elibegova (2017)

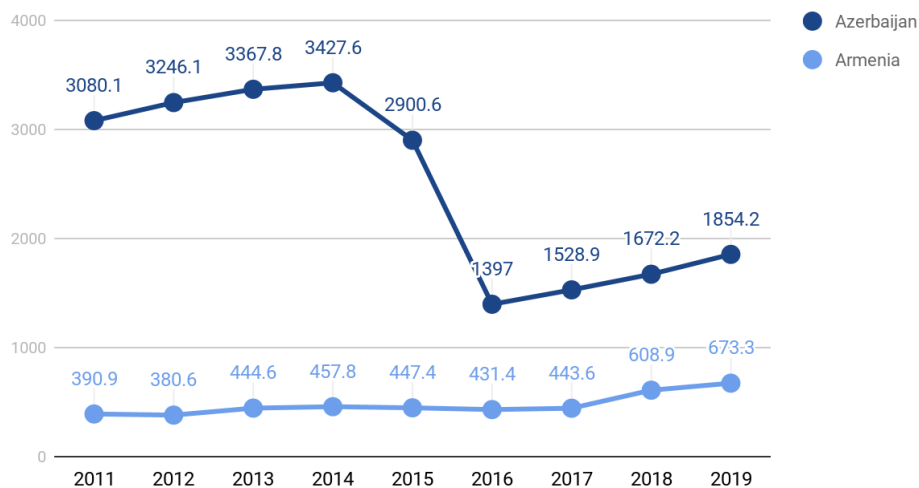
share to total GDP, the health expenditures and population. In 2018, Armenia ranked as the third most militarized country in the world (BICC, 2020).

While looking at the expenditures' percentages spent for military purposes (See **Figure 3**), it becomes evident that both sides have acquired more weapons year by year not to falter in the arms race.²²

Figure 3

Military expenditures of Azerbaijan and Armenia 2011-2019 (\$ US mln)

Military expenditures of Azerbaijan and Armenia 2011-2019 (\$US m.)



Note. Data is taken from SIPRI (2020)

In this case, Oskanian's perspective (2010, p. 105, 107) about the South Caucasus as the revisionist conflict formation, 'based on the incompatible identities and values of the units involved' with the existence of the 'military competition' is correct. Therefore, the foreign policy of hard-balancing is applicable in this case.

²² Figure 3 shows the decrease in both countries in 2016 which was due to the April War.

Nowadays, the only platform for a peaceful resolution of the conflict is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, which has been mediating since 1992. It includes three Co-Chairs representing Russia, France, and the US and permanent members, comprising Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Minsk Group also includes the OSCE Troika, made up of former, current, and subsequent OSCE Chairmen-in-Office on a rotation basis (OSCE, 2020). The leading role, of course, is reserved for the Co-Chairs. During the period of the OSCE Minsk Group activity, three main frameworks with their variations have been discussed for the issue's settlement. As experience shows, the actions of this structure did not yield any results. Moreover, if we take into account the April four-day war in 2016, the instigator of which was Azerbaijan, we can say that, to some extent, it even failed.

Our research does not involve a discussion of the negotiation process details, and arguments of both parties since the whole thesis can be dedicated to revealing the latter. Hence, without delving into the negotiation process, it is to be noted that outwardly, the parties are always willing to support this mediation mission. Nevertheless, the reality is entirely different. Most of the time, Azerbaijan continually violates the reached agreements, aggravating the situation not only along the borders of Artsakh-Azerbaijan but also Armenia-Azerbaijan borders. For example, on March 30, 2020, a 14-year-old schoolboy was wounded by an Azerbaijani bullet in the Voskevan community of Armenia's Tavush region (MFA, 2020).

Besides, the Azerbaijani leadership never misses an opportunity to make claims not only on Artsakh but also on Armenia. The quote below is a clear proof of that:

'Yerevan is our historical land, and we Azerbaijanis must return to these historical lands.'

-Ilham Aliyev, The Congress of New Azerbaijan Party, (Eurasianet, 2018, February 9).

In the conditions of total hatred, economic and political blockade, and the continuing state of semi-war, the Artsakh issue is a direct threat to Armenia's security, not only in connection with Azerbaijan itself but also with Russia. The latter, pursuing its interest in the region, seems quite comfortable with the current stage of the conflict.

The 'status-quo' is in favour of Moscow since it is another leverage to tighten its only real partner in the South Caucasus, leaving almost no room for Armenia to pursue other ways but Russian. Such an example was the forced renunciation of Armenia from the European path in 2013, which further will be discussed in the next chapter. Additionally, Russia pursues economic interests, as conflicting countries are among the main markets for Russian armament. The second-largest exporter of weapons for Baku is Moscow (SIPRI, 2020b), which sells arms without any discount in contrast to its strategic partner.

