



## The Enemy of my Friends is my Friend: Assessing Armenia's Relationship with Iran

By Renée Rippberger

24 September, 2019

### Abstract

The importance of Iran to Armenia cannot be understated. Still blockaded by neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic remains one of Armenia's only access points to the outside world. This leaves Yerevan to navigate difficult diplomatic waters as tensions between Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States escalate to a near boiling point. After the United States unilaterally pulled out of the landmark Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Iran has again become subject to sanctions which aim to severely damage Iran's economy and limit its options for trading with key partners, such as Armenia. Armenia's partnership with Iran remains also marked by Russian influence and the desire to regionally balance Azerbaijan and Turkey.

### Introduction

Since its independence from the Soviet Union, Armenia has proclaimed to engage in a foreign policy doctrine of 'complementarism' which allows it to navigate its difficult geopolitical position and effectively serve its own interests.<sup>1</sup> Yerevan has found mild success in this strategy. While it still remains heavily influenced by Russia, it is both a member of the Russian led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) but also a member of the European Union's Eastern Partnership initiative. It is also a member of the Russian led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) but has been

<sup>1</sup> Yepremyan, Tigran. "Armenia Within the Complex of 'Overlapping Authority and Multiple Loyalty.'" *THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: SECURITY CHALLENGES*, 2018, 227-41. doi:[http://www.studiieu.org/files/publications/EUSEC\\_book\\_2018.pdf](http://www.studiieu.org/files/publications/EUSEC_book_2018.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> "Pashinian Warns Of Regional Security Challenges For Armenia." Azatutyun, June 24, 2018. Accessed June 28, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30017265.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Markarov, Alexander, and Vahe Davtyan. "POST-VELVET REVOLUTION ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES." *Demokratizatsiya* 26, no. 4 (2018): 531+. *Expanded Academic ASAP* (accessed July 1, 2019). <https://link-galegroup-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/apps/doc/A562868187/EAIM?u=glasuni&sid=EAIM&xid=7f5cc6a2>.

19 Sayat Nova Ave.

Yerevan 0001, Armenia

Tel.: +374 (10) 582638

E-mail: [think-tank@ICHD.org](mailto:think-tank@ICHD.org)

[www.ICHD.org](http://www.ICHD.org)

contributing to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operations since 2004. Armenia has also been able to establish effective diplomatic relations with great powers which are generally at odds with each other like the United States, Iran, Russia, and China. But complementarism is becoming increasingly difficult to practice. As Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan puts it, Armenia's neighborhood is becoming more "complicated".<sup>2</sup> This acknowledgement comes as the United States is again on a campaign to contain Iran and through sanctions is seeking to exercise maximum pressure on Tehran. An enhanced alliance with Iran makes strategic sense for Armenia as this partnership can act as a balancing force against the traditional decision given to Armenia, being forced to choose between the West or Russia<sup>3</sup> while simultaneously serving as a regional balance against the Azerbaijan-Turkey alliance.<sup>4</sup> Yerevan should remain steadfast in its commitment to Iran as anything else would surely severely damage the security and economic standing of the Armenian Republic.

An analysis of the current state of Armenian-Iranian relations is necessary as this partnership is generally under examined by social scientists. Western scholars and geopolitical experts have never regarded Armenian foreign policy as having much consequence in the world arena.<sup>5</sup> On the other side of the coin, while Iran is the subject of much analysis, American accounts often portray Iran as a malign actor through negative discourse and stereotypes.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Abrahamyan, Eduard. "Pashinyan Formulates Armenia's New Iran Strategy." Jamestown, October 15, 2018. <https://jamestown.org/program/pashinyan-formulates-armenias-new-iran-strategy/>.

<sup>5</sup> Zarifian, Julien. "Christian Armenia, Islamic Iran: Two (Not So) Strange Companions Geopolitical Stakes and Significance of a Special Relationship." *Iran & the Caucasus* 12, no. 1 (2008): 123-51. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/25597359>.

<sup>6</sup> Ferrero, Christopher. "The Iran Narrative: The Ideational Context of US Foreign Policy Decision-Making toward the Islamic Republic of Iran." *Iran & the Caucasus* 17, no. 1 (2013): 41-76.

This paper will provide a current account of this special relationship. The next section will continue with a brief examination of the historical ties between Armenia and Iran. This will be followed by an analysis of the current situation of the nexus between these two states and how the pressure of American sanctions on the Islamic Republic influence this relationship. The report will also aim to explore how the Iran-Armenia axis is influenced by its top economic partner and main security guarantor Russia as well as its neighbors Azerbaijan and Turkey.

## History

Persians and Armenians share thousands of years of common history. For many centuries, the Persian empire ruled Armenian lands. While the nature of this relationship has not always been equal and religious differences exist, this has not impeded the development of the current cordial relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Armenia. When Armenia gained its independence from the Soviet Union Iran rushed to establish diplomatic relations with the country as it considered Armenia to be included in its "natural sphere of influence".<sup>7</sup>

In the past 30 years of Armenian independence, Armenian-Iranian relations at certain points have stagnated; however, disruptive elements such as war and political upheaval have never threatened the stability of this alliance.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Yerevan's strong political relationship with Tehran would at times prove critical to the survival of the Armenian Republic. Following the fall out of the Nagorno Karabakh war, Armenia became blockaded by two of its four neighbors, unable to access 80 percent of its borders. These border closures provoked a series of energy crises. Iran's assistance in the winters of 1992 and 1993 proved critical in alleviating challenges in regions plagued by widespread electricity shortages during particularly harsh winters.<sup>9</sup>

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/23597519>.

<sup>7</sup> Zarifian, Julien. "Iran and its Two Neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan: Resuming Relationships Under America's Suspicious Eyes." *Iran and the Caucasus* 13, no. 2 (2009): 383-399.

<sup>8</sup> *Armenia 2011 — Without Illusions*. December 31, 2011. Report, The Civitas Foundation, Yerevan.

<sup>9</sup> Zarifian, Julien. "Christian Armenia, Islamic Iran: Two (Not So) Strange Companions Geopolitical Stakes and Significance of a Special Relationship." *Iran & the Caucasus* 12, no. 1 (2008): 123-51. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/25597359>.

<sup>10</sup> *Armenia 2011 — Without Illusions*. December 31, 2011. Report, The Civitas Foundation, Yerevan.

<sup>11</sup> Ghazinyan, Aris. "ARMENIA AND IRAN: ANCIENT RELATIONS AND CHANGING WORLD NECESSITIES." AGBU, May 1, 2009.

Furthermore, Iran proved to be Armenia's only reliable pathway to the outside world during the war in Karabakh and again in the 2008 Russo-Georgian war.<sup>10</sup> With roads to Turkey and Azerbaijan still closed, the 400 kilometer highway connecting Yerevan to Iran became unofficially referred to as "the road of life" by Armenians.<sup>11</sup> With the roadways from South Ossetia and Abkhazia closed in 2008, Armenian trade through Georgia became limited to one sole border crossing in Upper Lars, already regularly inaccessible due to snow during the winter months and during the remaining seasons prone to natural disasters like flash floods.<sup>12</sup>

## The Current Situation of the Nexus

For years Yerevan had flirted with the idea of closer cooperation with the European Union but ultimately it chose to join its alternative, the Russian led Eurasian Economic Union. Many viewed this decision purely as a sign of fealty to Moscow but Yerevan's partnership with Tehran figured into this strategic move. Had Armenia even considered joining the EU it would have become unable to conduct energy trade with Iran given European sanctions at the time.<sup>13</sup>

Armenia has always recognized the importance of Iran to its economic survival. This wish for development of ties became more possible in 2015 when the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or the Iran nuclear deal was reached between the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, China and Iran. The JCPOA, a landmark nuclear non proliferation deal, ended the sanctions regime on Iran which crippled the Islamic Republic's economy. As Iran was granted more breathing room in the international economy, Tehran post-haste took advantage of this new found freedom to start suggesting new energy and transport endeavors with its northern neighbor.<sup>14</sup> The end of the sanctions regime on Iran was an action equally appreciated in Armenia. The ability to conduct trade and relations more freely with Iran was welcomed as an opportunity for

<https://agbu.org/news-item/armenia-and-iran-ancient-relations-and-changing-world-necessities/>.

<sup>12</sup> Jardine, Bradley. "Armenia and Azerbaijan Compete to Attract Iranian Cargo." Eurasianet, April 9, 2018. <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-and-azerbaijan-compete-to-attract-iranian-cargo>.

<sup>13</sup> Rinna, Anthony. "Yerevan's Choice: Armenia and Its Integration into the Eurasian Customs Union." *Iran & the Caucasus* 18, no. 4 (2014): 395-404. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/43899170>.

<sup>14</sup> Grigoryan, Armen. "Armenia and the Iran Deal." The Central-Asia Caucasus Analyst, August 13, 2015. Accessed July 11, 2019. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13263-armenia-and-the-iran-deal.html>.

