

# Extra-Regional Actors in the South Caucasus: Armenia-India Alignment in the Spotlight

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Vasif Huseynov\* and Aynur Abbassoy\*\*

Armenia's quest for new security guarantors after the Second Garabagh War has elevated India to the position of its key arms supplier. This marks the emergence of India as a new extra-regional actor with a footprint in the South Caucasus amid the ongoing reconfiguration of the regional geopolitical landscape. New Delhi now views the South Caucasus as part of its broader geopolitical strategy, particularly in light of Azerbaijan's close ties with Pakistan and Türkiye. India's growing military cooperation with Armenia, highlighted by increased arms supply agreements, is a significant reflection of the security dynamics of the region. Given the fragility of the South Caucasus's security architecture, India's deepening involvement introduces new complexities into an already delicate geopolitical environment, raising questions about how these actions might influence prospects for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This article also explores the ideological drivers behind the alignment between New Delhi and Yerevan. It concludes that these developments generate reasonable concerns about their potential consequences for peace efforts between the two South Caucasian republics, while also suggesting that India's strategy in the region could not only affect its relations with Azerbaijan but also risk undermining its broader economic and connectivity interests.

**Keywords:** India, South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Garabagh, geopolitics



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### *Introduction*

It is difficult for small states to achieve extraordinary foreign policy ambitions, especially when they challenge more powerful neighbours. States with strong determination to pursue these ambitions often seek the support of larger powers, through various means, including military and political alliances.

Armenia, the South Caucasian republic with a population of less than three million and an area of approximately 29,000 km<sup>2</sup>, is a shining example to illustrate this situation. Although Armenia is a small former Soviet state with limited military and economic capabilities, its constitution contains territorial claims against the country's more powerful neighbours, Azerbaijan and Türkiye. In the early 1990s, the country dared to occupy 20 per cent of the territories of neighbouring Azerbaijan, although the latter's population was three times that of Armenia. This was possible thanks to the support of Russia, whose then leaders instrumentalized Armenia to maintain influence over the South Caucasus following the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The current landscape in the South Caucasus has changed significantly. Azerbaijan liberated its occupied territories and restored full sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders through the 44-Day War of September–November 2020 and anti-terror measures against the remnants of Armenia's armed forces, as well as Armenian separatists, in September 2023. Armenia's relations with Russia have cooled, although it remains officially aligned with Moscow through military and economic alliances. However, one constant over the past three decades is Armenia's continued reliance on foreign powers to pursue its broader ambitions, particularly against Azerbaijan. Today, Armenia has expanded the geographical spread of its patrons and enjoys support from

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France and India via various means and in different spheres. In this context, the close India–Armenia partnership and the former's military supplies to the latter create a particular case worth closer scrutiny, as these relations pose a critical threat to peace and security in the South Caucasus.

This article attempts to explore the burgeoning relations between Armenia and India with a focus on uncovering the strategic objectives that are the driving

force behind it. The starting point of this enquiry is to question the very timing of India's South Caucasus endeavour in the wake of the 44-Day War of 2020. It raises questions about the causes, existing dynamics, and potential implications of India's emergence as an active player in the region. To address this, the article first examines India's expanding relations with Armenia, with a brief timeline of the military procurement process at its core. It then seeks to situate these developments within the broader context of India's South Caucasus strategy and to assess how these ties align with India's wider security objectives vis-à-vis the regional power balance and its connectivity agenda. Additionally, the article explores the ideological affinities that have forged an alignment between Armenia and India. Finally, it evaluates the potential implications of India's strategy for the stability of the South Caucasus, considering the risks and challenges to regional peace.