Overall, the conflict is complicated and determines the foreign and security policy of both states (Mammadov, 2012; Minasyan, 2016).

CHAPTER 3. ARMENIA-EU RELATIONS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

3.1. The EU's Interests in the South Caucasus: Eastern Partnership and Armenia

The EU is one of the world politics key actors currently uniting 27 European countries²³ and covering the area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black sea. With its material, economic, political, civilizational, spiritual, cultural, human, and scientific potential (almost 450 mln people [Eurostat, 2020], approximately 17% of the World's GDP [IMF, 2020]), the EU plays a weighty role to promote peace and stability in all over the World.

The EU, formed after World War II, symbolized Europe's rebirth, which had become the scene of two world wars. The necessity of economic reconciliation, stable peace's affirmation in the region, and the desire to become the dominant economic and political power in the world scale led to the realization of the already crystallized idea of a united Europe. It has become a platform of the states' cooperation and a new type of partnership based on shared values; human rights, democracy, the rule of law, equality, *etc.*²⁴

The EU's role increased in the 1990s after the USSR's collapse and the defeat of the 'socialist camp' in the Cold War.

As a result of the World's bipolar system's destruction, a radical change in the geopolitical situation was registered in the South Caucasus. In order to fill the generated political, social, and economic vacuum, novel influential actors have involved in the region. New relations began to form between regional and

²³ After the United Kingdom's leaving on January 31, 2020, the number of the EU's member states has become 27.

²⁴ The EU common values are fixed in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union.

extra-regional actors and the countries of the South Caucasus. However, in the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the South Caucasus did not occupy an essential place in the framework of the EU's interests. The lack of direct political interest in the region had both internal and external reasons.

Some scholars, like Lynch (2003), attribute the neglect of the South Caucasus in the late 1990s to the region's remote geographical location. At that time, both in terms of security and relations, the region was not seen as part of Europe, but as a region beyond the geographical reach of European initiatives. Among the main reasons for the EU's passive policy during this period, Lynch (2003) points out the lack of information on regional issues and strategic thinking about the region, the complexity of regional issues, the absence of lobbying groups representing the region's interests within the EU, as well as the robust presence of external actors (like Russia, the US) in the region.

Among the external factors hindering the EU's involvement in the region, other authors (Cornell & Starr, 2006) highlight the conflict in the Balkans and the lack of an agreement on the rapid and joint response of member states to the grave crises' management.

Meanwhile, authors (Popescu, 2011; Sierra, 2012) outline essential internal reforms of the EU institutions and the economic difficulties appeared with the Maastricht treaty²⁵, as a critical determiner of that inattention. Furthermore, Popescu (2011) points out that until the post of the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was introduced by the Amsterdam treaty in 1999, the absence of CFSP's appropriate institutional frameworks were significantly hampering the EU's active policy.

²⁵ This agreement is considered as the beginning of the EU's establishment, through which the EC, which was, in fact, only a platform for economic cooperation, made a transition to the political and civil spheres. It entered into force in 1993 and set the EU's three-pillar system, including the EC, CFSP, and Cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs.

Gradually, the EU started to show interest in this very convoluted region moving more clearly and consistently towards developing relations with the former USSR countries, including South Caucasus republics of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan. In turn, the European direction, the need to obtain and deepen bilateral relations with the countries of the European continent, and establish close and multilateral cooperation took an essential place in the foreign policy agenda of those states.

In 1991, the forerunner of the EU- the European Community (EC), launched the programme of Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of the Independent States and Georgia (TACIS) to provide newly independent countries with technical and financial support to overcome transition period's institutional, legal and administrative difficulties (Press Corner, 1992).

Later, South Caucasian countries were included in several other EU assistance programmes both in and out of the TACIS framework. The programmes such as Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), and Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE) launched through the TACIS funds aiming to develop interregional trade and transport routes, and enhance energy security and sustainable development (TRACECA ORG, 2020; INOGATE, 2020).

Furthermore, other programmes outside the TACIS framework, like the Food Security Programme (in favour of Armenia and Georgia) or humanitarian aid managed by the European Commission Humanitarian Office, commenced overcoming specific challenges of the region.

From 1991 to 2000, almost one billion euros was dedicated to the region. However, in comparison to other post-Soviet countries, like Ukraine and

Moldova, South Caucasian countries did not get that much attention from the EU (Delcour & Duhot, 2011).

The political component of the EU relations with the post-Soviet countries, including the South Caucasus, increased in 1996 when Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) were signed (entered into force in 1999). Their goal was to support the enhancement of democracy, the development of a market economy in partner countries, *etc.* (EUR-Lex, 2010). Although PCAs significantly expanded the field of cooperation, the lack of effective mechanisms for the implementation of the defined actions, the EU's undifferentiated approach towards the countries, and the inadequacy of the reciprocal political led to incomplete and inefficient operation of the programmes.