Armenia to not only decrease its dependence on Russia but also improve its overall economic standing.<sup>15</sup>

Politically relations continued to soar to new highs but economic progress and trade turnovers remained unsatisfactory.<sup>16</sup> Many companies and investors remained wary of conducting business in Iran as only sanctions aimed at curtailing Iran's nuclear program were lifted as a result of the JCPOA. American sanctions targeting Iran for sponsorship of terrorism and violation of human rights remained in place thus businesses with ties to the U.S. were cautious to fall under these sanctions as well.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, the detente between Iran and the United States did not last. The situation quickly reverted back to its regular difficult status quo with the election of Donald Trump to the American presidency. During the 2016 election campaign period Trump was loudly critical of the Iran nuclear deal qualifying it as one of the "worst deals ever negotiated" and vowed to scrap the deal if he were to enter the Oval Office.<sup>18</sup> In 2018, Trump made good on his promise and at his directive, the United States unilaterally pulled out of the JCPOA and reintroduced sanctions on the Islamic Republic. The nuclear issue was at the core of the decision as American politicians and members of the public have long perceived the possibility of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons as a catastrophic event.<sup>19</sup> European diplomats were vexed by Trump's decision to pull out of the deal and this had to lead to a standoff between Iran and the United States, with these two nations engaging in a dangerous game of chicken.

To the irk of Washington, following the United States' withdrawal Armenia reaffirmed its support along with the European Union for the preservation of the landmark nuclear deal. Armenia went a step further than its European counterparts and publicly reaffirmed the importance of bilateral relations with Iran.<sup>20</sup> During the Obama

administration, Washington had a clear understanding of Armenia's difficult position and the necessity of strong bilateral ties with Iran. Former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Richard Mills recounted as he left office that "There's no interest or push from Washington for Armenia to end its relationship or turn hostile toward Iran."<sup>21</sup>

The new administration in Washington claims to still have the same appreciation for Armenia's situation. Trump's team has placed a greater interest in the ongoings of the South Caucasus. In 2018 former U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton traveled to Yerevan to meet with top Armenian officials to discuss a number of strategic matters, prime among them the Iran issue. During his visit he stated that the American administration did not wish to "cause damage to our friends in the process" of reinstating sanctions against Iran; however, he remained firm that the Armenian-Iranian border would become "a significant issue."<sup>22</sup> To lessen Armenia's dependence on its Iran, Bolton continued the OSCE's line that both parties to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict should find a mutually acceptable decision to end the long standing deadlock. This would create an atmosphere favorable to reopening the border with Azerbaijan. After relations with Azerbaijan would be repaired Bolton stated, "The Turkish border, I believe, would almost certainly open." as Turkey's border is closed to Armenia as a marker of solidarity to Azerbaijan.<sup>23</sup> This process of reconciliation would allow Armenia to not rely so heavily on its southern border, driving down the significance of Armenia's relationship with Iran.

This renewed interest in the Caucasus from the Trump administration and Bolton's propositions led to some speculation from the former U.S. ambassador to Armenia John Evans that "Bolton does not care about Nagorno-Karabakh. His focus is on Iran."<sup>24</sup> It was already expected

<sup>15</sup> Abrahamyan, Eduard. "The Potential and Obstacles to Armenia-Iran Strategic Relations." *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, March 16, 2016. Accessed August 30, 2018. <http://cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13343-the-potential-and-obstacles-to-armenia-iran-strategic-relations.html>.

<sup>16</sup> "Armenian PM's Upcoming Visit Expected to Boost Ties with Iran." *Armenpress.am*, February 25, 2019. Accessed August 19, 2019. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/965453.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Azatutyun. "U.S. Official: Armenia 'Very Close Friend, Ally'." *YouTube* video, 15:16. June 23, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vbj8X8w3mM>.

<sup>18</sup> Zarifian, Julien. "La présidence Trump et la (nouvelle) dégradation des (non-) relations américano-iraniennes." *Orients Stratégiques* 7 (2018): 41-53.

<sup>19</sup> Ferrero, Christopher. "The Iran Narrative: The Ideational Context of US Foreign Policy Decision-Making toward the Islamic Republic of Iran." *Iran & the Caucasus* 17, no. 1 (2013): 41-76. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/23597519>.

<sup>20</sup> "EU 'Pleased' With Armenian Support For Iran Nuclear Deal." *RFE/RL*, June 22, 2018. Accessed July 11, 2019. <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/eu-pleased-with-armenian-support-for-iran-nuclear-deal/29314262.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Titizian, Maria. "U.S. Ambassador Mills: I Leave Inspired and Hopeful." *EVN Report*, October 15, 2018. Accessed August 02, 2019. <https://www.evnreport.com/politics/u-s-ambassador-mills-i-leave-inspired-and-hopeful>.

<sup>22</sup> Synovitz, Ron. "Bolton Vows To 'Squeeze Iran,' Explore Weapons Sales To Armenia." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, October 25, 2018. Accessed August 01, 2019. <https://www.rferl.org/a/u-national-security-adviser-bolton-vows-to-squeeze-iran-/29563540.html>.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> "Переговоры Азербайджана и Армении в Вашингтоне. Зачем Это Нужно США? - BBC News Русская Служба." *BBC Russian Service*, June 21, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-48704252>.

that Armenia would not join American efforts to undermine its ally.<sup>25</sup> Nikol Pashinyan firmly rebuked Bolton's ideas stating that, "the Republic of Armenia has its own national and state interests, which do not always coincide with the interests and ideas of other countries, any other country."<sup>26</sup> The message was clear, Armenia would continue maintaining and improving its relationship with Iran.

In the past the U.S. has been willing to look the other way concerning Armenia's energy concerns given its "special needs."<sup>27</sup> Thus far Iran's natural gas imports have not been sanctioned so Yerevan continues to engage in its electricity for Iranian gas swap.<sup>28</sup> Barring this exchange would be counterproductive to the interests of Washington in the South Caucasus. The U.S. administration is acutely aware that a move such as this would push Yerevan further into the arms of Moscow, Gazprom already controlling most of Armenia's natural gas market.<sup>29</sup> Still, the U.S. administration does not wish to be mistaken for being too conciliatory. Asserting that the administration is seeking to exert maximum pressure on Iran, the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan issued a statement that it "is not being selective in its Iran sanctions" even in the case for its ally Armenia.<sup>30</sup>

After American sanctions on Iran were reintroduced in 2018, a special American delegation on behalf of the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan met with top Armenian government officials, policy makers, and companies to explain the

sanctions against Iran. At the time of this, the Armenian government offered no statements detailing the discussions with the American delegation.<sup>31</sup> Many scholars and academics have raised their concerns, explaining that the United States government must be given a clear account of the significance of Armenia's relationship with the Islamic Republic.<sup>32,33</sup> The Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia, Armen Grigoryan, assured that despite pressure from the United States that, "Armenian-Iranian relations are on a very high level... We never try to enter into the relations of other states, we are building our relations bilaterally. Of course, the other relations have a certain impact, but we do the utmost to avoid any impact"<sup>34</sup>

While Grigoryan does not assess the current situation of American sanctions to have serious impact on Armenia, others remain decidedly unconvinced. Armenian President of the National Assembly Ararat Mirzoyan has stated that indeed strained American-Iranian relations are starting to have a negative impact on the Armenian economy.<sup>35</sup> He affirmed Armenia would not stop buying Iranian gas and that the Armenian government would rest firmly against sanctions that punish Armenia for pursuing its own foreign policy objectives.<sup>36</sup> However, what is important to note that according to Armenia's ambassador to Iran, Artashes Tuamanyan, is that not even the European Union is able to stand up against American pressure to desist from cooperation with Iran.<sup>37</sup> The sanctions implemented before

<sup>25</sup> Glum, Luise. "The US Is Too Far Away, and Iran Is next Door." Zenith Magazine, June 5, 2019. Accessed June 28, 2019. <https://magazine.zenith.me/en/politics/interview-analyst-anahitshirinyan-armenia>.

<sup>26</sup> "Pashinian Says He Made 'Clear' To U.S. That Armenia Will Maintain Ties With Iran." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 2, 2018. Accessed June 26, 2019. <https://www.rferl.org/a/pashinian-says-made-clear-to-us-bolton-armenia-will-maintain-ties-with-iran/29578365.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Titizian, Maria. "U.S. Ambassador Mills: I Leave Inspired and Hopeful." EVN Report, October 15, 2018. Accessed August 02, 2019. <https://www.evnreport.com/politics/u-s-ambassador-mills-i-leave-inspired-and-hopeful>.

<sup>28</sup> "Iran Warns Against 'Third-Party Interference' In Ties With Armenia." Azatutyun, February 27, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29794134.html>.

<sup>29</sup> O'Byrne, David. "Iran and Armenia Propose Gas Transit to Georgia." Eurasianet, March 1, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/iran-and-armenia-propose-gas-transit-to-georgia>.

<sup>30</sup> Hovhannisyan, Hripsime. "United States 'not Selective' in Iran Sanctions." Armenian News - Tert.am, March 15, 2019. Accessed August 02, 2019. <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/03/15/usa/2948850>.