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### ***India's expanding relations with Armenia***

While India is far from being a regional power, its engagement with Armenia marks a deliberate step towards securing a foothold in the ongoing geopolitical restructuring in the South Caucasus. Before this shift, relations were primarily focused on identifying areas of mutual interest for future development, previously limited to regional trade strategy, with Armenia's potential role in extending the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) through Iran being a key point of consideration. However, the first-ever visit of the Foreign Minister of India to Armenia in October 2021 revealed the growing strategic dimension of this outreach.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between Armenia and India has notably intensified on multiple fronts, with the defence partnership emerging as the cornerstone of this evolving strategic alignment.

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<sup>1</sup> Indian Express, Jaishankar stresses on connectivity, proposes Chabahar Port be included in the North-South Transport Corridor, October 13, 2021, Available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/jaishankar-armenia-connectivity-chabahar-port-north-south-transport-corridor-7570148/> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

the political support of Türkiye and Pakistan. The assessment of India–Armenia relations and, hence, India–Azerbaijan relations, in the broader context of India’s relations with Türkiye and Pakistan, has been a guiding principle of New Delhi’s foreign policy. An Indian expert writing for the Observer Research Foundation, a top Indian think-tank, clearly outlines this perspective and calls for cooperation between Yerevan and New Delhi in the sphere of intelligence:

*Ankara’s support for Pakistani claims on Kashmir and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan’s public statements about India’s domestic politics have eroded relations with New Delhi. Similarly, alongside its decades-old hostility towards India, Pakistan has refused to even accord Armenia diplomatic recognition. These hostilities have intensified, necessitating closer Indo-Armenian intelligence cooperation on this front.*<sup>2</sup>

Against this backdrop, India has stepped up its defence cooperation with Armenia, raising the possibility of it gradually replacing Russia as a key arms supplier and potentially becoming the main contributor to shaping Armenia’s military capabilities. Indeed, since 2020, Armenia

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has purchased advanced Indian-made weapon systems, making it the largest purchaser of Indian arms in the fiscal year 2024–2025 with contracts worth \$600 million.<sup>3</sup> Notable agreements include Armenia’s acquisition of Pinaka multiple-barrel rocket systems, anti-tank missiles,<sup>4</sup> and reportedly the Akash-1S surface-to-air missile systems, with deliveries expected by the end of 2024.<sup>5</sup> In 2023, India also exported the Zen Anti-Drone System (ZADS) to Armenia.<sup>6</sup> Earlier, in 2020, Armenia received Swathi

2 Goswami, A., R., “An India-Armenia Intelligence Partnership for the 2020s”, Observer Research Foundation, October 15, 2024, Available at: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/an-india-armenia-intelligence-partnership-for-the-2020s> (Accessed: October 24, 2024).

3 EADaily, India has an unexpected largest arms buyer, July 24, 2024, Available at: <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2024/07/24/india-has-an-unexpected-largest-arms-buyer> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

4 Tashjian, Y., “The Geopolitical Implications of India’s Arms Sale to Armenia”, The Armenian Weekly, August 9, 2023, Available at: <https://armenianweekly.com/2023/08/09/the-geopolitical-implications-of-indias-arms-sale-to-armenia/> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

5 Indian Defence Research Wing, India to Begin Shipping Akash 1S Air Defence Missile System to Armenia, August 8, 2024, Available at: [https://idrw.org/india-to-begin-shipping-akash-1s-air-defence-missile-system-to-armenia/#google\\_vignette](https://idrw.org/india-to-begin-shipping-akash-1s-air-defence-missile-system-to-armenia/#google_vignette) (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

6 Sharma, R. “After Pinaka Rockets, Armenia Buys Indian Anti-Drone System to Fight Azerbaijan’s Kamikaze UAVs”, Eurasian Times, November 7, 2023, Available at: <https://www.eurasiantimes.com>

weapon-locating radar systems from India, marking New Delhi's first major international sale of this kind. Pushing to further bolster its firepower, the recent confirmation of Armenia's order for 84 additional Advanced Towed Artillery Gun Systems (ATAGS) from India builds on a previous order of six ATAGS in 2023.<sup>7</sup>