Besides, at that time, the EU's 'Russia first' strategy obstructed the deepening of the relations with South Caucasian countries. As PCA with Moscow came into force earlier than in those states, Russia continued to be a privileged partner of European leaders in pursuing a foreign policy in the post-Soviet area (Simão, 2011; Paul, 2016).

It is quite clear that the EU's involvement in the region during that period was with mere socio-economic mechanisms and assistance tools, not showing excellent results. However, the situation started to veer in the early 2000s.

What did prompt a change in the EU's position towards the region? What are the EU's vital interests there?

The desire not to be a 'political gnome',²⁶ the reappraisal of the region's strategic importance somewhat diminished during the Soviet era, and new

²⁶ The author of this expression is Belgium prime minister Mark Eyskens who mentioned that the EU would continue to remain an economic giant, but political gnome, unless it implemented its common foreign policy and defence system.

challenges related to the EU's biggest enlargements and energy security defined the region's place in Brussel's political agenda.

The end of the systemic conflict between the world's two major actors prompted many clashes in the post-soviet areas (especially in the Balkans) and the Persian Gulf. Thus, the urgency to inaugurate a common approach in the field of foreign and security issues and to settle it at the institutional level emerged. In this sphere, the EC/EU did not have the political tools appropriate to its economic weight. Although the EC/EU had a variety of external relations, its main mechanisms were primarily limited to trade and economic issues, and did not include areas such as conflicts, international peace, and peacekeeping missions. Additionally, its unique role played the desire of several member states (chiefly France) to have an autonomous political and military defence system independent of the US and NATO.

Thus, starting from the Maastricht treaty's three-pillar system, one of which was the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), later continuing developments with Amsterdam (1997/1999), Nice (2001/2003) and Lisbon (2009) treaties more reliable common political mechanisms started to be implemented.

With the adoption of the European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003, the main hazards to the EU's security and the priority measures for countering them were recorded. In particular, it highlights primary threats such as terrorism and organized crime, the spread of the weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, especially in the EU's geographical neighbourhood, and failed states. In 2009, with the Implementation Report on ESS, energy and cybersecurity, as well as climate change issues, were added (General Secretariat of the Council, 2009).

In essence, geopolitical changes, which led to the alteration of the Union's vital interests and the internal transformations, enabled the EU to become one of the crucial political actors in the new multipolar world and expand its fluence.

Inspired by the upcoming Big Bang enlargement²⁷ and based on the European Commission's 'Wider Europe' approach,²⁸ in 2003, the EU embarked on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The latter was called to stabilize the relations with the new neighbouring states in the East and South to avoid dividing lines within Europe and ensuring economic and political security and stability. The ENP does not envisage or rule out EU membership. Nowadays, within the framework of the programme, 16 partner countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Palestine, Tunisia- in the South, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine-in the East) are involved in the both regional/multilateral and bilateral relations. The primary goals of the ENP are included in the individual Action Plans (AP) or Association Agendas signed with each partner country. They reflect the relations' state with each country, its capabilities and opportunities, shared interests, and set the agenda of economic and political reforms with short-term and medium-term priorities (Communication, 2016).

Despite the bilateral frameworks, the cooperation is also carried out through the regional mechanisms (Eastern Partnership (EaP) for the Eastern countries, and Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) for the Southern countries²⁹). The ENP

²⁷ The EU enlargement's fifth round of 2004, when ten countries joined the Union.

²⁸ As a result of the largest enlargement, the borders of the EU would have been closer to Russia, Western NIS and Southern Mediterranean. Taking into account the economic and political interactions the latter ones' stability and development was in the EU's interests. That is why the Union has adopted this approach.

²⁹ UfM includes countries from North Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (suspended), Tunisia and Turkey. Libya is an observer.

offers partners unique relations with the highest possible degree of political interconnection and economic integration based on common values (democracy, the rule of law, human rights, effective governance, market economy principles). The EU provides financial support, economic integration and access to the EU market, easier access to the EU, and technical and political advice (Communication, 2016).

As some authors remark (Neumenn, 1994; Simao, 2013), the ENP became a kind of construction site for the EU's security policy in the Southern and Eastern neighbouring regions.

It should be noted that all three countries of the South Caucasus were not part of the programme at the beginning. Nevertheless, political changes in the region (mainly the Rose revolution in Georgia and growing security issues) and the EU's further enlargement towards the East with which these countries have become 'immediate neighbours' shifted the attitude towards the region (Delcour & Hoffman, 2018).

The EU's increasing interests in the region became evident when the EU's Special Representative for the South Caucasus was appointed in 2003. Moreover, the region with its three countries has entered the ENP since 2004 (Delcour & Duhot, 2011). In 2006 the ENP action plan for Armenia was adopted, paving the way for closer economic, social, cultural, and political cooperation (Action Plan, 2006).

