Chapter - III

The Armenian-Indian Political and Cultural Relations in Soviet and Post-Soviet Period of Armenia’s Independence
In 1920, Soviet power has been established in Eastern Armenia, on the basis of preceding short-lived independent Democratic Republic of Armenia and was incorporated into USSR as a constituent republic in 1922. Notwithstanding all new challenges for the Armenian nation, who passed in its history through ordeals, time of peace came. As far as physical existence and security of the nation was safeguarded, Armenians stepped on the path of modernization, resourceful work and cultural development.

After its independence in 1947, India developed exceptionally close in political, trade-economic and military terms, relationship with USSR. For New Delhi these were relations that it did not have with any country in the world, even though India assumed leadership of the non-aligned movement. In spite of the fact that the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia quite naturally lacked the possibility of conducting independent foreign policy, some economic, cultural, scientific and educational cooperation aspects actively involved it in the mainstream of Indo-Soviet relations.

Several important official visits testify to that point. The first notable visit from Soviet Armenia to independent India, though clerical, took place in 1963. The Supreme Head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in India Catholicos Moran Mar Basilios Gevarghese II invited the spiritual head of the Armenian nation Vazgen I Paljian, Catholicos and the Supreme Patriarch of All the Armenians to visit India, in particular Kottayam in South Indian state of Kerala as the Seat of the Catholicos of South Indian Christians. Despite the fact that the visit’s format was strictly ecclesiastical, Indian government extended to the head of the Armenian Christian Church all the possible courtesy and received him and accompanying Armenian delegation on the highest official level. The Armenian clerical delegation arrived in New Delhi on November 15th, 1963. His Holiness and the entourage were welcomed by A.M. Thomas, Indian Minister for Defense Production, representatives of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and the Armenian community. The Armenian Catholicos gave courtesy calls to the President of India Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Vice-President Zakir Hussain, and Home Minister Gulzarilal Nanda. The culmination of the official program was the meeting with

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1 V.P. Dutt, *India’s Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 65
2 Syrian Orthodox Malankar Church in India with its See in Kottayam, Kerala, is the sister church of the Armenian Apostolic Church.
the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who enjoyed immense popularity in Armenia. The meetings served the purpose of revival of the centuries-old relationship between the two nations and laying a new ground for their enhancement. In the aftermath of this visit, Yerevan, the capital of Soviet Armenia, had opportunity to host in its turn highest ranking Indian delegations.

In the framework of the visit to India, Catholicos Vazgen I had been also in Kottayam, Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. The latter was known for having the largest number of Armenians at that time. An event of special importance for the Indo-Armenian community was the ceremonial blessing and laying of the foundation-stone of the proposed new building of the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy. Another function of significance was the projection of the film “Etchmiadzin”, which had been shot in Yerevan and arranged at the Holy See of St. Etchmiadzin under the personal supervision of the Catholicos. The film depicted, among other liturgical ceremonies, the preparation and blessing of Holy Chrism and the features of Etchmiadzin Cathedral. The same film was shown prior to Calcutta trip in New Delhi along with the lecture of Catholicos to an assembly of Indian officials and the Armenian community representatives. Catholicos’s devotion to the Nation has gained for him an unforgettable place in the hearts of all the members of his wide-spread flock, whilst the memory of his historic visit to India – the first by an Armenian Catholicos – remained as the most notable event in the lives of the Indo-Armenians. The impact of this visit on further shaping of the Armenian-Indian relations was profound because of several reasons. It became reminiscent in India on history of two nations time-honored upbeat relationship. At the same time, it helped to bridge the Armenian community of India with Armenia, exhibiting that even being Soviet republic – just one of fifteen – the homeland is not superficial but a political and cultural entity.

After one year, in 1964, Vazgen I visit was “reciprocated” by the brief visit of the President of India Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan to Armenia. President Radhakrishnan was in 1949-1952 assigned as India’s ambassador to the Soviet Union and was known for his thorough knowledge of the country. Because of another page of his background in capacity of the head of the Indian delegation to UNESCO and scholarly interest in cross-

road nations between the East and the West (author of the work "East and West: Some Reflection", 1955), Armenia was an appealing country for Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. "I saw new Yerevan, visited State University and the depositary of old manuscripts, observed laboratories with hydroponic technology. The Armenian people, who are spiritually close to us, create their bright future."

