

RSC “Year in Review” Briefing Developments in Armenia & South Caucasus Region

Richard Giragosian

16, 18 and 19 December 2025

Four Key Briefing Issues

- Foreign Policy Issues
- Connectivity & Deterrence
- Domestic Politics & Election Preview
- 2026: Looking Ahead; predictive analysis and what is likely to come

RSC Briefing Issues

Foreign Policy Issues

- Armenia-Azerbaijan diplomacy
- “Normalization” with Türkiye
- Relations with others (West, Russia, Iran)

Connectivity & Deterrence

- Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP)

Armenia-Azerbaijan Diplomacy

- March: negotiations over post-war bilateral peace treaty closed
- July: Abu Dhabi bilateral summit
- August: White House “peace summit” & two agreements
- November-December: grain imports & Azerbaijani oil shipments

Personal Chemistry



The Washington “Peace Summit”



August 2025

Washington Peace Summit

- US presidential initiative: broader context of positive momentum
- US interest and commitment: perception vs. reality
- Bilateral peace treaty initialed
- Connectivity framework signed

Armenia-Azerbaijan Bilateral Peace Treaty

- *Negative* elements
 - Punitive peace as premise
 - Flawed premise & dangerous precedents
 - The “day after” & no international guarantee or guarantor
 - Does little to address roots of conflict

Armenia-Azerbaijan Bilateral Peace Treaty

- *Positive* elements
 - Renounces territorial claims & recognizes current borders
 - Commits to no use of force or threat of use of force
 - Combats intolerance & extremism
 - Calls for diplomatic recognition

Trump Route for International Peace & Prosperity (TRIPP)