On May 7, 2009, in Prague, the Eastern dimension of the ENP- the Swedish-Polish joint ambitious initiative EaP was launched. Its chief purpose repeated the main task set at the ESS and the ENP - to create a security and stability zone

in the EU's neighbourhood. The programme enables partner countries- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, to develop political, economic and cultural ties with the EU (Council of the European Union, 2009). As commissioner Štefan Füle commented:

'The Eastern Partnership, a key policy initiative in the Neighbourhood, aims to bring our eastern neighbours closer to the European Union. Drawing on the EU's unique range of instruments, we are seeking to achieve a new, innovative style of partnership. We want to engage further in cooperation with our neighbours to support their democratic transformation. We encourage reforms in key policy areas. We offer stronger links to political association and economic integration, adapted to our partners' wishes and capacities. EU funding channelled via budget support programmes is an important tool to achieve these goals.' (Quoted in Tatiashvili, 2016, p. 525).

Over time, the ENP has been revised to counter radical changes and new challenges in the EU's neighbouring areas. The latest one was in 2015. Continuing to adhere to the EU's core values, the review introduced, on the one hand, the principle of 'flexibility' (differentiated approach) to promote partnership support and respond quickly to changing political conditions and priorities, and on the other hand, it seeks to engage partner countries in the field of enhanced security cooperation by strengthening their state and public resilience (European External Action Service, 2015).

In line with the global changes resulting in the reviews of the ENP (2015) and Global Strategy (2016), the EaP priorities have also changed over time. At the Riga Summit in 2015, four priority areas of multilateral cooperation were adopted:

- **Stronger Economy** (economic development and market opportunities, including free trade regimes for Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, and also support for small and medium business development, increasing the competitiveness of all six partners)
- **Stronger Governance** (strengthening institutions and good governance, related to the rule of law and the independent judiciary, the prevention and fight against corruption, public administration reforms, civil protection)
- **Stronger Connectivity** aimed at the interconnection of energy and transport infrastructure of the EU and partner countries, the integration of energy markets and transport services)
- **Stronger Society** (mobility and people-to-people contacts, envisaging Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine's citizens' free movement in the Schengen area, as well as facilitation and liberalization of patent procedures for citizens of Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Armenia) (European Commission, 2020a).

In 2017, Brussels adopted EaP '20 key deliverables for 2020' to affirm the commitment of proving the partners' citizens with more touchable and concrete results from both multilateral and bilateral cooperation (*ibid*).

Marking the EaP 10th anniversary in 2019, the Commission found it necessary to renew the cooperation framework. Despite the outbreak of the COVID-19, it has adopted *The EaP Beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience -an eastern partnership that delivers for all-* a document defining five long-term objectives for the cooperation. The latter includes *Creating, Protecting, Including, Greening, and Connecting partnerships*. The real novelty here is the environmental

component. It reaffirms the shared commitment to eliminating the negative consequences of climate change, bringing a sustainable and 'green economy' to a cleaner and resource-efficient future for the region. (The EaP Beyond, 2020). These new objectives go in hand with the amended ENP and the Global Strategy, embodying the core principle of resilience and increased differentiation, flexibility, and greater ownership. This new document, taking into account partners' different ambitions and goals, does not consider them as one homogeneous region. Thus, it pushes more bilateral relations and sectoral cooperation. The centre-periphery approach has given way to the 'pick and choose' procedure, enabling countries to decide the depth and sphere of the cooperation on their own (Barseghyan, 2020).

The South Caucasus's particular significance as a hub connecting different geopolitical sides has already been discussed in this thesis. As we pointed out before, apart from the EU, various power centres, such as the USA, Russia, Turkey, Iran, and China, have special interests as well. These independent players compete with each other trying to counteract and to enhance the realms of their influence. However, each of them does not underestimate Russia's dominant impact and the heterogeneous nature of the region; ergo, boosting bilateral relations, can assure deeper influence. Without deviating from this logic, the EU shows a differentiated approach towards the countries both in terms of the cooperation's level and sphere. It is widely known that the EU is one of the global actors intensively and effectively using its *soft power*³⁰ and acting on the *principled pragmatism*³¹. The EaP is an outstanding example of it.

³⁰ Contrary to the traditional military-hard power, soft power assumes the use of non-coercion methods, such as political values and culture to achieve the desired.

³¹ Guiding principle of the EU declared in the Global Strategy 2016. It asserts that the organisation's 'interests and values go hand in hand' Thus, the EU will continue to act according to the liberal principles

Nevertheless, the EU's predominant concerns in the region do not just apply to the desire to enhance the scope of the influence. The region's value is affiliated to Brussel's Energy Security. Russian-Ukrainian energy crisis in 2009³² and further disputes in the following years found out the shortcomings of the gas supply system. They reveal the essentiality of assuring the supply routes' diversification. The EU's energy security issue is quite disquieting, as about 40% of the gas and 30% of the petroleum oil imported to the Union are supplied by Russia (Eurostat, 2019).

