

# Between Russia and Europe, between War and Peace?

## What is at Stake in Armenia's Upcoming Election?

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### ► Key Takeaways

- The Armenian parliamentary elections on June 7, 2026, will take place against a backdrop of political tensions with Russia, as evidenced by the suspension of Armenia's participation in the OSTC.
- In recent years, Nikol Pashinyan's government has pursued a pragmatic foreign policy, for instance by improving relations with Turkey: these elections will reveal the impact of this strategy on the Armenian people.
- Among the eighteen different parties participating in the election, some share the current government's European ambitions, but the three main opponents of Nikol Pashinyan are united by the idea of rebuilding relations with Russia.
- The most likely outcome of this election is the re-election of Nikol Pashinyan. However, if one of the pro-Russian parties wins, the recent peace in the South Caucasus could be undermined.

## Introduction

Armenia's June 7, 2026, parliamentary election is shaping up less as a routine vote than as a referendum on Nikol Pashinyan's post-2020 course, which includes peace with neighbors, reduced dependence on Russia, and a more explicit European orientation. The ruling Civil Contract party is still the frontrunner, but its position is fragile, as the campaign is being fought in a highly polarized environment shaped by the trauma of defeat in the war against Azerbaijan, the displacement of Karabakh Armenians, and the massive election interference from Russia.

## “Foreign policy diversification”: Is Armenia turning away from Russia?

The current election in Armenia is unprecedented, especially when it comes to external involvement. In the previous elections, there was a general understanding that whatever the outcome, it would be unlikely to change Armenia's geopolitical orientation as a Russian ally. This time, the main contenders are the incumbent government, which advocates reducing dependence on Moscow and establishing a new quality of relations with the West, and the opposition that calls for a return to an alliance with Russia. World leaders have openly taken sides in this electoral battle: European leaders and the Trump administration have expressed their support for incumbent Nikol Pashinyan, while Moscow has thrown its support behind opposition leader, Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan.

The upcoming election can be seen as a vote of confidence in incumbent Prime Minister (PM) Pashinyan's foreign policy, focused on two priorities: “diversification” and the “peace agenda”. “Diversification” refers to Armenia's attempt to distance itself from Russia and find new foreign policy partners. In recent years, Armenia has visibly moved away from its long-standing dependence on Russia in the area of security. Thus, Armenia has frozen its participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and has almost stopped arms procurement from Russia, purchasing military equipment from other countries, including India and France.<sup>1</sup> Russian border guards have been asked to leave the checkpoints in Yerevan airport and on the Armenia-Iran border.<sup>2</sup>

This shift has been driven by the collapse of confidence in Moscow as a security guarantor because of Moscow's passive stance during successive existential crises facing Armenia in recent years (including the 44-day war in 2020, clashes on the Armenia-

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1. N. Chukhuran, N. Minasyan and V. Muradyan, “A Shift Away From”, German Marshall Fund of the United States, July 31, 2024, available at: [www.gmfus.org](http://www.gmfus.org).

2. K. Simonian, “Russian Border Guards Leave Yerevan Airport”, Azatutyun, July 31, 2024, available at: [www.azatutyun.am](http://www.azatutyun.am); “Russian Border Guards Withdraw from Sole Checkpoint on Armenian-Iranian Border”, Meduza, December 31, 2024, available at: <https://meduza.io>.

Azerbaijan border in September 2022, and Azerbaijan's 2023 offensive, which led to the exodus of Karabakh Armenians). Russia's passivity in these crises has triggered a negative shift in public attitudes toward Russia, a shift reflected by the incumbent government's policy. However, this shift has not been completed: the Russian military base remains in Gyumri, and Russian border guards are still stationed along the Armenia-Turkey and Armenia-Iran borders (though not at the checkpoints). The Armenian government has been wary of completely alienating Russia.

"Diversification" also implies closer links with Europe. The European Political Community Summit in Yerevan in May, followed by the first European Union (EU)-Armenia summit, marked a symbolic and political milestone in the relationship. It also helped the Armenian government present Armenia as an active participant in European diplomacy. The summit also led to a crisis in relations with Russia, especially due to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky's visit and the statements he made in Yerevan.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, it is also clear that the goal of joining the European Union (EU), which was enshrined in legislation adopted by the Armenian parliament a year ago,<sup>4</sup> remains a strategic priority at best, rather than a realistic short-term goal. Armenia remains a part of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), with key dependencies on Russia as an energy supplier and as an export market.

