

## RETHINKING THE SHARING OF CHALLENGES IN ALLIED RELATIONS: INDICATORS FOR ASSESSING RELATIONS IN THE DYNAMICS OF ARMENIAN-RUSSIAN MILITARY COOPERATION

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the main trends in rethinking challenges in the dynamics of Armenian-Russian military cooperation. In this regard, it comparatively examines how alliances have played a key role throughout the history of international relations, from the Peloponnesian Wars to modern times. As alliances of states formed both for collective defense and to project influence through pooled resources in relation to other alliances and international systems, alliances have continually faced a range of internal and external challenges. These challenges have primarily been related to the level of mutual trust between member states, the degree to which their interests coincide, and the fulfillment—or non-fulfillment—of mutual commitments. This problem has become particularly acute in the 21st century, when formally concluded alliance treaties have not always been fully implemented in practice; that is, alliances created through mutual assistance agreements have not always functioned effectively. In this context, it is crucial to identify, systematize, and analyze the indicators and variables that determine the willingness of bilateral or multilateral state alliances with formally signed treaties to provide mutual support in real-world political and military situations. From this perspective, this article particularly examines and evaluates the structure, nature, and viability of the formal alliance between Armenia and Russia in the new realities of contemporary international relations.

**Keywords:** *alliance relations, formal strategic cooperation, Armenian-Russian strategic cooperation, formal obligations, 102nd military base, CSTO, international security.*

### Introduction

From antiquity to the contemporary stage of globalization, military-political alliances, alongside states, have constituted key actors and subjects in international relations. Functioning primarily as systems of collective security, this institution of international relations has fulfilled a crucial mission in ensuring international security and self-

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defense. As aggregates of different states—often with partially divergent interests—alliances have nonetheless been able to safeguard the vital national interests and security of their members. Alliances based on civilizational commonality have generally proven particularly effective in this regard and continue to do so today.

In this context, it is important not only to examine and analyze the functional role of military–political alliances, but also to focus specifically on the indicators of alliance effectiveness, the correlations that determine when alliances manifest themselves in real political practice, and the circumstances under which they remain merely formal commitments. The study of this issue is of particular importance for the Republic of Armenia, given its alliance relations with the Russian Federation and its problematic political experience in 2022 in connection with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) during the border incidents involving Azerbaijan. From this perspective, it is especially important to identify and articulate the factors that ensure the activation of alliance relations and determine their level of effectiveness.

The various aspects of alliance theory and alliance functioning have been a focal point of scholarly research at different stages of historical development. In particular, during the 1930s and 1940s, and later from the late twentieth century into the twenty-first century, numerous Western—especially American—scholars (Morgenthau 1948; Liska 1962; Fedder 1968; Booth 2021; Snyder 1997), particularly representatives of political realism and neorealism (Walt 1990), conducted systematic studies focusing on national interests, alliances, and alliance relations.

Initially, the primary focus of these studies was descriptive and functional analysis of the conceptual nature and essence of alliances and allied relations. However, with the application of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, scholarly attention shifted toward the behavioral drivers of alliances, their functional role, the factors influencing alliance relations, and the process of moving from formal commitments to practical, real-world actions. The key issue in the study of formal and informal alliances was addressed by scholars such as K. Booth, E. Fedder, J. Liska, S. Walt, (Leeds 2003), and H. Snyder. Based on quantitative analysis (Crescenzi et al. 2012) examined the impact of factors such as the presence of a common threat, political regime type, and cultural similarities between states on alliance relations.

Among researchers studying international alliances, B. A. Leeds paid particular attention to the issue of the maintenance—or failure to maintain—legally binding alliance obligations by states. He identified primary causes of non-fulfillment, including changes in political course and shifts in state leadership. K. T. Gaubatz (1996) argued that alliances between democratic states are more stable and that democratic values and institutions facilitate the fulfillment of obligations within these alliances.

J. V. Downs, D. M. Rothe and P. R. Barsoom (1996) argued that the fulfillment of obligations depends on the characteristics of the provisions contained in alliance treaties, as well as on the type of alliance formed.