In June 1976 the historic visit of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to Yerevan took place, which turned into a true festival of friendship. Minister of External Affairs Y.B. Chavan, Member of the Planning Commission S. Ghosh, Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union I.K. Gujral, and Prime Minister's two sons, Rajiv and Sanjay, accompanied Mrs. Gandhi during her three-day stay in Armenia. In Yerevan, Prime Minister Gandhi, accompanied also by the Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers I. Arkhipov, was received by the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Soviet Armenia Karen Demirchian and literary entire leadership of the republic. The Indian leader paid a visit to the Holy See of Etchmiadzin, where she and her delegation met Catholicos Vazgen I. As part of the cultural program, Prime Minister Gandhi observed special exposition at Matenadaran, depositary of ancient manuscripts and adjoining research institute. The exposition included collection of Matenadaran's manuscripts in Armenian and Sanskrit as well as late medieval – early modern period print books on India and Armenian-Indian interactions. In Matenadaran, stereotype publication – copy of the first Armenian periodical Azdarar, printed in Madras in 1794, was presented to Indira Gandhi. In the journal for visiting dignitaries at Matenadaran she left the following note: "History is always fascinating. For us it was especially motivating to recollect the account of deep-rooted bonds between Armenia and India."

The analysis of Indian – Soviet Armenian ties makes is apparent that significant importance was attached to the culture as a prospective bridging factor between the two nations, given the mutual goodwill for strengthening the links.

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4 During the existence of Soviet Armenia only leaders of four foreign countries visited Yerevan. The logic behind was that the USSR leadership was arranging visits to Armenia solely for the highest dignitaries of those countries, which enjoyed special historical and cultural relationship with the Armenian nation. Apart from Samata Gandhi, French President Francois Pinot, Syrian President Hafez Asad and Shah of Iran Mohamed Reza Pahlavi visited Armenia.

5 Sumit Chakravarty, "PM, Armenian leaders hold discussions", Patriot, June 13, 1976, New Delhi

6 "Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in Armenia", The Indian Herald, Yerevan, June 2001, p. 31
Cultural exchanges and dynamic cooperation in that area became prime source for mutual acquaintance, attraction and practical interface. The phenomenon of Indian culture's immense popularity in Soviet Armenia was often explained by time-honored tradition, anchored on historical affinity of the two nations and merely magnetism of the Indian culture. The work of the eighteenth century Armenian enlightenment devotees in India found its continuation in the twentieth century Soviet Armenia. The masterpieces of Indian literature and poetry were translated into Armenian and presented to public at large. The Armenian readers were given opportunity to read in their native language ancient and modern Indian literary masterworks like "Mahabharata", Shakuntala, lengthy parts of "Ramayana", "Nal-Damayanti" and others, including collections of Indian stories. The poems and tales of Navjet Singh, Chandra Krishna, Vallathol Narayana Menon, Sukanto Bhattacharya, Prem Chandry, Mulk Raj Anand, Govind Singh and Shedwan Singh.

Particularly significant interest the Armenian readers had for Bengali poet, short-story writer, playwright, essayist Rabindranath Tagore, one of the titans of the world literature. The works of India's great son entered into the Armenian reality yet at the second decade of the twentieth century. Since that period, numerous works of his poetry and prose were published in the globally spread Armenian media, from Yerevan, Tbilisi, Tehran, Beirut, Calcutta to Vienna, Paris, Istanbul and Jerusalem. The veracity of Tagore's poems being virtually untranslatable could not halt the efforts of numerous Armenian enthusiasts and his poetry admirers. In separate editions were published in Armenian Tagore's "Gitanjali" (Song offerings), "Gora" (Fair skinned), "Gardener", "The home and the world", "The hungry walls", "Sacrifice" and many other poems, stories and plays. In translation of poet Gagik Davtian, was printed Tagore's selected works under the name "Eternal wanderer". Numerous meetings and interactions of the great poet with the Armenians in India, Iran, and in many countries of Europe are well-known. Being familiar with the historical destiny of the Armenian people, Rabindranath Tagore on many occasions publicly spoke with great tenderness about creative talent of the nation. During those long periods that Tagore spent out of India, the Armenian communities were fortunate for several occasions to host him. In 1925, while visiting the Armenian Mekhitarist congregation in Saint Lazzaro island, Venice, he expressed himself
about Armenian and Indian nations in the following way: "...Not because I enjoy this beauty and peace gripping us, but due to that invisible bond that connect us through our deep roots, which are in the distant past of our two peoples' origin. We are different branches of the large tree that is the Arian race. The blood that runs in your veins is our blood. And this brotherhood I felt in your persons today." At the meeting with the Armenians in Tehran in 1933, Tagore pointed out: "You, Armenians, left behind long history of martyrdom...On the background of your sufferings in the past, your hearts are open for feelings of sympathy towards the whole humankind."\(^7\)