However, "diversification" is not only about Europe. Yerevan managed to simultaneously advance its relations with the Trump administration as well. The United States of America (USA) helped bring Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations to a close with the signing of the August 2025 Washington Accords. The accords also include the creation of the so-called "Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity" (TRIPP), which helped to resolve the remaining controversies between Azerbaijan and Armenia. This is a road that will connect Azerbaijan to its exclave, Nakhchivan, over Armenian territory and will be managed by a joint American-Armenian company. Armenia has been visited by the US Vice President and the Secretary of State, who promised lucrative contracts in the spheres of nuclear energy and AI technology.<sup>5</sup> Recently, Donald Trump endorsed Nikol Pashinyan in a social media post. Armenia also seeks to reduce its dependence on Russia by widening its relations with the global South. Thus, India became an important partner in terms of arms procurement. Armenia's neighbors, Iran and Georgia, remain a priority, and Yerevan is

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## Russia's passivity in these crises has triggered a negative shift in public attitudes toward Russia

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3. M. Fornusek, "Kremlin Lashes out at Armenia over Zelensky's 'Anti-Russian Statements' in Yerevan", *The Kyiv Independent*, May 10, 2026, available at: <https://kyivindependent.com>; A. Barseghyan, "Russia Expresses Outrage over Zelensky's Remarks at EPC Summit in Yerevan", OC Media, May 8, 2026, available at: <https://oc-media.org>.

4. F. Light, "Armenia Adopts Law to Launch EU Accession Process", Reuters, April 4, 2025, available at: [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

5. S. Tatikyan, "Strategic Partnerships in Motion: J.D. Vance in Armenia and Azerbaijan", EVN Report, February 13, 2026, available at: <https://evnreport.com>; V. Huseynov, "Baku and Yerevan View Vance's Visit as Expansion of U.S. Engagement", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, The Jamestown Foundation, February 24, 2026, available at: <https://jamestown.org>.

doing its best to make sure that its relations with the EU and the US do not affect its relations with these countries.

## “Peace agenda”: pragmatism vs. identity?

The other major pillar of Pashinyan's policy is the “peace agenda”, the peace process with Azerbaijan and normalization of relations with Turkey. “Diversification” would not be successful without these processes. However, the “peace agenda” demands steps that are seen as painful concessions by part of Armenian society, as well as many Armenians in the Diaspora. Thus, peace with Azerbaijan became possible after the Armenian leadership recognized Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Moreover, Pashinyan urges Karabakh Armenian refugees to abandon hopes of returning to their homeland. Similarly, Pashinyan declares that Armenia's foreign policy should not focus on international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, which took place in 1915 in Ottoman Turkey, but rather on the future of Armenia-Turkey relations. Pashinyan sees this approach as pragmatic, arguing that a line should be drawn between issues of identity

and history, and issues of foreign policy. According to this view, the memory of Genocide remains an important part of Armenian history, but it should not be treated as the guiding principle of Armenia's foreign policy, as that would lead to enduring conflict with Turkey.

This approach remains controversial both in Armenia and in the diaspora. First, it provokes a strong emotional response among some Armenians, who see it as immoral and disrespectful to the memory of Genocide victims. Some critics also argue that this approach could embolden Azerbaijan and Turkey to demand further

concessions, without doing their part to advance the peace process. In the context of elections, these discussions turn emotional, leading to tense and aggressive political campaigning. Some opposition leaders accuse Pashinyan of “selling out” Karabakh Armenians and being a traitor to “Armenian identity”. In turn, Pashinyan calls his opponents the “party of war” and warns that if they come to power, Armenia would face another war with Azerbaijan.

Social and economic issues also play a significant role in the Armenian election. One of Pashinyan's strongest arguments is the economic growth that Armenia has experienced since the 2018 revolution. Armenia's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, still below EU standards, has doubled since 2018, from about 4,200 USD to 8,500 USD in 2024.<sup>6</sup>

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6. “GDP per capita (current US\$) – Armenia”, World Bank Open Data, 2026, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org>; “Growth of the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Armenia from 1993 to 2031”, Statista, December 2025, available at: [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com).