One of the key items on Armenia's defence shopping list has been the acquisition of a medium-range missile system, which is crucial for enhancing its capability to strike deep inside Azerbaijan. Over the past few years, several options have been considered, with BrahMos often mentioned as a top contender due to its proven operational track record and range capabilities.<sup>8</sup> For now, the spotlight has shifted: according to recent reports, India is now planning to supply Armenia with short-to mid-range Pralay ballistic missiles, which have a range of 150 to 500 kilometres and can carry various types of warheads.<sup>9</sup> The export of Pralay, comparable to Russia's Iskander-M missile system, can be viewed as a bold move in India's military diplomacy.

Moreover, reflecting the level of Armenia's successive military orders, the establishment of an air cargo corridor between India and Armenia marks a pivotal development in enhancing strategic logistics and military–technical cooperation between these two nations.<sup>10</sup> The initiative, undertaken by the joint working group of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Container Corporation of India (CONCOR), not only facilitates timely deliveries but also underscores India's commitment to supporting Armenia's militarization efforts.

In a mutual effort to solidify their defence ties, Armenia appointed a defence attaché to its Embassy in India in 2023,<sup>11</sup> followed by

[com/after-pinaka-rockets-armenia-buys-indian-anti-drone-system/](https://www.com/after-pinaka-rockets-armenia-buys-indian-anti-drone-system/) (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

7 Armenpress, Armenia begins process to purchase 84 additional units of ATAGS artillery systems, October 3, 2024, Available at: <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1201444> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

8 Caliber.az, India and Armenia's "missile" challenge to Azerbaijan, October 21, 2024, Available at: <https://caliber.az/en/post/india-and-armenia-s-missile-challenge-to-azerbaijan> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

9 Indian Defence Research Wing, India Considers Supplying Pralay Missile to Armenia Amidst Regional Tensions, September 25, 2024, Available at: <https://idrw.org/india-considers-supplying-pralay-missile-to-armenia-amidst-regional-tensions/> (Accessed: October 21, 2024).

10 Sidharth, R. "HALCON to Boost Strategic Air Cargo Exports to Armenia", Logistics Insider, March 19, 2024, Available at: <https://www.logisticsinsider.in/halcon-to-boost-strategic-air-cargo-exports-to-armenia/> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

11 Azatutyun.am, Armenia to Appoint Defence Attaché To India (translation from Armenian), May 18, 2023, Available at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32417740.html> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

a similar move from India in 2024<sup>12</sup>. During their first military consultation in May 2024, the two nations agreed to deepen military diplomacy beyond defence trade to encompass military education, tactical training, and experience sharing.<sup>13</sup> The potential for deeper collaboration is not limited to training or joint military exercises. Political will may be pushing forward to the inclusion of additional dimensions, such as intelligence sharing and conceptualization of military strategies. India is now positioned to become one of the key contributors to Armenia’s militarization efforts, with expert circles contemplating the potential evolution of their relationship into a strategic partnership.<sup>14</sup> Armenia is increasingly viewing India as its ‘new hope’ for its military diversification efforts, which would establish India as a significant player in the balance of regional affairs – one that cannot be overlooked.

### *A shift in India’s approach to the South Caucasus*

*The emergence of India as a new extra-regional power with a foothold in the South Caucasus following the Second Garabagh War is shaped by its geopolitical concerns, particularly over Azerbaijan’s victory in the 44-Day War, which set the new tone for the Azerbaijan–Pakistan–Türkiye trilateral cooperation.*

The emergence of India as a new extra-regional power with a foothold in the South Caucasus following the Second Garabagh War is shaped by its geopolitical concerns, particularly over Azerbaijan’s victory in the 44-Day War, which set the new tone for the Azerbaijan–Pakistan–Türkiye trilateral cooperation. This victory is perceived by New Delhi as more than just a regional success – rather, it symbolizes the strengthening of that axis. This alignment has intensified India’s fears of a similar strategic collaboration being wielded against it in Kashmir, prompting New Delhi to cultivate closer ties with Armenia as a strategic counterbalance. Apart from matching up to its adversary’s strategy, India’s growing strategic footprint in Armenia is in tandem with synergies with France and the USA in regional affairs.

