

# The factors that influence the foreign policy of Armenia

UDC 327

DOI <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-9616.2025-1.35>

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*Purpose.* The purpose of this article is to examine some factors that influence the foreign policy of Armenia. These factors include geopolitical and regional factors, economic structural factor, diaspora and Armenians living in other countries, population, political system and government structure, leaders, the concept of 'external dependence' and ideology (Armenian nationalism). Moreover, to analyze the role of these factors that have significant role on foreign policy strategy of Armenia.

*Method.* While working on the article, the author made an effort to provide a comprehensive view of the subject using statistical data from official institutions. The article employs theoretical methods such as content analysis and deduction and research methods such as comparative analysis to offer a detailed explanation of the topic.

*Scientific innovation.* The article analyzes the factors that play a significant role in determining the foreign policy of states and explains them using the example of Armenia.

*Practical Importance.* This article holds both scientific and practical significance as it thoroughly examines all aspects of factors that influence the foreign policy of states. It extensively illustrates these factors, particularly in the case of Armenia.

*Conclusion.* The article underlines the influence of some factors that have on the significant role on foreign policy of states. It also highlights some of these factors that have huge impacts of foreign policy of Armenia. In the article, these factors are analysed through the case of Armenia. The role of the above-mentioned factors in determining Armenia's foreign policy was analysed. Armenia's geographical location, population, political regime and economic potential were analysed. At the same time, the role of leaders, Armenian diaspora, ideology and external dependency factor in the formation of the foreign policy of the state was emphasised.

**Key words:** foreign policy, main factors, Armenia, the foreign policy of Armenia.

**Introduction.** Foreign policy is a type of activity carried out by a state to ensure its national interests in the international arena on a regional or global scale. This activity is aimed at the realisation of strategic interests covering political, economic, cultural, humanitarian, military, security and other areas.

There are a number of factors that influence the formation and implementation of a state's foreign policy and it is important to pay attention to these criteria in analysing the foreign policy of each state. Thus, in many cases, these factors determine the basic orientations and objectives of foreign policy and even the mechanisms of its implementation. Therefore, a number of factors of strategic importance are taken into account in analysing the foreign policy trajectory of states. These factors include the nature of the international system, the current situation in the world, quantitative and qualitative indicators of the state's national power (geopolitical position, military power, economic potential, government structure, quality of diplomatic activity, national characteristics, etc.), bilateral and multilateral relations of states, etc.). It is also important to note the domestic factors influencing foreign policy. These include public opinion, the activities of media organisations, the nature of the political regime, national ideologies, political parties, the role of civil society, etc. [1]. As one of the most influential factors guiding the foreign policies of states, it is necessary to pay special attention to the ideological factor.

**The article aims** to analyze the role of some factors that influence to the foreign policy and their impact

on determine foreign policy strategy on the example of Armenia.

**Method.** The article adopts a comprehensive approach, utilizing statistical data from official institutions and employing theoretical methods such as analysis and deduction, as well as research methods like comparative analysis, to provide a detailed explanation of the topic.

**Main text.** The end of the post-Cold War order brought back the phenomenon of great power rivalry and accelerated the reshaping of both global and regional actors. The South Caucasus, like the Middle East, has become a region where the interests of not only Russia but also the US, the EU and even China and India intersect. [2] In this case, the nature of the new world order for the small states that regained their independence in the region has had a serious impact on foreign policy. Therefore, it is possible to feel the role of these factors in Armenia's foreign policy [3].

Armenian officials state that Armenia's foreign policy strategy is based on the principles of diplomacy, collective security, co-operation, status quo policy and peaceful coexistence.

– Diplomacy: Armenia endeavours to solve its foreign policy problems through diplomatic relations and negotiations.

– Collective security: Armenia is a member of the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and adheres to a collective defence policy.

– Co-operation: Armenia cooperates with various international organisations, notably Russia. It is also

seeking to improve its relations with the European Union.

– Status quo policy: Armenia attaches importance to status quo issues within the framework of the Karabakh conflict and endeavours to maintain its position on the settlement of the conflict.