Of course, this rise is partly related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which re-shaped patterns of trade, investment and migration in post-Soviet space. However, it has also been made possible by the fight against corruption, one of the priorities of Pashinyan's government since 2018. Pashinyan's arguments work best in Armenian regions, which had been neglected before the 2018 revolution, but saw a lot of government spending after 2018.<sup>7</sup> In addition, in 2026, healthcare reform started, which envisages universal health insurance, significantly lowering the costs of healthcare for the majority of the population, especially the elderly.<sup>8</sup> The opposition tries to match these achievements with promises of various social initiatives, such as lowering the prices of medicines or removing the taxes on small businesses completely. However, it is not entirely clear how these policies would be implemented.

Discussion of social and economic issues is tied to foreign and security policy. Pashinyan argues that the peaceful opening of the borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan will allow Armenia to become a regional transit hub and a haven for investors. In turn, the opposition scares the voters with the perspective of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis moving to Armenia (although there is currently little evidence supporting such scenarios) and warns that Armenian producers might not be able to withstand competition with cheap Turkish goods.

Ultimately, the main issue at stake is the credibility of the "peace agenda". Pashinyan's critics argue that military asymmetry between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the absence of clear and reliable security guarantees by big players cast doubt on the perspectives of peace. However, they have yet to articulate a clear and broadly convincing alternative. The main suggestion of leaders like the former President of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and former President and Prime Minister of Armenia, Robert Kocharyan, and previously mentioned Shavarsh Karapetyan, is a return to alliance with Russia in the hope that Moscow would finally fulfill the role of a security guarantor. However, this model has already been Armenia's choice for dealing with security challenges in the past, and it did not prevent the war and defeat in Nagorno-Karabakh. In these crises, Russia has preferred to stay "outside the fight" to preserve relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan, partners that are significantly more important for Moscow. In general, Russia's ability to act as a guarantor of peace and security in the Caucasus is increasingly questioned, given the current situation on the Russian-Ukrainian front. Besides, this approach is to a large extent based on a selective memory of the conflict and zero-sum thinking, which assumes that the conflict has been caused by an irrational hatred of Armenians by their neighbors.

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7. "Armenia: Tourism and Regional Infrastructure Project – Environmental And Social Management Framework", February 2025, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org>; "Armenian Authorities Allocate 13 Billion Drams for Major Capital Repair of Regional Roads", ARKA News Agency, May 7, 2026, available at: <https://arka.am>.

8. "Armenia's Universal Health Insurance: How the New System Works, What It Covers, What It Does Not, and Where Private Insurance Still Matters", Insurebusiness, April 8, 2026, available at: <https://insurebusiness.am>; "Armenia to Roll out Mandatory Health Insurance in 2026 after Years of Delay", Civilnet, July 31, 2025, available at: <https://civilnet.am>.

## The main contenders

Incumbent Pashinyan and his Civil Contract party seem to be in the lead at the current stage with 32% of potential votes.<sup>9</sup> Pashinyan has been actively campaigning, using both traditional electoral methods, such as door-to-door campaigning and street rallies, and social networks. Pashinyan's social network posts went viral not only in Armenia, but also among users from other post-Soviet countries. Thus, he can be seen listening to Russian rock star Zemfira ("canceled" in Russia due to her anti-war position), playing the drums in a pop band, or simply eating a pastry while riding a bus. In addition, Pashinyan and his supporters are wandering the streets, talking to supporters, bystanders, and sometimes opponents. However, Pashinyan's campaigning methods also carry certain risks. Repeatedly, Pashinyan lashes out at the opponents, using harsh language, which contradicts the message that Civil Contract tries to convey, the message of peace and stability. Such episodes are frequently amplified by Russian state-controlled and pro-Kremlin media outlets, which portray Pashinyan as a dictator and accuse the EU of double standards for its support of Pashinyan.

The three main parties campaigning on the platform of removing Pashinyan and restoring relations with Russia include "Strong Armenia" of Karapetyan, "Armenia

alliance" of former president Kocharyan and "Prosperous Armenia" of local billionaire Gagik Tsarukyan. Their strategy is based on the idea of turning the election into a vote of no-confidence in Pashinyan. This strategy appeals to those Armenians who see Pashinyan as culpable for the defeat in the 2020 war and see "the peace agenda" as one-sided concessions.