Moreover, almost 80% of Russian gas is provided through Ukraine's transit gas pipeline, which makes the EU energy security more vulnerable, especially in the geopolitical processes around Crimea. From this point of view, the South Caucasus is seen as an alternative transit for Caspian Basin and Central Asia's hydrocarbon resources, bypassing Russia. Thus, Azerbaijan remains a crucial partner as a supplier, and both Azerbaijan and Georgia as transportation routes (European Commission, 2020b).

In the hierarchy of the EU's interests, the assurance of regional security and states' the democratization or Europeanization follow and are strongly related to the energy *realpolitik*. The latter cannot be implemented on its own. The EU is interested in the hydrocarbon reserves of the region. Albeit, to ensure the latter's secure transition, it needs to establish a certain level of regional stability. The South Caucasus is one of the most troubled, militarized conflict-ridden regions in the world known for already mentioned unresolved conflicts.

Here the EU is mostly guided by the principle of *status quo*, even giving priority to various organizations such as the OSCE. Nevertheless, Brussel's logic is based

it has adopted and share its democratic values. However, the organization's self-interests and pragmatic benefits also have their say. See more in Rabinovych & Reptova (2019).

³² As a result of the dispute over gas tariffs, the supply of Russian gas within transit Ukraine was stopped that year.

on the principle of *democratic peace theory*, assuming that the more democratic the states, the less likely they are to clash. Furthermore, states with functioning democracy, good governance, the rule of law, and sufficient border control would be capable of fighting against transnational crimes. Due to the Soviet heritage of the influential criminal networks and in case of having weak governance, the region's geographical location is quite favourable to increase the crimes such as arms and nuclear smuggling, drug trade, human trafficking, and terrorist threats. (Cornell, 2003; Schmidt, 2003).

Consequently, peaceful settlement of the region's conflicts, the political maturity and stability, and economic prosperity of the states are in the scope of the EU's interests. Hence, only steps towards democratization can support and assure regional stability, which will serve the EU's energy interests in turn.

We can say the EU's politics towards the region should be observed as a package of interconnected interests, each provided in different ways and having a certain level of importance.

3.2. How Does the post-Soviet Regional Security Complex Affect Armenia's Foreign Policy Towards the EU?

When examining the EU-Armenia relations, someone should keep in mind not only the organization's interests in the region but also the fact that Armenia is a small, landlocked country with two immediate closed borders and in a very challenging neighbourhood full of frozen and unsolved conflicts one of which is directly linked to the country's security.

We can say among many factors affecting the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours two have a high aptitude to influence the further and more

productive collaboration negatively: the presence of the strong external actor in the country's socio-economic and political life, and the state's possession of the strategic good, such as oil, giving much free room to manoeuvre (such as the case of Azerbaijan).

The first is applicable for Armenia, which became more evident with the unanticipated U-turn in 2013. Having the foreign affairs priority (also defined in the NSS) to enhance and develop relations with the EU and taking advantage of the opportunities provided within the EaP, Yerevan was negotiating for AA and DCFTA. After nearly four-year constant negotiations concluded in July 2013, the agreements were expected to be signed in November of that year at the EaP Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania. Notwithstanding, on September 3, 2013, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan announced his overnight decision to join the yet-to-be-formed EAEU. As stated in the official statement, it was 'unfeasible and inefficient to stay away from the relevant geo-economic area' (The President of the Republic of Armenia, 2013). As Richard Giragosian, the former advisor to the EU delegation in Armenia and a Founding Director of the Regional Studies Centre think-tank mentioned, this decision taken under Kremlin pressure was a 'forced sacrifice' (New Eastern Europe, 2017).

Russia owns various influencing tools to affect Yerevan's foreign policy. Firstly, the arsenal includes Armenia's already discussed dependence on strategic areas like natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications. This energy insecurity provides excellent leverage for Russia to suppress any non-Russian policy indication (Hovhannisyan, 2019, Terzyan 2018). It should be pointed out that before Armenia's more significant step towards the European path, Russia in April 2013 increased gas prices almost for 50% to alarm impending economic predicaments. As a twist of fate, prices dropped after choosing to join EAEU (Asbarez, 2013).

Another dominant factor to influence Yerevan is the presence of the biggest Armenian diaspora and large numbers of labour immigrants in Russia. The fear of discriminatory treatment towards local Armenians and deportation of illegal working migrants, conjointly meaning the deprivation of remittances coming from them. The latter will put a substantial socio-economic burden on Armenia (Hovhannisyan, 2019, Terzyan, 2018).

