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**VALUES AND IDENTITY AS SOURCES  
OF FOREIGN POLICY IN ARMENIA  
AND GEORGIA**



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## **ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

### **Introduction**

The meaning of public mood in foreign policy decision-making is one of the most controversial and one of the most interesting subjects of scientific debate. A great many studies are devoted to the study of the influence of public opinion on foreign policy decision-making<sup>29</sup>. In this context, there are several influential factors: the issues, time, the foreign policy agenda, external actors, the types of decisions, the types of political regime, etc. (Mintz, A., DeRouen, K. Jr., 2010).

In the case of Armenia, we are dealing with a number of specific factors. Its geopolitical state influences the country's foreign policy in many ways: Armenia as a small, land-locked, economically "fragile" country in a complex and troubled neighbourhood, which is subject to competition between regional and world powers. These factors have a decisive impact not only on the adoption of government decisions, but also on the formation of public opinion on specific foreign policy issues.

Moreover, most of these issues (the country's foreign policy orientation, relations with regional neighbours) are securitized – Armenia's current foreign policy is extremely politicized and seen as one of the most important components of national security. This fact directly or indirectly affects public preferences in foreign policy matters. This might explain why proposals that would radically change the country's foreign policy are seen as marginal, and it is widely believed that major changes could lead to internal political

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<sup>29</sup> It is logical that in a democracy, the public has more access to important information about the government's foreign policy, as well as more opportunities to use direct (mass actions) or indirect (media) influence to pressure foreign policy decision-making. In addition, at times of crisis, the public is more mobilized and the government is more inclined to enlist public support and avoid domestic conflicts.

destabilization and could ultimately weaken the country's external security.

This study seeks to understand the center of "geopolitical gravity" for the population of Armenia; who Armenians define as the country's main friend and enemy; how the public views the country's major partners; and society's views on the country's relations with its allies and enemies. Many studies on the influence of public opinion on foreign policy decisions are based on experiences in developed democracies, and emphasize the ability of the people to influence policy from the "bottom-up". Armenia, however, is still a country in transition and public opinion lacks the power to have any real influence on foreign policy making.

There is no reason to believe that Armenia's foreign policy will change in the near future, or that Armenian society<sup>30</sup> will create an effective mechanism to influence policy makers over their foreign policy decision. The unity shown in the April 2016 clashes with Azeri forces over Nagorno-Karabakh indicated, however, that when under attack, Armenian society and political elites can put aside all internal differences and quickly mobilize to provide human, material, political, and psychological assistance to the government to help fight against foreign threats.

There were several significant implications from the April clashes: first, Armenian society was disappointed by the level of support exhibited by some of its allies; consequently, these countries have lost a degree of public trust. While we do not believe that this will change the hierarchy and the balance of public preferences in the selection of Armenia's main friends and enemies, it will cause more citizens to believe that Armenia does not have any external allies.

Understanding the public attitudes towards official foreign policy is important both for academic and practical reasons. In addition, it is also an indicator of the level of public support for the government's decisions and initiatives. This can serve as the basis or a means to legitimate official policy. The main source of data for this

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<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of this article, Armenian society refers to the population of the Republic of Armenia. Armenians living in Karabakh are referred to as Karabakh society and Armenians living abroad are referred to as Diaspora Armenians.

study is the public opinion surveys conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre – the Caucasus Barometer (CB); Eurasian Development Bank’s Centre for Integration Studies Integration Barometer (IB) and the EU Neighbourhood Barometer (EU NB), as well as the data from Barometer.am (YB) and APR Group (APRG).

There are advantages and disadvantages to using these research tools. The advantage of **CB** is its huge online database, which includes data from 2008 to the present, which allows the comparison of the public's responses. There are two main disadvantages to using this tool, however: on some important issues (such as country’s main friends and enemies), this tool registers only single answers, and the CB does not include all the issues that are necessary for the scope of our study.

The **IB** database also includes surveys’ results since 2011. Its main advantage is that it registers multiple answers. The disadvantages are that the social and demographic survey data are only partially available, and here, too, some important issues were not included in the survey itself. The **EU NB** provides details comparative data relating to the EU. However, this narrow focus is also a disadvantage. In addition, the ability to detect correlations with socio-demographic data is absent. The **YB** provides an opportunity to identify correlations with socio-demographic data, but the surveys are relatively new (since 2014) and only include responses from residents of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. The **APRG** survey provides detailed data, but only concerning the country’s orientation towards Russia and the West. In addition, this study was conducted only twice - in 2014 and 2015, and it there is not enough data to identify trends.

