



Report # 2

Armenia-France Relations: An Overview

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This report explores the historical ties, current status, and prospects of the relationship between Armenia and France. The two nations share a millennia-old bond, and during the 19th and 20th centuries, France demonstrated a strong affinity for Armenia, notably intervening during the Armenian Genocide in 1915. Presently, France hosts the largest Armenian diaspora in Europe, contributing significantly to the depth of the bilateral relationship.

Despite the emotional and philosophical connections, both countries stand to gain from further enhancing their economic, military, and diplomatic ties. Strengthening relations with France could serve as a catalyst for Armenia's pursuit of multilateralism. Overcoming challenges such as geographical distance is essential for realizing the full potential of the historical ties between Armenia and France.

Armenia and France: Historical Ties

The historical relationship between France and Armenia dates back to the 11th and 12th centuries, with the founding of the Kingdom of Cilicia. Armenia's early adoption of Christianity made it a valuable ally and refuge for Crusaders in a predominantly Islamic region. This era saw many Frankish lords marrying Armenian princesses, leading to the establishment of a Franco-Armenian royal lineage. King Levon II further solidified these ties by implementing a process of Francization in the Armenian court and state, aligning them with the feudal and royal system of the Franks. Even after the fall of the kingdom, the last Armenian king, Levon VI, who was Catholic, spent part of his life in exile in France and is buried in Paris.¹

In the 17th century, Armenian merchants played a crucial role in bridging the gap between France and the Ottoman Empire, particularly in Marseille. This prompted Colbert, Louis XIV's minister, to create the Marseille Free Port of Armenians, further facilitating trade and cultural exchange between the two nations.

The 19th century witnessed a significant acceleration in cultural exchanges between Armenia and France. Many dignitaries of the Ottoman Empire spoke French and adopted a French lifestyle. French literature, including works by Victor Hugo, was translated into Armenian, influencing Armenian intellectuals. The republican ideals championed by France since the 1789 revolution resonated with minorities in the Ottoman Empire, particularly the Armenians. The Armenian revolutionary movement,

led by the three parties *Armenakan* (founded in 1885), *Hentchak* (founded in 1887), and *Dashnaktsutyun* (founded in 1890), was inspired by these ideals. Archag Tchobanian, an Armenian exiled to France in 1895, played a pivotal role in advancing the Armenian cause in France. He founded a significant pro-Armenian movement and successfully garnered support from prominent republican figures such as Clemenceau, Jaurès, and Anatole France. Tchobanian's establishment of the journal *Pro-Arménia* further amplified his advocacy efforts, effectively disseminating Armenian culture in France. His translation of numerous French poets into Armenian contributed to the cultural exchange between the two nations, solidifying his status as a major point of contact between Armenia and France.² Despite Tchobanian's efforts and the support he garnered, it is important to note that French support for Armenia was not unanimous. France maintained significant ties with the Ottoman Empire and later with Turkey, leading to divisions within French elites. The Franc-Maçonnerie (Freemasonry), a notable organization, was internally divided on the issue, with both Turks and Armenians drawing inspiration from its republican ideals. The Franc-Maçonnerie's influence extended to the Young Turk movement, which played a role in the 1908 revolution in the Ottoman Empire and later became implicated in the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Consequently, the France-Armenia lodge's request for the recognition of an "Armenian national center" by the president of the Franc-Maçonnerie order was rejected in the name of the institution's neutrality on the matter.³

During the initiation of the Armenian Genocide by the Young Turks in 1915, France, established in Syria through its protectorate, extended assistance and rescued several Armenian refugees. Notably, the French 3rd fleet in the Mediterranean undertook the rescue of Armenian populations who had defied deportation orders and found themselves besieged by the Turks on Mount Musa Dagh. Commencing from 1916, France established a protectorate in Cilicia, which was recognized by the Sultan of Constantinople through the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. Subsequently, France orchestrated the repatriation of Armenians to Cilicia. However, following the deposition of the Sultan, the Turks progressively reasserted control over certain provinces, including Cilicia, once lost by the Ottoman Empire. With the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, France definitively relinquished its hold on Cilicia. Consequently, the Armenians of Cilicia were compelled into exile, notably seeking refuge in France.⁴

