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POLICY NOTE

ARMENIAN ELECTIONS AND TÜRKİYE-ARMENIA NORMALIZATION

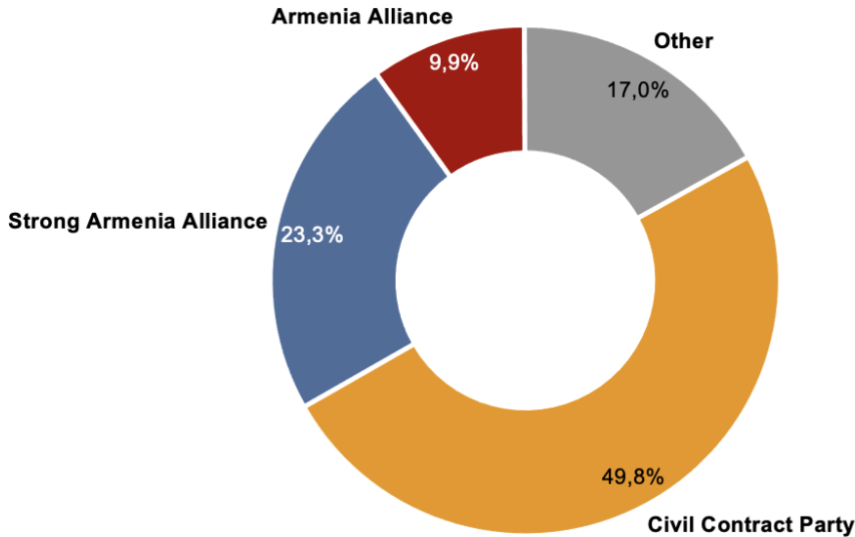
The Armenian parliamentary elections held on 7 June 2026 marked a historic turning point, as they were the first regular elections following the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023 and the subsequent migration of the Armenian population living in the region. The Civil Contract Party, led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, secured its hold on power by receiving 49.87 percent of the vote and winning 64 seats in the 105 member parliament. These results should be interpreted not merely as an outcome of domestic political competition, but, in a way, as a referendum in which the Armenian public endorsed a new state vision that moves away from the ideals of “Historical Armenia” and instead seeks peace and prosperity within the borders of “Real Armenia.” Voters granted clear legitimacy to Pashinyan’s strategy of steering the country away from the orbit of its traditional ally, Russia, pursuing integration with the West, and adopting rational peace oriented policies vis-à-vis Türkiye and Azerbaijan.

Although the parliamentary arithmetic grants the Civil Contract Party the authority to form a government on its own, it has not prevented the emergence of a highly polarized opposition bloc in parliament. The Strong Armenia Alliance, backed by businessman Samvel Karapetyan, who is known for his close ties to Russia and conservative political stance, won 23.30 percent of the vote and 29 seats, becoming the main opposition force. Meanwhile, former President Robert Kocharyan’s Armenia Alliance secured 9.94 percent of the vote and 12 seats. On the other hand, the Prosperous Armenia Party, led by pro-Russian oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan, remained at 3.99

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percent, narrowly failing to pass the 4 percent threshold and therefore staying outside parliament².