12 Armradio.am, India to post Defence Attaché in Armenia, April 11, 2024, Available at: <https://en.armradio.am/2024/04/11/armenia-to-post-defence-attache-in-armenia/> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

13 Armradio.am, First defence consultations held between Armenia and India, May 14, 2024, Available at: <https://en.armradio.am/2024/05/14/first-defence-consultations-held-between-armenia-and-india/> (Accessed: October 21, 2024)

14 Poghosyan, B. Time to transform Armenia – India cooperation into a strategic partnership, Civilnet.am, March 21, 2024. Available at: <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/768808/time-to-transform-armenia-india-cooperation-into-a-strategic-partnership/> (Accessed October 21, 2024).

In addition, post-war developments in the South Caucasus are reshaping the projected regional transit routes, with each power vying to keep them under close watch as these routes hold the key to reshaping regional influence and geoeconomic connectivity. India is no different in this regard. India's recent activism comes at a time when the geopolitical landscape is rapidly evolving. Within this compelling geopolitical context, India might have wanted to respond to the emerging dynamics by reinforcing its strategic axis, thereby expanding its foreign policy space. One of the key drivers in India's positioning in the South Caucasus is to secure its national security objectives, particularly to reduce any possible reliance on Turkish-aligned routes like the Middle Corridor and counterbalance the influence of regional powers, including Azerbaijan in that regard, as a close ally of Türkiye. Additionally, India might seek to counterbalance the logistical efforts of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by crafting an integrated strategy to establish a stronger foothold in Eurasia. As part of this approach, New Delhi has likely incorporated Armenia into its strategic calculus to bolster its regional influence.

The South Caucasus, in one way or another, offers India a vital bridge to access European markets and serves as a key transit corridor within the INSTC, facilitating connections to Central Asia. On the one hand, Armenia, although poorly connected to its neighbours due to a lack of crucial infrastructure, offers an alternative transit route through the Iran–Armenia–Georgia connection or the Persian Gulf–Black Sea corridor. On the other hand, Azerbaijan serves as a readily available hub for transit projects and offers substantial economic advantages. Just a few years ago, before India's recent pivot to the region took place, New Delhi had been seriously evaluating alternative options along the Caspian coast through Azerbaijan to create a bridge to the north and west via the South Caucasus.

### ***Common characteristics of the dominant political ideologies of India and Armenia***

In addition to the strategic depth that India is pursuing, the ideological affinity between the two states adds another layer to the relationship, making Armenia appear a natural partner to India. India's Prime Minister Modi, who is currently in his third term, has been promoting a

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Hindutva agenda, advocating for a Hindu renaissance and envisioning a homogeneous Hindu society for India.

India, home to the world's largest Muslim minority, has become increasingly dangerous for religious minorities, particularly at the hands of Hindu extremism. Rising anti-Muslim sentiment (as well as hostility to other religious minorities) has fuelled communal riots, exacerbated by institutionalized mechanisms that marginalize the Muslim population. Despite these growing tensions, the government has yet to declare a clear policy or strategy for managing communal relations. Many of these incidents are fuelled by radical Hindu rhetoric and hate speech, often coming from members of the ruling BJP party. Yet, the records of declining human rights<sup>15</sup> and political freedom<sup>16</sup> in India have not hindered its expanding relations with the West, which continues to portray India as a 'democratic ally'.