The Armenian intellectual circles and the general public were to certain extent familiar with the Indian civilization and cultural values. At the phase of intensive contacts, elevated to policy level, comprehension of multifaceted Indian culture was deepening in a rapid manner. As far as the Armenian culture was concerned, it was basically not known in India before. Profound scholarly interest towards the Armenian culture was born in Europe in the seventeenth century and in essence was limited by the boundaries of Europe. Over the span of centuries living in India, the Indo-Armenian community was not able and was not pursuing the goal of introduction of its culture to the host nation. The lifestyle of the Armenians in India could be characterized as more secluded than open, enveloped with constant apprehension over the issue of endurance and national identity preservation. Small Armenian Diaspora communities all over the world were preoccupied with the same concern. Being a tiny minority in several places in India, in huge and densely populated country of ancient civilization, the place of origin and meeting point of different religions, diversity of cultures, Armenian societal behavioral pattern in the given terms was essentially limited just to ethnic-national survival. The church, schools, language, cultural institutions comprised an interconnected system for national preservation. Considering also the fact that for centuries the country of Armenia was conquered by mighty powers, people were persecuted and often deprived of opportunity to sustain national attainments, the realism of the whole nation living in a survival mode becomes apparent. And having better environments abroad, these Armenian Diaspora communities turned into islands for safeguarding the identity, national culture not only for them but for the nation at large. In the described

\(^7\) Rabindranath Tagore, *Collected Works*, (in Armenian), Yerevan, 2003, p. 113
circumstances, the Armenians in India, as elsewhere on the globe, were not capable of coming out of the established framework and apply efforts to expose the Armenian culture amidst the local Indian environment. After becoming a part of the Soviet Union, the whole set up for the issues concerned changed. Then Armenia was able, simultaneous to advancement of its culture, to introduce it to other nations, to engage in cultural exchange and pertinent enrichment. That is the reason why the Armenian side was putting a special emphasize on presenting mostly unknown Armenian culture to India.

In 1977, conference of Soviet and Indian writers was held in the USSR Union of Writes guest house in Tsaghkadzor, Armenia. It was devoted to contemporary issues in literature. The conference enabled the Indian writers to be acquainted with the Armenian literature. Upon the request of the Indian colleagues, a collection of stories by Armenian writes was singled out to be translated into Hindi, Bengali, Urdu and Tamil languages. In addition, a decision was taken to publish it in English as well. In 1981, "International Book Trust" publication house printed “Armenian short stories”. In the latter works of classical and contemporary best writers like Hovhannes Tumanian, Avetik Isahakian, Derenik Demirchian, Vakhtang Ananian, Mushegh Galshoyan and Hrant Matevosian found place. This literary collection was tenderly received in India.

Two distinguished Armenian artists Dmitri Nalbandian and Mariam Aslamasian produced series of paintings on India in the course of frequent trips to the country. Both of them became Jawaharlal Nehru international prize winners. Dmitry Nalbandian, member of the USSR Academy of Fine Arts, published in Moscow his album titled “Ninety days in India”. \(^8\) He was privileged to personally present the portrait of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to her.

Another Armenian artist Sargis Khachaturian moved into India in 1938, after assumingly experiencing a vision calling him to India. He spent four years in Ajanta caves, nearly adapting himself to the life of the Buddhist monk-artists who created the original works. The dedicated work of four years resulted in 37 masterly reproductions of the ancient paintings. Khachaturian’s reproductions of Ajanta cave paintings were displayed at the New India House in New York in 1957. They found a permanent home

\(^8\) Gevorg Gharibjanian, *Our Friend India*, (in Armenian), Yerevan, 1976
in the Armenian National Art Gallery.\textsuperscript{9} Indian art critic Guwarsmani remarked in his regard: "Sargis Khachaturian in his own way saved and eternalized these masterpieces of the Indian art."