Finally, one of the powerful blackmailing cards of Moscow is the Artsakh conflict. For this vital security issue, Russia's role is significant not only as a major regional player and the Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk group but also as the main arms supplier for Armenia. Popescu was even surprised that under tremendous security pressure, Armenia could have managed to reach the point of initialling agreements (Mediamax, 2014). As a former chairman of the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee, Elmar Block commented in his interview, Moscow's pressure, especially for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, led to the change of Yerevan's position. Thus, he stated that the Union should increase its involvement in the peaceful settlement of the problem, which is for the good of the Union itself aside from Armenia (Radio Liberty, 2013). Needless to say, the latter statement is reasonable and has a right to exist. Various authors (Ó Beachàin, 2013; Zacho, 2018) are also in favour of increasing the Union's engagement in this conflict as it is the only way to have a real say in the region, to get out of the status of 'newcomer', and implement policies to the possible maximum. However, core questions are if it is realistic? Is it desirable for Armenia? Considering the EU's special attitude towards Azerbaijan concerning its energy security, as well as other even strategic ally Russia's often biased attitude because of self-interests, the involvement of a new force in the conflict will further complicate the situation.

Additionally, conflicting sides are also sceptical to that (Ó Beacháin, 2013). Therefore, the direct involvement of the EU is not in the best interests of Armenia. Furthermore, for the EU itself, direct involvement in the conflict would mean further political and financial burden, which in the end might not provide desirable results since Russia's massive impact in the overall region should not be underrated. That is why the EU's 'wait and see' approach (Efe, 2012) remains. Albeit, the EU still can deal with things at which it is the master-the use of the soft power. The EU could instead increase its engagement not in the conflict, but around it, developing a favourable environment and interconnection opportunities with the participation of civil society. The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh serves for this role aiming to encourage dialogue between conflicting societies and ensuring confidence and peace-building activities through media, public discussions, *etc.* (EPNK, 2020).³³

Despite the obstacles and difficulties stated above, after two years of renewed negotiations, the Comprehensive and Deep Trade Agreement (CEPA) was signed on November 24, 2017. In its kind, this unique 'AA-minus' agreement reflects the possible golden mean between Armenia's wishes and opportunities in the relations with the EU. The former legal frameworks for cooperation have already provided tangible results for citizens: for example, the state continues to benefit from the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) for almost 6400 products with a utilisation rate of over 90% (MFA, 2018; European Commission, 2020c). GSP+ offers Armenian exports free access to the EU market, considering that the EU is Armenia's biggest export partner (see in Figure 2). Since 2009 almost 25000 Armenian enterprises have received funding

³³ The third phase of the programme lasted from May 2016-April 2019 with the total budget €4.732.120.

from the EU, and 3200 new jobs have been created. Furthermore, Armenia is a part of such initiatives as COSME (since 2015), Horizon 2020 (since 2016), *etc.* (Factsheet Armenia, 2020). Under Erasmus+ (2014-2020), approximately 2,500 Armenian students have been involved in the mobility and studying programmes (Ibid).

The EU's financial assistance has included areas such as nuclear security. The EU is the second donor (29%) for lengthening the life of the Metsamor Nuclear power plant, which produces 40% of Armenia's energy (Hovhannisyan, 2019).

It is also worth mentioning here that since 2013 the EU has launched the programme supporting Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process, which is on the third stage (2019-2021). The latter's overall objective is to support the opening of the Armenia-Turkey land border and the establishment of diplomatic relations by encouraging dialogues between societies (ATNP, 2020).

With the new CEPA, more intensified cooperation for all spheres, including economic, social, and sectoral cooperation, will occur. The EU can further contribute towards the development of the Armenian governance system specifically by fighting against corruption, strengthening the institutions, improving electoral legislation, and ensuring the real separation of power branches and the independence of the judiciary system. Cooperation also includes the sphere of making a safer and cleaner environment and promoting peaceful resolution of conflicts (CEPA, 2017). The EU affirms its willingness to help the country financially and technically in the latter (Factsheet Armenia, 2020). Moreover, it will provide a friendlier environment for reinforcing the inclusion and role of civil society with tools such as the EaP Civil Forum.³⁴ The other great opportunity for Armenia is the visa liberalization, which is envisaged

³⁴ Including six EaP countries, this forum intends to promote pluralism, democracy and strengthening civil societies in those countries.

in the CEPA and as stated Andrea Wiktorin, the EU Ambassador to Armenia, 'The Commission sees a possibility of starting such a [visa liberalization] dialogue' (Azatutyun, 2020). Reduced red tapes and lower airfares (planned with the entry into force of the Common Aviation Agreement which text has been negotiated yet in 2017) will propel mobility and people-to-people contacts.

