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EU–Armenia summit: more Europe in the Caucasus

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On 4–5 May, the first-ever EU–Armenia summit was held in Yerevan, preceded by the eighth summit of the European Political Community (EPC). The parties adopted a joint declaration confirming their intention to further strengthen relations and deepen cooperation, particularly in the fields of the economy (including connectivity) and security (with an emphasis on enhancing Armenia's resilience to hybrid threats). The EU acknowledged Armenians' European aspirations and announced tangible financial support for Armenia. Among other measures, a new working arrangement on cooperation was signed between the EU's Frontex agency and the Armenian Interior Ministry. Moscow sharply criticised the summit through statements in the media and social media posts, which accused Armenia of betrayal. Meanwhile, Armenia's pro-Russian opposition argued that European support for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan ahead of the parliamentary election scheduled for 7 June amounted to unfair political competition.

The organisation in Yerevan of summits attended by leading Western politicians – alongside representatives of EU member states and the bloc itself, participants also included NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte – one month before the election signalled support for Pashinyan and his political course. It also constituted a strong indication of the EU's growing interest not only in Armenia, but in the South Caucasus as a whole.

Commentary

- **Armenia's European turn represents a strategic choice rather than merely an attempt by Yerevan to expand its room for manoeuvre in relations with Russia.** This shift began after Armenia lost the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in autumn 2020, although Prime Minister Pashinyan, who came to power in spring 2018, had already been distancing himself from Russia and the post-Soviet integration frameworks dominated by it. In September 2022, when Azerbaijan attacked targets within Armenia itself – without any response from either Russia or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) – Yerevan decided to broaden its cooperation with Western institutions and states (see '*Armenia: between the West and the threat of war*'). This resulted in a series of meetings, including the Armenia–EU–US summit in Brussels, at which Western states declared support for Armenian reforms, economic development, and financial assistance (April 2024); the Armenian parliament's adoption of a law launching the country's accession process to the EU (March 2025); and the new Strategic Agenda for the EU–Armenia Partnership (adopted in December 2025). Another important element of Armenia's rapprochement with Western states was the strategic partnership agreement signed with the United States in January 2025.

- **The EU unequivocally supports Armenia's pro-Western turn,** despite the fact that the country formally remains a member of such frameworks as the CSTO and the Eurasian Economic Union, although in practice it no longer participates in their activities**.** Following the aforementioned escalation in 2022, the EU deployed an ad hoc civilian mission to Armenia to monitor the situation along the border with Azerbaijan. In February 2023, this was replaced by EUMA **(European Union Mission in Armenia, see '***The EU's ambivalent neighbours. Brussels on the South Caucasus***').** In February 2025, its mandate was extended for an additional two years. In April 2026, the EU decided to deploy the European Union Partnership Mission (EUPM) to Armenia for a two-year period, with the aim of strengthening the country's resilience to external threats**.** In addition to the previously agreed EU support under the Resilience and Growth Plan (€270 million) and anticipated investments under the Global Gateway initiative (€2.5 billion), Armenia has also been included in the European Peace Facility (EPF), from which it is to receive €30 million**.**
- **At the same time, the EU is actively supporting the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan under US auspices, as well as the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Turkey (see '***The Washington Declaration: moving closer to peace in the South Caucasus*'). This is reflected in the relevant passages of the joint declaration, the participation of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in the EPC summit via video link, as well as in the fact that the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas – and also Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni – travelled directly from Yerevan to Baku for a visit**.**
- **The organisation in Yerevan of two important summits on the eve of the parliamentary election constituted a clear expression of Western support for Pashinyan.** This support was all the more significant because leaders of individual EU member states also attended the EPC summit, thereby increasing its political weight, whereas the EU–Armenia summit formally required only the participation of the EU leadership. The presence of two figures strongly opposed by Moscow – Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya – sent a clear signal that Brussels does not regard the South Caucasus as part of Russia's sphere of influence any more and intends to draw the states of the region more closely into its orbit .