Composer Sargis Balasanian was awarded Jawaharlal Nehru international prize for his music on "Shakuntaly".

Since 1963 institutionalized ties were established between the “Armenian branch of the society for cultural relations with foreign countries” and “Andhra Pradesh State branch of all-Indian association of cultural relations with USSR”. Because of a set of activities in this context, special ties have been established between Soviet Armenia and Indian State of Andhra Pradesh. It could be argued if the choice of the latter state was the most accurate one. Taking into account the geography of the Armenian settlements in India, their historical presence and locally formed system of relationship in different parts of India, establishing ties of this type with the states of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu or Maharashtra could have been more productive and could endow with continuity. However, the formalized ties with Andhra Pradesh were bearing their fruits. Indian culture, history, achievements of the country in diverse spheres was regularly presented in Soviet Armenia. The works of Jawaharlal Nehru, published in Armenian, enjoyed immense popularity. In its turn, the Armenian culture and the achievements of the Soviet republic were presented in Andhra Pradesh through exhibitions. A number of books, articles and booklets, devoted to Soviet Armenia and Armenian culture, were published in Hyderabad. Soviet Armenia – Andhra Pradesh collaborative framework produced a selection of writings in Telugu on Armenia. Local poet K. S. Rao spearheaded in coverage of the Armenian topics. He also translated into Telugu masterpieces of Hovhannes Tumanian’s poesy and fairytales. The translation of Vahagn Davtian’s "Communist" was turned into a song, upon writing music for it.

Mutual visits acquired regular character. Delegates from Soviet Armenia took part in the first World Congress of Solidarity of Asia and Africa Peoples in 1974 in New Delhi. The Armenian participants, along with the others, had an opportunity to meet the President of India Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who visited Armenia in 1964.

\textsuperscript{9} Tsovinar Arevyan, “The Mural Paintings of Ajanta Caves – An Armenian Homage”, \textit{The Indian Herald}, Yerevan, 2000, p. 27
Soviet Armenia - India society of friendship, as a branch of the Soviet-Indian society, came into being in 1982. It gave a considerable boost to intensifying cultural exchanges, mutual visits and expanding the scope of the activities. In the same year of 1982 Soviet Armenia represented the USSR at the international expo in New Delhi. On this occasion vast promotional literature on Soviet Armenia has been distributed in the capital. Indira Gandhi visited the Soviet exhibition, represented by Armenia, and expressed her warm regards to the country, and also reflected on her visit to Yerevan.10

The Armenian community in India was not involved in the Soviet Armenia - India collaborative efforts. It was not invited as a community to participate in functions, was not encouraged to come up with its own arrangements. The global Armenian Diaspora those years was polarized on the basis of acceptance of the Soviet Union or rejection. Even the Armenian Church became divided, with Etchmiadzin (in Armenia) being pro-Soviet and Antelias (in Lebanon) being anti-Soviet. The Indo-Armenians made their clear choice to remain with Etchmiadzin and took a staunch position on that.11 Therefore, from this viewpoint the Armenian community in India was quite “eligible” to be engaged in the mainstream of Soviet Armenia - India cooperative efforts. At the same time some of the Calcutta Armenian community organizations maintained direct cultural relations with the Soviet Armenia like founded in 1948 Haygazian Artistic Society and others. The Haygazian society was pursuing an aim of arousing the interest of young people in Armenian art and literature, old and new. In 1954, the society presented play “The Sake of Honor” to raise funds for the reconstruction of the old building of the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy in Calcutta.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 created avenues for constituent republics to gain their independence. Movement for independence in Armenia was strengthening since 1988, combined with the mighty wave in support of Nagorno-

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10 Rafik Abrahamian, *USSR-India, Friendship Coming From Centuries*, Yerevan, 1986, p. 41
11 Since 1958 the Armenian community in India was separated from the Indo-Iranian Diocese, which came under supremacy of Antelias, and submitted directly to the jurisdiction of Holy See of Etchmiadzin. Bishop Asoghik was sent to Calcutta as Pontifical Legate in 1958 with seats in Calcutta and Sydney. In 1980, by encyclical of Catholicos Vazgen I the Pontifical Legation of India was transferred to the See of Australia and New Zealand. Since 1981 Archbishop Aghan was appointed the Primate of the Armenian Diocese in Australia and New Zealand and Pontifical Legate in India. Under his jurisdiction the spiritual leadership of the Armenians in India was assumed by a clergyman from Etchmiadzin, with seat in Calcutta.
Karabakh Armenians. In September 1991, de-facto sovereign Armenia proclaimed de-jure its independence.