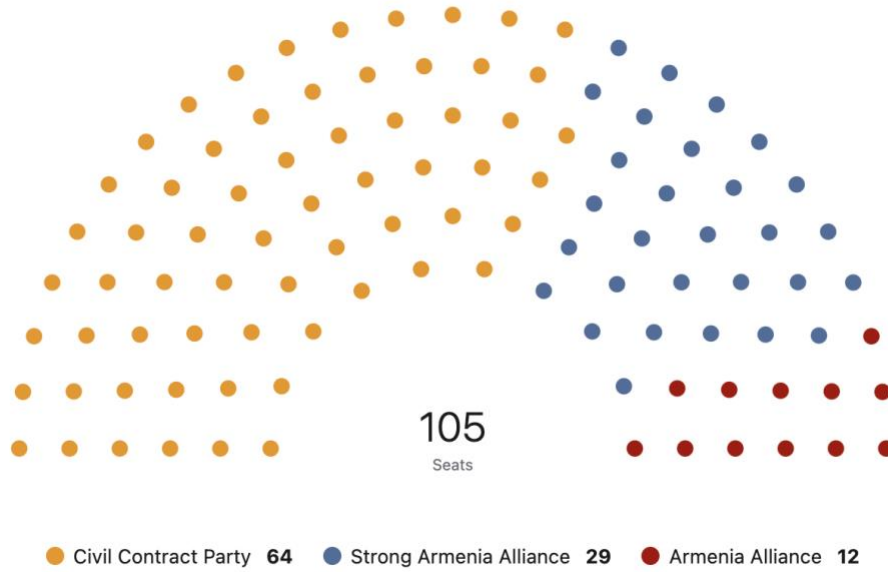
Figure 1. The preliminary final results



Source: AGOS, TEPAV visualizations

This parliamentary arithmetic has deepened the constitutional deadlock, which remains one of the most significant obstacles facing Armenia. Prime Minister Pashinyan has failed to secure the two-thirds qualified majority in parliament required to put a new constitution directly to a referendum. This situation has the potential to block the peace process, as Azerbaijan insists on the complete removal of references to the Declaration of Independence, associated with the idea of unification with Nagorno-Karabakh, from Armenia's constitutional framework as an absolute precondition for signing a final peace agreement. Among the possible scenarios are Pashinyan seeking to overcome this political impasse by attracting opposition MPs to his side, or calling a new snap election in order to pave the way for a constitutional referendum. However, for such a referendum to pass, it would require not only the support of a majority of participants, but also the approval of at least 25 percent of all eligible voters. The opposition is therefore expected to use all available means to undermine the process.

² Agos News Desk. (2026, June 8). *All votes counted: Pashinyan's third victory*. Agos. <https://www.agos.com.tr/en/news/all-votes-counted-pashinyan-s-third-victory-40748>

Figure 2. Distribution of the seats

Source: AGOS, TEPAV visualizations

Russian Influence

The elections can be regarded as a reflection of Armenia's integration with the West and its process of disengagement from Russia. Following the inaction of Russia- traditionally seen as Armenia's security guarantor- during the crises between 2020 and 2023, largely due to its preoccupation with the war in Ukraine, the Yerevan administration undertook a fundamental revision of its security procurement strategy. Armenia, which had previously obtained 90 percent of its arms imports from Russia, reduced this share to around 5-10 percent and positioned India and France as its main defense partners³. The country has also effectively frozen its participation in the activities of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

To counter this significant decline in its regional leverage, the Kremlin pursued an intensive hybrid and asymmetric intervention strategy aimed at weakening the Pashinyan government ahead of the 2026 elections. To remind voters of Armenia's existing economic dependencies, Russia imposed customs restrictions on agricultural products of Armenian origin, as well as on imports of wine, mineral water, and cognac, while also threatening to cut off supplies of cheap natural gas and energy⁴. In addition, through structures such as "Evrazia" and disinformation networks, fears were fueled that Pashinyan's re-election would create a "Ukraine scenario," while active support was provided to Russia linked candidates.

In this context, one of the most striking allegations was that Armenians living in Russia were planned to be brought to Armenia to support anti-Pashinyan candidates in the elections. According to a Reuters report based on Western intelligence and government officials,

³ Stanley, J., & Wolff, S. (2026, June 4). *Armenia's 2026 parliamentary election and the future of the South Caucasus*. The Foreign Policy Centre. <https://fpc.org.uk/op-ed-armenias-2026-parliamentary-election/>

⁴ Ditych, O. (2026, June 8). *Armenia's election: A welcome win for Pashinyan, but a difficult road lies ahead*. European Union Institute for Security Studies. <https://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/commentary/armenias-election-welcome-win-pashinyan-difficult-road-lies-ahead>

Moscow considered the option of bringing diaspora voters into the country; however, whether this plan was actually implemented could not be independently verified⁵.

Economic pressure tools also became more visible during the same period. In May 2026, the sale of products by Armenian producers on the Russia based Wildberries and Ozon platforms was temporarily restricted, citing new customs procedures and additional documentation requirements⁶. When considered together with the restrictions imposed on wine, mineral water, flowers, and agricultural products, this development can be read as one of the indirect pressure mechanisms aimed at making Yerevan's westward orientation more costly during the election process.

Implications for Türkiye-Armenia Relations and Border Diplomacy

The election results in Armenia have created a highly conducive environment for the uninterrupted continuation of the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process. In its Statement No.111 dated 8 June 2026, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the peaceful conduct of the elections and stated that it expects Armenia to take "bolder steps" in the name of regional peace.

Shortly before the election process, technical and symbolic steps were taken in border diplomacy. During the 8th European Political Community Summit held in Yerevan on 4 May 2026, the parties came together and signed a historic protocol. This protocol secured the joint restoration of the historic Ani Bridge, located on the border separating the two countries and dating back to the 11th - 12th centuries.

At the same time, work on the economic dimension of the border has also accelerated. On 28 April 2026, a technical working group meeting was held in Kars with the aim of reactivating the Kars-Gyumri, or Akyaka-Akhuryan, railway, which has been closed for 32 years. Technical issues such as how to address the difference between the Soviet standard rail gauge on the Armenian side and the European standard used on the Turkish side, as well as the construction of border transfer stations, were discussed. Although Türkiye's Special Representative, Serdar Kılıç, emphasized the confidence-building nature of the political process, he stated that the borders are physically "ready to be opened," while noting that bureaucratic obstacles such as security arrangements, the deployment of customs officers, and the completion of fiber-optic infrastructure have not yet been overcome⁷.