<sup>31</sup> Danielyan, Emil. "U.S. Sanctions On Iran 'Explained' To Armenian Government, Banks." Azatutyun, November 16, 2018. Accessed July 16, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29604754.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Arakelyan, Liana. "United States 'need Clear Explanations' on Iran's Vital Role for Armenia." Tert.am, February 16, 2019. Accessed August 05, 2019. <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/02/16/iran/2923798>.

<sup>33</sup> "Garik Misakyan: Iran Is an Important Country for Us, and Any Tension or Conflict Can Be a Challenge for Us." Tert.am, July 2, 2019. Accessed August 05, 2019. <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/07/02/Iran/3039593>.

<sup>34</sup> Harutyunyan, Aneta. "Secretary of Security Council Highly Appreciates Level of Armenian-Iranian Relations." Armenpress.am, July 26, 2019. Accessed August 05, 2019. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/982910.html>.

<sup>35</sup> "U.S. Should Not Put Pressure on Armenia over Ties with Iran: Speaker." PanARMENIAN.Net, July 16, 2019. Accessed July 16, 2019. <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/271018/>.

<sup>36</sup> "Armenian Speaker Rules Out Support For U.S. Sanctions Against Iran." Azatutyun, July 16, 2019. Accessed July 17, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30058646.html>.

<sup>37</sup> "Armenia Ready to Boost Cooperation with Iran 'to the Best of Its Efforts' - Ambassador." Tert.am, February 18, 2019. Accessed August 05, 2019.

the JCPOA agreement did indeed limit Armenia's options for business and cooperation with its southern neighbor. When the sanctions regime on Iran was lifted, one U.S. official stated, she acknowledged "the sacrifices that Armenia made to help to enforce our sanctions regime."<sup>38</sup> With a renewed maximum pressure campaign led against Iran, Armenia will be expected to make sacrifices again. As Ararat Mirzoyan states, "Armenia cannot pay such a price."<sup>39</sup>

Since the reinstatement of the sanctions regime, the U.S. government has placed sanctions on multiple organizations such as the Yerevan based Flight Travel LLC for its commercial cooperation with Tehran based Mahan Air. Mahan Air had been sanctioned since 2011 for providing air transport of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) personnel and weapons to the Assad regime in Syria.<sup>40</sup> American officials in Yerevan have encouraged any organizations if they are unsure if their business practices violate the sanctions regime to seek clarifications and the assistance of the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC).<sup>41</sup> The U.S. Department of Treasury was apparently even willing to show leniency with Flight Travel LLC as they issued several warnings to its owners before officially sanctioning the organization that their collaboration within Mahan Air would warrant sanctions.<sup>42</sup>

Other Armenian companies to have been sanctioned by the United States include the Yerevan Telecommunication Research Institute (YETRI) for their supposed business with a blacklisted Iranian organization. YETRI director Mher Markosyan alleges that his company has not conducted business with Iran since 2009 and that the U.S.'s decision to blacklist their company was perhaps a "mistake."<sup>43</sup> Enjoying regular inspections from the U.S. State Department,

Markosyan claims that these officials even gave their praise for YETRI's operations. There were unsubstantiated reports made by Azerbaijani newspapers that Armenia and Iran allegedly co presented radar systems intended at a military equipment forum, but Markosyan denied that Iran took part in this presentation.<sup>44</sup> These allegations were also eventually denied by the Iranian Embassy in Azerbaijan after protests by Azeris.<sup>45</sup> All the same, the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) found the company "to be acting contrary to the national security or foreign policy interests of the United States".<sup>46</sup> Consequently YETRI has been rendered ineligible to conduct trade or buy necessary parts from the United States. Markosyan admitted that while this complicates his business operations adding that they will push forward and that they have the ability to purchase necessary, albeit more expensive, parts from countries other than the U.S.<sup>47</sup>

## Iran's Need of Armenia

While Iran remains of the utmost importance for Armenia, historically the same cannot be said vice versa.<sup>48</sup> Iran is not restricted by the same geopolitical concerns as Armenia and has always had the opportunity to pursue trade and strengthen economic ties with its neighbors like Turkey and Azerbaijan. Today; however, with the revival of escalating tensions between Iran and the United States, Iran is being economically strangled and to survive, it will have to rely on the help of its neighbours, Armenia figuring prime among them. Tehran has quite publicly reaffirmed its commitment to strong bilateral ties with Armenia.<sup>49</sup> Ayatollah Ali

<https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/02/18/artashes-tumanyan/2925038>.

<sup>38</sup> Azatutyun. "U.S. Official: Armenia 'Very Close Friend, Ally.'" *YouTube* video, 15:16. June 23, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vbj8X8w3mM>.

<sup>39</sup> "Armenian Speaker Rules Out Support For U.S. Sanctions Against Iran." Azatutyun, July 16, 2019. Accessed July 17, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30058646.html>.

<sup>40</sup> "US Treasury's Big Stick Hits Armenia Sales Agent That 'Acts for Sanctioned Iranian Airline'." *bne IntelliNews*, January 24, 2019. <https://www.intellinews.com/us-treasury-s-big-stick-hits-armenia-sales-agent-that-acts-for-sanctioned-iranian-airline-155320/?source=armenia>.

<sup>41</sup> Azatutyun. "U.S. Official: Armenia 'Very Close Friend, Ally.'" *YouTube* video, 15:16. June 23, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vbj8X8w3mM>.

<sup>42</sup> Musheghyan, Trdat. "U.S. Treasury Dept. Freezes Assets of Yerevan Company; Says It Services Iranian Airline Assisting Iran's Proxies in Syria." *Hetq.am*, January 24, 2019. Accessed August 19, 2019. <https://hetq.am/en/article/100303>.

<sup>43</sup> "Armenian Company Baffled after Getting Included in United States BIS Entity List." *Armenpress.am*, August 14, 2019. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/984888.html>.

<sup>44</sup> "Protest in Baku against 'Iran-Armenia Military Production'." *OC Media*, July 20, 2019. <https://oc-media.org/protest-in-baku-against-iran-armenia-military-production/>.

<sup>45</sup> "Iranian Embassy Makes Statement on Alleged Military Co-Op with Armenia." *Trend.Az*, July 18, 2019. <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3092519.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Nalbandian, Naira. "U.S. Sanctions Armenian Firms." Azatutyun, August 14, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30109857.html>.

<sup>47</sup> "US Places Sanctions on Two Armenian Companies." *JAMnews*, August 15, 2019. <https://jam-news.net/us-places-sanctions-on-two-armenian-companies/>.

<sup>48</sup> Zarifian, Julien. "Christian Armenia, Islamic Iran: Two (Not So) Strange Companions Geopolitical Stakes and Significance of a Special Relationship." *Iran & the Caucasus* 12, no. 1 (2008): 123-51. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/25597359>.

<sup>49</sup> Sharafedin, Bozorgmehr. "Iran's Khamenei Says U.S. Seeks War, Sedition 'everywhere'." *Reuters*, February 27, 2019. Accessed July

Khamenei, speaking to Pashinian, stated that “Iran and Armenia have never had any problems with each other,” later adding that, “According to our Islamic teachings, we feel obliged to behave well toward our neighboring countries.”<sup>50</sup> Iranian President Hassan Rouhani even directly stated that Armenia-Iran relations will continue to flourish even in the face of American sanctions.<sup>51</sup>

High profile diplomatic visits between Armenia and Iran have increased as both states remain steadfast in their determination to not only preserve their relationship but to strengthen it.<sup>52</sup> Continued summits such as the 16th annual Iran-Armenia Joint Trade and Economic Committee meeting aim to continue developing joint initiatives in energy and environmental projects as well as facilitating tourism.<sup>53</sup> Continued dialogue allows for mutually beneficial projects such as the free economic zone in Meghri to come to fruition. On the border with Iran, the Armenian town of Meghri since 2017 allows Iranian entrepreneurs to establish businesses which are exempt from profit tax, value added tax, excise tax and customs fees.<sup>54</sup>

When Armenia joined the Russian led Eurasian Economic Union, Iran recognized it would benefit from the membership of its northern neighbor. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif hailed Armenia’s decision as one providing “broader cooperation options to Iran, Armenia and Russia.”<sup>55</sup> Zarif’s suppositions would prove to be correct. Shortly after joining, Armenia proposed a free trade

agreement between the EAEU and Iran.<sup>56</sup> With the ratification of this deal Armenia’s importance to Iran will continue to rise, now serving as an important route for Iran to export its products to EAEU members states.<sup>57</sup> This historic move is a first for the Islamic Republic as it is the only regional economic agreement in which it will have participated in since the Revolution of 1979.<sup>58</sup> The agreement could prove to be very beneficial as the Iranian economy is currently buckling under the pressure of sanctions on its oil and its exclusion from international financial markets.<sup>59</sup> The opportunity to engage in free trade with the EAEU will allow Iran to make an amount of profit on non-oil exports.<sup>60</sup>

Tehran has been able to count on Yerevan to alleviate its international isolation through these kinds of free economic zones and preferential trade agreements but it has also used the relationship and geographical proximity of Armenia to circumvent American sanctions. Before the achievement of the JCPOA, sanctions similarly closed Iran off from the outside world. As an ally, Armenia’s importance to Iran increased. This neighbor became of prime interest for Iranian banks seeking to develop financial mechanisms to evade restrictions on its banking sector. The sanctioned Central Bank of Iran (CBI) sought to use Armenia as an alternative to Turkey and the United Arab Emirates to

02, 2019. [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-khamenei-bolton/irans-khamenei-says-u-s-seeks-war-sedition-everywhere-idUSKCN1QG29T?utm\\_source=CSISAll&utm\\_campaign=b1e19975ab-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_02\\_27\\_02\\_26&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f326fc46b6-b1e19975ab-161801969](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-khamenei-bolton/irans-khamenei-says-u-s-seeks-war-sedition-everywhere-idUSKCN1QG29T?utm_source=CSISAll&utm_campaign=b1e19975ab-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_02_27_02_26&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f326fc46b6-b1e19975ab-161801969).