A similar emphasis on ethno-nationalism can be found in Armenia's core political ideology, which is centred on the idea of national homogeneity and aspires to unite the Armenian people within their so-called 'historical homeland'. The *Tseghakron* movement, launched by Nazi collaborator Garegin Nzhdeh<sup>17</sup> and rooted in racist ideology, promotes a belief in the superiority of the Aryan race. Armenia's current demographic composition, which is overwhelmingly Armenian, speaks for itself in reflecting this nationalist ethos. The deportation of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from the territories of Armenia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the consistent refusal of successive Armenian governments to allow the return of these Azerbaijanis to their homeland, is an outcome of these racist ideologies, which are deeply entrenched in the political thinking of the country.

Strangely, neither these facts nor a series of rallies and demonstrations

15 Human Rights Watch, "India: Increased Abuses Against Minorities, Critics", May 16, 2024, Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/11/india-increased-abuses-against-minorities-critics> (Accessed October 21, 2024).

16 Bajpae, Ch., "Modi's India has become less liberal but better governed", Chatham House, March 18, 2024, Available at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2023-12/modis-india-has-become-less-liberal-better-governed> (Accessed October 21, 2024).

17 Trend.az, "Israeli ambassador condemns nazi rally honoring Garegin Nzhdeh in Yerevan", January 3, 2024, Available at: <https://en.trend.az/world/israel/3844978.html> (Accessed October 21, 2024).



calling for “Armenia without Turks” attracted the attention of Western media.<sup>18</sup> Instead, Armenia has enjoyed unwarranted sympathy, with the Western mentality often embracing the country as a ‘victim’ or, perhaps strategically, as a new address for the export of ‘colour revolutions’. The ready acceptance of persistent narratives has led observers to neglect conducting a reality check on the local discourse in Armenia. For instance, little attention is given to understanding the underlying reasons behind the voluntary departure of the Armenians of the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan, including their expressed reluctance to live alongside Azerbaijanis under the jurisdiction of that country. Meanwhile, unsubstantiated claims of ‘forced displacement’ or ‘ethnic cleansing’ are echoed by top officials and amplified by the media in those countries. This occurs despite the ethnic cleansing committed by Armenia in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan, which resulted in the displacement of more than 700,000 Azerbaijanis and the relentless destruction of their settlements. This is largely overlooked, as if such atrocities were never committed by the ‘Christian Armenians’.

Indeed, the Western powers’ courting of both India and Armenia further aligns their political outlooks. For Armenia, this is primarily channelled through a pro-Western pivot and aspirations to join the EU. India, meanwhile, enjoys a unique ‘NATO-like’ partner status, labelled as a ‘like-minded’ state despite significant divergences. Washington has been giving the green light to India’s access to cutting-edge technologies, including membership in the semiconductor alliance, underscoring the deepening defence and strategic ties between them.<sup>19</sup>

Equally important, in the context of the Russia–Ukraine war, is the way Western relations with India and Armenia serve as a test, given that both are defence partners of Russia. Normally, this should have presented a significant challenge; however, there are no indications that it truly is. Instead, strategic circles in the West have shifted towards a more tolerant perspective, contemplating a reasoned approach to both countries by offering alternatives to help them divert from Russia.

18 Ednews.net, “Armenia has never brought to justice those who uttered ‘Armenia without Turks’ slogan - MFA”, October 30, 2023, Available at: <https://ednews.net/en/news/politics/628087-armenia-has-never-brought-justice> (Accessed October 21, 2024).

19 Iyengar, R., “U.S. State Department’s ITSI Fund Adds India as a Partner”, Foreign Policy, September 6, 2024, Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/09/08/us-itsi-semiconductor-chips-india-manufacturing-state-department/> (Accessed October 21, 2024).

However, this situation raises questions about their roles in evading sanctions, seemingly doing so with impunity in the eyes of the West.