The disadvantages of these instruments made the comparison of results and / or addition of missing data very difficult and sometimes even impossible. Nevertheless, the data available has enabled us to identify a valuable overall picture of the public mood and trends on some important foreign policy issues.

## General Geopolitical Orientation

As noted above, officially, Armenia conducts a complementary foreign policy. It is worth noting that the public surveys indicate Armenian society supports the country's foreign policy and the general provisions of the National Security Strategy. In comparison with other post-Soviet countries, Armenia has an average index of attraction<sup>31</sup> in relation to post-Soviet space and the European Union, according to IB - 2015 (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 84-92). However, *Table 1* clearly shows that, in **political** matters, public opinion in Armenia over the past four years has been tightly focused on post-Soviet space: in these matters the CIS has maintained a stable dominance over other centres of gravity. Concerning the **economy**, however, Armenians lean toward Europe. The study also highlights that, in **socio-cultural** terms, Armenia, along with Ukraine, is one of the most "self-sufficient" countries in post-Soviet space: in these countries, the number of respondents who are not interested in other cultures is higher than the number of respondents interested in cultures of other countries.

A comparison of the structure of the cumulative indexes of attraction uncovers two interesting trends. First, it is obvious that a "competition" is underway between the three spaces: an increase in the index of attraction to the CIS means a reduction of indexes of the EU and "other countries." Conversely, a decrease in the index of attraction to the CIS means an increase of the indexes of the EU and "other countries." Second, although the index of the CIS is always higher than that of other centres, the index itself is not stable: the index registered high levels of attraction to the CIS in Armenia in 2012 and 2014, but the number fell in both 2013 and 2015.

The index shows that Armenia is *politically* highly oriented on the post-Soviet space, which, in this case, means Russia. *Culturally*, however, the country's orientation is slightly more pro-European and

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<sup>31</sup> According to the IB methodology, the cumulative index of attraction consists of three separate indices of attraction toward the EU, CIS and "Other countries" - political, economic and cultural. Each of these indexes, in its turn, is based on respondents' answers to three relevant group of questions.

economically, Armenia is pro-CIS.

**Table 1. Armenia's Indexes of Attraction to Different Categories of Countries\***

		Year	Centres of Attraction			
			CIS	EU	Other	None
Spheres of Attraction	Political	2012	<b>0.63</b>	0.20	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.09</i>
		2013	<b>0.56</b>	0.18	0.10	0.16
		2014	<b>0.65</b>	<i>0.09</i>	<i>0.05</i>	0.20
		2015	<b>0.58</b>	0.16	<i>0.07</i>	0.20
	Economic	2012	0.29	0.30	0.23	0.17
		2013	0.29	0.33	0.30	<i>0.09</i>
		2014	0.34	0.28	0.26	0.12
		2015	0.30	0.30	0.30	<i>0.10</i>
	Socio-Cultural	2012	0.33	0.34	0.16	0.17
		2013	0.31	0.35	0.21	0.13
		2014	0.33	0.30	0.18	0.19
		2015	0.30	0.33	0.20	0.16
Cumulative		2012	<b>0.42</b>	0.28	0.16	0.15
		2013	0.38	0.29	0.21	0.12
		2014	<b>0.44</b>	0.23	0.16	0.17
		2015	0.39	0.26	0.19	0.15

\* **Bold** marked numbers are the highest and *italic* marked numbers are the lowest.

### Armenia's Main Friends

As noted above, in the **political dimension**<sup>32</sup>, Armenia's population is predominately focused on *post-Soviet space*. According to the IB-2015, this is the region where Armenia's citizens identify the country's major ally – as well as two of its main enemies. The vast majority of the population perceive post-Soviet countries as friends that can help in times of need. More specifically, 86% of respondents consider Russia to be a friendly country, which will be

<sup>32</sup> Public perception of friendliness and hostility of other countries, the vectors of political and military cooperation etc.

helpful at difficult times. France came in at a distant second, with 30% of respondents, and neighbouring Georgia came in third, with 27% of respondents (see *Table 2*).

**Table 2. IB 2012-2015: Country's main friend (%)**

	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Russia</b>	90	91	87	86
<b>France</b>	45	37	14	30
<b>Georgia</b>	19	21	15	27
<b>None</b>	4	4	10	10

However, *Table 2* indicates the rankings are far from stable: first, over the past three years Russia's rating has been falling. This trend became increasingly visible after Armenia joined the Russian-led Customs Union, and it has continued even after the country joined the Eurasian Economic Union. Second, 2012-2014, France's positive rating fell, but in 2015 its ranking doubled among respondents. Third, Georgia's ranking is unstable: in 2014 the country's rating fell by 6 points, but in 2015 its ranking increased by 12 percent.