<sup>50</sup> “Iran’s Khamenei Wants ‘Strong’ Relations With Armenia.” Azatutyun, February 27, 2019. Accessed July 02, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29794531.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Danielyan, Emil. “Iran Says U.S. Sanctions No Hurdle To Closer Ties With Armenia.” Azatutyun, July 03, 2019. Accessed July 08, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30035484.html>.

<sup>52</sup> “Iran’s Rouhani Hosts Armenian Deputy PM in Tehran.” Panorama, July 3, 2019. Accessed July 04, 2019. <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2019/07/03/Rouhani-Armenian-deputy-PM/2136055>.

<sup>53</sup> “Iran, Armenia Must Find Solution for Challenges Facing Development of Ties.” Panorama, July 2, 2019. Accessed July 04, 2019. <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2019/07/02/Iran-Armenia/2135279>.

<sup>54</sup> Jardine, Bradley. “Armenia and Azerbaijan Compete to Attract Iranian Cargo.” Eurasianet, April 9, 2018. <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-and-azerbaijan-compete-to-attract-iranian-cargo>.

<sup>55</sup> Vatanka, Alex. “Looking at Armenian-Iranian Relations Through a Russian Lens.” Eurasianet, February 4, 2015. Accessed September 6, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/looking-at-armenian-iranian-relations-through-a-russian-lens>.

<sup>56</sup> “Eurasian Economic Union, Iran to Sign Free Trade Zone Agreement within Months - Kremlin.” TASS, April 2, 2018. Accessed July 02, 2019. <https://tass.com/economy/997298>.

<sup>57</sup> Giragosian, Richard. “Paradox of Power: Russia, Armenia, and Europe after the Velvet Revolution.” ECFR.EU, August 07, 2019. Accessed August 13, 2019. [https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/russia\\_armenia\\_and\\_europe\\_after\\_the\\_velvet\\_revolution](https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/russia_armenia_and_europe_after_the_velvet_revolution).

<sup>58</sup> “Officials Review Mechanisms to Implement FTA with Eurasian Economic Union.” IRNA English, September 1, 2019. <https://en.irna.ir/news/83461064/Officials-review-Mechanisms-to-implement-FTA-with-Eurasian-Economic>.

<sup>59</sup> Basravi, Zein. “The Economic Impact of US Sanctions on Iran’s Streets.” Al Jazeera, July 06, 2019. Accessed August 13, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/middleeast/2019/07/economic-impact-sanctions-iran-streets-190706190053896.html>.

<sup>60</sup> “Armenia Ready to Act as Platform for Closer EEU-Iran Economic Relations.” Financial Tribune, October 22, 2018. <https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-domestic-economy/94637/armenia-ready-to-act-as-platform-for-closer-eeu-iran>.

advance infrastructures which allow Iran to maintain its trade channels with foreign countries.<sup>61</sup>

These efforts to avoid pre-JCPOA sanctions came as the U.S.'s big stick swung hard at Iranian banks in Armenia, which today have since come under renewed scrutiny by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the international community. The Armenian based subsidiary of Bank Mellat became sanctioned along with its parent company for providing financial services for Iran's nuclear program.<sup>62</sup> Mellat's Yerevan branch lost big under the instatement of sanctions. According to the Deputy Head of the Financial Intelligence Unit at the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA), Arakel Meliksetyan, the Yerevan branch saw its assets decrease more than 50 percent from 2010 to 2012 alone.<sup>63</sup>

Leaked diplomatic cables concerning American-Armenian relations reveal much more than attempted workarounds in the area of finance. Wikileaks disclosures of a 2008 letter reveal that the U.S. accused Armenia of allegedly transferring machine guns and rockets to Iran in 2003.<sup>64</sup> These arms transferred to Tehran eventually made their way into the hands of Shia militants who used these weapons to reportedly killed one U.S. soldier and injured six others. Diplomatic officers requested that Armenia be willing to allow periodic and announced assessment visits to the Armenian-Iranian border to verify guards are working to detect attempted exports of contraband to Iran.<sup>65</sup>

These are of course examples of Armenian violations of sanctions in place before the signing of the JCPOA. It remains unclear how Armenia, its banks or citizens may currently be collaborating with their Iranian counterparts. Should America's sanction regime stay in place for more time to come, Armenia must remain vigilant not to become implicated in attempted sanctions evasion.

## The Russian Dimension

The complementarism of Armenian foreign policy is further challenged when one examines the Russian factor in the Armenian-Iranian relationship. While Pashinyan hopes to achieve a delicate balance of seeking to improve relations with the United States<sup>66</sup> and pursuing closer cooperation with Iran, he must simultaneously reaffirm the importance of Armenia's partnership with the Russian Federation.<sup>67</sup> This balancing act is critical as the complementarity of Armenian foreign policy can serve as a way to soften Armenian dependence on Russia on which it relies upon heavily.<sup>68</sup>

Historically Russia has found itself at odds with Iran concerning Armenia. After centuries of ruling over Eastern Armenian lands, the Russian Empire took control of the territory from the Persians in 1828. These territories would remain in Moscow's complete and total control until the implosion of the Soviet Union. Present day the relationship between Tehran and Moscow has transformed from one of rivalry to something more collaborative in nature. However, despite concurrence on many issues, any Iranian endeavors to expand ties with Armenia will likely be unfavorably viewed as encroachment onto the Kremlin's 'near abroad'.

In 2015 when the JCPOA was signed, the Armenian political structure expected the occasion to be a perfect opportunity to enhance bilateral cooperation with Iran. This assumption would unfortunately prove to be surface level only. Combined with Iran's already difficult return to the world's economic stage, the deepening of Armenian ties with Iran would have been largely been at odds with Moscow's interests in the region. The wish for collaboration would be further stifled by existing pre-conditions, namely Armenia's membership in the EAEU, which already committed Yerevan

<sup>61</sup> Charbonneau, Louis. "Exclusive: Iran Looks to Armenia to Skirt Bank Sanctions." Thomson Reuters, August 21, 2012. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-sanctions-armenia/exclusive-iran-looks-to-armenia-to-skirt-bank-sanctions-idUSBRE87K05420120821>.

<sup>62</sup> "Treasury Designates Bank Mellat Subsidiary and Chairman Under Proliferation Authority." November 5, 2009. Accessed September 5, 2019. <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/pages/tg355.aspx>.

<sup>63</sup> Charbonneau, Louis. "Exclusive: Iran Looks to Armenia to Skirt Bank Sanctions." Thomson Reuters, August 21, 2012. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-sanctions-armenia/exclusive-iran-looks-to-armenia-to-skirt-bank-sanctions-idUSBRE87K05420120821>.

<sup>64</sup> Abrahamyan, Gayane. "Armenia: WikiLeaks Cables Cause Stir in Yerevan." Eurasianet, November 30, 2010. Accessed September 5, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-wikileaks-cables-cause-stir-in-yerevan>.

<sup>65</sup> "US Embassy Cables: US Fury at Armenia over Arms Transfers to Iran | World News | The Guardian." n.d. Accessed September 5, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/184879>.

<sup>66</sup> "Pashinian Vows To 'Improve' U.S.-Armenian Relations." Azatutyun, July 04, 2019. Accessed July 09, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30037224.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Pinchuk, Denis. "New Armenian PM Tells Putin He Wants Closer Ties with Russia." Reuters, May 14, 2018. Accessed July 15, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-armenia-putin-pashinyan/new-armenian-pm-tells-putin-he-wants-closer-ties-with-russia-idUSKCN11F1A3>.