Indeed, it might seem paradoxical that the Russia–Ukraine conflict has provided momentum for India to deepen its relations with Europe, even while maintaining good ties with Moscow. This approach is also evident in Armenia’s case, which exemplifies a complex duality. The significant increase in its exports to Russia can primarily be attributed to the re-export of products sourced from third countries, thus facilitating the circumvention of sanctions imposed on Russia. Western media turn a blind eye to the skyrocketing growth in Armenia’s trade turnover with Russia, that jumped from a mere \$2 billion prior to the Ukraine war to a projected \$16 billion this year. It is a commonly accepted fact that such growth would not have been possible without circumvention of Western sanctions and re-export of sanctioned products.

### *Implications for peace and security in the South Caucasus*

The implications of Armenia’s defence procurement from India extend beyond their bilateral relations to influence regional security dynamics. This complicates New Delhi’s professed neutrality in the South Caucasus. By aligning with Armenia and providing military support at such a critical juncture, India joins a league of countries, for example, France,<sup>20</sup> pushing the arms race forward and bolstering Yerevan’s revanchism. Such moves have sparked sharp condemnation from Azerbaijan, which views these actions as detrimental to regional peace.<sup>21</sup> Baku has expressed clear concerns and suggests that external military support is encouraging revanchist sentiment in Armenia, further complicating prospects for lasting stability.

Interestingly, even from the outset, New Delhi poised itself to strategically extend its regional partnerships by coupling Armenia with other key allies through trilateral and multi-country frameworks, such as the India–Armenia–Greece and India–Armenia–Cyprus alliances

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20 Nazaretyan, N., “‘Strategic Intimacy’: Armenian-French Defence Cooperation”, Evnreport, November 15, 2023, Available at: <https://evnreport.com/politics/strategic-intimacy-armenian-french-defence-cooperation/> (Accessed October 21, 2024).

21 Azernews.az, “Azerbaijan conveys concerns to India’s ambassador over country’s expanding military co-op with Armenia”, July 26, 2023, Available at: <https://www.azernews.az/nation/212769.html> (Accessed October 21, 2024).

and, on the horizon, France–Armenia–India. Perhaps the boldest expression of this potential lies in THE defence alliance between India, Iran, and Armenia. Thus, from an Indian perspective, Yerevan serves as a flexible strategic asset, allowing India to forge various alliances across the region. This flexibility enables India to expand its geopolitical influence, particularly in key alignments such as the India–Iran–Armenia axis, where Iran offers port access for shipments, or the India–Armenia–Greece partnership, which focuses on countering Türkiye.

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India’s growing defence ties with Armenia can be seen as part of a broader strategy to enhance its influence in the region. However, India, although aspiring to be a global arms exporter, falls short of fully explaining the strategic calculus involved. Despite India’s framing of the emerging defence partnership as a business endeavour and emphasizing its relations with both countries, the one-sided nature of these dealings undermines the efforts for peace and stability in the South Caucasus by fuelling revanchism in Armenia.

Revanchist-minded political and societal groups in Armenia do not acknowledge the postwar realities in the region and are calling for a military takeover of the Garabagh region and other territories of Azerbaijan. For example, Benjamin Pogosyan, the chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, claims, “*The only way to secure the right of return of Armenians is to end Azerbaijani control over Nagorno Karabakh, and Armenia can do that only through military means.*”<sup>22</sup> Several other prominent experts and politicians share Pogosyan’s views. Richard Grigosyan, director of the Yerevan-based Regional Studies Center, asserted in an interview with Armenian media in December 2023 that the prospect of instability in Azerbaijan caused by the implosion of the country is “the only positive scenario in regaining Karabakh”.<sup>23</sup> This analysis indirectly refers to the

22 Pogosyan, B. “What Next for Nagorno Karabakh?”, *The Armenian Mirror Spectator*, October 14, 2023, Available at: <https://mirrorspectator.com/2023/10/14/what-next-for-nagorno-karabakh/> (Accessed October 24, 2024).