These political forces are united by their approach to foreign policy that relies on rebuilding the relationship with Russia. Their position is based on the assumption that Russia's refusal to help Armenia against Azerbaijan

in 2020 was a result of Pashinyan's presumed inability to build a relationship with Vladimir Putin and alleged attempts to break away from Russia. This interpretation overlooks the fact that, until 2022, Pashinyan's government largely pursued policies aimed at maintaining close ties with Moscow. In order to do this, it even made steps hardly compatible with its democratic credentials, such as sending Armenian military specialists to Syria in support of Bashar al-Assad's regime or congratulating Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko on "election victory" in August 2020.<sup>10</sup> It is true that Pashinyan's

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9. "Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, May 2026", International Republican Institute, May 22, 2026, available at: [www.iri.org](http://www.iri.org).

10. J. Kucera, "Armenia Sends Military Deminers and Medics to Support Russian Mission in Syria", EurasiaNet, February 8, 2019, available at: <https://eurasianet.org>; "Pashinyan Criticized by Armenian Civil Society after Lukashenko Congratulations", Caucasus Watch, August 11, 2020, available at: <https://caucasuswatch.de>.

image of a leader who came to power as a result of a revolution has probably contributed to the negative feelings toward him in Moscow. However, Russia's approach to the Karabakh conflict may be explained less by attitudes toward Pashinyan himself than by Moscow's broader relationship with Baku and Ankara.

Robert Kocharyan is Armenia's former president, whose "Armenia alliance" came second in the 2021 election but will hardly be able to repeat that success. It is now polling at 3-4%, but it needs to overcome the 8% barrier for electoral alliances, set in Armenian electoral law<sup>11</sup> ("single" parties need only 4%). Kocharyan has his share of die-hard supporters, but many Armenians associate him with corruption and authoritarian rule, particularly the violent crackdown on protests in 2008.<sup>12</sup> Another figure from the past is Gagik Tsarukyan, one of the richest people in Armenia, who played the role of "systemic opposition" before the revolution, sometimes joining the government as a junior coalition partner. In recent International Republican Institute (IRI) polls, Tsarukyan has only about 2% of the votes.<sup>13</sup> His ally, Andranik Tevanyan, is accused of state treason, due to alleged cooperation with foreign secret services (though Russia was not explicitly mentioned in the government statement).<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the frontrunner of the pro-Russian opposition is "Strong Armenia", the party of Samvel Karapetyan, who was explicitly supported by Putin during his rhetorical clash with Pashinyan in a meeting in the Kremlin on April 1. Karapetyan is an Armenian-born businessman who built his fortune in Russia as the head of Tashir Group, a conglomerate with interests in real estate, energy, construction and retail. He is number 54 on the Russian Forbes list, with about 4 billion dollars. He has also had legal troubles with the French authorities: they confiscated the Villa Maria Irina on the Côte d'Azur (120 million euros), officially acquired by Karapetyan through a shell company, under suspicion that the real beneficiary is the Russian state-owned company Gazprom.<sup>15</sup>

Karapetyan had stayed away from politics until last year, when he criticized Pashinyan for "attacking the Armenian Church" and threatened to unseat him. The Armenian government accuses Karapetyan of plotting a *coup d'état*, as well as of financial manipulations: he is currently under administrative arrest. An investigation by Russian opposition media claims Karapetyan is linked to the FSB and might have entered Armenian politics under orders from the Kremlin.<sup>16</sup> However, according to Armenian

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11. "Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, May 2026", op. cit.

12. "Democracy on Rocky Ground: Armenia's Disputed 2008 Presidential Election, Post-Election Violence, and the One-Sided Pursuit of Accountability", Human Rights Watch, February 25, 2009, available at: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).

13. "Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, May 2026", op. cit.

14. A. Barseghyan, "Armenia Launches What Appears to Be First-Ever Investigation of Russian-Backed Espionage", OC Media, May 22, 2026, available at: <https://oc-media.org>.

15. "French Court Confiscates €120 Million Villa Linked to Gazprom", *European Pravda*, February 20, 2024, available at: [www.eurointegration.com.ua](http://www.eurointegration.com.ua).