Subsequent to this, the relationship between Armenia and France primarily centers on the Armenian diaspora residing in France. This diaspora has experienced shifts in its perception within French society. Initially marginalized and isolated, Armenians were deemed "stateless" and lived in precarious economic circumstances, profoundly impacted by the economic crisis of 1929. However, owing to their significant role in the French Resistance from 1940 to 1945, they garnered greater recognition, integration, and improved living conditions. The 1980s witnessed the Socialist Party's rise to power, leading to a more pronounced presence of the Armenian community in France's political and cultural spheres, notably through the establishment of Cultural Centers.⁵

The tragic earthquake of 1988 sparked a solidarity movement in France towards Armenia, organized by the Armenian community. France then strengthened its ties with Armenia, which had been relatively absent due to Armenia's membership in the Soviet Union, in humanitarian, scientific, and especially cultural domains. A notable example of this solidarity was the charitable song "Pour toi Arménie" ("For You, Armenia") by Charles Aznavour, which resonated deeply with audiences and became a symbol of the solidarity between France and Armenia during that time.⁶

Following Armenia's declaration of independence in 1991, new ties between Armenia and France began to take shape, with a particular focus on diplomatic and economic relations. The visit of French senators to Armenia in 1998 marked a significant milestone, as it defined economic relations and institutional cooperation as priority areas in the bilateral relationship.⁷ Accompanying the Senate delegation were numerous French business leaders, demonstrating a keen interest in establishing a presence in Armenia's emerging market. The growing relations between the two countries culminated in France's official recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 in 2001.

The Velvet Revolution of 2018 further strengthened the quality of relations between the two countries, with Armenia viewing France's closer ties as a means to protect its sovereignty through a multilateral approach, while France welcomed the new government's commitment to transparency.⁸

The conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 and 2023 prompted France to align itself with Armenia, officially denouncing Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing and mobilizing humanitarian aid for refugees.⁹

Overview of the Current Relationships between France and Armenia:

The current relationship between Armenia and France depends on the geographical and historical conditions previously described. On one hand, the historical ties between Armenia and France and the significant Armenian diaspora present in France (600,000 people, the largest in Europe) make Armenia and France privileged partners, especially in more intangible areas such as cultural, diplomatic, or memorial relations. On the other hand, the geographical distance between the two countries, spanning 3497 km, poses challenges to more tangible aspects of their relationship, such as economic and military cooperation.

Cultural Relationships:

The cultural relations between France and Armenia are primarily influenced by two key factors: the Armenian diaspora in France and the presence of the Francophonie in Armenia.

The Armenian community in France, the largest in Europe with 600,000 members, including 400,000 born in France, is remarkably diverse and heterogeneous, especially in terms of migration backgrounds, making it challenging to define precisely. Despite this diversity, the diaspora plays a crucial role in promoting Armenian culture in France

and influencing French society as a whole. However, due to its heterogeneity, establishing reliable statistics on the characteristics of this diaspora is challenging. Nonetheless, certain trends can be identified, such as the majority of diaspora members having arrived in France over several generations and being fully integrated into the country. From the Armenian perspective, the integration of the diaspora into French society presents both advantages and disadvantages. Integration implies a gradual decrease in the dominance of Armenian culture, which is viewed as a disadvantage. However, integration also offers the opportunity for the diaspora to have a more significant influence on French society and play a more prominent social role, which is seen as an advantage. Most diaspora members interviewed claim to speak, read, and write in Western Armenian, sometimes watch television and listen to radio in Armenian, and wish to pass on this knowledge to their children. The Armenian language holds official recognition as a (non-territorial) language in France. Despite this, the Armenian culture persists and flourishes through various avenues. For example, numerous Armenian football clubs and the *Hamaskaïne* Cultural Association school contribute to the vitality of Armenian cultural heritage in France. However, except newcomers, most diaspora members do not consider Armenian as their dominant language. There is a noticeable decline in the trend of preserving the Armenian language among the diaspora.