D. M. Gibler and J. A. Vasquez (1998), studying alliance types, emphasized that agreements involving the settlement of territorial disputes tend to last longer, with the parties to such agreements being more likely to fulfill their obligations. In this context, it is also important to note Bennett's (1997) article, which identifies at least four main

types of alliance duration and discusses potential factors influencing alliance stability and the fulfillment of each party's commitments.

In the study of alliance relations, we consider both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to be particularly important. From this perspective, both the present research and the proposed applied methodology—namely, the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) (2022) project—are valuable. This study focuses on the comparative analysis of a number of historically formed and currently existing alliances, providing useful data for understanding the dynamics and effectiveness of international alliances.

**The Purpose of the Research:** The aim of this study is to identify and document the factors, circumstances, and preconditions that affect and condition the fulfillment of mutual obligations in formal alliance relations between states.

**Hypothesis:** Changes in domestic political orientation reduce the practical implementation of alliance obligations.

**Methodology:** The research methodology is varied and multifaceted. In the analysis of alliances, methods of conceptual and systems analysis, as well as the historical-comparative method, were applied.

In the section discussing alliance relations, the historical-processual method was used. In the characterization and justification of Armenian–Russian alliance relations, coefficient-based comparative methods, as well as the analogical method, were applied. In presenting inter-state alliance relations, formalist, structural, and event analysis were utilized. The study of alliance relations also employed the chronological research method.

### **The Conceptual Definition of Alliances and Allied Inter-State Relations: Core Issues and Existing Approaches**

Throughout the history of international relations, alliances have traditionally played a crucial role. From antiquity through the Middle Ages and the modern era to the present day, states have formed alliances, interstate unions, and coalitions of various orientations in order to advance their national interests—some of which later evolved into leading international organizations. The well-known Western theorist J. Liska notes in this regard that “it is impossible to speak about international relations without addressing alliances; apart from their names, the two are fused in virtually every respect” (Liska 1962, 3). As in the past, interstate alliances today address a wide range of regional and global challenges for states within the contemporary international system (Liska 1962). However, despite their significant role and their function as a point of departure for the policies of many states, a unified and broadly accepted approach to interpreting and defining the concept of alliance has yet to emerge, particularly in Western academic literature (McGowan and Rood 1975; Bergsmann 2001; Kaplan 2006; Webber 2013; Crawford 2024; Deni 2025).

The concept of an alliance is generally applicable both to groups composed of political parties and forces within a state, to military, political, or economic cooperation among states, and to forms of cooperation among private companies (such as economic conglomerates, producers' associations, and similar entities).

The realist theory of international relations (Gupta 2025), drawing on the approaches of Thucydides, N. Machiavelli and T. Hobbes, proceeds from the assertion that the international system is anarchic in nature, in which states struggle for relative power and dominance. From H. Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* to the works of J. Liska, K. Waltz, and S. Walt, realist scholarship has regarded the concept of the 'balance of power' as the principal mechanism for regulating an anarchic system and establishing security within it. This concept is defined as both the foundation and the primary motivation (and outcome) of alliance formation. By identifying interstate competition and confrontation as the driving force of the anarchic international system, the realist theorist J. Liska argues that "alliances are formed first and foremost against something (the policy or threat posed by a rival state)" (Liska 1962, 285). In other words, according to realists, the primary purpose of alliances is to respond to and counter threats facing a state.

In this context, H. Morgenthau identifies three possible ways for states to respond to rivals within an anarchic system: first, they may increase their own capabilities; second, they may augment their capabilities by adding the power of other states; and third, they may deprive their adversary of the support of other countries. The latter two options result in the formation of military-political alliances (Morgenthau 1948, 197). Continuing the examination of realist approaches to alliance formation, another influential theorist, S. Walt, in his work "The Origins of Alliances" (1990), analyzes historical precedents and argues that alliance formation is primarily driven by efforts to establish a balance of power and to secure victory under conditions of competition in response to a growing threat from one or more states. A state adopts such behavior when it perceives the growing power of another state as a threat. In response to the rival's successes, the state forms a group of countries pursuing similar interests—namely, an alliance. With regard to the balance of power, Walt, agreeing with Morgenthau and Liska, emphasizes that alliance formation aims not only to counter existing threats (such as increases in power or capabilities) but also to balance and offset potential future threats (Walt 1990, 19). Thus, political realists viewed threats within the balance-of-power and alliance framework as encompassing not only a rival state's hostile interests, but also its growing power and economic development, which could potentially lead to expansionist policies in the future. From this perspective, alliance formation serves to counterbalance rising powers and prevent their prospective aggressive ambitions.