These trends were reflected in the CB 2011-2015 surveys. For example, according to CB-2015 data, 75 percent of respondents believe Russia is Armenia's closest friend – the lowest rate since 2011(see *Table 3*)<sup>33</sup>.

**Table 3. CB 2011-2015: Country's main friend (%)**

	2011	2012	2013	2015	Change
<b>Russia</b>	81	77	83	75	-6
<b>France</b>	7	9	5	5	-2
<b>Georgia</b>	4	2	2	<5 <sup>34</sup>	<5
<b>None</b>	4	4	4	11	+7

*Sources:* (Caucasus Barometer 2011 Armenia (1), 2013);

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<sup>33</sup> Probably, the differences of IB and CB ratings could be explained by the fact, that "Integration-Barometer" permits simultaneously multiple answers, and "Caucasus-Barometer" registers only one answer.

<sup>34</sup> In CB 2015, Georgia, USA, Germany, Iran and other countries were grouped to "Other", which together received only 5%.

(Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (4), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (11), 2013) (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (2), 2016)

The surveys also found that Armenians tend to trust post-Soviet countries for military assistance. The IB-2015 found Armenia (82 percent) is second only to Kyrgyzstan among 12 post-Soviet countries that look to Russia for military-political support in times of war. France and the USA came in at a distant second and third, with 14 percent and 9 percent respectively.

The survey results also indicate that, for the majority of respondents, Armenia is a security consumer, not a security provider: for instance, just 46 percent of Armenians believe the country should help Russia militarily in times of war. The number is even less for Georgia – 10 percent – and France – 7 percent. Moreover, 49 percent of respondents do not think that any foreign country merits Armenia’s political and military support (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 34-35) (see *Table 4*).

**Table 4. Armenia Can Expect/Needs to Provide Support From/To These Countries (%)**

		<b>Expect support from</b>	<b>Provide support to</b>
<b>Post-Soviet</b>	2012	88	63
	2013	87	59
	2014	82	58
	2015	84	49
<b>European</b>	2012	23	10
	2013	30	12
	2014	13	5
	2015	15	8
<b>Other</b>	2012	9	5
	2013	25	9
	2014	12	4
	2015	11	4
<b>No one/DK</b>	2012	8	28
	2013	9	44
	2014	16	40
	2015	15	49

It is interesting to note that Russia has maintained its role as Armenia's most trusted ally despite the fact that it is the main supplier of weapons to Azerbaijan – Armenia's military adversary. (Wezeman P.D., Wezeman S.T., 2015, p. 7)

While the public has increasingly shown its concern about this situation, especially against the background of periodic clashes between Azeri and Armenian forces, only a small percent of respondents say Yerevan should break its relations with Moscow over this issue. (Barometer.am (3), 2015) (see **Table 5**).

**Table 5. As a response to the fact, that Russia sells weapons to Azerbaijan, Armenian authorities should ... (%)**

Negotiate this issue with Russia	47.3
Not to react at all	34.4
Condemn Russia officially	7.4
Demand from Russia some compensation	5.5
Break off relations with Russia	2.3
Don't know	3.2

There are some signs that the situation could change following the April 2016 four-day war between Armenian and Azeri forces. While 66 percent of respondents expected Russian support if Azerbaijan attacked Nagorno-Karabakh, according to the 2015 Barometer.am (Barometer.am (5), 2015), April events clearly show, that Armenian society had unreasonably high expectations from Russia, especially after Russia stated it would continue selling weapons to Azerbaijan even following the clashes (Reuters, 2016).

### **Armenia's Main Enemies**

All public opinion surveys indicate Armenia's citizens consistently perceive two enemies threatening the country – Azerbaijan and Turkey – which aligns with the official position.

The public's view differs, however, in how they assess the two countries' degree of hostility: the public assessment of the degree of "hostility" of Azerbaijan is higher than that of Turkey: given the possibility of multiple answers (IB, YB), "indexes of

hostility" for these countries are higher and closer.

When respondents can only choose one answer (CB), the majority perceives Azerbaijan as the country's main enemy. As shown in **Table 6**, the results of the CB survey (2012-2015) indicate that more than half of the respondents consider only Azerbaijan to be Armenia's biggest enemy. The IB (2012-2015) and the 2014 YB survey results show, however, that with the possibility of multiple answers, the overwhelming majority considers both countries as hostile to Armenia.