Conversely, the new generation presents a contrasting picture, characterized by the emergence of a "linguistic elite" proficient in French, Armenian, and other languages. This generation is fully assimilated into French society while maintaining connections with various Armenian diasporas worldwide. These new elites have the potential to serve as influential agents in strengthening cultural ties between France and Armenia.¹⁰

A significant number of renowned French artists, celebrated in both France and Armenia, boast Armenian heritage. In the realm of music, the most prominent figure is undoubtedly *Aznavour*, while other notable names include singer *Rosy Armen*, filmmaker *Michel Legrand*, and filmmaker and actor *Charles Gérard*. These artists incorporate elements of Armenian culture into their work, thereby showcasing Armenia on a global stage. For instance, Charles Aznavour's extensive repertoire features songs like "*Tendre Arménie*," "*Autobiographie*," and "*Ils sont tombés*" (which addresses the Armenian Genocide). Aznavour also composed the charitable song "*Pour toi Arménie*." Additionally, Henri Verneuil's cinematic diptych, "*Mayrig*" and "*588, Rue d'Arménie*," depicts the journey and experiences of an Armenian family in France, escaping the horrors of the genocide.

Sometimes, a cultural gap widens between the Armenian diaspora and those who have remained in Armenia. This divide is exemplified by the experience of writer Henri Troyat (born Lev Torossian), an Armenian-origin writer residing in France. Despite his international acclaim, Troyat remains relatively unknown in Armenia, with his works only being translated into Armenian there in 2009. He has faced significant criticism from Armenian writers such as Shushanian, who dismissed his works as lacking any meaningful connection to Armenians.¹¹ From a pan-Armenian perspective, it is

essential to consider the question of cultural compatibility between Armenia and its various diasporas, including the one in France. While maintaining a deep connection to their Armenian heritage, the diaspora has evolved within a context vastly different from that of Armenia, leading to a redefinition of its own Armenianness.

Armenia has been a member of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie since 2008. However, the number of French speakers in Armenia, meaning those who master the French language perfectly, remains low, representing only 0.3% of the country's population.¹² The French language holds a significant position in Armenian education, being the third most taught language after Russian and English, with 43,000 students enrolled in French language courses.¹³ The Franco-Armenian University, educating 2,000 students, contributes to this linguistic landscape. In the 2019-2020 academic year, France welcomed 1,770 students from Armenia, marking a 54% increase over five years. Anatole France High School in Yerevan also plays a crucial role in promoting French culture and language in Armenia.

The importance of Francophonie in Armenia is on the rise, demonstrated by the country's increasing role within the Francophonie organization. Armenia hosted the 17th Francophonie Summit in 2018 and is scheduled to host the 10th Francophonie Games in 2027. Annually, from March to April, Armenia celebrates the Francophonie season. The French Senate has proposed strengthening the Fund for French-speaking Christian schools in the Orient, particularly in areas affected by the conflict with Azerbaijan.¹⁴

Francophonie represents a potent tool for diplomatic rapprochement with numerous countries, offering access to 300 million French speakers across five continents.

Despite the strong cultural ties between Armenia and France, certain events can strain this relationship. For example, the appointment in January 2024 of Rachida Dati, who is known to be pro-Azerbaijani and sits on the Board of the Franco-Azerbaijani Friendship Group, as the Minister of Culture in France could potentially impact the quality of Franco-Armenian relations. However, overall, cultural relations continue to serve as a powerful testament to the enduring bonds between Armenia and France.

Diplomatic relationships:

Armenia and France maintain excellent diplomatic relations due to their cultural and historical proximity. Official visits between the two countries are frequent, and recent developments have brought their relations to the forefront. During the pantheonization of the Armenian-born resistance fighter Missak Manouchian on February 21, 2024, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited France and met with President Emmanuel Macron. France reaffirmed its friendship and support for Armenia's territorial integrity, which was solidified by the conclusion of contracts for the delivery of equipment with a defensive purpose. This visit was followed by a visit from the Minister of the Armed Forces, Sébastien Lecornu, to Armenia on February 23, 2024, marking the first visit by a French Minister of the Armed Forces to Armenia. During his visit, Lecornu also reaffirmed France's support for Armenia.

Indeed, there are two France-Armenia Friendship Groups ("Groupe d'Amitié France-Arménie") in the French Parliament, one in the National Assembly (lower house) and

one in the Senate (upper house). These Friendship Groups play a crucial role in facilitating cooperation that does not involve the executive branch and should not be underestimated. Their main purpose is to engage in interparliamentary relations with the partner country and to establish connections with individuals from the partner country who may not necessarily be members of parliament but are involved in its political, economic, social, and cultural life. Additionally, they can initiate decentralized cooperation and promote the establishment of relations between local authorities. This can lead to non-state diplomatic relations, the importance of which should not be overlooked. Friendship Groups can also leverage cultural aspects; in this regard, Armenia's membership in the Francophonie is a significant asset.¹⁵ The President of the France-Armenia Friendship Group in the National Assembly is Anne-Laurence Petel (Renaissance, Presidential Party).¹⁶ The President of the Franco-Armenian Friendship Group in the Senate is Gilbert-Luc Devinaz (Socialist, Ecologist, and Republican Group, Left).¹⁷