At the same time, classical realists sought to specify and classify the threats posed by rival states based on their "power and capabilities, their reach, their capacity to inflict harm, and their intentions." According to them, the balance-of-power system constitutes the principal incentive for the formation of alliances and coalitions. In this regard, proponents of political realism placed particular emphasis on clarifying alliance behavior, as such behavior determines not only the formation of alliances but also their subsequent policies. The study "Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances" by O. R. Holsti, P. T. Hopmann, and J. D. Sullivan examines the relationship between alliance formation and alliance behavior. The authors conclude that "the intensification of a threat significantly contributes to alliance cohesion by enabling it to be better prepared and more capable of responding appropriately to the threat" (Holsti, Hopmann

and Sullivan 1973, 2). This suggests that the nature and magnitude of a threat play a decisive role in determining an alliance's internal cohesion and the adoption of unified behavior.

Issues of alliances, peace, and war have also been addressed by representatives of neorealism, one of the most influential contemporary theories of international relations. State behavior in forming alliances is examined in detail in K. Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979), where he does not limit his analysis solely to balance-of-power theory, arguing that it fails to predict alliance behavior. Although states do ally in the presence of a particular threat, the effectiveness of an alliance depends on how well it is managed and how strong mutual commitments are. Waltz's central argument is that the stronger an alliance's internal cohesion and the greater the alliance leader's capacity to compel members in the face of external threats, the more flexible alliance politics become. According to him, the effectiveness of alliances is directly related to the nature of relations among member states and the homogeneity of their positions. Consequently, in a multipolar world, alliances tend to be less flexible (and less inclined to compromise), since parity among members can shift rapidly under relatively minor influences (Waltz 2001, 122-123). By contrast, a bipolar world enables alliance leaders to exercise greater control over alliance policies, as the contributions of smaller players, while desirable, are not essential for the leader to maintain its power. In this context, researchers Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan identify four key indicators as essential preconditions for effective intra-alliance cooperation: ideological homogeneity, regime stability, unity of objectives, and systemic characteristics (Holsti, Hopmann and Sullivan 1973, 84, 143).

Summarizing the predominantly realist theoretical approaches to alliances, their formation, and the provision of security, several intermediate conclusions may be drawn. Political realists argue that alliances formed under conditions of an anarchic international system aim to balance the unequal distribution of power among states. Such asymmetries generate conditions for constant competition and, consequently, persistent conflict. Neorealists, in turn, emphasize the degree of intra-alliance cohesion and alliance behavior in their assessments, deriving these factors from the nature of relations among member states and their shared values and normative orientations.

### **Formally Institutionalized and De Facto Allied Relations: Alliance Indicators and Their Application to Armenian-Russian Strategic Cooperation**

A key issue in the study of alliances concerns their viability—that is, the fulfillment or non-fulfillment by member states of legally codified alliance commitments. At various points in time, this issue has been at the center of scholarly inquiry by researchers such as K. Booth, E. Fedder, J. Liska, H. Snyder, S. Walt, and B. A. Leeds. In particular, B. A. Leeds has noted that alliance commitments are honored in only about 75 percent of cases, adding that the primary reasons for non-compliance are changes in political course or shifts in governing power in one of the allied states (Leeds 2003, 823). Focusing on the correlation between the fulfillment of alliance commitments and domestic political regimes, Gaubatz, for example, concludes that alliances between democratic states tend to be more stable than those involving other types of regimes,

since democratic values and institutions, by their nature, facilitate compliance with alliance obligations (Gaubatz 1996, 127).