<sup>68</sup> Yepremyan, Tigran and Narek Mkrtchyan. "On Reasons Behind Armenia's Integration Choice: EU Vis-a-Vis Russia-Led EEU." *Eurolimes* no. Supplem (2016): 172-192.

to a number of agreements with Moscow and other EAEU partners.<sup>69</sup>

One such matter against the interests of Russia would be energy cooperation between Iran and Armenia. Russia has an effective monopoly over Armenia's gas infrastructure, selling it gas below market price.<sup>70</sup> Weaning itself off of complete dependency on gas giant Gazprom became more of a possible reality than a dream with the construction of a pipeline from Iran to Armenia. However, both Iran and Armenia decided it was best not to provoke the Russian bear and were deferential to Gazprom's order of a smaller than planned diameter of the pipeline, thus significantly decreasing the pipeline's supply capacity to Armenia. This demand would continue to prevent Armenia from achieving any semblance of a country with an amount of energy independence.<sup>71</sup> When Gazprom purchased the Armenian section of the Iran pipeline, it came to control the entirety of the Armenian gas infrastructure.<sup>72</sup> So even as Iran has discussed the possibility of increasing gas exports to Armenia, Gazprom would have full control over its distribution. Furthermore, any increased gas export capacity of Iran may fall under U.S. sanctions.<sup>73</sup> Any future energy projects between Yerevan and Tehran will likely encounter the same disdain from Moscow.

In April of 2016, a delegation of the Armenian Ministry of Defense met with then Iranian Minister of Defense Hossein Dehghan to discuss the possibility of closer defense cooperation between their two countries. At the time, according to Radio Free Europe's Armenian service, no elaboration was given on what kind of support, expertise or

technological exchanges would come from these 'agreements'.<sup>74</sup> This meeting came only weeks after the reignition of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The four-day war shook Armenian confidence in Russia's role as a security provider to Armenia. Yerevan perceived that its membership in CSTO and military alliance with Russia did nothing to prevent the retrogression of the security landscape in the region.<sup>75</sup> Going to Iran to discuss the defense collaboration was a signal to Moscow it was not prepared to rely solely on Russia to protect their security. Strategic cooperation would; however, be limited by Armenia's inconvenient membership in the CSTO. This alliance binds it to several agreements concerning military interoperability but more worryingly its constrains member's national security policies to pursue predominantly Russian interests.<sup>76</sup>

In any case, Armenia's economic standing would preclude any extensive defense cooperation with Iran. Within the framework of the CSTO, member states can buy weapons from Russia at a fraction of the price.<sup>77</sup> It is improbable that Tehran would be able to offer Yerevan as sweet of a deal as Moscow on armaments. Undoubtedly, Russia will continue its trend of assertive foreign policy and increase its investment into Azerbaijan and Turkey, a way to stoke fears in Armenia that Russia's promise of security may be conditioned by Armenian political fealty to the Kremlin.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Abrahamyan, Eduard. "The Potential and Obstacles to Armenia-Iran Strategic Relations." *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, March 16, 2016. <http://cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13343-the-potential-and-obstacles-to-armenia-iran-strategic-relations.html>.

<sup>70</sup> Grigoryan, Marianna. "Armenia: Will Murders Bring Change to Ties with Russia?" *Eurasianet*, January 16, 2015. <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-will-murders-bring-change-to-ties-with-russia>.

<sup>71</sup> Ter-Matevosyan, Vahram, Anna Drnoian, Narek Mkrtchyan, and Tigran Yepremyan. "Armenia in the Eurasian Economic Union: Reasons for Joining and Its Consequences." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 58, no. 3 (2017): 340-60. doi:10.1080/15387216.2017.1360193.

<sup>72</sup> Bedevian, Astghik. "Gas Operator To Buy Iran-Armenia Pipeline." *Azatutyun*, June 3, 2015. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/27052147.html>.

<sup>73</sup> Konarzewska, Natalia. "Armenia's Gas Dispute with Russia." *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, April 29, 2019. Accessed August 22, 2019. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13570-armenias-gas-dispute-with-russia.html>.

<sup>74</sup> "Armenia, Iran 'Agree' On Closer Defense Ties." *Azatutyun*, June 20, 2016. Accessed August 5, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/27809073.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Shirinyan, Anahit. "Armenia's Foreign Policy Balancing in an Age of Uncertainty." *Armenia's Foreign Policy Balancing in an Age of Uncertainty*. Chatham House: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, March 14, 2019. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-03-14-Armenia3.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> Weitz, Richard. "Assessing the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Capabilities and Vulnerabilities." *Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press*, October 2018. <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdf/files/PUB1391.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> "Deputy FM Comments on Prices of Russian Weapons Acquired by Armenia." *Panorama*, September 10, 2019. <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2019/09/10/Deputy-FM-Russian-weapons/2164319>.

<sup>78</sup> Shirinyan, Anahit. "Armenia's Foreign Policy Balancing in an Age of Uncertainty." *Armenia's Foreign Policy Balancing in an Age of Uncertainty*. Chatham House: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, March 14, 2019. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-03-14-Armenia3.pdf>.



## The Azerbaijani Dimension

The ratification of this EAEU free trade deal is equally advantageous for Armenia and comes at a critical time as it is locked in a competition with Azerbaijan to curry favor with their southern neighbor.<sup>79</sup> When the JCPOA was signed in 2015, naturally Iran did not just look to its neighbor Armenia for closer cooperation but also to Azerbaijan. This is a foreign policy strategy which strengthens Tehran's position as a regional heavyweight. So while the Islamic Republic remains committed to deepening its ties with Armenia it simultaneously participates in projects which totally exclude Armenia's participation. One such example is the Kars-Igdir-Nakhchivan Railway.<sup>80</sup> This project will strengthen Armenia's enemies as it will not only connect Turkey to Nakhichevan but it is planned that one day the railway will connect all the way to Pakistan.<sup>81</sup>

Fortunately for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran's relationship is fraught with mutual suspicion which may detract from productive cooperation. A canceled summit between Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia is the tip of the iceberg of disagreements and problems between these two countries.<sup>82</sup> While both countries are Shi'a majority, Iran is a theocratic republic and Azerbaijan a secular state. Most Azerbaijanis are averse to what they brand as an extreme form of Islam.<sup>83</sup> There also exist disagreements concerning the use of the Caspian Sea and its resources. Further complicating these disputes, the U.S. Military has increased

funding to Baku for its naval fleet, an apparent move to counter threats emanating from Tehran.<sup>84</sup>

These concerns are also accompanied by unacceptable positions to either side. To the irritation of Azerbaijan, Iran maintains a neutral position in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.<sup>85</sup> To the dismay of Iran, Azerbaijan maintains friendly relations with its largest regional enemy, Israel. While this relationship between Baku and Tel Aviv may be mutually advantageous, part of the basis of this partnership developed based off of perceived threats from Tehran.<sup>86</sup>

Finally, for Iran it fears Azerbaijan may stoke irredentist claims in its Northwest provinces which are home to millions of ethnic Azeris. When Azerbaijan reclaimed its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union its second president, Abulfaz Elchibey, became a controversial figure in Tehran as he actively promulgated the idea of Iran's ethnic Azeris rejoining Azerbaijan proper.<sup>87</sup> With the two successive presidents, Heydar and Ilham Aliyev, calming the situation at the highest political level<sup>88</sup>, but suspicions and ethnic cleavages remain.<sup>89</sup> Given these factors such an environment is not conducive to political trust and will hinder future economic and political endeavors between Azerbaijan and Iran.

## The Turkish Dimension

Armenian cooperation with Iran produces a unique opportunity to another counterbalance regional player and

<sup>79</sup> "Armenia Stands to Benefit from Eurasian Economic Union, Iran Trade Deal." JAMnews, June 11, 2019. Accessed August 13, 2019. <https://jam-news.net/armenia-will-receive-privileges-to-import-more-than-500-goods-from-iran/>.

<sup>80</sup> Jardine, Bradley. "With New Railway, Turkey Seeks to Isolate Armenia and Integrate Azerbaijan." Eurasianet, June 29, 2019. Accessed July 02, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/with-new-railway-turkey-seeks-to-isolate-armenia-and-integrate-azerbaijan>.

<sup>81</sup> "Railroad Planned With Turkey, Azerbaijan." Financial Tribune, June 16, 2018. Accessed July 02, 2019. <https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-domestic-economy/88082/railroad-planned-with-turkey-azerbaijan>.

<sup>82</sup> Martirosyan, Tigranuhi. "Iran Seeking to 'disrupt New US-led Alliance' in Persian Gulf – Expert." Tert.am, August 19, 2019. Accessed August 22, 2019. <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/08/19/israyelyan/3073889>.

<sup>83</sup> Coffey, Luke. "After the Nuclear Deal Iran Eyes S Caucasus." Al Jazeera, August 22, 2015. Accessed August 23, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/08/nuclear-deal-iran-eyes-caucasus-150822094307004.html>.

<sup>84</sup> Kucera, Joshua. "Amid Iran Crisis, U.S. Offers Big Military Aid Boost to Azerbaijan." Eurasianet, August 9, 2019. Accessed August

23, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/amid-iran-crisis-us-offers-big-military-aid-boost-to-azerbaijan>.

<sup>85</sup> Zarifian, Julien. "Iran and its Two Neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan: Resuming Relationships Under America's Suspicious Eyes." *Iran and the Caucasus* 13, no. 2 (2009): 383-399.