The presidents of these two Friendship Groups are currently advocating for the opening of a consulate in Syunik, in Kapan, to demonstrate France's commitment to Armenia's territorial integrity in the face of Azerbaijani claims.¹⁸

France is also attempting to push the European Union to support Armenia more decisively, but faces resistance from some states, such as Germany, especially concerning Azerbaijan's gas dependency.¹⁹

It is important to note that France is a co-chair of the Minsk Group, along with Russia and the United States, in seeking a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Within this framework, France must maintain a certain neutrality in the conflict and cannot openly support Armenia entirely. France is often criticized for its perceived lack of neutrality, particularly by forces leaning towards pro-Turkish sentiments²⁰ and by Baku. France has also not recognized the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, the effectiveness of the Minsk Group following the 44-day war is being questioned, which redefines France's role and neutrality regarding Armenia. It appears that, rather consensually, the Minsk Group has failed to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Azerbaijani officials have tended to delegitimize the Minsk Group's actions since 2020, claiming that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue has already been resolved (manifested by Nagorno-Karabakh's annexation to Azerbaijan).

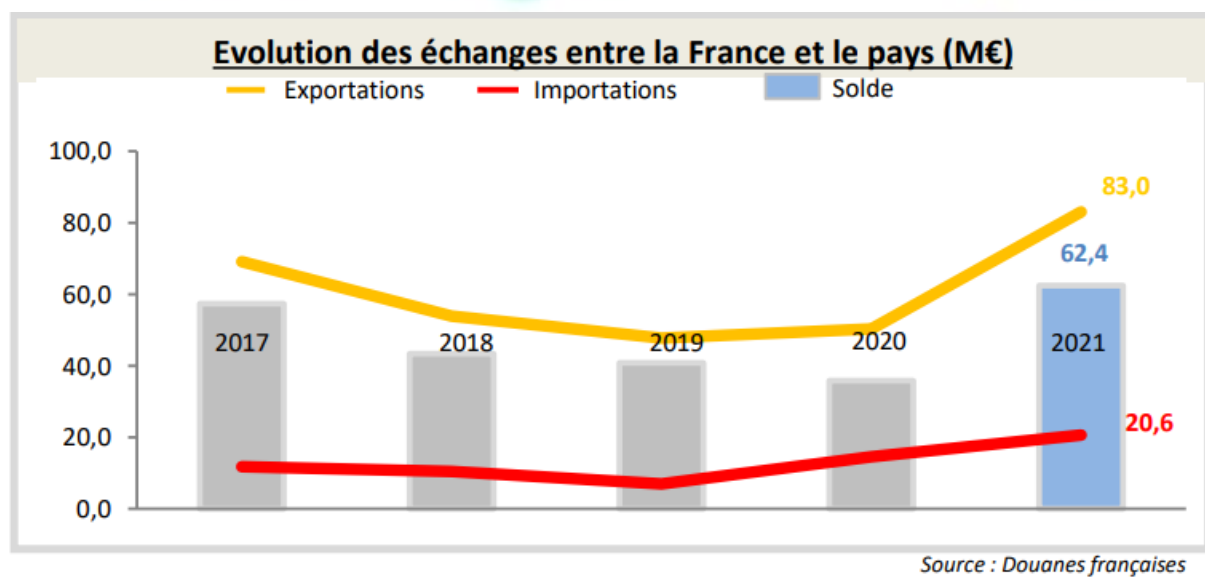
However, despite the good relations between France and Armenia, France also has interests concerning Azerbaijan and Turkey that could jeopardize relations with Armenia. This is particularly evident in economic relations, as Azerbaijani oil represents a significant interest for France, especially after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.²¹ Azerbaijan also has around thirty companies established in France. Additionally, there exists a France-Azerbaijan Friendship Group. Azerbaijan is suspected of practicing what is termed "caviar diplomacy" towards France, as well as other countries.