Issues of compliance and non-compliance with alliance commitments are determined not only by political orientation and regime type, but also by the nature of alliance treaties and the type of alliance itself. For instance, J. W. Downs, D. M. Rocke, and P. R. Barsoom argue that a higher probability of treaty compliance largely depends on whether states initially include in alliance agreements only those provisions they are realistically capable of implementing, rather than a broader and more ambitious range of obligations (Downs, Rocke and Barsoom 1996, 387-388).

D. M. Gibler and J. A. Vasquez, examining alliance commitments from the perspective of alliance types, note that agreements incorporating the settlement of territorial disputes tend to be more durable and that the parties to such agreements are more likely to fulfill their obligations (Gibler and Vasquez 1998, 791-793).

Questions concerning formal alliances and their viability, as well as the formation and functioning of informal alliances in contemporary international security, are directly linked to the theses outlined above. On the one hand, they encapsulate existing theoretical approaches, research findings, and historical-political patterns; on the other, they reflect and embody the transformations taking place in international security, in the security behavior of alliances and informal groupings, and in the evolving realities faced by small states within their allied relationships.

Under such conditions, there is an emerging perception that, in the contemporary world, the military-political significance of formal alliance commitments is gradually diminishing, while informal alliances are gaining prominence. For example, when the United States launched military operations in Iraq in 2003, it did not receive support from some of its formal NATO allies; similarly, the U.S.-led coalition against the “Islamic State” was formed on an ad hoc basis (Yamao 2025, 27-58; Dadparvar and Parto 2025). Another illustrative example from U.S. practice is the informal alliances between the United States and Israel, as well as between the United States and Taiwan. The growing role and significance of informal allied relations, along with the transformation of traditional approaches to alliances, raise a number of important questions from the perspective of state security. First, this gives rise to the question of what methodologies and analytical tools exist to assess the credibility of formal alliances, enabling more reliable predictions as to whether formal alliance commitments will actually be activated in times of security need. Second, based on such assessments, it becomes possible to analyze and evaluate the necessity of transforming a state’s foreign policy strategy (Weiss and Fernandes 2025).

These considerations make particularly relevant the question of whether the presence or absence of formally institutionalized alliance relations correlates with the actual level of cooperation between states and the stability of those cooperative ties (Smolnikov 2026, 23-37). Global or regional shocks in the international system, shifts in regional power balances, and wars effectively serve as a litmus test for allied relations. Within the framework of the present study, Armenian-Russian strategic allied relations will be examined as a case of formally institutionalized alliance cooperation, while the methodological foundation of the analysis will be the ATOP

(Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944) dataset and analytical framework<sup>1</sup>.

1. According to the ATOP methodology, the first variable for assessing alliance relations is the level of military-technical cooperation between the parties, specifically arms transfers and their share in the total volume of weapons supplied to an alliance partner (expressed as a percentage). The inclusion of this indicator among the variables under study is largely conditioned by the fact that many scholars emphasize arms transfers as a key measure of cooperation between allies (for example, Moscow and Yerevan). Moreover, according to K. Krause's conceptual framework, arms transfers constitute an important aspect of international influence, enhancing states' bargaining power, structural leverage, and hegemonic potential (Krause 1991, 320 ). Arms supplies shape the foundations of a state's security and serve as a core component of alliance relations—namely, the provision of security and military defense. In responding militarily to potential external threats, arms trade or transfer creates conditions for greater synchronization and effectiveness of allied armed forces. The empirical basis for this component is drawn from military-technical reports, in particular the yearbooks of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the Military Balance reports, materials published in the media, and official data (see Table 1 and Table 2).

**Table 1. List of Military Equipment Deliveries**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Quantity (units)</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
France <sup>2</sup>	2023 order	- GM 200 and GM 400 Alpha radar systems	3	
		- Short-range Mistral air defense systems	-	
India <sup>3</sup>	2022 order	- Bastion armored vehicles	50	
		- Pinaka multiple rocket launch systems	-	
		- Zen air defense systems	-	
2023 order	- Medium-range Akash surface-to-air missile defense systems	-		

<sup>1</sup> Leeds, Brett Ashley. 2026. The Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) project. Rice University. Accessed April 16, 2026. <http://www.atopdata.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). 2023. "24 Bastion-type armored vehicles are being delivered to Armenia, another 26 will be delivered later. Bill in the French Senate." December 04, 2023. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32712633.html> (In Armenian).