– Peaceful coexistence: Armenia also attaches importance to peaceful coexistence and emphasises this principle in the UN and other international organisations. [4]

Other strategies such as imperialism, neo-colonialism, revisionism, aggressive policies and nationalist universalism can be seen to some extent in Armenia's foreign policy, but the main approach is diplomatic and co-operative. Despite Armenia's strong strategic alliance with Russia and numerous partnerships in the international arena, the principles of neutrality and loyalty are sometimes manifested in the context of mutual independence. [5]

The foreign policy of Armenia, which declared its independence in the early 1990s, was dominated by an idealistic approach. Armenia's foreign policy objectives in the first years of its independence were to prevent new military conflicts, to eliminate communication and logistical isolation, to increase economic development and to ensure the country's energy supply [6]. While analysing the different orientations and strategies chosen by Armenia from time to time, the factors affecting its foreign policy should be taken into consideration. If we list the factors that determine a country's foreign policy in general terms; among them are the country's geographical location, economic potential, decision-making mechanism, political structure, regional characteristics, etc. can be attributed [7].

Firstly, let us consider **geopolitical and regional factors**. First of all, Armenia is a geographically closed country with no access to the sea. Therefore, its connections with the seas and important trade centres are not strong. On the other hand, the fact that the USSR-era 'unification of regions' project bypassed Armenia (for example, a significant part of the railways and motorways connecting other countries of the USSR to Iran passed through other countries, especially Azerbaijan) is considered by Armenian researchers to have had a negative impact on Armenia's geopolitical position. For this reason, Armenia has been experiencing serious problems in its access to other countries for a long time [8].

Another issue to be considered is Armenia's neighbouring countries and its relations with these countries. As a matter of fact, the conflict with Azerbaijan, which has a wide border line in the east, due to the occupation of Karabakh and the surrounding territories, and the closure of its borders with both Azerbaijan and Turkey, another neighbouring state, for the same reason have led to its isolation in the region. Iran is not seen as a reliable enough

friend for Armenians who do not have warm relations with their northern neighbour Georgia. In fact, this unpleasant situation that Armenia is experiencing with its neighbouring countries is directly related to Armenia's own racist, aggressive and destructive foreign policy. This is just one of the indicators of how seriously its irrational foreign policy strategy is influenced by the ideology of nationalism [8].

In fact, Georgia can be considered as a way out for Armenia, but there are problems here too. Indeed, many Armenian writers emphasise Georgia's rapid withdrawal from Russia's sphere of influence, the political instability prevailing in the country, the existence of ethnic conflicts within the country, and especially the large number of Azerbaijanis living in Georgia as negative factors for Armenia's security. Therefore, Armenian authors argue that Armenia's geographical position is not sufficiently secure due to the presence of so many 'enemies' and that the lack of natural protective borders separating Armenia from other countries makes Armenia feel 'encircled and defenceless' [8].

Another factor that is considered to have a serious impact on foreign policy is the **economic structural factor**. The foreign and defence policy to be pursued by a country is closely related to its economic structure and wealth, and whether it has a strong foreign policy or not. It is a well-known fact that countries with a high volume of foreign trade and a diversity of trade products try to create a belt of stability around themselves and carefully avoid armed conflicts at least in their own regions. Moreover, deep economies usually generate more foreign policy actors, which makes foreign policy more controlled and pragmatic. Small economies, based on very few products, often lead to a foreign policy dependent on external factors and a less secure foreign policy-making process. As mentioned above, the most important reason for Armenia's relatively weak economy is its geographical location.

Unlike its neighbours, Armenia, which is located in a mountainous region and has poor transport routes, cannot be considered a country rich in natural resources. Especially the insufficiency of energy resources and the inability to compensate this insufficiency with other resources is an almost impossible problem to solve. The small population is another negative factor for the economy. It is obvious that a small and constantly migrating population cannot create a serious market. Migration also makes it impossible to create a quality labour market. Another factor weakening the economy is external migration, especially the migration of skilled labour to Russia, Europe and the USA [8].

Bribery and deterioration of moral values resulting from political instability are also important factors hindering economic development. As corruption and poverty increase, a spiral is formed and these two

elements constantly repeat themselves. In addition to all these, the political environment of the Caucasus region, which is structurally favourable to conflicts, negatively affects Armenia and all countries in the region. The conflicts in Karabakh, Chechnya, Abkhazia, Ossetia, etc. and the possibility of conflicts breaking out in other regions at any time 'frighten' foreign investors and reduce their business opportunities. For these reasons, even relatively wealthy Armenians living in other countries have not shown the expected willingness to do business with Armenia [8].