**Table 6. Armenia's Main Enemy (%)**

	<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>CB 2012</b>	63	32
<b>IB 2012</b>	94	71
<b>CB 2013</b>	66	28
<b>IB 2013</b>	94	66
<b>IB 2014</b>	92	67
<b>IB 2015</b>	90	72
<b>CB 2015</b>	76	18
<b>YB 2014 (1<sup>st</sup> answer)</b>	68	20
<b>YB 2014 (2<sup>nd</sup> answer)</b>	27	71

**Sources:** (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (3), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (10), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (3), 2016); (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015); (Barometer.am (4), 2014)

The perception of Azerbaijan and Turkey as hostile countries is shared across all groups, regardless of gender, age or background.

Moreover, according to a special survey conducted by the CRRC in 2014 (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 19), 77 percent of respondents believes that Turkey pursues a hostile policy toward Armenia, and 82 percent of respondents believes that Turkey cannot be trusted. Only 25 percent of respondents said that Turkey's foreign policy toward Armenia is more favourable today than it was 100 years ago (see **Table 7**).

**Table 7. Attitude towards following statements regarding Turkey (%)**

	<b>Fully agree</b>	<b>Rather agree</b>	<b>Equally dis/agree</b>	<b>Rather not agree</b>	<b>Don't agree at all</b>
<b>Turkey cannot be trusted</b>	70	12	7	4	7
<b>Turkey pursues hostile policies towards Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh</b>	57	20	10	7	6
<b>Turkey's official policy differs from the position of the Turkish people</b>	20	26	32	11	11

However, a comparison of the results of CB (2010) and CRRC (2014) (Grigoryan A., 2015) indicates certain changes in public perceptions: For example, the number of those who believe that Turks have a positive attitude towards Armenians has nearly doubled. In addition, the number of respondents who believe that Turks have a neutral attitude toward them increased by about 10 percent, and the number who answered that Turks have a negative attitude toward Armenians decreased<sup>35</sup> almost by 20 percent. (see **Table 8**)

**Table 8. Turkey's population's general attitude towards Armenians (%)**

	<b>CB 2010</b>	<b>CRRC 2014</b>
<b>Absolutely negative</b>	32	19
<b>Rather negative</b>	30	25
<b>Neutral</b>	15	26
<b>Rather positive</b>	14	29
<b>Very positive</b>	3	2

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<sup>35</sup> There is no data on how public perception has changed since the April clashes (BBC, 2016) although Turkish support for Azerbaijan might have behavior of Turkey during the four-day war.

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2010 Armenia (2), 2013); (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 20)

Responses to the surveys also indicate that distrust in society toward Azerbaijanis and citizens of Turkey runs deeper than just issues of security. The CB survey data from 2009 to 2013 show that a stable majority of respondents does not support doing business with Azerbaijanis and Turks, and a stable majority opposes marriages with them (see *Table 9*). It is noteworthy that Azerbaijanis and Turks are the only nations with which the majority of respondents disapprove business dealings.

**Table 9. Attitude towards business and marriage with Turks and Azerbaijanis (%)**

	CB 2010		CB 2011		CB 2012		CB 2013		CB 2015	
	YES	NO								
<b>Business with Turks</b>	45	53	40	57	39	59	31	67	28	69
<b>Business with Azerbaijanis</b>	34	64	32	64	32	66	22	76	18	79
<b>Woman marrying Turks</b>	8	91	9	90	7	92	4	95	5	94
<b>Woman marrying Azerbaijanis</b>	9	91	9	90	7	92	4	96	5	94

*Source:* The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. "Caucasus Barometer Armenia" 2010-2015. "Approval of doing business with Turks/Azerbaijanis" & "Approval of women marrying Turks/Azerbaijanis", Retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets/>, accessed on 15 May, 2016

## The Normalization of Relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan

Based on the survey results, Armenians are sceptical about the likelihood that the relations between Armenia and Turkey will normalize in the near future.

For example, comparison of the data of public opinion surveys reveals that the number of those who oppose the **opening of the Armenian-Turkish border** in Armenia has decreased over the last four years (see *Table 10*). The data analysis indicates that Armenian society perceives the possible economic benefits from border opening are more important than its possible threats for national security. According to CB, in 2012 more respondents supported the opening of borders, compared to 58 percent in 2010 and 46 percent in 2012 who feared it would negatively affect Armenia's national security.

However, according to YB data, only 20 percent of the respondents from Yerevan expect the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border in the next five years (Barometer.am (6), 2015).

**Table 10. Support of opening border with Turkey with no precondition (%)**

	CB 2010	CB 2012	CRRC 2014
<b>Don't support at all</b>	31	22	22
<b>Rather don't support</b>	13	13	11
<b>Neutral</b>	11	16	15
<b>Rather support</b>	26	21	36
<b>Fully support</b>	16	19	15

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2010 Armenia (1), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (5), 2013); (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 16)

Public attitudes towards the issue of compensation by Turkey, once it recognizes **Armenian genocide**, are also noteworthy. If the authorities decide to pursue legal claims against Turkey, it appears

that the society has already decided what it wants from Ankara. In *Table 11*, we see public perceptions on what Armenia should **demand** from Turkey, what is **expected to receive** and what it **will receive**.