<sup>86</sup> Göksel, Oğuzhan. "Beyond Countering Iran: A Political Economy of Azerbaijan-Israel Relations." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 4 (2015): 655-75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2015.1048973>.

<sup>87</sup> Brown, Roland Elliott. "Strange Triangle: Iran, Armenia, and Azerbaijan." IranWire, October 31, 2014. Accessed August 22, 2019. <https://iranwire.com/en/features/682>.

<sup>88</sup> Zarifian, Julien. "Iran and its Two Neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan: Resuming Relationships Under America's Suspicious Eyes." *Iran and the Caucasus* 13, no. 2 (2009): 383-399.

<sup>89</sup> Souleimanov, Emil. "Football Nationalism Among Iran's Azeris." *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, June 24, 2015. Accessed August 23, 2019. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13238-football-nationalism-among-irans-azeris.html>.

strategic opponent Turkey. Ankara is unwilling to normalize relations with Yerevan without preconditions. The successor state to the Ottoman empire to this day refuses to recognize the 1915 genocide of the Armenians and Armenia's international quest for genocide recognition is a thorn in Ankara's side.<sup>90</sup> Turkey also remains in brotherly solidarity brotherly with Azerbaijan concerning the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, its border with Armenia closed since 1993. Furthermore, its pan-Turkic ideology of "One Nation, Two States" with Azerbaijan distresses Armenia but also displeases Iran. With the threat of encirclement from this Turkic-Azeri alliance, Armenia is left with no choice but to aggressively foster closer ties with Iran.

For Iran, it often finds itself geopolitically at odds with Turkey and relations between Tehran and Ankara have never been particularly warm. Given its NATO membership and close ties with the United States, Iran recognizes Turkey as a proxy of American interests in the Middle East. Tehran, considering itself a righteous Muslim country at the forefront in the fight against American imperialism, takes this as a serious offense from an Islamic nation like Turkey.<sup>91</sup> The feelings of discomfort concerning ideological differences is mutual. Turkey, like Azerbaijan, views Iran's theocratic leanings unfavorably and as a threat to the secularism of the nation. However, over time as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has begun to eschew from secularism and leaned increasingly into authoritarianism this has led to cosier relations.<sup>92</sup>

A degree of economic pragmatism offers an indemnity to the geopolitical and ideological tensions between the two states. Non-energy trade is significant but Turkey's energy trade with Iran has become a substantial annoyance to U.S. Turkey relations.<sup>93</sup> With the American sanctions campaign in full swing, the U.S. will sanction any nation importing Iranian oil.

<sup>90</sup> Galstyan, Narek. "The Main Dimensions of Armenia's Foreign and Security Policy." *The Main Dimensions of Armenia's Foreign and Security Policy*. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center, March 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Larrabee, F. Stephen and Alireza Nader. "Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013. Accessed September 1, 2019. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR258.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR258.html).

<sup>92</sup> Kirişci, Kemal. "Post-Revolutionary Iran and Turkey at 40: Pragmatism and Convergence." April 4 2019. Accessed September 15, 2019. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/04/04/post-revolutionary-iran-and-turkey-at-40-pragmatism-and-convergence/>.

<sup>93</sup> Larrabee, F. Stephen and Alireza Nader. "Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013. Accessed September 1, 2019. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR258.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR258.html).

<sup>94</sup> Sezer, Can. "Despite Rhetoric, Turkey Complies with U.S. Oil Sanctions on Iran" Reuters, May 21, 2019. Accessed September 15,

Turkey, while publicly criticizing this American ultimatum, has complied with the sanctions and brought its Iranian oil imports down to zero.<sup>94</sup> For these stated reasons, Turkish-Iranian cooperation promises neither stability nor genuineness for the near future. While ideology is not the sole determinant of Iranian foreign policy, as evidenced by Iranian preference from Christian Armenia over Shi'ite Azerbaijan, it plays an important role and the long running disagreement over Syria hinder a sustainable partnership.

## Conclusion

With a new government at the helm, there has been a great focus on the domestic situation, perhaps to the detriment of Armenia's foreign policy concerns.<sup>95</sup> Iranologist Vardan Voskanyan asserts that this focus inward is neither "reassuring" nor "satisfying".<sup>96</sup> As Armenia's neighborhood becomes more complicated, Voskanyan's remarks become more clear. Russo-Georgian diplomatic relations continue to deteriorate leaving Armenia in a precarious position. Although Tbilisi assures that the current spat with Moscow will not jeopardize Armenia's access to Russia through the Georgian transport corridor, the situation remains tense.<sup>97</sup> Even with these assurances, Yerevan should be more committed than ever to maintaining good relations with Iran, its only dependable portal to the outside world.

While the level of political collaboration between Iran and Armenia runs high, economic ties still have room for improvement. The growth of economic relations may be prioritized by leaders in Yerevan and Tehran, but as Iran expert Armen Israelyan contends, "daily work" toward developing serious projects is necessary should the two sides wish for economic cooperation to grow.<sup>98</sup> Pashinyan and future leaders would do well to learn from the mistakes

2019. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-oil-turkey/despite-rhetoric-turkey-complies-with-u-s-oil-sanctions-on-iran-idUKKCN1SR16S>.

<sup>95</sup> "Armenian Authorities 'Too Preoccupied' with Maintaining Power to Address Foreign Policy Concerns - Opinion." Tert.am, August 24, 2019. <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/08/24/Hambaryan/307740>

<sup>96</sup> Asatryan, Maria. "Armenian Iranologist on US Sanctions against Iran, Impact on Armenia." News.am, May 31, 2019. <https://news.am/eng/news/515866.html>.

<sup>97</sup> Harutyunyan, Sargis. "Georgian Minister Allays Armenian Concerns Over Russia Border Crossing." Azatutyun, June 27, 2019. Accessed August 19, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30024427.html>.

<sup>98</sup> "Armenian PM's Upcoming Visit Expected to Boost Ties with Iran." Armenpress.am, February 25, 2019. Accessed August 19, 2019. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/965453.html>.

of the previous regimes and prioritize this special relationship. Promises for projects are easy<sup>99</sup>, but concrete plans are what will improve the economic standing of Armenia. Proposals to make Armenia a transit country for Iranian gas to Georgia are likely to spark backlash from Washington. At a time when the American administration is trying to box Iran in, it may not take too kindly to Armenia offering Iran ways to remain afloat during its “toughest ever” sanctions. Focusing on Iran’s relationship with the EAEU will prove to be an effective way to boost bilateral trade. With the next EAEU summit taking place in Yerevan in October of 2019, Pashinian’s invitation to and the attendance of the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is a success for Armenia.

Complementarity is still the official protocol in Yerevan, its National Security Strategy not being updated since 2007. Since the Velvet Revolution, the government has placed a renewed interest on diversifying its economy and reducing its overdependence on Russia. It must remain wary; however, to not mystify Moscow. The annexation of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Crimea show how far Russia is willing to go to protect its interests in their ‘near abroad’. Russian investment and rapprochement with Azerbaijan and Turkey is a checkmate on Armenia’s attempt to diversify its foreign policy toward Iran. This being stated, Armenia must continue to compete with Azerbaijan to curry the favor of Iran. The conditions of competition are favorable to Armenia given the suspicions that remain between Azerbaijan and Iran. While pragmatism reigns in Azeri-Iranian cooperation, long term sustainable development of a mutually beneficial partnership will be strained. The same may be said about the Turkish and Iranian relationship.

In conclusion, as Iran walks back its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA the United States’s resolve to keep its sanctions regime in place strengthens and any attempts from Armenia to decrease its dependence on Russia will surely create enmity in the Kremlin. Overall, it is up to the Armenian government to make the necessity of this relationship with Iran known to not only the United States and Russia but to its neighbors and the greater international community.

