

European Summit in Yerevan: A break with Russia?

Armenia's hosting of the 8th European Political Community Summit is seen as contributing to Armenia's normalization of relations, but it is also interpreted as a break from Russia.

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Associate Professor Orkhan Valiyev, Head of the Department of Political Science and Philosophy at Khazar University, wrote an article for AA Analysis on the importance and key topics of the 8th European Political Community Summit held in Armenia.

The 8th Summit of the European Political Community began in Yerevan on May 4, 2026. The Summit, which saw broad participation at the leaders' level, was attended by Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz, representing President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This marked the highest-level visit from Türkiye to Armenia in nearly twenty years.

Azerbaijan supported Armenia hosting the summit, while Armenia supported Azerbaijan hosting it in 2028.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz met within the framework of the summit. During this meeting, an agreement was reached on the repair of the Ani Bridge, located between the two countries. Türkiye's approach and stance in the peace process also played a decisive role in the meeting. Indeed, Turkey attaches importance to Azerbaijan's demand for territorial integrity.

European Political Community Summit: Armenia's strategic shift

Pashinyan's rise to power and his premiership have shattered the established patterns of Armenian politics since the independence era. In this sense, Pashinyan's recent policies towards Azerbaijan and Türkiye, and his steps to counterbalance Russia's dominance in the country, are noteworthy. Hosting the 8th European Political Community Summit, which will significantly contribute to Armenia's opening to the world during its independence period, is seen as a contribution to normalization but also as a break from Russia, especially given Armenia's demographic and economic difficulties.

Although Nikol Pashinyan's government has taken over border security from Russian forces, Russian influence persists in strategic areas such as banking and railways. Furthermore, the continued presence of a Russian military base demonstrates that Moscow has not completely lost its influence. Nevertheless, whether Russia can maintain its former dominance remains uncertain.

The Summit, which brought together leaders from approximately 50 countries, including France and the United Kingdom, in Yerevan, can be interpreted as a bold step for Armenia, a country known for its dependence on Russia. In this sense, Pashinyan is trying to free his country from its dependence on Russia and diversify political, economic, military, and technological relations.

However, it can be said that the final peace agreement to be signed with Azerbaijan will be decisive both for Armenia and for the establishment of peace and security in the region. In this sense, Pashinyan signaled in his opening speech that he might go to Baku for the 2028 summit. This shows that Pashinyan aims to win the election and sign the peace agreement. It is understood that if Pashinyan wins the election,

he will continue his policies aimed at removing the constitutional obstacle to signing the peace agreement and balancing dependence on Russia.

The positions of Azerbaijan and Russia

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev participated in the meeting online at the invitation of the President of the Council of Europe, António Costa, and delivered a speech. This marked the first high-level participation since independence. Aliyev stated that, as part of the peace process, Azerbaijan had unilaterally lifted transit restrictions against Armenia.

In his speech, Ilham Aliyev also touched upon the importance of the 'Trump Corridor'. He stated that the realization of the corridor would strengthen Nakhchivan's connection with Ankara and that this line would become part of the Central Corridor. Aliyev also thanked the European Commission for its stance on the peace process.

However, Aliyev noted that not all European institutions follow the same policy, criticizing the contradictory resolutions adopted by the European Parliament (EP) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe shortly before the Summit. Furthermore, it was stated that Azerbaijan's relations with the EP have been suspended. The main reason for Azerbaijan's dissatisfaction with these resolutions is the lack of support for Azerbaijani casualties in the occupation, while simultaneously ignoring Azerbaijan's peaceful approach towards Armenian civilians.

The Russian side, whose stance on the summit was eagerly awaited, stated that it approached the peace process positively, but analyses in the Kommersant [1] newspaper included assessments that Europe was sabotaging the process, referring to Aliyev's speech. In general, statements made by Russia [2] expressed support for the peace process, while noting that there were disagreements with Western institutions. Azerbaijan stated that it remained committed to the peace agenda despite those who tried to obstruct the peace process, and that the statements of Armenian officials also showed this.

How should Europe's stance be interpreted?

The world has transitioned from the rule-based order of modernity to a period of global “normlessness” [3] and is in search of establishing a new order. In this sense,

a period is being experienced in which leaders are effective, as well as strong state structures. Europe has lost its effectiveness in shaping the global order due to the lack of leadership it has faced. So much so that Europe has not been able to show the will to influence the process in strategic issues such as Karabakh, the Middle East, Ukraine, and Iran.

Although Brussels aimed to mediate the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace talks, the summit in Washington allowed the Trump administration to make a more significant contribution to establishing peace in the South Caucasus. It is known that European countries also played a role in the realization of the corridor, which Azerbaijan and Türkiye call the "Zangezur Corridor," and which was referred to as the "Trump Path" at the Washington summit.

The fact that the 8th European Political Community Summit was held in Yerevan can be seen as an effort by Europe to assert its presence in the region through various maneuvers. Indeed, the Summit saw broad participation, including leaders from member states, as well as the Secretaries General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and NATO.

However, the European Parliament's double standards regarding peace talks against Azerbaijan raise concerns that Europe has still not learned from its strategic mistake in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

[1] <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/8634942?query=Ильхам%20Алиев>

[2] <https://report.az/xarici-siyaset/dunya-metbuati-azerbaycan-prezidentinin-avropa-siyasi-birliyi-nin-zirve-toplantisindaki-cixisindan-yazir>

[3] <https://www.setav.org/kurallara-dayali-duzenin-cozulusu-kuresel-normsuzluk-cagi-ve-turkiyenin-stratejik-rolu>

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