**Table 11. What to demand and expect and will be received from Turkey? (%)**

	Demand	Expect		Receive	
	YB 2014	ACNIS 2005	CRRC 2014	ACNIS 2005	CB 2012
<b>Financial</b>	5	4	9	-	51
<b>Territorial</b>	30	20	28	74	34
<b>Material</b>	1	5	1	-	-
<b>Monument's restoration</b>	-	-	1	-	44
<b>Recognition/Moral</b>	7	27	42	43	-
<b>All of the above</b>	51	40	-	-	-
<b>Nothing</b>	6	-	-	-	-

*Source:* (ACNIS, 2005, p. 12); (Barometer.am (3), 2014); (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (1), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (2), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2012 Armenia (6), 2013); (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 21); (Barometer.am (1), 2014)

Even though the surveys asked slightly different things, it is possible to draw some conclusions by comparing the results. First, the absolute majority of respondents are in favour of bringing together all types of claims ("all of the above"), although it is unclear how likely they believe such an outcome is in reality.

Second, the vast majority of respondents believe it is likely that Armenia will receive financial compensation, although it is not considered a major demand. This also applies to the demand of restoration or preservation of Armenian cultural heritage, which is also not included in the list of the main claims from Turkey. Third, about 30 percent of respondents believe that Armenia should demand territorial compensation. They also expect that this requirement will be fulfilled. However, almost 95 percent of respondents from

Yerevan do not expect that Turkey will recognize the Armenian Genocide in the next five years (Barometer.am (6), 2015).

The public opinion on the future of Armenian-Turkish relations is also interesting. Comparing similar data from ACNIS (ACNIS, 2005, p. 15) and CRRC (Grigoryan A., 2015, p. 23) (**Table 12**), we can conclude that, first, during 2005-2014, public interest in diplomatic and economic relations changed dramatically: Interest in the political sphere has sharply decreased while interest in trade and some economic areas has increased (in general by 53 percent). Second, the interest in cultural cooperation also increased (in general by 15 percent). Third, in the military sphere, there are no significant changes. Finally, there was a four percent decreased in the number of those who support the development of relations with Turkey in all fields.

**Table 12. Preferable Spheres of Armenian-Turkish Relations (%)**

	ACNIS 2005	CRRC 2014
<b>Diplomatic/Political</b>	46	16
<b>Economic</b>	22	27
<b>Cultural</b>	1	8
<b>Military</b>	2	3
<b>Comprehensive</b>	12	8

**Note:** CRRC 2014 lists also several economic sectors (Transport-12%, Energy-9%, Tourism-5%), and two cultural sectors (Science-4% and Education-3%), and also the Environment (5%).

Armenians also distrust Turkey’s involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. According to CB (Caucasus Barometer 2011 Armenia (2), 2013), almost 70 percent of those questioned opposed any Turkish involvement in the **Karabakh conflict settlement**, and only eight percent believed Turkey should have a small role in the peace process. A relative majority (41 percent), however, believes that the normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations will have a positive impact on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Three quarters of the respondents said that Azerbaijan has a great influence on Armenian-Turkish relations (Grigoryan A., 2015, pp. 18,

33). While just 10 percent of those questioned believed the Karabakh conflict can be settled in the next five years, the majority of respondents in both Armenia and Azerbaijan said a negotiated settlement is possible (Barometer.am (4), 2015).

Unlike Armenians, however, Azerbaijanis are less inclined to rule out the possibility of a new military conflict (see *Table 13*). Middle-aged respondents from Armenia appear to have the most confidence that the conflict can be resolved through negotiations. It is also interesting that respondents from Yerevan not only prefer negotiations, but also support internationally mediated negotiations (72 percent) for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Only nine percent of Yerevan residents believe a military solution of the conflict is the most likely option (Barometer.am (1), 2015).

**Table 13. Likely to find a solution to the Karabakh conflict through ... (%)**

	Very unlikely	Rather unlikely	Rather likely	Very likely	DK
<b>Peaceful negotiation (Armenia)</b>	16	15	26	28	15
<b>Peaceful negotiation (Azerbaijan)</b>	22	17	20	35	7
<b>Force (Armenia)</b>	33	27	12	8	20
<b>Force (Azerbaijan)</b>	29	23	13	20	15

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2013 regional dataset (2), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 regional dataset (1), 2013)

The survey also showed that a vast majority of respondents' favour Karabakh becoming part of Armenia, although for many respondents the option of an independent state is also acceptable (see *Table 14*).