23 Youtube Channel of Civilnet.am, *Insider Perspective on Armenia’s Military Transformation*, December 2, 2023, Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rREaP8tZ2sk&ab\\_channel=CIVILNET](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rREaP8tZ2sk&ab_channel=CIVILNET) (Accessed: October 24, 2024).

early 1990s, when Armenia launched a war and occupied Azerbaijani territories, taking advantage of the “implosion of the country” due to political and economic crises. By supplying weapons to Armenia, India, in a similar vein to France and others, emboldens these revanchist sentiments and fuels the arms race in the region.

In addition to the detrimental consequences of this policy to peace and security in the South Caucasus, such a positioning also jeopardizes India’s long-term interests vis-à-vis this region, particularly in terms of trade and connectivity. Investing all its strategic assets into Armenia while downplaying the repercussions of its actions may lead to significant consequences, including a potential complication for the shipment of Indian goods flowing through the INSTC in the case that any Indian-made weapon is used against Azerbaijan or if missiles inadvertently land on its territory. Such imprudent and risky projects threaten India’s overall presence in the region. Moreover, this new military partnership could complicate the dynamics of this region, where Türkiye, Russia, and Iran have established interests. Not only does it risk India’s economic engagement in Azerbaijan – encompassing energy projects, air connectivity, tourism, and around 1,000 Indian-owned businesses – but it also poses a threat to broader regional stability. While India may gain from its relationship with Armenia, it risks alienating itself from a key regional player, thus ultimately diminishing its prospects for cooperation throughout the South Caucasus.

In the current context, the region’s fate is closely tied to the progress of peace initiatives. The incentive structures in place are crucial to maintaining this momentum and preventing future re-escalation. Thus, factors such as the evolving dynamics of regional alliances hold paramount importance in shaping the power balance in the region, as they can either reinforce the stability achieved through peace initiatives or, if mismanaged, trigger renewed conflicts.

### *Conclusion*

Armenia’s reliance on foreign powers to bolster its military ambitions, particularly through its burgeoning relationship with India, represents a significant shift in regional dynamics that poses new challenges to

peace and stability in the South Caucasus. As India is stepping towards an Armenia-focused approach in its engagement with the South Caucasus, its strategic motivations behind this endeavour come into sharper focus. Armenia and India are striking sparks off each other in an interplay of aligned security interests, which involve offsetting the influence of some regional powers, as well as ideological sympathy. This partnership, fueled by military procurement, is raising alarms in the already fragile post-war geopolitical environment of the South Caucasus.

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Thus, this article has provided an analysis of India's evolving role in the South Caucasus to understand the broader implications of its strategy for regional dynamics and long-term stability. In conclusion, it suggests that India's bet on Armenia presents inherent risks, as it may backfire on its established interests in the region.

India's military support, framed as part of its broader geopolitical strategy, risks empowering revanchist groups in Armenia that have yet to come to terms with the post-war realities. This escalation, fueled by a deepening defence partnership, threatens to destabilize the region, as external powers inadvertently embolden Armenia's territorial aspirations and fuel an arms race in the South Caucasus.

For India, its growing involvement in the South Caucasus must be carefully calibrated to avoid unintended consequences. While seeking to counterbalance regional players like Türkiye and Pakistan, India risks undermining its own economic and strategic interests by alienating Azerbaijan, a critical partner in regional connectivity and energy projects.

Furthermore, by aligning so closely with Armenia's defence agenda, India is jeopardizing its reputation in the region and risks entangling itself in a conflict that could spiral beyond its control.

The South Caucasus stands at a critical juncture, as peace and stability depend on sustained diplomatic efforts and the recognition of new regional realities. As external actors like India and France continue to deepen their ties with Armenia, they must be aware that their miscalculated actions carry far-reaching implications. Encouraging

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revanchism through military support only prolongs conflict and diminishes the prospects for long-term peace. To foster stability, regional and global powers must prioritize diplomatic engagement and refrain from actions that escalate tensions, thus ensuring that the momentum for peace, established through the post-war order, is maintained.