16. S. Kanev, "Grabbing Him by the 'Beard': The Insider Identifies the FSB, GRU, And SVR Agents Russia Sent to Armenia to Take on PM Nikol Pashinyan", *The Insider*, May 19, 2026, available at: <https://theins.press>; X. A. Kuenning and

legislation, Karapetyan himself cannot hold the position of Prime Minister (or even a member of parliament), since dual citizens are barred from holding high state offices. Karapetyan's supporters aim to gain a two-thirds majority and change the constitution to allow him to take office, a scenario that seems unlikely. But still, according to the polls, Karapetyan's party alliance, which currently has about 6% of the votes, is most likely to come in second.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, so far, Civil Contract and the three pro-Russian parties are the most likely contenders to enter the new parliament. There are 15 more parties participating in the

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## Outside interference can create surprises, as was the case in the Romanian presidential election in 2024

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election. Some of these share the pro-European outlook of Civil Contract and criticize it for not doing enough to break away from Russia. Others share the pro-Russian position of the three main opposition parties. Some others criticize the government from nationalist positions, while also rejecting the pro-Russian agenda. Finally, there is the party "Against everyone", which promises that in case of its victory, it would lower the election barrier to 1% and immediately call a new election. It also has the most eccentric electoral campaign: its representatives

sometimes dress as Hollywood superheroes. However, the electoral chances of most of these parties are slim.

Outside interference can create surprises, as was the case in the Romanian presidential election in 2024, whose results were ultimately canceled. Moscow's interference has intensified during the last few months. Russia has applied diplomatic and economic pressure: it has threatened to denounce the natural gas contract with Armenia, banned Armenian products from Russian markets and prompted a statement from the EEU demanding that Armenia hold a referendum to choose between the EU and the EEU.<sup>18</sup> There have been veiled threats of military action – comparisons to Ukraine, and even calls for "special military operation" by talking heads in Russian media.<sup>19</sup> Moscow has stepped up its hybrid interference, for example, "Doppelgänger" media attacks (Pro-Kremlin operators create spoofed versions of reputable European and domestic websites to plant false news about Armenia), previously used against Ukraine and Moldova.<sup>20</sup> A mechanism identified by Armenia's Foreign Intelligence Service involves paying and organizing sections of the Armenian diaspora residing in Russia to come to

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N. Ostiller, "Leaked Documents Show Russian Plans to Unseat Pashinyan, Ties Between Karapetyan and Putin", OC Media, May 26, 2026, available at: <https://oc-media.org>.

17. "Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, May 2026", op. cit.

18. "Russia Threatens to Rip up Natural Gas Deal with Armenia over Its EU Ambitions", *The Moscow Times*, May 27, 2026, available at: [www.themoscowtimes.com](http://www.themoscowtimes.com); P. Barabas and A. Brezar, "Russia Recalls Ambassador to Armenia over Closer EU Ties Days before Decisive Elections", Euronews, May 29, 2026, available at: [www.euronews.com](http://www.euronews.com); "Russia Ramps Up Pressure on Armenia with Produce Import Ban", *The Moscow Times*, May 28, 2026, available at: [www.themoscowtimes.com](http://www.themoscowtimes.com).

19. N. Ostiller, "Solovyov's Suggestion of 'Special Military Operation' in Armenia a 'Personal Opinion', Kremlin Says", OC Media, January 16, 2026, available at: <https://oc-media.org>.

20. J. Bodnar and S. N., "All Operations on Armenia: Russia's Influence Machine Targets the Vote", *Digital Dispatches*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, available at: [www.isdglobal.org](http://www.isdglobal.org).

Armenia on election day to vote for pro-Kremlin parties.<sup>21</sup> To help Armenia deal with these threats, EU has established a civilian mission in the country.<sup>22</sup> The polls suggest that all this has had little influence on Armenian voters so far, but the real extent of foreign interference can be assessed only after the election.

## Conclusion: possible scenarios and prospects

The most plausible election scenario is that of another Pashinyan-led government. Overall, a renewed Pashinyan government would probably continue its cautious move toward diversification and away from dependence on Moscow. It will try to step up its engagement with the EU, with visa liberalization being the closest tangible goal. It will also continue its push for institutionalized peace with Azerbaijan and normalization of relations with Turkey. The degree to which the normalization process can advance depends not only on Yerevan but also on Baku and Ankara. When it comes to relations with Russia, a renewed Pashinyan government will try to avoid an open confrontation with Moscow, while insisting on Armenia's right to pursue an independent foreign policy. The most likely scenario is that Armenia will not be able (or willing) to break away completely from Moscow, but it will continue incremental steps toward reducing Moscow's influence. However, if Russia demands that Armenia make a clear choice that could push Armenia further away from Moscow, of course, provided it receives support from its "diversified" partners. However, if left alone, Armenia would probably have to accommodate Moscow's demands. Overall, in the event of Pashinyan's victory, Armenia will most probably continue its delicate balancing act between various centers of power in the region, while slowly moving closer to the EU. However, a lot will depend on events beyond Yerevan's control, such as the fate of the Russia-Ukraine and the US-Iran conflicts.