<sup>3</sup> Mediamax Media. 2024. "Armenia is diversifying its arms suppliers." June 24, 2024. Accessed April 16, 2026. [https://mediamax.am/am/news/arm\\_world/55134/](https://mediamax.am/am/news/arm_world/55134/) (In Armenian).

Russian Federation	2020 order	- Mi 8 helicopters <sup>4</sup>	-	
	2022 supply			
	2021	-		Armenia has stated that it paid USD 400 million to the Russian Federation; however, the deliveries were delayed. Between 2011 and 2020, approximately 94% of Armenia’s military equipment supplies originated from the Russian Federation. According to the Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, this share has declined significantly since 2021, falling to less than 10%

Besides indicators of arms trade, there are two additional key metrics that attest to the level of military-technical relations between states: the number of joint military exercises and the presence of an allied country’s military contingent or military base on a state’s territory (see Table 2).

**Table 2. List of military exercises conducted with the participation of the RA**

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Name of Exercise</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Scope of Involvement</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
USA	Eagle Partner 2023	September 11-20, 2023	Approximately 85 American and 175	Armenian military personnel participated at the “Zar” training center	-

<sup>4</sup> CIVILNET. 2024. “What weapons have Armenia and Azerbaijan bought since the 2020 war?” April 1, 2024. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://civilnet.am/en/news/770063>.

				Ministry of Defense of the RA's N training center <sup>5</sup>	
	Eagle Partner 2024	July 15-24, 2024	The participants included troops from the Armenian Peacekeeping Brigade, the U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and the Kansas National Guard	The training took place at the V. Sargsyan Military Academy in Yerevan <sup>6</sup>	-
	Eagle Partner 2025	August 12-20, 2025	The participants included the Armenian Peacekeeping Brigade, the U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and the Kansas National Guard <sup>7</sup>	-	-
	Combined Resolve 2025	2025	The Armed Forces of Armenia's medical unit participated in the joint multinational exercise organized by the United States	Germany – Hohenfels Barracks, Medical Battalion <sup>8</sup>	-
<b>RF</b>	“West 2021” Military Exercises	November, 2021	Units from Armenia, Russia, and Belarus participated <sup>9</sup>	-	-

<sup>5</sup> ARMENPRESS. 2023. “Armenia to host Eagle Partner 2023 joint military exercise with United States.” September 6, 2023. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1118856>.

<sup>6</sup> ARMENPRESS. 2024. “Joint Armenian-American exercises “Eagle Partner 2024” begin in Armenia.” July 15, 2024. Accessed April 16, 2026. [https://armenpress.am/en/article/1195755?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://armenpress.am/en/article/1195755?utm_source=chatgpt.com).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Defence of the RA. 2025. “The commencement of the Armenia-U.S. joint exercise “EAGLE PARTNER 2025” was announced.” August, 12, 2025. Accessed April 16, 2026. [https://www.mil.am/en/news/12903?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.mil.am/en/news/12903?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>8</sup> ARMENPRESS. 2025. “Armenia participates in Combined Resolve military exercises with U.S.” February 3, 2025. Accessed April 16, 2026. [https://armenpress.am/en/article/1211009?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://armenpress.am/en/article/1211009?utm_source=chatgpt.com).

<sup>9</sup> ARMENPRESS. 2021. “Armenia, Russia hold joint military exercises.” November 25, 2021. Accessed April 16, 2026. [https://armenpress.am/en/article/1069143?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://armenpress.am/en/article/1069143?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

	2023	-	-	-	Armenia has refused to conduct military exercises on its territory for CSTO member states <sup>10</sup>
	2024 February	-	-	-	In an interview with <i>France 24</i> , the Prime Minister of Armenia announced the ‘suspension’ of Armenia’s membership in the CSTO <sup>11</sup>
					On November 24, 2025, Russian Presidential Assistant Y. Ushakov announced that Armenia’s representatives would not participate in the CSTO summit scheduled in Bishkek. However, they would not oppose the adoption of the agreed-upon documents. Armenia’s Deputy Minister of Foreign

<sup>10</sup> Daily Sabah. 2023. “Armenia cancels military drills with Russia amid tensions.” January 10, 2023. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/africa/traditional-healers-turn-to-ancestral-remedies-as-ebola-spreads-in-drc>.