In a context where Armenia seeks to diversify its diplomatic relations, France appears to be a significant ally with strong potential for the development of diplomatic relations. This potential stems from the historical and cultural ties between the two countries and

the positive diplomatic precedents between them, provided both countries can overcome the obstacle presented by France's interests vis-à-vis Azerbaijan. A fruitful approach could involve investing in diplomatic relations that not only involve executive powers but also engage parliamentarians and even local authorities, as seen in Friendship Groups. Armenia's strategic importance as a "bridge" with certain powers hostile to France, such as Iran or Russia, is indeed a significant factor to consider. This aspect of their relationship could influence how France approaches its diplomatic and strategic engagements in the region.

Economic Relations:

Despite these good cultural and diplomatic relations, economic ties between France and Armenia remain relatively undeveloped. The total trade volume between the two countries amounted to 103.7 million euros in 2022. This figure falls short compared to Armenia's trade with Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands.²² France was only the 13th supplier to Armenia (with 83 million euros in exports from France to Armenia) and the 28th customer (with 20 million euros in imports from Armenia to France). Armenia is ranked only as the 131st commercial partner of France. It's noteworthy that Armenia's limited size constrains its capacity to compete with larger states. The main export items from France to Armenia include chemicals, perfumes, and cosmetics (20%), agri-food products (13%), pharmaceutical products (10%), and textiles, clothing, leather, and shoes (8%). The main import items from Armenia to France are metallurgical and metal products (65%) and textiles, clothing, leather, and shoes (18%). Despite being relatively undeveloped, these exchanges are on the rise.²³



Evolution of the exchanges between France and Armenia. Yellow curve: exportations from France to Armenia. Red curve: importations from Armenia to France. Grey shape: balance. Source: Fiche Repères économiques Arménie²⁴

Foreign direct investments (FDI) are higher but still relatively marginal. France's FDI in Armenia amounted to 228 million euros in 2022, falling behind Russia (1713 million dollars), Cyprus (606 million dollars), the United Kingdom (589 million dollars), and

Canada (320 million dollars). However, these investments are seeing a significant increase (+33% compared to 2023).^{25*} These investments are mainly concentrated in the agri-food sector (such as the acquisition of Brandy Ararat by Pernod Ricard), banking (Crédit Agricole), and water (Veolia) sectors.²⁶ There are no significant investments from Armenia in France.²⁷

**NOTE: However, there are contradictory figures on this matter. For instance, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry France-Armenia, which is also a reliable source, ranked France as the second largest investor after Russia in 2018, with investments totaling 380 million euros.²⁸ Government figures indicate investments amounting to 228 million euros, despite a 33% increase. Hence, there is a contradiction. The more probable assumption is that the two institutions do not attribute the same meaning to the term "investment." We prioritize the government figures.*

French public investment in Armenia is significant, with the French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement, AFD) and its subsidiary Proparco having operated in Armenia since 2012, committing a total of 140 million euros.²⁹ The AFD finances housing renovation, efficiency and sustainability of irrigation in the Ararat plains, and the implementation of solar energy sources, with the goal of reaching a 10% threshold of solar energy by 2026.³⁰

Decentralized cooperation is very dynamic, with around twenty French local authorities involved in twinning and cooperation projects with Armenia, covering a wide range of domains.

The limited development of economic ties between France and Armenia can be attributed to several factors, most notably geographical constraints. The considerable distance between the two countries (3497 km) necessitates that commercial exchanges traverse the Georgian border due to the Turkish blockade, which adds logistical complexities and costs. The French Senate has also highlighted concerns about an "insufficiently serene business climate," particularly regarding the functioning of the judicial system in Armenia, although it acknowledges significant improvements since the Velvet Revolution. This economic disparity is also recognized by other global actors, as evidenced by the observation from the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (Университет Дружбы Народов) that "France's cultural diplomacy towards Armenia significantly precedes its economic diplomacy".³¹

However, certain assets confer potential to these economic relations. Armenian products in France could benefit from the support of the Armenian diaspora in France. French investors in Armenia might be interested in Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, which would open the door to a market of 182 million consumers. The French Senate asserts that France could contribute to the opening up of Armenia and the development of regional connections, particularly in the field of infrastructure.³²