There are fears among part of Armenian civil society that a landslide victory for Pashinyan's Civil Contract could lead to democratic backsliding, as Pashinyan, left without a viable opposition, could be tempted to consolidate power, leading to the emergence of a new authoritarian regime. However, these risks can be mitigated through the committed involvement of the EU, which would support Armenian civil society and democratic institutions. While concerns about democratic backsliding under a renewed Pashinyan government cannot be entirely dismissed, a victory by the pro-Russian opposition would also raise significant concerns regarding the future trajectory of Armenia's democratic institutions. Such a scenario would most probably mean a significant increase in Russia's influence over Armenia, resulting in Armenia's return to the Russian sphere of influence. In this scenario, if Moscow demands to cut ties with Brussels or Washington, a pro-

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21. T. Balmforth, G. Slattery, H. Pamuk and L. Papachristou, "Exclusive: Imported Voters, Fake Websites: Russia's Covert Efforts to Stop Armenia's Pivot West", Reuters, May 29, 2026, available at: [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

22. "Armenia: EU Establishes a New Civilian Mission to Contribute to Strengthening the Country's Resilience", European External Action Service, April 21, 2026, available at: [www.eeas.europa.eu](http://www.eeas.europa.eu).

Russian Armenian government will likely comply, as it has already happened in 2013, when Armenia abandoned Association agreement talks with the EU and joined the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan (which later became the EEU). Besides, a pro-Russian government could seek to introduce legislation inspired by legal and political developments observed in Russia and, more recently, Georgia, leading to further alienation from Europe.

Victory of the pro-Russian opposition can also lead to a breakdown of the “peace agenda”. Its leaders question the legitimacy of the Washington agreements, promising to renegotiate their terms and to raise the issue of the return of Karabakh Armenian refugees to their homeland. These positions may resonate with a segment of the Armenian electorate, but could also complicate the implementation of the existing peace framework and increase tensions with Azerbaijan. A return to conflict would also increase Russia’s leverage in the South Caucasus as the arbiter in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, a position it has recently lost.

However, a win by pro-Russian forces is unlikely. None of the three pro-Russian forces can count on a majority that would allow them to form a government on their own. The only relatively plausible scenario is that Civil Contract receives a plurality but not a

majority, and the three pro-Russian parties together receive a majority that allows them to form a coalition. This was the scenario that allowed a victory for pro-Russian forces in a local election in Gyumri, Armenia’s second-largest city, in 2025. However, local elections have their specifics, and the polls indicate that this scenario can hardly be reproduced at the national level. A stalemate is also unlikely, since the Armenian

Constitution provides the option of a run-off in case there are no clear winners in the parliamentary election. And, judging from opinion polls, in a run-off between Pashinyan and Karapetyan, Pashinyan has an advantage.

An alternative, albeit unlikely, scenario is that some of the smaller parties make a breakthrough and find themselves in the new parliament. According to the current polls, about 40% of those surveyed refused to answer or are still undecided.<sup>23</sup> However, most smaller parties have difficulty explaining to the voters how their agendas are different from those of either Pashinyan or the pro-Russian opposition. Even if they do get into the new parliament, most probably they would have to align themselves with either Pashinyan or the pro-Russian opposition. Ultimately, Armenian voters will decide about the fate of Pashinyan’s “pragmatic” approach to foreign and security policy. This approach is fraught with risks, both internal and external, but the opposition does not offer a credible alternative.

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## However, a win by pro-Russian forces is unlikely

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23. “Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, May 2026”, op. cit.

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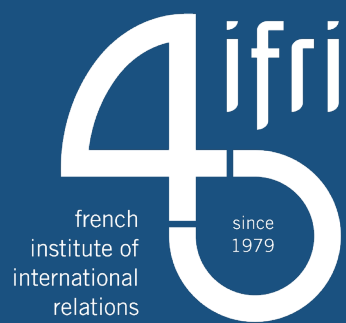
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