<sup>11</sup> The Prime Minister of the RA. 2024. “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's interview with France 24 TV.” February 23, 2024. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2024/02/23/Nikol-Pashinyan-Interview-France-24/>

					Affairs, Mnatsakan Safaryan, stated in a briefing with journalists that the issue of Armenia's withdrawal from the CSTO is not on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' agenda <sup>12</sup>
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The legal status and foundations of the military presence of the 102nd Russian military base in the Republic of Armenia were established through a number of bilateral agreements, the most significant of which was the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the Russian military base on the territory of the Republic of Armenia, signed by the presidents of the two countries in Moscow on March 16, 1995<sup>13</sup>. The agreement stipulated the joint provision of security for Armenia's external borders, while from a strategic perspective its primary objective was to ensure a balance of power for the RF in the South Caucasus and to guarantee its own military-political presence in the region<sup>14</sup>.

Structurally, the units of the 102nd Russian Military Base are integrated into the Joint Military Grouping with the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia. This grouping consists of two components and is responsible for safeguarding the Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Iranian borders. In accordance with the agreement of September 30, 1992, the 102nd Military Base ensures the security of the 345-

<sup>12</sup> Sputnik Armenia. 2025 "Armenia will not participate in the upcoming CSTO summit: stated the aide to the President of the RF." November 24, 2025. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://arm.sputniknews.ru/20251124/hajastany-chi-masnakci-hapk-gagatnazhvoghvovin-rd-nakhagahi-ognakan-96176119.html> (In Armenian).

<sup>13</sup> The MFA of the RF. 1995. "TREATY between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the Russian military base on the territory of the Republic of Armenia." Accessed April 16, 2026. [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/international\\_contracts/international\\_contracts/2\\_contract/47983/](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/47983/) (In Russian).

<sup>14</sup> President of Russia. 2011. "Ratification of Protocol No.5 between Russia and Armenia." June 27, 2011. Accessed April 16, 2026. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/11754>; The MFA of the RF. 1992. "TREATY between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the legal status of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation located on the territory of the Republic of Armenia." August 21, 1992. Accessed April 16, 2026. [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/international\\_contracts/international\\_contracts/2\\_contract/48796/](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/48796/) (In Russian); The MFA of the RF. 1994. "PROTOCOL between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the procedure for financing and logistical support of the Border Troops of the Russian Federation located on the territory of the Republic of Armenia." January 25, 1994. Accessed April 16, 2026. [https://mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/international\\_contracts/international\\_contracts/2\\_contract/48151/](https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/48151/) (In Russian).

kilometer Armenian–Turkish border and the 45-kilometer Armenian–Iranian border. It also includes border guard units of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of the Russian Federation stationed in Armenia. The FSB border guard contingent comprises four border groups located in Gyumri, Meghri, Armavir, and Zvartnots Airport (the border guard presence at Zvartnots Airport ceased operations in 2024). The total number of FSB border guard personnel amounts to approximately 4,500. Their logistical support and maintenance are provided on an approximately equal basis by the two sides<sup>15</sup>.

On August 20, 2010, during the visit of Russian President D. Medvedev to Armenia, the fifth protocol to the March 16, 1995 agreement on the presence of the Russian military base in Armenia was signed between the RA and the RF, extending the duration of the base’s deployment until 2044<sup>16</sup>. According to the amendments introduced in Article 3 of the Protocol, in addition to ensuring Russian interests and Armenia’s security through joint forces, the Russian Federation assumed the obligation that “for the achievement of these objectives, the Russian side shall provide assistance to the Republic of Armenia by supplying modern and comparable military (special) equipment”<sup>17</sup>: It should be emphasized that Russia’s security guarantees extended exclusively to the internationally recognized territory of the Republic of Armenia.