In fact, with Armenia's European cultural heritage and strong eagerness towards enhancing cooperation with Europe, the full activation of the CEPA (22 countries have ratified yet) opens a new chapter in Armenia-EU relations. However, the strong dependence on Russia is still a big obstacle to the agreement's realization as blackmailing with this game card, it would try to intervene in stronger bilateral relations and to counter the EU's rising presence in the region.

In addition to all of these, whenever talking about the EU, we should not neglect the sizeable Armenian diaspora there. Notably, the third-largest Armenian community numbered in France with almost 600 thousand people. There are many Armenians in other EU countries as well, like Spain (80.000), Greece (70.000), Germany (60.000), Bulgaria (50.000), Poland (50.000), Hungary (20.000), the Netherlands (15.000), Belgium (20.000) and *etc.* (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017, p. 32). Of course, it is not accidental that France ranked second among Armenia's friends (See in **Table 4**). However, Armenia does not fully utilize this possible powerful tool and we can say that there is an untapped potential of the Armenian diaspora in European countries. Unlike Russia, the domestic nature of those countries does allow the possibility to impact their political course prompting homeland's interests. This can make another way for Armenia to mitigate its overreliance on Russia.

CONCLUSION

With their increasing number since the 1950s to the 1960s, small states have aroused interest in academic society. Furthermore, being the majority on the world map, holding specific characteristics, and manifesting behaviour that significantly differs from the big states, have made them more attractive for research.

Three main approaches of states' classification are distinguished: absolute-quantitative (Vital, East, Crowards), descriptive-qualitative (Criekemans/Duran, Keohane), and complex (Väyrynen, Thorhallsson, Wivel). The first one relies on quantitative thresholds (land area, population size, GDP, military capability), and the second on qualitative indicators (political resources of the country, its role in the international arena, leaders' perceptions of the political weight of the state). However, we think that the most appropriate and precise models are in the third one as they combine both elements.

Using Wivel's model from this category, we have shown that both in quantitative and qualitative terms, Armenia is a small state. Its smallness becomes even more apparent when we compare it with other states in the region.

Generally, there are external and internal factors impacting small states' foreign policy behaviour. It should be highlighted that they are interconnected. However, we believe that external characteristics, like the structure and the security order of the given RSCs in which the small state is placed, and the absence of the sea-exit, influence more on small states' foreign policy course.

Indeed, the general behavioural characteristics of small states (such as sensitivity to the international order, the international system's structure and changes, vulnerability to external interference, and the importance of international organizations and 'moral' principles) can be enumerated.

However, these common factors have the same impact if small states function in the same environment. We argue that the immediate regional context of the small states possesses a far more crucial role in identifying possible outcomes of their foreign policy.

In particular, the more balanced are the centres of power in the region, and the more economically and institutionally interconnected the states composing, the more possibilities for peaceful relations exist. Thus, the fruitful foreign policy of the small states will be realistic in those RSCs. The striking example is European RSC, where many small states function successfully.

Conversely, the presence of a dominant or hegemonic state in the region, and the escalation of tensions in the relations between the great powers, narrow the foreign policy opportunities of small states, often turning them either into the apple of discords in the hands of the competing powers or making them the 'client' of the nearest great power.

The illustration of this kind of conflict formation is the post-Soviet RSC, where Armenia is located.

The hegemonic distribution of power opens opportunities for Russia to penetrate in Armenia's policy. Knudsen's variables discussed earlier in our research reflect, in essence, the limitations of Armenia's foreign policy in the above-described circumstances.

Connected with the collective memory dating back to the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, Armenia is essential for Russia to maintain its leverages in the geopolitically significant South Caucasus region, which is also considered a Southern dimension of an insulating mini-complex Caucasus. Being at the crossroads of conflicting interests of North and South, East and West, the region was always a place to compete for. Although there is no shortage of forces resisting for the region, every actor acknowledges Russia's overwhelming and preponderant influence here.

Furthermore, to not fall behind in the intense rivalry with other both great extra-regional powers like the USA, China, the EU, and regional actors such as Turkey and Iran, Armenia plays an essential role as a strategic and most reliable partner in the region which promotes Russia to enhance its influence further. Moreover, Russia's growing pressure on Armenia and its non-resistance to any deviated behaviour become explicit in the vein of the EU-Armenia bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Additionally, Armenia is also a landlocked country without any strategic goods like oil and gas and has an economy based on mining and remittances. The latter is again mostly provided by Armenian migrants working in Russia.

With two closed borders in the East (Azerbaijan) and the West (Turkey), immediate security threat from Azerbaijan regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the country's economic development perspectives are strictly limited, and overreliance on the strategic partnership with Russia exceeds the reasonable limits.