## Bibliography

1. Abrahamyan, Eduard. “Pashinyan Formulates Armenia's New Iran Strategy.” Jamestown, October 15, 2018. <https://jamestown.org/program/pashinyan-formulates-armenias-new-iran-strategy/>
2. Abrahamyan, Eduard. “The Potential and Obstacles to Armenia-Iran Strategic Relations.” The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, March 16, 2016. Accessed August 30, 2019. <http://cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13343-the-potential-and-obstacles-to-armenia-iran-strategic-relations.html>
3. Abrahamyan, Gayane. “Armenia: WikiLeaks Cables Cause Stir in Yerevan.” Eurasianet, November 30, 2010. Accessed September 5, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-wikileaks-cables-cause-stir-in-yerevan>
4. Arakelyan, Liana. “United States 'need Clear Explanations' on Iran's Vital Role for Armenia.” Tert.am, February 16, 2019. Accessed August 05, 2019. <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/02/16/iran/2923798>
5. Asatryan, Maria. “Armenian Iranologist on US Sanctions against Iran, Impact on Armenia.” News.am, May 31, 2019. <https://news.am/eng/news/515866.html>
6. Basravi, Zein. “The Economic Impact of US Sanctions on Iran's Streets.” Al Jazeera, July 06, 2019. Accessed August 13, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/middleeast/2019/07/economic-impact-sanctions-iran-streets-190706190053896.html>
7. Bedevian, Astghik. “Gas Operator To Buy Iran-Armenia Pipeline.” Azatutyun, June 3, 2015. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/27052147.html>
8. Brown, Roland Elliott. “Strange Triangle: Iran, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.” IranWire, October 31, 2014. Accessed August 22, 2019. <https://iranwire.com/en/features/682>
9. Charbonneau, Louis. “Exclusive: Iran Looks to Armenia to Skirt Bank Sanctions.” Thomson Reuters, August 21, 2012. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-sanctions-armenia/exclusive-iran-looks-to-armenia-to-skirt-bank-sanctions-idUSBRE87K05420120821>
10. Coffey, Luke. “After the Nuclear Deal Iran Eyes S Caucasus.” Al Jazeera, August 22, 2015. Accessed August 23, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/08/nuclear-deal-iran-eyes-caucasus-150822094307004.html>
11. Danielyan, Emil. “Iran Says U.S. Sanctions No Hurdle To Closer Ties With Armenia.” Azatutyun, July 03, 2019. Accessed July 08, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30035484.html>
12. Danielyan, Emil. “U.S. Sanctions On Iran 'Explained' To Armenian Government, Banks.” Azatutyun, November 16, 2018. Accessed July 16, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29604754.html>

<sup>99</sup> “Armenia, Iran Should Focus on Joint Projects Not Included in Sanctions List, PM Says.” News.am, September 1, 2019. <https://news.am/eng/news/531202.html>.

13. Daragahi, Borzou. "I Know You're a Terrorist, but What Am I?" Atlantic Council, April 9, 2019. Accessed August 05, 2019.  
<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/irgc-terrorist-designation-what-s-in-a-name>
14. Ferrero, Christopher. "The Iran Narrative: The Ideational Context of US Foreign Policy Decision-Making toward the Islamic Republic of Iran." *Iran & the Caucasus* 17, no. 1 (2013): 41-76.  
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/23597519>
15. Galstyan, Narek. "The Main Dimensions of Armenia's Foreign and Security Policy." *The Main Dimensions of Armenia's Foreign and Security Policy*. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center, March 2013.
16. Ghazinyan, Aris. "ARMENIA AND IRAN: ANCIENT RELATIONS AND CHANGING WORLD NECESSITIES." AGBU, May 1, 2009.  
<https://agbu.org/news-item/armenia-and-iran-ancient-relations-and-changing-world-necessities/>
17. Giragosian, Richard. "Paradox of Power: Russia, Armenia, and Europe after the Velvet Revolution." ECFR.EU, August 07, 2019. Accessed August 13, 2019.  
[https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/russia\\_armenia\\_and\\_europe\\_after\\_the\\_velvet\\_revolution](https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/russia_armenia_and_europe_after_the_velvet_revolution)
- Glum, Luise. "'The US Is Too Far Away, and Iran Is next Door.'" Zenith Magazine, June 5, 2019. Accessed June 28, 2019.  
<https://magazine.zenith.me/en/politics/interview-analyst-anahit-shirinyan-armenia>
18. Göksel, Oğuzhan. "Beyond Countering Iran: A Political Economy of Azerbaijan-Israel Relations." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 4 (2015): 655-75.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2015.1048973>
19. Grigoryan, Armen. "Armenia and the Iran Deal." The Central-Asia Caucasus Analyst, August 13, 2015. Accessed July 11, 2019.  
<https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13263-armenia-and-the-iran-deal.html>
20. Grigoryan, Marianna. "Armenia: Will Murders Bring Change to Ties with Russia?" Eurasianet, January 16, 2015.  
<https://eurasianet.org/armenia-will-murders-bring-change-to-ties-with-russia>
21. Harutyunyan, Aneta. "Secretary of Security Council Highly Appreciates Level of Armenian-Iranian Relations." Armenpress.am, July 26, 2019. Accessed August 05, 2019.  
<https://armenpress.am/eng/news/982910.html>
22. Harutyunyan, Sargis. "Georgian Minister Allays Armenian Concerns Over Russia Border Crossing." Azatutyun, June 27, 2019. Accessed August 19, 2019.  
<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30024427.html>
23. Hovhannisyan, Hripsime. "United States 'not Selective' in Iran Sanctions." Armenian News - Tert.am, March 15, 2019. Accessed August 02, 2019.  
<https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/03/15/usa/2948850>
24. Jardine, Bradley. "Armenia and Azerbaijan Compete to Attract Iranian Cargo." Eurasianet, April 9, 2018. Accessed September 2, 2019.  
<https://eurasianet.org/armenia-and-azerbaijan-compete-to-attract-iranian-cargo>
25. Jardine, Bradley. "With New Railway, Turkey Seeks to Isolate Armenia and Integrate Azerbaijan." Eurasianet, June 29, 2019. Accessed July 02, 2019.  
<https://eurasianet.org/with-new-railway-turkey-seeks-to-isolate-armenia-and-integrate-azerbaijan>
- Kirişci, Kemal. "Post-Revolutionary Iran and Turkey at 40: Pragmatism and Convergence." April 4 2019. Accessed September 15, 2019.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/04/04/post-revolutionary-iran-and-turkey-at-40-pragmatism-and-convergence/>
26. Konarzewska, Natalia. "Armenia's Gas Dispute with Russia." The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, April 29, 2019. Accessed August 22, 2019.  
<https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13570-armenias-gas-dispute-with-russia.html>
27. Kucera, Josh. "After Bolton Takes Aim at Russia and Iran, Is Armenia the Collateral Damage?" *Eurasianet.org*, October 30, 2018. Accessed June 27, 2019.  
<https://eurasianet.org/after-bolton-takes-aim-at-russia-and-iran-is-armenia-the-collateral-damage>
28. Kucera, Joshua. "Amid Iran Crisis, U.S. Offers Big Military Aid Boost to Azerbaijan." Eurasianet, August 9, 2019. Accessed August 23, 2019.  
<https://eurasianet.org/amid-iran-crisis-us-offers-big-military-aid-boost-to-azerbaijan>
29. Larrabee, F. Stephen and Alireza Nader, Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013.  
[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR258.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR258.html)  
Also available in print form
30. Markarov, Alexander, and Vahe Davtyan. "POST-VELVET REVOLUTION ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES." *Demokratizatsiya* 26, no. 4 (2018): 531+. *Expanded Academic ASAP* (accessed July 1, 2019).  
[https://link.galegroup-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/apps/doc/A562868187/EAIM?u=gla\\_suni&sid=EAIM&xid=7f5cc6a2](https://link.galegroup-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/apps/doc/A562868187/EAIM?u=gla_suni&sid=EAIM&xid=7f5cc6a2)
31. Martirosyan, Tigranuhi. "Iran Seeking to 'disrupt New US-led Alliance' in Persian Gulf - Expert." Tert.am, August 19, 2019. Accessed August 22, 2019.  
<https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/08/19/isravelyan/3073889>
32. Musheghyan, Trdat. "U.S. Treasury Dept. Freezes Assets of Yerevan Company; Says It Services Iranian Airline Assisting Iran's Proxies in Syria." Hetq.am, January 24, 2019. Accessed August 19, 2019.  
<https://hetq.am/en/article/100303>
33. O'Byrne, David. "Iran and Armenia Propose Gas Transit to Georgia." Eurasianet, March 1, 2019.  
<https://eurasianet.org/iran-and-armenia-propose-gas-transit-to-georgia>