**Table 14. Karabakh's Future Status**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Part of Azerbaijan</b>	2	95	4
<b>Independent State</b>	74	24	2
<b>Part of Armenia</b>	90	7	3

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (7), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (8), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (9), 2013)

### **Socio-Cultural and Economic Orientations**

According to IB-2015 (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 58-80), according to the **socio-cultural dimension**, as mentioned above, Armenia's society is mainly *"self-sufficient"* (see **Table 15**): a relative majority is not interested in the main components of foreign socio-cultural attraction<sup>36</sup>. However, preference is given to entertainment, education and vacations in European countries. This is true even considering the fact that the absolute majority of respondents have not travelled abroad in the past five years. The overwhelming majority has permanent social contacts (relatives, friends, and partners) in the former USSR (mainly in Russia); just 24 percent have ties to European countries, mainly France and Germany.

Even though Armenians speak Russian better than other foreign languages, they still prefer tourists from European countries rather than those from Russia. (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (1), 2016)

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<sup>36</sup> The survey indicates under this index the interest in cultural products, education, personal communication with representatives of other countries, the personal experience of visiting these countries, tourist orientation and preferences in the sphere of tourist exchange with other countries etc.

**Table 15. Interest in History, Culture and Geography (%)**

	Post-Soviet countries	EU countries	Other countries	None
<b>2012</b>	35	29	14	42
<b>2013</b>	30	32	21	44
<b>2014</b>	28	28	14	44
<b>2015</b>	21	30	15	50

*By the economic criteria*<sup>37</sup>, the respondents from Armenia are orientated to both post-Soviet and European labour markets. Nearly twice as many respondents prefer to work at home (40 percent).

Only about 20 percent of those surveyed are interested in relocating to the post-Soviet space (mainly Russia) and Europe, and the absolute majority (58 percent) does not prefer any foreign country. The relative majority of respondents (40 percent) indicated that they were equally accepting of labour migrants or students from any country. Armenians prefer doing business with fellow Armenians and Russians, however, according to the CB-2015. The survey also indicated that Armenians value business relations with Europeans, Americans, Georgians and Iranians. Respondents prefer goods and products from post-Soviet countries to imports from Europe or other countries. (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 36-57)

### **The Other "Others": Public Attitudes to International Organizations**

The studies indicate that there is broad public support for Armenia's multi-vector foreign policy. In this context, public attitudes to various international organizations (especially "western"-the EU and NATO, and "northern" – the CIS, CSTO and the EAEU) are of peculiar interest.

Various studies reveal the profound *lack of awareness* about international organizations in the society, however. Specifically, in

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<sup>37</sup> Consumer preferences, preferable vectors of temporary labour and long-term migrations, as well as immigration, of investment sources and business activity, scientific and technological cooperation, etc.

2009, more than 60 percent of those surveyed said they were not informed about the EU (Caucasus Barometer 2009 Armenia (3), 2013) In fact, many even believed Armenia was already a member of the EU (Caucasus Barometer 2009 Armenia (5), 2013). While most respondents knew what the CIS was (Caucasus Barometer 2009 Armenia (2), 2013), a 2013 study indicated that the vast majority of the respondents (nearly 70 percent) did not exactly know what the EAEU was (Manukyan S. et al., 2013, pp. 20-21).

The lack of awareness was indirectly confirmed by data from the 2015 YB study. According to these results, while more than 80 percent of respondents from Yerevan considered themselves to be well informed about the EU (Barometer.am (7), 2015), around 40 percent of them still deemed Armenia to be a member of the EU (Barometer.am (2), 2015). There was a similar misconception about Armenia's cooperation with international organization like NATO and CSTO: approximately half of respondents from Yerevan did not know that Armenia is a founding member of the CSTO (Barometer.am (8), 2015).

Second, comparison of public opinion survey data shows some changes in *public trust and confidence* towards the "West" (EU and NATO) and "North" (the CIS and EAEU). Thus, according to WVS-2011 (World Values Survey , 2011), the EU and the CIS had comparable ratings: both organizations had the confidence of the relative majority of respondents. However, the changes in public trust towards the EU are obvious in other surveys (see *Table 16*).