As Armenia is currently geographically distant from strong competitive markets, it has been forced to rely on more 'risky' sources, especially in the energy sector due to the conflict situation with Azerbaijan, and to purchase low-quality imported goods at higher prices due to poor relations with Turkey. Due to the problems in imports and the inability to develop foreign trade with the countries of the region, the desired expansion of the domestic market cannot be achieved.

Thus, the weak economy showed its first effect on the concept of 'power', which is the most important element of foreign policy. From this point of view, we can say that the economy, which is considered to be one of the most important elements of a country's power, has narrowed the room for manoeuvre of Armenia's foreign policy and significantly reduced the power of cooperation. As a natural consequence of this situation, Armenia was expected to pursue a more passive, perhaps more compromising foreign policy. However, with the contribution of the after-effects, the result was in the opposite direction, which can be considered as another indicator of how far Armenia's foreign policy is from rationality [9].

When analysing Armenia's economic external dependence, the first group to be considered is undoubtedly the **diaspora and Armenians living in other countries**. During the Kocharyan administration, an organised group from the diaspora started to use their economic power more openly as a tool to achieve their political goals. Diaspora organisations also had the opportunity to influence political decision-making mechanisms and increase their supporters within the country by taking advantage of the economic weakness and vacuum [10].

Decisions began to be taken in favour of companies in the Diaspora. Thus, under the name of 'aid' and 'privatisation', the Armenian economy started to be isolated and taken over by the Diaspora. This process worried some segments in Armenia. For example, the Armenian newspaper 'Irvunk' published an article about 'the danger of the economy being completely taken over by diaspora businessmen through legal regulations'. The Armenian newspaper Orran also drew attention to a similar threat.[10] According to 'Orran', diaspora Armenians have only two problems: 'Firstly, how can I protect my investments in Armenia

and secondly, how can I continue to love Armenia from afar» [10].

Another Armenian newspaper, Hayastani Komunist, wrote that Armenia-diaspora relations are nothing but an attempt by a few businessmen in the diaspora to increase their profits in the homeland. In particular, Armenians living in Western Europe and North America have been able to participate more in Armenia's internal affairs and foreign policy thanks to their financial means. If we remember that these groups are much more rigid and uncompromising on foreign policy issues compared to the Armenians in Armenia, it becomes easier to understand how much this group radicalised Armenia's foreign policy. The Armenian diaspora has been one of the most important obstacles especially in relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Diaspora Armenians, far from understanding the conditions of the region they live in, have always advocated a more 'idealistic' and less 'realistic' foreign policy [10].

Although briefly touched upon within the framework of economic development, the issue of '**population**' has a special place among the factors determining foreign policy, especially when it comes to a unique country like Armenia in terms of population size. As is well known, population is an important part of the state and is important not only in terms of quality but also in terms of quantity. For example, China, with a population of over one billion, or India and Pakistan, which are considered as actors to be taken into account in their regions due to their populations, no matter how weak their economies are, can be cited as examples in this regard. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, with all its wealth and a relatively small population, is unable to play the role expected of it in the Arab world. Turning to Armenia, it is easy to understand that we are facing a very special situation. According to the latest data, Armenia, together with Japan, has the lowest natural population growth rate. Negative migration also plays a major role in the population decline. Thus, among the new immigrants to Western Europe, Armenia ranks behind Russia with more than one million immigrants. Considering that it is not correct to compare Russia and Armenia in terms of population, it is easy to understand how great an impact this immigration has had on Armenia [11].

As we have already mentioned, in addition to the small size of the population, perhaps more importantly, the decline in '**quality**' has caused serious damage to Armenia. The fact that a significant part of the groups emigrating abroad are skilled people, and that a large number of skilled people, mainly Russians and Azerbaijani Turks, have emigrated from Armenia, or more precisely, that Azerbaijanis have been forced to leave their ancestral lands, has had a devastating impact on many sectors of Armenia. The service sector and public administration have borne the brunt of this. The impact of this change

on foreign policy decision-making, which is in great need of highly qualified and educated personnel, has been much greater than expected. Although efforts were made to fill this gap with Diaspora Armenians, experienced diplomats and experts who speak the language and are familiar with diplomacy could not be found, leading to serious losses in international meetings [11].