34. Pinchuk, Denis. "New Armenian PM Tells Putin He Wants Closer Ties with Russia." Reuters. May 14, 2018. Accessed July 15, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-armenia-putin-pashinyan/new-armenian-pm-tells-putin-he-wants-closer-ties-with-russia-idUSKCN11F1A3>
35. Sezer, Can. "Despite Rhetoric, Turkey Complies with U.S. Oil Sanctions on Iran." Reuters, May 21, 2019. Accessed September 15, 2019. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-oil-turkey/despite-rhetoric-turkey-complies-with-u-s-oil-sanctions-on-iran-idUKKCN1SR16S>
36. Sharafedin, Bozorgmehr. "Iran's Khamenei Says U.S. Seeks War, Sedition 'everywhere'." Reuters, February 27, 2019. Accessed July 02, 2019. [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-khamenei-bolton/irans-khamenei-says-u-s-seeks-war-sedition-everywhere-idUSKCN1QG29T?utm\\_source=CSISAll&utm\\_campaign=b1e19975ab-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_02\\_27\\_02\\_26&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f326fc46b6-b1e19975ab-161801969](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-khamenei-bolton/irans-khamenei-says-u-s-seeks-war-sedition-everywhere-idUSKCN1QG29T?utm_source=CSISAll&utm_campaign=b1e19975ab-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_02_27_02_26&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f326fc46b6-b1e19975ab-161801969)
37. Shirinyan, Anahit. "Armenia's Foreign Policy Balancing in an Age of Uncertainty." *Armenia's Foreign Policy Balancing in an Age of Uncertainty*. Chatham House: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, March 14, 2019. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-03-14-Armenia3.pdf>
38. Souleimanov, Emil. "Football Nationalism Among Iran's Azeris." *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, June 24, 2015. Accessed August 23, 2019. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13238-football-nationalism-among-irans-azeris.html>
39. Synovitz, Ron. "Bolton Vows To 'Squeeze Iran,' Explore Weapons Sales To Armenia." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, October 25, 2018. Accessed August 01, 2019. <https://www.rferl.org/a/u-s-national-security-adviser-bolton-vows-to-squeeze-iran-/29563540.html>
40. Ter-Matevosyan, Vahram, Anna Drnoian, Narek Mkrtchyan, and Tigran Yepremyan. "Armenia in the Eurasian Economic Union: Reasons for Joining and Its Consequences." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 58, no. 3 (2017): 340-60. doi: 10.1080 / 15387216.2017.1360193.
41. Titizian, Maria. "U.S. Ambassador Mills: I Leave Inspired and Hopeful." *EVN Report*, October 15, 2018. Accessed August 02, 2019. <https://www.evnreport.com/politics/u-s-ambassador-mills-i-leave-inspired-and-hopeful>
42. Usta, Betül. "Turkey, Iran Aim to Keep Trade Flow via Financial Mechanism." *DailySabah*, July 03, 2019. Accessed July 04, 2019. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/2019/07/04/turkey-iran-aim-to-keep-trade-flow-via-financial-mechanism>
43. Vatanka, Alex. "Looking at Armenian-Iranian Relations Through a Russian Lens." *Eurasianet*, February 4, 2015. Accessed September 6, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/looking-at-armenian-iranian-relations-through-a-russian-lens>
44. Weitz, Richard. "Assessing the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Capabilities and Vulnerabilities." *Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press*, October 2018. <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/PUB1391.pdf>
45. Yepremyan, Tigran. "Armenia Within the Complex of 'Overlapping Authority and Multiple Loyalty.'" *THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: SECURITY CHALLENGES*, 2018, 227-41. doi: [http://www.studii.eu.org/files/publications/EUSEC\\_book\\_2018\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.studii.eu.org/files/publications/EUSEC_book_2018_pdf.pdf)
46. Yepremyan, Tigran and Narek Mkrtchyan. "On Reasons Behind Armenia's Integration Choice: EU Vis-a-Vis Russia-Led EEU." *Eurolimes* no. Supplem (2016): 172-192.
47. Zarifian, Julien. "Christian Armenia, Islamic Iran: Two (Not So) Strange Companions Geopolitical Stakes and Significance of a Special Relationship." *Iran & the Caucasus* 12, no. 1 (2008): 123-51. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/25597359>
48. Zarifian, Julien. "La présidence Trump et la (nouvelle) dégradation des (non-) relations américano-iraniennes." *Orients Stratégiques* 7 (2018): 41-53.
49. Zarifian, Julien. "Iran and its Two Neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan: Resuming Relationships Under America's Suspicious Eyes." *Iran and the Caucasus* 13, no. 2 (2009): 383-399.
50. *Armenia 2011 — Without Illusions*. December 31, 2011. Report, The Civilitas Foundation, Yerevan.
51. "Armenian Authorities 'Too Preoccupied' with Maintaining Power to Address Foreign Policy Concerns — Opinion." *Tert.am*, August 24, 2019. <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/08/24/Hambaryan/3077400>.
52. "Armenian Company Baffled after Getting Included in United States BIS Entity List." *armenpress.am*, August 14, 2019. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/984888.html>
53. "Armenia, Iran 'Agree' On Closer Defense Ties." *Azatutyun*, June 20, 2016. Accessed August 5, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/27809073.html>
54. "Armenia, Iran Should Focus on Joint Projects Not Included in Sanctions List, PM Says." *News.am*, September 1, 2019. <https://news.am/eng/news/531202.html>
55. "Armenian PM's Upcoming Visit Expected to Boost Ties with Iran." *Armenpress.am*, February 25, 2019. Accessed August 19, 2019. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/965453.html>
56. "Armenia Ready to Act as Platform for Closer EEU-Iran Economic Relations." *Financial Tribune*, October 22, 2018. <https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-domestic-economy/94637/armenia-ready-to-act-as-platform-for-closer-eeu-iran>

57. "Armenian Speaker Meets U.S. Congressional Leaders." Azatutyun, July 17, 2019. Accessed July 18, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30061382.html>
58. "Armenia Stands to Benefit from Eurasian Economic Union, Iran Trade Deal." JAMnews, June 11, 2019. Accessed August 13, 2019. <https://jam-news.net/armenia-will-receive-privileges-to-import-more-than-500-goods-from-iran/>
59. "Armenia Ready to Boost Cooperation with Iran 'to the Best of Its Efforts' - Ambassador." Tert.am, February 18, 2019. Accessed August 05, 2019. <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/02/18/artashes-tumanyan/2925038>
60. "Armenian Speaker Rules Out Support For U.S. Sanctions Against Iran." Azatutyun, July 16, 2019. Accessed July 17, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30058646.html>
61. Azatutyun. "U.S. Official: Armenia 'Very Close Friend, Ally'." YouTube video, 15:16. June 23, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vbj8X8w3mM>
62. "Deputy FM Comments on Prices of Russian Weapons Acquired by Armenia." Panorama, September 10, 2019. <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2019/09/10/Deputy-FM-Russian-weapons/2164319>
63. "EU 'Pleased' With Armenian Support For Iran Nuclear Deal." RFE/RL, June 22, 2018. Accessed July 11, 2019. <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/eu-pleased-with-armenian-support-for-iran-nuclear-deal/29314262.html>
64. "Eurasian Economic Union, Iran to Sign Free Trade Zone Agreement within Months - Kremlin." TASS, April 2, 2018. Accessed July 02, 2019. <https://tass.com/economy/997298>
65. "Iran, Armenia Must Find Solution for Challenges Facing Development of Ties." Panorama, July 2, 2019. Accessed July 04, 2019. <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2019/07/02/Iran-Armenia/2135279>
66. "Iran Warns Against 'Third-Party Interference' In Ties With Armenia." Azatutyun, February 27, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29794134.html>
67. "Iranian Embassy Makes Statement on Alleged Military Co-Op with Armenia." Trend.Az, July 18, 2019. <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3092519.html>
68. "Iran's Khamenei Wants 'Strong' Relations With Armenia." Azatutyun, February 27, 2019. Accessed July 02, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29794531.html>
69. "Iran's Rouhani Hosts Armenian Deputy PM in Tehran." Panorama, July 3, 2019. Accessed July 04, 2019. <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2019/07/03/Rouhani-Armenian-deputy-PM/2136055>
70. "Officials Review Mechanisms to Implement FTA with Eurasian Economic Union." IRNA English, September 1, 2019. <https://en.irna.ir/news/83461064/Officials-review-Mechanisms-to-implement-FTA-with-Eurasian-Economic>
71. "Pashinian Says He Made 'Clear' To U.S. That Armenia Will Maintain Ties With Iran." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 2, 2018. Accessed June 26, 2019. <https://www.rferl.org/a/pashinian-says-made-clear-to-us-bolton-armenia-will-maintain-ties-with-iran/29578365.html>
72. "Pashinian Vows To 'Improve' U.S.-Armenian Relations." Azatutyun. July 04, 2019. Accessed July 09, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30037224.html>
73. "Pashinian Warns Of Regional Security Challenges For Armenia." Azatutyun, June 24, 2018. Accessed June 28, 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30017265.html>
74. "Protest in Baku against 'Iran-Armenia Military Production'." OC Media, July 20, 2019. <https://oc-media.org/protest-in-baku-against-iran-armenia-military-production/>
75. "Railroad Planned With Turkey, Azerbaijan." Financial Tribune, June 16, 2018. Accessed July 02, 2019. <https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-domestic-economy/88082/railroad-planned-with-turkey-azerbaijan>
76. "Treasury Designates Bank Mellat Subsidiary and Chairman Under Proliferation Authority." November 5, 2009. Accessed September 5, 2019. <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/pages/tg355.aspx>
77. "US Embassy Cables: US Fury at Armenia over Arms Transfers to Iran | World News | The Guardian." n.d. Accessed September 5, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/184879>
78. "US Places Sanctions on Two Armenian Companies." JAMnews. JAMnews, August 15, 2019. <https://jam-news.net/us-places-sanctions-on-two-armenian-companies/>
79. "US Treasury's Big Stick Hits Armenia Sales Agent That 'Acts for Sanctioned Iranian Airline'." bne IntelliNews, January 24, 2019. <https://www.intellinews.com/us-treasury-s-big-stick-hits-armenia-sales-agent-that-acts-for-sanctioned-iranian-airline-155320/?source=armenia>
80. "Переговоры Азербайджана и Армении в Вашингтоне. Зачем Это Нужно США? - BBC News Русская Служба." BBC Russian Service, June 21, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-48704252>