The Türkiye-Armenia business community meeting held in Kars in early June was also significant in demonstrating that normalization has moved beyond the diplomatic level and onto the private sector agenda. Held with the support of both governments, the meeting brought together representatives from sectors such as food, beverages, construction, tourism, logistics, and floriculture. The discussions addressed issues including the launch of direct trade, the use

⁵ Balmforth, T., Slattery, G., Pamuk, H., & Papachristou, L. (2026, May 29). *Imported voters, fake websites: Russia's covert efforts to stop Armenia's pivot West*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/imported-voters-fake-websites-russias-covert-efforts-stop-armenias-pivot-west-2026-05-29/>

⁶ Barseghyan, A. (2026, May 1). *Russian major online retailers Wildberries and Ozon suspend sale of Armenian products*. OC Media. <https://oc-media.org/russian-major-online-retailers-wildberries-and-ozon-suspend-sale-of-armenian-products/>

⁷ Söğütü, B. (2026, May 5). *Türkiye-Ermenistan Normalleşme Süreci Özel Temsilcisi Kılıç'tan 'sınır' açıklaması: Tamamlanması gereken teknik çalışmalar var*. T24. <https://t24.com.tr/dunya/turkiye-ermenistan-normallesme-sureci-ozel-temsilcisi-kilictan-sinir-aciklamasi-tamamlanmasi-gereken-teknik-calismalar-var,1319539>

of Türkiye/Armenia origin and destination information for goods transported through third countries, and Armenian products' access to the Akhalkalaki-Kars railway line⁸.

Besides, tourism can be considered an important starting point for Türkiye-Armenia relations. In the normalization process, tourism should be regarded not only as an economic sector, but also as a confidence building tool. The development of regional tourism routes covering Eastern Anatolia, Yerevan, and Armenia more broadly could contribute to softening mutual perceptions by increasing direct contact between the two societies. Considering historical and cultural assets such as Kars, Ani, Van, Akdamar, Erzurum, and Doğubayazıt together with Yerevan and its surrounding areas within package tour programs would create new economic opportunities in the border regions through accommodation, transportation, guiding services, local products, and the broader service sector. For this reason, tourism stands out as one of the concrete areas of cooperation that could strengthen the social foundation of Türkiye-Armenia normalization while also supporting regional development in the border regions.

In addition to tourism, joint industrial zones can also be considered as another area for confidence building measures. Designing TRIPP solely as a transportation route would have a limited impact in terms of regional normalization and development. For this reason, the route should be considered within a broader east–west economic axis extending to Europe through Türkiye and to the Caspian and Central Asian connections through Azerbaijan. The success of TRIPP will depend not only on the opening of the route, but also on the development of production, logistics, and service activities around the corridor. In order for transportation corridors to evolve into economic corridors, industrial zones, logistics centers, border customs infrastructure, energy and digital connections, and private sector coordination should be considered together. In this context, cross-border organized industrial zones or joint production clusters encompassing Türkiye, Armenia, and Azerbaijan could transform TRIPP from a mere transit route into an instrument of regional development. Such a model could both contribute to the peace process by generating concrete gains through increased mutual economic interdependence among the three countries, and support employment, investment, and local production capacity in the border regions.

Conclusion

The 2026 Armenian elections marked a critical threshold not only for the country's domestic political balance, but also for the broader geopolitical orientation of the South Caucasus. The Pashinyan government's ability to retain power has provided political legitimacy to Armenia's will to move away from its Russia centered security and foreign policy dependency, deepen its relations with the West, and continue its pursuit of normalization with Türkiye and Azerbaijan. At the same time, the issue of constitutional change, the polarized structure of the opposition, and Russia's economic and political pressure tools indicate that serious vulnerabilities still remain in the peace process. For this reason, Türkiye-Armenia normalization should be supported not only through diplomatic statements, but also through the preparation of border infrastructure, the launch of direct trade, the development of tourism routes, and the establishment of concrete economic cooperation mechanisms around TRIPP, such as production, logistics, and joint industrial zones. Such an approach could transform

⁸ Armenpress. (2026, June 2). *Armenian and Turkish business communities welcome favorable environment established for the launch of trade between the two countries.* <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1251804>

normalization from a merely political process into an instrument of structural transformation that increases contact between societies, supports development in border regions, and contributes to the formation of a more durable peace architecture in the South Caucasus.