**Table 16. Public Trust Toward the EU in 2012-2015 (%)**

	EU NB 2012	EU NB 2014	Difference	CB 2013	CB 2015	Difference
<b>Tend to trust</b>	63	45	-18	28	28	0
<b>Tend not to trust</b>	31	51	+20	29	27	-2
<b>Neither trust not distrust</b>	-	-	-	31	29	-2
<b>DK</b>	6	4	-2	14	17	+3

**Source:** (EU Neighbourhood Barometer - EAST, 2012); (EU Neighbourhood Barometer - EAST, 2014); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (4), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (4), 2016)

Moreover, the results of the EU NB 2012 (EU Neighbourhood Barometer - EAST, 2012) and 2014 (EU Neighbourhood Barometer - EAST, 2014) indicate a growing number of Armenians view the EU negatively: In 2012, 49 percent of respondents viewed the EU positively, compared to 17 percent with a negative view. In 2014, however, just 40 percent had a positive view while those who viewed it negatively rose by eight percent (25 percent). The number of people with a neutral opinion about the EU also increased (32 percent in total in 2014).

Third, despite the low level of public awareness, studies reveal a high orientation in the selection of the *preferred international organizations*. For example, the results of the APR Group's 2014 and 2015 surveys indicate that respondents prefer Russian-led organizations (see *Table 17*). The survey results showed some differences between age groups: respondents over the age of 45 were more supportive of Armenia's Eurasian choice, while those between the age of 18-25 were more inclined toward Europe (APR Group, 2015).

**Table 17. Armenia's Desirable Membership to International Organizations (%)**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>European (EU)</b>	24.8	24.3
<b>Pro-Russian (CU)</b>	38.4	36.1
<b>Both</b>	11.8	12.6
<b>None</b>	10.1	8.3
<b>DK</b>	15	18.2

When asked to choose between the EU and CIS, the vast majority of respondents opted for cooperation with the CIS (60 percent for CIS, compared to 25 percent for the EU) (Caucasus Barometer 2009 Armenia (1), 2013). However, despite the fact, that in 2013 the majority – 55 percent – supported Armenia's membership in the EAEU, the relative majority (40 percent) was also in favour of

Armenia's membership in the EU (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (1), 2013). A similar pattern was also the case with NATO until 2013, when support declined significantly (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (3), 2013).

The latest data available indicates that public opinion has not changed: in 2015, the majority of respondents supported Armenia's membership in the EAEU but were also in favour of the EU. Support for NATO remained low, with just 23 percent registering support for the military alliance (see *Table 18*).

**Table 18. Support of Armenia's membership in ...**

	CB 2013	CB 2015	Change	CB 2013	CB 2015	Change	CB 2013	CB 2015	Change
<b>Support</b>	55	55	0	40	39	-1	26	23	-3
<b>Don't support</b>	13	12	-1	23	22	-1	28	27	-1
<b>Indifference</b>	21	23	+2	25	27	+2	30	32	+2
<b>Don't know</b>	11	10	-1	11	12	+1	16	17	+1
	<b>The EAEU</b>			<b>The EU</b>			<b>The NATO</b>		

*Source:* (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (2), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (1), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2013 Armenia (3), 2013); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (6), 2016); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (7), 2016); (Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia (5), 2016)

Armenians between the ages of 18-35, living in urban areas, were more inclined to support membership in EU and NATO, according to the survey. IB – 2015, too, shows that the absolute majority supports Armenia's Eurasian integration: 56 percent of respondents were for Armenia's membership into Russia-led EAEU (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, pp. 97, 98).

Armenia's level of public support for the EAEU is average compared to that registered in other member countries. In Armenia, however, the only integration initiative within the EAEU that was supported by the majority of the respondents was the proposed single

currency (EDB Centre for Integration Studies, 2015, p. 99) (see *Table 19*).

**Table 19. Do you support the following integration initiatives within the EAEU? (%)**

	Yes	No	DK
<b>Single Currency</b>	55	35	10
<b>Common Laws</b>	48	40	12
<b>Common Army</b>	46	44	11
<b>Common Ruling Bodies</b>	47	38	15

The survey provides interesting insight into how the public perceives the government’s Eurasian choice. While 37 percent believe joining the EAEU is economically beneficial, 29 percent said Armenia opted for the Russian-led union due to pressure from Moscow. In addition, 16 percent believed it was due to Karabakh conflict and 10 percent said the country was acting according to the interests of the oligarchs, according to the YB 2014 data (Barometer.am (2), 2014).

Based on the responses, it is not surprising that Armenian society has exhibited a strong preference for complimentary *cooperation* with the EU and Russia (see *Table 20*). Russia is seen as the most attractive partner in the fight against external threats, as well as in industry, and the EU is more popular as a partner in the humanitarian sphere, as well as in science and education. There was also support for cooperation with both the EU and Russia in certain sectors, particularly in the field of science, education and industry (Manukyan S. et al., 2013, pp. 20-21).