Another factor affecting Armenia's foreign policy is the violence and extremism stemming from the weakness of the **political system and structure**. As mentioned before, Armenia has not been a stable country since its independence. In addition to the economic and social problems, the Karabakh war and the increasing influence of radical movements on the administration have made the independence process even more difficult. Especially the lack of democracy and a stable structure in Armenia has led to the strengthening of extremists. Recent surveys show that 85 per cent of people in Armenia do not see their country as democratic, and 80 per cent of them do not turn to official institutions to solve the problems they face. Another result of the study is that there is no clear idea of who is dominant in the country [12].

All this shows that the ruling administration has radicalised Armenia's foreign policy and that the interests and views of individuals or groups, rather than national interests, have become the main criterion. In normal political systems, radical poles are relatively marginal and have very little ability to influence the government. In cases where radicals occupy a central position in the Armenian political regime, pragmatism in foreign policy, especially in relations with neighbouring states, diminishes and is replaced by emotion and reactionary relations. In an environment of increasing extremist activities, the policies of the centre parties also harden and this leads to a deterioration in the mental health of the society as a whole.

It is a well-known fact that **leaders** play a certain role in determining a country's foreign policy, although some scholars disagree. For example, 'adventurous' leaders tend to be less pragmatic in foreign policy and less inclined to compromise with other countries, even if it is in the interests of their own country. The same is true for the staff who work with the manager (who are advisors in the decision-making process). A well-trained and experienced foreign policy staff can help a radical leader to stay within certain limits and pursue a more balanced foreign policy. Armenia has not been so lucky in this respect. First of all, as mentioned in other paragraphs, Armenians have long been a 'stateless people'. Therefore, it is difficult to talk about trained Armenian personnel in areas such as foreign policy, where state tradition is most needed. For this reason, in the first years of independence, both Ter-Petrosyan and Kocharyan had to rely on some assistance from the diaspora in foreign policy

matters. The need for personnel became so urgent that it was even impossible to send representatives to some diplomatic missions [13].

As for the personality of the leader, Robert Kocharyan, for example, was not a very 'promising' leader, especially in the first years of his rule. Unlike Ter-Petrosyan, who made statements that 'unnecessarily' worried Turkey, its biggest neighbour, Kocharyan, in his first days in power, wanted to reflect the tension in the Karabakh conflict on Armenia's foreign policy with almost the same harshness.

Before the elections, Kocharyan had said, 'If I win the election, there will be new directions and new emphasis in our relations with Turkey.' While saying this, he was still speaking as if he was the 'people's hero of Karabakh'. However, any cooler and more realistic leader can easily realise that the foreign policy of a country the size of Armenia cannot be based on threats from a country with a population 20 times larger than its own [14].

Another factor affecting Armenia's foreign policy is the concept of '**external dependence**'. In addition to external dependence, another characteristic of Armenian nationalism is its dependence on Russia and the Russians. Armenian nationalists, who see the Russians as a permanent element in the region, have received the greatest support from the Russians in achieving their goals compared to Britain, France and the USA. For more than 200 years, Russia has been trying to build a 'Christian and pro-Russian' barrier against the Turks and Iranians in the Caucasus, seeing Armenians as its 'natural allies', and this situation continues today.

After gaining its independence in 1991, Armenia remained within Russia's 'sphere of influence.' Although some feeble attempts were made to reduce Russian influence, dependence on Russia in almost every field increased in the following years. With Georgia seeking its main ally outside Russia and turning towards the West, Armenia has become the only country in the Caucasus close to Russia [15].

Another important feature of Armenia's foreign policy in terms of relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan is '**Turkophobia**'. In the international system, there are foreign policy objectives such as interests based on the use of force and the pursuit of interests. As a result of all these, the ideology of nationalism has become the main ideological basis and symbol of the struggle of the Armenian people. The establishment of independent Armenia did not diminish the effects of this ideology; on the contrary, nationalism became the ideology of the state and the main driving force of domestic and foreign policy [16].