The demise of the Soviet Union appeared as a serious challenge for India, as important pillar of India’s foreign relations had been fallen. Nonetheless, the consequence of it was Nehru’s predicted end of the cold war and a transformed international order. The necessity for regaining the balance of external policy system compelled India to address the issue of rebuilding its relations with successor states - Russia as well as newly independent fourteen countries. The Indian foreign policy decision makers proficiently “navigated in thorny new waters”, elaborating and simultaneously implementing proactive policy course. Less than a month before the actual demise of the Soviet Union New Delhi took a decision to establish direct relations with the republics. 12 Given the strategic importance of Central Asia for India, the Prime Minister wrote to the leaders of Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan inviting them to India. On 26 December 1991, six days after independence proclamation in some of the republics, India extended formal recognition to the Russian Federation and eleven other states, including Armenia.

It must be noted that India was among the first states to recognize the independence of Armenia and sign Protocols on the Establishment of Diplomatic and Consular Relations on August 31, 1992. The multifaceted cooperation between the two countries started to develop rapidly, based on traditions of historical friendship and common political interests. The historical relations between Armenia and India have entered a qualitatively new epoch after the independence of Armenia.

In theoretical terms, the formation of the nation-state for Armenia occurred in a very unique external environment. In 1991 Barry Buzan, British political scientist, questioned the pure model of nation contemplating existence of state. His point was exemplified by the Armenians, a nation without state. Ironically, his sample did not last long, since the very same year Armenia became independent. However, the potential of the “Armenian case” to contradict pure models seems to be indefatigable. Yet to make things more clear, let us glance at Armenia in the mainstream of the political processes which occurred in the world at the last decade of the 20th century. Aside from the end of

12 V.P. Dutt, India’s Foreign Policy in a Changing World, p.75
time, international organizations such as OSCE, CIS and EU, helping to solve these problems have certain regional underpinning and vocation. Not surprisingly, Armenia’s foreign policy gravitates towards a balancing act between the global and regional tendencies. Consequently, the task that Armenia’s foreign policy was compelled to fulfill was a choice between practical short term gains and developing a solid conceptual framework for its orientation in the region and the world.

Here perceptions interact with realities and visa versa. These perceptions are shaped by historical record of being a borderland nation for many times during various historical periods with Armenia’s strategic location at the crossroads between East and West, North and South. At the same time, another reality of Armenia’s past and present is the existence of the worldwide Armenian communities, which acquired a global role since the early modern period of history. As a borderland, throughout the history the Armenian kingdoms were integrated into different regional systems, by assuming a peculiar role of a quasi independent “trustworthy alien”. Armenia’s role as “the sole Christian Kingdom of the Caliphate” and “the Oriental Kingdom of Latin Outremer” during the Crusades is good case in point.13

The other organizational form of the Armenian people – the Diaspora – came into existence at the initial phase of global trade, when the Armenian merchants established worldwide trading network. The author of the perpetual peace theory Immanuel Kant was one of the first thinkers who paid close attention to the Armenian Diaspora’s phenomenon “Armenians wander on foot from the borders of China all the way to Cape Corso on the coast of Guinea to carry on commerce... in line from North-East to South-West, they travel through almost whole extent of the ancient continent and know how to secure a peaceful reception by all the peoples they encounter.”.

Why are these two generalizations important for the assessment of Armenia’s foreign policy making? First of all, both these realities are present nowadays and happen to form the constants of Armenia’s foreign policy. Armenia is a member of various regional initiatives, such as CIS, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Council of Europe (CoE), EU European Neighborhood Policy, augmented with the