A roadmap for economic cooperation has been established between the Republic of Armenia and the French Republic for the period 2021-2026. It foresees a significant increase in economic ties between France and Armenia, particularly in the areas of transportation and healthcare. This involves France's support in developing urban services and railway connectivity, as well as assistance in implementing universal healthcare coverage. The two countries also commit to promoting bilateral dialogue, notably through inter-ministerial working groups, supporting the ongoing activities of the French Development Agency (AFD), encouraging contacts between cities and

decentralized administrations, and supporting the mobility of young French professionals in Armenia (through the "Volontariat International en Entreprise" program).³³

Military Relations:

In Armenia's strategy to diversify its military partners and reduce its dependence on Russia (for example, by freezing Armenia's participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization), France can play a crucial role. The deaths of four Armenian soldiers in Syunik on February 13, 2024, and the growing tensions with Azerbaijan, highlight the significance of the military challenge. The partnership between Armenia and France gained momentum after Armenia's loss in the 2020 war against Azerbaijan,³⁴ prompting Yerevan to reevaluate its military strategy. However, the partnership has intensified since October 2023. Following contracts signed on October 3, France delivered 24 light armored vehicles (Bastion) and batches of night vision goggles (Safran) to Armenia. Additionally, contracts were signed for the acquisition of defensive weapons, including 3 medium-range radars (Ground Master 2000) capable of detecting aircraft at a distance of 250 km, and surface-to-air missiles. On February 23, 2024, a contract was also signed for the acquisition of precision rifles.^{35,36,37}

The partnership between France and Armenia extends to military training as well. In early February, France initiated training for Armenian soldiers in infantry and mountain combat. Furthermore, plans are underway to welcome 5 Armenian military personnel to the elite military academy of Saint-Cyr in 2024.³⁸

Geographical considerations, along with economic factors, can present obstacles to the partnership between France and Armenia. The only transportation route between the two countries is through Georgia. This was exemplified by the transportation of armored vehicles, which passed through the Georgian port of Poti before being transported to Armenia by rail.³⁹

However, France's arms sales policy has historically been opportunistic, including in the Caucasus region, which has sometimes complicated the otherwise positive outlook of military cooperation. Before 2020, France sold weaponry to Azerbaijan, although these sales were not officially designated for offensive purposes.⁴⁰ In 2018, Azerbaijan was France's third-largest customer in terms of arms sales, with orders totaling €157 million.⁴¹ In recent years, the French Parliament has been working to implement stricter control over arms sales. The *proposition de loi constitutionnelle instituant une commission parlementaire de contrôle des exportations d'armements* (proposal for constitutional law establishing parliamentary control over weapons exports), put forward in November 2020, specifically mentions the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and France's paradoxical policy of selling arms to Azerbaijan while supporting Armenia.⁴² The 2024-2030 military programming law grants Parliament the authority to control arms sales.⁴³ In light of the evolving international landscape and conflicts like those in Ukraine and between Armenia and Azerbaijan, where France has vested interests, there is hope for a more coherent arms sales policy in the near future. Additionally, Armenia could potentially rely on the Franco-Armenian Friendship Groups to further its interests and strengthen ties with France in this context.

Memorial Relations:

Memorial relations between Armenia and France are deeply intertwined with their respective histories of genocide and the preservation of memory. France, with its strong sensitivity to genocide issues, particularly from the Second World War, maintains a commitment to preserving the memory of victims. The collaboration between the Vichy government and Nazi Germany led to the deportation and extermination of French Jewish and Roma populations, a history that France actively commemorates. Teaching the history of these genocides is a significant component of the curriculum in French schools, with sites like the "Camp des Milles" playing a crucial role in preserving this memory. Since 1995, France has acknowledged the responsibility of the French state in the Holocaust. The *Gayssot Law* of 1990, France's first memorial law, criminalizes Holocaust denial. France officially recognized the Armenian Genocide in 2001, following years of advocacy and political efforts. The recognition process began with a proposal by Communist deputy Guy Ducloux in 1985.

In 2006, a proposed law aimed to criminalize denial of the Armenian Genocide, but it was censored by the Constitutional Council as part of a policy against the proliferation of memorial laws. In 2015, France commemorated the centenary of the Armenian Genocide, and since 2019, April 24th of each year has been designated as the day of remembrance for the Armenian Genocide. These actions reflect France's commitment to preserving the memory of these genocides and combating denial.⁴⁴

In addition to the historical resonance stemming from shared experiences of tragedy, Armenian memory in France is also upheld by its sizable Armenian community. Numerous books written in French by members of the Armenian diaspora contribute to this collective memory. Notable examples include "*Étrangère*" by Valérie Toranian, "*Ma grand-mère d'Arménie*" by Annie Romand, "*Lucine*" by Ondine Khayat, and "*Tigrane*" by Olivier Delorme.