In this challenging situation, Armenia has officially adopted the complementary policy intended to balance the competing interests of all presented actors and expand Armenia's foreign policy opportunities.

Having only two ways of salvation from the double blockade posed by kinship brothers Turkey and Azerbaijan, Armenia needs to maintain good-neighbourly relations with Georgia and Iran, serving respectively as Northern and Southern gates. Nevertheless, everything is not smooth here, as well.

Examining the nuances of the relationship with Georgia, it becomes clear that despite the religious and cultural similarities, there are more problems than can be assumed.

The propensity for different geopolitical and security blocs (in the case of Georgia, the EU-NATO, and in the case of Armenia, the EEU-CSTO), and their different and sometimes contradictory approaches to resolving ethnic conflicts (territorial integrity *versus* self-determination of nations) complicate the existing relations. Georgia's strategic cooperation with Turkey and Azerbaijan in the political and economic spheres, the often-discriminatory treatment of Armenians living in Georgia, and the frequently escalating differences between the Armenian and Georgian churches make relations even more problematic. It becomes clear how complicated and vague 'friendly' relations the states have.

However, given that Georgia serves as the crucial link between Armenia to the outside world and the only land route connected to Armenia's strategic partner Russia, many efforts are made to keep relations at a neighbourly level. That is why Armenia always emphasizes the need to build relations at the bilateral

level. Thus, in these relations elements of the alignment, soft balance and neutrality are mostly manifested.

Another significant exit for Armenia is Iran. While examining Yerevan-Tehran relations, it becomes evident that these culturally and religiously distinct actors have been able to establish stable, friendly relations. Considering that Armenia is heavily dependent on Russian gas, and Georgia as a transit country, Iran can play a significant role in diversifying communication routes and energy supplies. Besides, both countries have challenging and competitive relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, there are fundamental obstacles on the path of these mutually beneficial relations.

On the one hand, Russia does not want and let the strengthening of Iran in the region. On the other hand, the West, with its sanctions against Iran, makes it hard to realize this profitable partnership.

In general, the foreign policy adopted by Armenia toward Iran can suit in the framework of individual alignment and economic pragmatism.

The most difficult relations in the region, which change the whole political course of Armenia, are connected with the Azerbaijan-Turkey unity.

There were many attempts for normalization of relations with Turkey, all of them unsuccessful. The failed relations are conditioned first of all by the non-recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey. Besides, Turkey's aspirations to participate in settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and resolve the issue in favour of its ally Azerbaijan reaffirm the country's unwillingness to establish diplomatic relations.

On the other hand, there is a heavy burden of the unresolved issue with Azerbaijan. Despite many claims that the war is frozen, the reality is different. Tensions on both the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Artsakh-Azerbaijani lines of

contact are regularly escalating. Adding to that, the total Armenophobia in Azerbaijan and continuing military rhetoric makes it clear that the situation is far from a final settlement. It is a zero-sum game where each side tries to win. In terms of relations with both countries, Armenia chiefly exercises the strategy of individual hard balancing.

As our research represents, depending on the nature of existing disagreements, the vitality of relations, and overlapping interests, Armenia practices several foreign policy strategies towards various actors.

However, the imposed closed borders and immediate security threat significantly deepen Armenia's dependence on Russia in terms of security, economy, energy, military, and politics.

While striving for complementarity, Armenia finds itself in a situation where the penetration of its strategic partner is so rooted that it is almost impossible to neutralize. Moscow is directly involved in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group. It is Armenia's main gas, army, oil supplier and trading partner.

This situation severely limits the state's ability to pursue its more far-reaching interests, thus restraints adopted strategies in some cases. A vivid example of this was the unexpected turn from the EU to the EAEU. It was not a result of the latter being more economically expedient but a threat from Russia.

In these conditions, the success of Armenia's complementarity can be considered a unique CEPA agreement with the EU, conducted after the forced step back of 2013.

Unlike Russia, relations with the EU are really in Armenia's long-term interests. The primary energy and security interests of the Union make it an advocate of peace and stability in the region. The latter is in Armenia's interests too.

Moreover, bilateral (CEPA) and multilateral (EaP) frameworks aim to improve public administration, strengthening the rule of law, democracy, civil society, and developing the economy. As a soft normative power, the EU contributes to the advancement and transformation of countries from within, which, of course, has a positive effect on Armenia.

Nonetheless, considering the above-discussed factors, it is not easy to imagine a turnaround in the foreign policy agenda. Even the new government came to power in 2018, previously known as a robust anti-Russian opposition, reaffirmed the foreign policy line of the former authorities.

Therefore, we can say that the post-Soviet RSC and its dominant power Russia harm the capabilities of a small and landlocked Armenia in foreign affairs. In fact, despite its desires, Armenia's foreign policy is bandwagoning rather than multi-vector balancing.

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