2. In addition to indicators of military cooperation between states, another important metric is the level of political support that allied countries provide to one another, as reflected in the convergence of their positions within influential international organizations (such as the United Nations and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe). Voting alignment in the UN General Assembly or the PACE constitutes a reliable indicator of mutual support among allies in international forums. Within this framework, the present study examines the outcomes of Armenia’s voting on a number of resolutions concerning the Russian Federation in the UN and the PACE.

In November 2019, the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proposed by Ukraine entitled “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.” Sixty-seven states voted in favor of the document, 82 abstained, and 23 voted against. According to TASS, “Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Syria, North Korea, as well as a number of Latin American and African states did not support the draft resolution.”<sup>18</sup>

In April 2022, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council. The joint resolution submitted by the EU delegation was supported by 93 countries, opposed by 24, while 58 countries abstained. Armenia did not participate in the vote; Azerbaijan also abstained from participation (Barabanov 2025; Abrahamyan 2025; Epstein and Paylan. 2025).

On April 16, 2025, Armenia voted in favor of the UN General Assembly document entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> President of Russia. 2010. “Joint news conference following Russian-Armenian talks.” August 20, 2010. Accessed April 16, 2026. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/8695>.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> CIVILNET. 2014. “Armenia Votes with Russia Against Ukraine.” March 28, 2014. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://civilnet.am/en/news/390140>.

organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe,” which contains allegations against Russia. The preamble of the resolution refers to “Russian aggression against Ukraine and Georgia” and also mentions efforts related to “the establishment of a special tribunal on the crime of aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation.” The resolution was adopted with 105 votes in favor, 9 against (including the United States), and 33 abstentions<sup>19</sup>.

On February 22, 2022, Armenia was the only member state of the Council of Europe to vote alongside the Russian delegation against the decision to expel Russia from the organization in connection with its invasion of Ukraine. As reported, the proposal submitted by Poland and Ukraine was approved by 42 out of 47 member states<sup>20</sup>.

3. It is evident that the most important and most visible indicator of military–political alliance relations is allies’ joint participation in military operations, which represents the most comprehensive manifestation of alliance commitments. In this context, the examination of specific cases is particularly important, especially with regard to how joint military participation is articulated in treaties that formally establish alliance relations and, more specifically, under what circumstances the conduct of joint military operations is envisaged.

Notably, joint actions may not be explicitly stipulated in defense alliance agreements (for example, the allied obligations of CSTO member states did not require them to support Russia in Syria or Ukraine); such agreements may not envisage the military provision of a partner’s external security; external assistance to parties in civil wars may be provided informally, and its existence cannot always be reliably verified. According to assessments by several researchers, even after the events related to Crimea in 2014, the Russian Federation’s closest allies adopted a cautious stance regarding the prospects of further cooperation with Moscow (Klein 2019, 28). It is apparent that after 2014, international pressure on Russia in connection with Crimea, Donbas, and Syria could be viewed as a “stress test” of the resilience of relations between Moscow and its allies. The situations surrounding the “special military operation” in Ukraine in 2022 and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war created an ambiguous environment in terms of the predictability and mutual expectations of allied responses. Moreover, in the case of Armenia, the events in Jermuk in 2022 subjected alliance relations to intense scrutiny by Armenian society as well as by political and state elites. This, in turn, altered perceptions of the Russian Federation as an allied partner among segments of Armenian society, particularly affecting emotional components and historically rooted interpretations.

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<sup>19</sup> 168 Hours. 2025. “Armenia voted in favor of the UN resolution, which contains accusations against Russia.” April 18, 2025. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://168.am/2025/04/18/2202230.html> (In Armenian).

<sup>20</sup> Armenia Today. 2022. “Armenia is the only country that voted against the decision to expel Russia from the Council of Europe.” February 26, 2022. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://armeniatoday.am/hy/world-2/431754/> (In Armenian).

4. Another important and substantive indicator within the selected methodology is the volume of economic cooperation between states<sup>21</sup>, specifically foreign trade—namely, the share of exports and imports within overall trade turnover.