The most obvious example of this in the case of Armenia is the close relationship between religion and nationalism. The Church saw Armenian nationalism as an extension of its own existence



and religious elements were more prominent in Armenian nationalism than in other examples. This was also due to the fact that the Armenian Church was quite different from other Christian churches and had been outside the Christian world for a long time. Thus, Armenian Gregorian chants became almost exclusively Armenian, which made religion specific to a 'nation'. In other words, the disappearance of the Armenian nation would be a development that would spell the end of the 'Armenian religion'. This has also played an important role in the church's mythologisation of the 'events of 1915' and its construction of its institutional identity and Armenian identity on the pain of the past [16].

Recently, the influence of **ideologies** on foreign policy has become more evident. Ideas directly influence or determine people's perceptions of enemies and friends, as well as their foreign policy objectives. Three groups are most prominent in this category: nationalism, religion and other ideologies. These categories, which sometimes overlap, can expand or narrow their scope depending on the country.

In the case of Armenia, the most obvious example of this is the close relationship between religion and nationalism. The Church saw Armenian nationalism as an extension of its own existence and religious elements were more prominent in Armenian nationalism than in other examples. This was also due to the fact that the Armenian Church was quite different from other Christian churches and had been outside the Christian world for a long time. Thus, Armenian Gregorian chants became almost exclusively Armenian, making religion specific to a 'nation'. In other words, the disappearance of the Armenian nation would be a development that would spell the end of the 'Armenian religion'. This has also played an important role in the church's mythologisation of the 'events of 1915' and its construction of its institutional identity and Armenian identity on the pain of the past [16].

**Conclusion.** As it can be seen some factors play a significant role in influencing the foreign policy. These factors include geopolitical, economic, population size and quality, political system and structure of the state, leaders, external influences, international and regional situation, etc. In the article, these factors are analysed through the case of Armenia. The role of the above-mentioned factors in determining Armenia's foreign policy was analysed. Armenia's geographical location, population, political regime and economic potential were analysed. At the same time, the role of leaders,

diaspora, ideology and external dependency factor in the formation of the foreign policy of the state was emphasised. As a result, among the factors influencing Armenia's foreign policy, the role of the diaspora and Armenian nationalism in particular, as well as general factors, is noteworthy.

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## Фактори, що впливають на зовнішню політику Вірменії

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*Мета.* Метою цієї статті є розгляд деяких факторів, що впливають на зовнішню політику Вірменії. Ці фактори включають геополітичні та регіональні фактори, економічний структурний фактор, діаспору та вірмен, які проживають в інших країнах, населення, політичну систему та структуру уряду, лідерів, концепцію «зовнішньої залежності» та ідеологію (вірменський націоналізм). Крім того, проаналізувати роль цих факторів, які мають значний вплив на зовнішньополітичну стратегію Вірменії.

*Метод.* Під час роботи над статтею автор намагався надати комплексний погляд на предмет, використовуючи статистичні дані офіційних установ. У статті використовуються теоретичні методи, такі як контент-аналіз і дедукція, а також методи дослідження, такі як порівняльний аналіз, щоб запропонувати детальне пояснення теми.

*Наукова новизна.* У статті проаналізовано фактори, які відіграють значну роль у визначенні зовнішньої політики держав, та пояснено їх на прикладі Вірменії.

*Практична значущість.* Ця стаття має як наукове, так і практичне значення, оскільки в ній ґрунтовно розглядаються всі аспекти чинників, що впливають на зовнішню політику держав. Вона широко ілюструє ці фактори, зокрема, на прикладі Вірменії.

*Висновки.* У статті підкреслено вплив деяких факторів, які мають значну роль на зовнішню політику держав. Вона також висвітлює деякі з цих факторів, які мають величезний вплив на зовнішню політику Вірменії. У статті ці фактори аналізуються на прикладі Вірменії. Проаналізовано роль вищезгаданих факторів у визначенні зовнішньої політики Вірменії. Проаналізовано географічне розташування, населення, політичний режим та економічний потенціал Вірменії. Водночас підкреслено роль лідерів, вірменської діаспори, ідеології та фактору зовнішньої залежності у формуванні зовнішньої політики держави.

**Ключові слова:** зовнішня політика, основні фактори, Вірменія, зовнішня політика Вірменії.