



# RSC Analytical Briefing Developments in Armenia & South Caucasus Region

Richard Giragosian

20 February 2026

# RSC Briefing Issues

## *Foreign Policy Issues*

- Armenia-Azerbaijan diplomacy
- “Normalization” with Türkiye
- US engagement & TRIPP

## *Domestic politics*

- Vendetta politics: church and state
- State of the political opposition
- Pre-election year preview

# Armenia-Azerbaijan Diplomacy

- March: negotiations over post-war bilateral peace treaty closed
- July: Abu Dhabi bilateral summit
- August: White House “peace summit” & two agreements
- November-December: grain imports & Azerbaijani oil shipments

# Personal Chemistry



# What Next for Armenia-Azerbaijan Diplomacy

- Inter-agency dialogue & negotiations on bilateral track with US
- Border demarcation talks
- Azerbaijan eases trade and transit restrictions
- Possible partial prisoner release

# The Washington “Peace Summit”



# August 2025

## Washington Peace Summit

- US presidential initiative: broader context of positive momentum
- US interest and commitment: perception vs. reality
- Bilateral peace treaty initialed
- Connectivity framework signed

# Trump Route for International Peace & Prosperity (TRIPP)



# Regional Repercussions

- Russian reaction uncharacteristically passive & pensive
- Iran's sole "red line" respected
- Georgia as "loser state"
- Positive outlook for Armenia-Türkiye "normalization"

# Türkiye and TRIPP



# Armenia-Türkiye “Normalization”



- Establishing diplomatic relations
- Re-opening the closed border

# Armenia-Türkiye “Normalization”



The Turkish position: guarded optimism

- Wary of Azerbaijan
- Positive Momentum

# Armenia-Türkiye “Normalization”

- Renewed Turkish interest: regaining regional role
- Regional economics & Kurdish initiative
- Türkiye garners political cover from Armenia-Azerbaijan progress
- Tension between Ankara & Baku

# US Engagement



# US Engagement

- Trump Route for International Peace & Prosperity (TRIPP)
- Nuclear energy
- Armenian IT sector
- US military assistance
- Critical minerals & rare earth deposits

# Diversification of Armenian Foreign Policy

- Post-war accommodation & adaptation
- Transactional strategy & “passive-aggressive” policies with Russia
- Avoiding the Ukraine paradigm
- Small state strategy
- Vulnerability to regional spillover

# Domestic Politics

- Winning political message: moving Armenia closer to peace and further away from war; agreements as diplomatic deliverables
- Favoring incumbency: Russian factor as crucial & critical determinant
- Advantages of incumbency boosted by budget priorities & reducing conscription

# Marginalized Political Opposition

- Still no leadership alternative to Pashinyan
- Opposition parties more discredited and marginalized than ever
- Politics of personalities over policies
- Failure to present strategy or vision
- Failed bids for Russian support

# Third Force?



# The Political Utility of Oligarchs



# Opposition Trends & Triggers

- Opposition fragmentation
  - Traditional parties: former presidents
  - Ambitious contenders: Tatoyan, Vanetsyan
  - Third force: Karapetyan
- Lacking Russian support, utility of oligarchs limited or lost
- Open playing field after June 2026
- Over the horizon: new opposition?

# No More Smiles



# Church and State

- Vendetta-driven campaign against Church leadership
- Political confrontation targeting legacy
- But more personal more than political
- Attempts at mediation, compromise & consensus have all failed
- Distressing distraction from priorities

# Church and State

- Escalation from conflict to confrontation to crisis
- Pashinyan's "Real Armenia" concept
- Emotional, impulsive & emboldened
- Politicized theology & doomed foray into politics
- Last remaining legacy institution

# Conclusion:

## *Three Trends & Triggers*

- Positive momentum of diplomatic engagement with Azerbaijan & Türkiye
- Storm on the horizon: Resurgent Russia to intervene & interfere in 2026 elections
- Economics & local politics will define Armenia's 2026 parliamentary election



**For more information:**

Richard Giragosian  
Director

Regional Studies Center (RSC)

Yerevan, Armenia

[Director@regional-studies.org](mailto:Director@regional-studies.org)