



## RSC PRESENTATION NOTES



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### *EUROPEAN SPACE: WHY IT IS NECESSARY*

#### *ARMENIA'S EUROPEAN PATH*

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## **Introduction**

For Armenia, this post-war period has been a time of unprecedented challenges, unexpected threats and unforeseen developments. Yet Armenia has remained committed to its European path and has demonstrated renewed political will to deepen relations with the European Union (EU).

### **I. The Broader Context of Armenia-EU Engagement**

- Despite a strategic “U-turn” in 2013 when Armenia sacrificed its Association Agreement with the EU, Armenia received a “second chance” to restore relations and regain trust, with a new Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which entered into force in 2021.
- With the change of government in 2018, Armenia ushered in a new period of democratic transformation, marked by free and fair elections and a deepening of reform.
- With a sustained momentum of democratic transformation, Armenia was able to earn genuine democratic credentials and became endowed with a rare commodity of legitimacy.

## II. Armenia in 2020: A Test of Western Resolve

- The 2020 war posed a significant test of Western resolve. And it was a test that the West in general, and the EU in particular, failed. This indictment of the West was not only of response, but also due to the failure to challenge the implications from the 2020 war.
- More specifically, Azerbaijan's military victory in the 2020 war resulted in two dangerous precedents, each of which threatens regional security and stability and undermines Western ideals and values:
  - The first precedent was a dangerous vindication of Azerbaijan's successful use of force over diplomacy.
  - The second, related precedent was the apparent validation of authoritarian power over struggling democracy.

While both precedents could have weakened Armenian faith in democracy and confidence in the West, Armenia's path to Europe remained resolute. But these two dangerous precedents only encouraged and emboldened Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022.

- In terms of impact, the war of 2020 also left two significant casualties: the death of the national perception of Armenian "invincibility" and the demise of effective deterrence capable of restraining Azerbaijan.

## III. Armenia's New Post-War Reality

- In the wake of the unexpected defeat in the 2020 war, a second, early free and fair election was held in Armenia in 2021, with the incumbent government winning reelection.
- Armenia has struggled to adapt to a difficult post-war reality and strived to adopt policies to respond to continued threats to Armenian security, including cross-border incursions by units of the Azerbaijani armed forces in 2021 and 2022, which resulted in Azerbaijan's seizure of more than 200 square kilometers of sovereign Armenian territory.
- Nevertheless, Armenia has remained committed to post-war diplomacy, based on concession and compromise with Azerbaijan.

## IV. Armenia-EU: A Natural Convergence

- Against that backdrop of lingering insecurity and a legacy of instability in the South Caucasus, Armenia now stands out as a reliable and valuable partner of the EU.
- There is a natural convergence of interests, with Armenia reasserting its independence and sovereignty, pursuing a strategic diversification of security partners, and defending its democratic gains and achievements.
- For its part, the EU is committed to investing in the development of Armenia, with a specific focus on forging resiliency. This EU commitment is demonstrated by the formation and deployment of the EU Monitoring Mission to Armenia and with plans to provide broader security assistance to Armenia.

## V. What Next for Armenia-EU?

Looking ahead, the outlook for Armenia's path to Europe is firmly encouraging but is far from assured. Clearly, there is a "storm on the horizon," with justified expectations that no matter the outcome of Russia's failed invasion of Ukraine, an angry, vengeful Russia is most likely to lash out at all of her neighbors throughout the "near abroad." This possible scenario necessitates preparation in advance of such a storm from Russia, with a goal of attaining more robust resiliency for Armenia in three specific policy areas.

- First, there is an outstanding need for enabling the strengthening of democratic institutions over simply empowering individual democrats in Armenia.
- A second policy priority stems from the obligation to support Armenia's defense of "sovereign choice," based on an Armenian reassertion of its independence after decades of over-dependence on one unreliable security partner. This is also a course correction to the country's cumulative "mortgaging" of national security and "out-sourcing" of defense.
- And the third policy imperative is rooted in the necessity to regain deterrence, in this case, through economic interdependence in the region, and with Armenia becoming a transit state in the context of a restoration of trade and transport. This also required the reopening of closed borders more broadly, as in the case of Armenia-Turkey "normalization."