In May 2019, the Armenian Genocide Museum and the Camp des Milles site in France signed a partnership agreement to collaborate on research related to genocidal mechanisms. The Camp des Milles site, one of the primary memorial sites in France, also includes the Armenian Genocide in its presentations.⁴⁵ This site holds significant educational value for French students, serving as a powerful vehicle for preserving the memory of the Armenian Genocide in France.

Other organizations in France also play a vital role in preserving the memory of the Armenian Genocide, such as the *Association pour la Recherche et l'Archivage de la Mémoire Arménienne* (*Association for Research and Archiving of Armenian Memory*), founded in Marseille in 1997. The Association's scope encompasses documents about Armenia, Anatolian Armenians before, during, and after the Ottoman massacres of 1894-96 and 1909, the Armenian Genocide of 1915 perpetrated by the Young Turks government, as well as the history and culture of the Armenian diaspora, particularly in France and Europe. Its extensive archive includes books, maps, manuscripts, press articles, testimonies, photographs, and various other documents, amounting to thousands of digitized records. Through its efforts, the Association contributes significantly to the preservation and dissemination of Armenian memory in France and beyond.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION:

The historical ties between France and Armenia run deep, dating back to the 11th century. These early relations fostered a mutual cultural attraction, particularly within the nobility and royal courts. Economic exchanges began, and Armenian merchants settled in France, particularly in Marseille.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw a flourishing of cultural ties, with the ideals of the French Revolution, including republican values, spreading to Armenia during Ottoman rule. In France, a strong pro-Armenian movement emerged, championed by influential figures of the Third Republic such as Jaurès, Clemenceau, and Anatole France.

During the Armenian Genocide, France intervened, albeit cautiously, to support the Armenians. A significant number of Armenians sought refuge in France following the genocide, gradually integrating into French society. This integration led to the dissemination of Armenian culture and a growing interest in Armenia among the French population.

Today, Armenia and France maintain privileged relations, bolstered by various factors. France hosts the largest Armenian diaspora in Europe, facilitating cultural exchange and fostering connections between the two countries. Numerous artists, singers, writers, and filmmakers serve as cultural ambassadors, bridging the gap between Armenia and France.

Both nations enjoy strong diplomatic ties, further enhanced by Armenia's membership in the Francophonie, which provides privileged access to France and a global community of 300 million French speakers. Diplomatic relations have been actively pursued since Armenia's independence in 1991 and have intensified following the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the failure of the Minsk Group to achieve a peaceful resolution. These relations benefit from the presence of two active Friendship Groups in the French Parliament and dynamic decentralized cooperation.

Memory also plays a significant role in connecting Armenia and France, particularly through the remembrance of the Armenian genocide by the Armenian diaspora in France, which has permeated society as a whole. Additionally, the shared experience of genocidal episodes on French and Armenian soil serves as a powerful reminder of their intertwined histories.

Progress is still needed in the economic and military spheres of the relationship between Armenia and France. Trade between the two countries remains limited, and while investments are more substantial, they are still relatively low comparable to other European countries and Russia. However, decentralized cooperation is more dynamic. These challenges can be attributed to geographical barriers and the Turkish blockade, which are being acknowledged by both countries' authorities.

Efforts are being made to strengthen economic ties, particularly in the railway and health sectors. French arms deliveries to Armenia have increased since the 2020 conflict, and France appears to be aligning its arms sales with a more ethical and suitable approach to its foreign policy, which could be beneficial for Armenia. Nonetheless, further progress is required in these two domains.

In its efforts to expand the multi lateralization of its international relations, France could serve as a significant asset for Armenia. The strong historical ties, mutual cultural affinity, well-established diplomatic relations, and France's political support for Armenia, particularly evident since the 2020 conflict, indicate a promising future for the relationship between the two countries. This potential extends to less explored areas, notably the economic sphere, provided that French and Armenian stakeholders can effectively activate the necessary mechanisms. One such mechanism could involve leveraging the Friendship Groups in the French Parliament.

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The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Network State.

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