**Table 20. Preferential Partners by Sphere of Cooperation (%)**

	Russia	EU	Both
<b>Human rights</b>	25	52	6
<b>Science</b>	28	47	15
<b>Industry</b>	50	24	17
<b>Karabakh issue</b>	64	14	5
<b>External security</b>	72	10	3

In addition, according to the EU NB-2012, there was a widespread public perception that the EU should play a greater role

in trade (89 percent) and economic development (86 percent), education (81 percent), regional cooperation (79 percent), and democracy (76 percent). In general, it seems that Armenia's society traditionally perceives the EU as one of the country's main partners and highlights the EU's activity in the field of development and promotion of peace and stability in the region. While public support for Armenia's cooperation with the EU has declined in recent years (see **Table 21**), the vast majority of respondents still support cooperation with the EU.

**Table 21. The EU's Importance for Armenia (%)**

	2012	2014	Difference
<b>The EU is an important partner of Armenia</b>	86	67	-19
<b>The EU brings peace and stability in the region</b>	75	50	-25
<b>The EU contributes to the development of Armenia</b>	78	58	-20
<b>The EU has the appropriate level of involvement in Armenia</b>	66	53	-13

## Conclusion

1. Armenia has an average *cumulative geopolitical orientation* to the post-Soviet space: this space is more attractive for citizens than European countries or elsewhere. Even though the indexes show Armenians lean slightly more toward European countries than post-Soviet ones in terms of *socio-cultural* issues, the data also indicates that Armenia is a culturally "self-sufficient" country. Armenia's overall *economic indicators* show a multilateral or balanced orientation: respondents prefer Russian products, the Russian labour market and Russians as business partners, but, according to surveys, they prefer tourists, temporary workers and students from Europe. The picture is radically different in *politics*. Politically, Armenia is strongly oriented toward the post-Soviet space. In the realm of military-political cooperation, the vast majority of respondents from

Armenia prefer post-Soviet space. Political issues are clearly the dominant factor for Armenia's public orientation.

- 1.1 A detailed analysis of the data has revealed that Russia is the main factor for orientation toward post-Soviet space in terms of politics, culture and economics. It is Russia, and not the post-Soviet space in general, that is the "center of attraction" for Armenian society. Consequently, for the society in practice there is no "post-Soviet" or "Eurasian" choice, but simply a "Russian" choice in foreign policy.
- 1.2 The overwhelming majority of respondents view Russia as a *friend*, followed by France and then Georgia.
- 1.3 However, this image of Russia has been gradually changing over the past few years. Following the military clashes in April 2016, it is expected that Russia's positive image and its public support as country's main friend will continue to decrease, although this country, at least for the near future, will probably retain its leading position in public opinion as Armenia's biggest ally. In parallel, we can expect a significant increase of the percentage of respondents who believe that Armenia has no allies.
- 1.4 As for *preferred spheres of Armenia's cooperation with its main partners*, Russia is the preferable partner against external enemies and in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the EU is the preferred partner in the field of science and protection of human rights. In addition, European tourists, students and migrant workers are seen as more attractive and beneficial to the country.
2. Public attitudes toward Azerbaijan and Turkey do not differ significantly from Armenia's official position. The studies included in this analysis clearly indicate the public considers both countries to be *hostile* to Armenia, and there is a deep and total mistrust of Turks and Azerbaijanis. This way of thinking has not changed significantly during the last five years, even throughout the process of Armenian-Turkish alleged rapprochement. Moreover, the majority of the Armenia's population currently does not support the initiative for reconciliation.
3. The vast majority of respondents suffer from a lack of

awareness about the EU and the CIS/EAEU; many even believe that Armenia is a member of the EU. Trust in the EU is declining, however: in 2011, both post-Soviet and European spaces were viewed positively, but trust toward the EU fell in 2014. Despite widespread unawareness, the vast majority of the Armenia's population is interested in Armenia's relations with both the "West" and "North."

- 3.1 The vast majority of respondents support Armenia's membership in the EAEU and a relative majority supports country's membership in the EU, as well.
- 3.2 The EU has a traditionally positive or neutral image across Armenia's population. However, this positive image is gradually declining.
- 3.3 When forced to choose between Russia and the West, the vast majority of the population (in all age groups) chooses the "Northern" direction. However, in the case of an "and-and" option, the number of supporters of Armenia's cooperation with the two poles (even Armenia's membership in organizations of both geopolitical spaces) increases. Nevertheless, even in this case, the predominance of the "Northern" factor remains.
- 3.4 The number of "Northern" supporters is higher among the older generation, and supporters of the "Western" space are mostly young people. However, even a relative majority of young people chooses the "Northern" direction when forced to choose just one option.

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