5. In addition to the indicators discussed above, there exists a range of other, no less important auxiliary factors that condition and influence relations between allies. These include, in particular, the presence or absence of geographical proximity, historical and migratory ties between states, and the degree of cultural affinity (Mayer and Zignago 2011). When these indicators are applied to Armenian–Russian relations, it can be noted that the Republic of Armenia does not share a land border with its strategic ally, the Russian Federation, which constitutes a significant structural constraint. There is no direct corridor between Armenia and Russia; Georgia and Azerbaijan are located between them. For example, the road distance from Tavush Province (RA) to the Upper Lars checkpoint (Georgia–Russia border) is approximately 250–300 km, depending on the point of departure, while the route Yerevan–Upper Lars–Russian border is roughly 370–390 km. Turning to historical and political relations, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (Armenian SSR) officially became one of the founding republics of the USSR on December 30, 1922, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was established. Specifically, in December 1920, Soviet power was established in Armenia and the Armenian SSR was formed. In 1922, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan were united within the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR). On December 30, 1922, the TSFSR became one of the founding entities of the USSR, thereby incorporating Armenia into the Soviet Union. In 1936, the TSFSR was dissolved, and the Armenian SSR became a separate Union republic of the USSR. Armenia remained part of the Soviet Union until September 21, 1991, when, following a referendum, it declared independence.

Despite the importance of the aforementioned indicators, which at a general level define and outline both the structure and the depth of allied relations, they nevertheless do not provide a definitive explanation for the causal relationship between formal alliance commitments and their practical implementation. This suggests that certain conditions and circumstances may give rise to problematic situations in the realization of formal alliance relations even in the presence of robust, multidimensional indicators of cooperation.

In our view, the most significant of these factors include differences in the nature of political regimes and principles of power formation among allied states; shifts in the international geopolitical environment; adjustments to allies' foreign policy orientations amid the reconfiguration of the global balance of power; and pronounced asymmetries in the distribution of resources and interests between allies—most notably the dichotomy between the interests and influence of a great power and those of a small state.

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<sup>21</sup> Official Website of Statistical Committee RA. 2026. External trade database. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://armstat.am/am/?nid=160>; Official Website of Statistical Committee RA. 2026. Other statistical databases. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://armstat.am/am/?nid=14>.

## Conclusion and discussion

Summarizing the theoretical considerations and empirical observations outlined above, several key conclusions may be drawn:

- Strategic alliance relations are measurable and defined by clear indicators that reflect the quality, depth, scale, and hierarchy of inter-state relations. In the era of *realpolitik*, core interests must substantially converge for alliance obligations to function effectively. Under alternative geopolitical conditions, even the existence of a solid cooperative foundation does not guarantee the practical implementation of alliance commitments.
- The principal test of alliance relations is military assistance, which often depends not only on formal obligations but also on interstate and domestic political contexts, the prevailing balance of power in international relations, the nature of political regimes, and potential transformations in foreign policy orientations.
- Alliance relations between a great power and a small state are inherently problematic, as their respective interest domains are objectively different and cannot be sustained through partial convergence alone. A great power pursues agendas related to the expansion of influence, access to new resources, and broader global engagement, whereas small states are primarily focused on survival and, at best, localized development agendas.
- The dominant principle governing alliance relations is *realpolitik*, shaped by the balance of power and a state's resource potential. This implies that the formal existence of alliances does not guarantee the full and consistent fulfillment of alliance obligations, which may ultimately lead to a reassessment of the alliance relationship itself.
- Armenian–Russian strategic alliance relations represent a classical alliance–partnership format, both in structural and indicator-based terms. However, changes in the international political environment, shifts in political power within Armenia, and transformations in foreign policy priorities have created conditions for reassessing the content and spirit of the alliance component of Armenian–Russian relations. The transformation of perceptions regarding the roles, positions, and mutual expectations of the parties has prompted a recalibration of overlapping interests, accompanied by a more cautious and restrained discourse at the primary level of bilateral interaction.

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## Ethics Statement

The author confirms that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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