TRIPP Obstacles

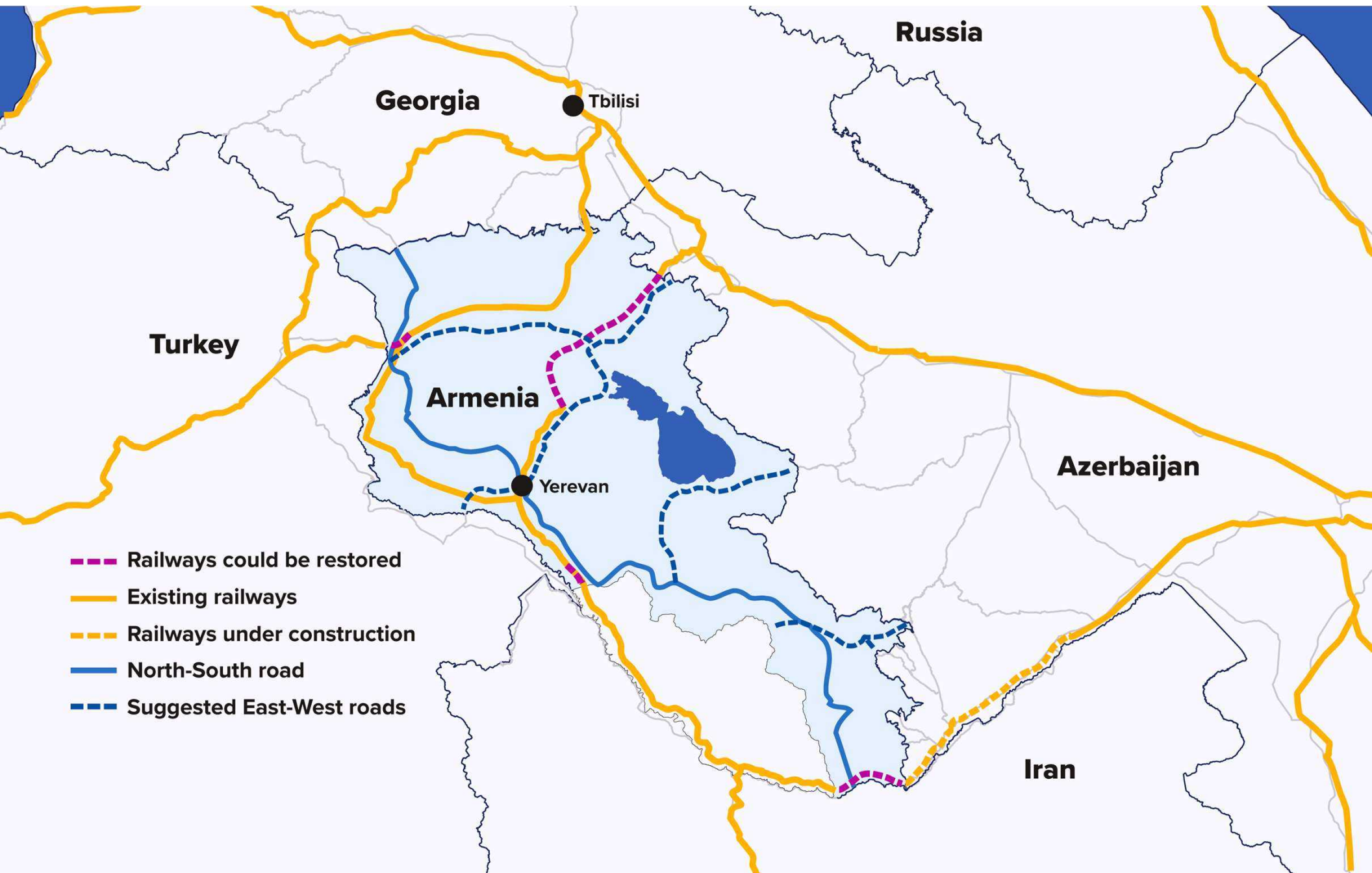
Project challenges

- Financing
- Construction
- Operational management

American Sustainability & Engagement

Russian Involvement?

Regional Repercussions



Regional Repercussions

- Russian reaction uncharacteristically passive & pensive
- Iran's sole "red line" respected
- Georgia as "loser state"
- Positive outlook for Armenia-Türkiye "Normalization"

Türkiye and TRIPP



Outstanding Issues

- Status of Armenian prisoners and detainees: total of 23 (including 8 former Nagorno Karabakh officials)
- Prisoner exchange: planned release of 10 Armenian detainees for 2 Syrian mercenaries; last prisoner release was December 2023, 32 Armenians freed for 2 Azerbaijani soldiers

What Next for Armenia-Azerbaijan Diplomacy

- Inter-agency dialogue & negotiations on bilateral track with US
- Border demarcation talks
- Azerbaijan eases trade and transit restrictions
- Possible partial prisoner release

Armenia-Türkiye “Normalization”



- Establishing diplomatic relations
- Re-opening the closed border

Armenia-Türkiye “Normalization”



The Turkish position: guarded optimism

- Wary of Azerbaijan
- Caution & half measures

Armenia-Türkiye “Normalization”

- Renewed Turkish interest: regaining regional role
- Regional economics & Kurdish initiative
- Türkiye garners political cover from Armenia-Azerbaijan progress
- Tension between Ankara & Baku

Diversification of Armenian Foreign Policy

- Post-war accommodation & adaptation
- Transactional strategy & “passive-aggressive” policies with Russia
- Avoiding the Ukraine paradigm
- Small state strategy
- Vulnerability to regional spillover

RSC Briefing Issues

Domestic Politics

- Church and State
- Political opposition
- Russia & external interference

Looking Ahead

- *Parliamentary election*
- *Security & regional stability*

Domestic Politics

- Winning political message: moving Armenia closer to peace and further away from war; agreements as diplomatic deliverables
- Opposition deeply discredited by lack of alternative strategy
- Advantages of incumbency boosted by budget priorities & reducing conscription

Marginalized Political Opposition

- Still no leadership alternative to Pashinyan
- Opposition parties more discredited and marginalized than ever
- Politics of personalities over policies
- Failure to present strategy or vision
- Favoring incumbency: Russian factor as crucial & critical determinant

No More Smiles



Church and State

- Vendetta-driven campaign against Church leadership
- Political confrontation targeting legacy
- But more personal more than political
- Attempts at mediation, compromise & consensus have all failed
- Distressing distraction from priorities

Church and State

- Escalation from conflict to confrontation to crisis
- Pashinyan's "Real Armenia" concept
- Emotional, impulsive & emboldened
- Politicized theology & doomed foray into politics
- Last remaining legacy institution

Conclusion:

Three Trends & Triggers

- Positive momentum of diplomatic engagement with Azerbaijan & Türkiye
- Storm on the horizon: Resurgent Russia tempted to intervene & interfere in 2026 elections
- Economics & local politics will define Armenia's 2026 parliamentary election

Looking Ahead: 2026

- Positive momentum of diplomatic engagement with Azerbaijan & Türkiye
- Storm on the horizon: Resurgent Russia & preparing for the “day after”
- Economics & local politics will define Armenia’s 2026 parliamentary election
- Looming & lingering regional instability



For more information:

Richard Giragosian
Director

Regional Studies Center (RSC)

Yerevan, Armenia

Director@regional-studies.org