collective security system on the regional scale and engagement in security frameworks of wider scope, provision of guarantees for Nagorno-Karabakh’s security, development of effective economic cooperation, establishment of dynamic and mutually beneficial relations with those states, which traditionally pursue strategic interests in South Caucasus and the states that can potentially and with growing intensity affect the state of regional affairs were laid in the foundation of the Armenian foreign policy. Considering those strategic goals as vital for sustenance of the newly independent state, the Armenian foreign policymakers gradually realized the immense necessity to strengthen relations also with India as a potential ally in securing stable, which unequivocally means favorable conditions in regional and international environment. At the outset Yerevan’s priorities in bilateral policy terms were largely focused on Russia, the United States, France, Greece and Iran as friendly countries with consideration of alliance. The stipulating factor for this was Armenia’s need to address and tackle operational issues of domestic (energy, economic, transportation) and external character that required immediate action and necessitated cooperation with those countries that were willing to support and had exposed highest “deliverability” in South Caucasus. In addition, OSCE Minsk Group on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution since 1992 and the main players in it, entitled to mediate between the parties to the conflict and facilitate the resolution process were “grabbing” Yerevan’s foreign policy focus. As far as India’s prime direction for foreign policy vis-à-vis the new commonwealth was initially Russia and the Central Asia, and not the South Caucasus, Armenia’s foreign policy “list” of potential strategic partners included India, but did not encompass the latter as an objective of immediate strategic efforts. Since 1994, when the war over Nagorno-Karabakh was over and ceasefire agreement signed in May 1994, the original phase of the statecraft was completed, Yerevan stepped into a stage of mid-term and long-term foreign policy planning, gaining capability to design prospective policies beyond pressing requisites.

Yet, the task of creating sound bonds of cooperation with India has been put on Armenia’s foreign policy agenda since the birth of independent Republic of Armenia. Attaching immense value to its relations with New Delhi, Yerevan’s outlook on India was shaped by several factors. As independent country Armenia embarked on the path of democratization and launched the process of transformation based on that principle. The
Armenian strategic elite’s vision did not see an alternative to democracy. India’s fame of being the largest democracy in the world made that country “natural partner” of Armenia, as the two nations shared the identical democratic values. The Armenian nation was very much encouraged by the Indian success in democratic state-building. India is also a state that constantly takes principled stand against the use of force and in favor of negotiation and compromise as a way of settling international disputes. Those principles are even embedded in India’s constitution: it decrees that as a matter of state policy India shall “endeavor to promote international peace and security; maintain just and honorable relations between nations; foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples”. For newly independent Armenia, facing numerous threats and challenges, India’s international stance was a blessing.

India is an economy with steady high growth, which makes it one of the best indexes in the world. It has colossal capabilities in advanced and high technology. The economic strength of India is also manifested in its system of reliance on rapidly growing domestic entrepreneurial resources and investments and much less, contrary to the common pattern, on foreign direct and portfolio investments. Eventually it was perceived worldwide that India’s size is considered an asset, not a liability. India has a depth of human and material resources matched by few other states.

Another major factor is India’s speedy transition in acquiring the full-fledged status of world power. Demographic, economic and military indicators place India in a very high rank. It is apparent that India is already a major international power, and its foreign policy truly became of global reach. The uniqueness of India is expressed even in this phenomenon. India’s millenniums long history of growth, decay and renewal has left its imprint on Indian society and political elite. While this past does not dictate contemporary policy, it does influence it. India’s foreign policy rests on an expansive vision of the country’s destiny; yet until recently India has lacked the resources that could turn vision into reality. India has long been counted among the have-nots. For international role playing India had appropriate political determination, moral authority but not sufficient capacity. This situation is rapidly changing, which is what will make India an interesting great power.\(^\text{15}\) The difference in case of India would be behavior of

high international responsibility deriving from the relevant status, in contrast with already perceived as typical supremacy and projection of power in fulfillment of rising ambitions, as in history registered classical cases. The visionary statements of Jawaharlal Nehru is being realized in modern political milieu: “The emergence of India in world affairs is something of major consequence in world history”, “India is growing into a great giant again”, “India can play a big part, and perhaps an effective part, in helping to avoid war”, and “India has gone on in the scale of nations in its influence and in its prestige”.\(^\text{16}\)

India has a distinct civilizational identity, composed of a number of cultural patterns, social structures, and a special view of history. These factors enable it to mobilize its own people around a unique set of values, images and ideas.

India plays a significant role at the United Nations and the other international organizations. At these fora it has a balanced and considered approach towards the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, thus creating favorable environment for determining accurate understanding and proper ways of addressing the issue. New Delhi strongly supports the efforts to reach a resolution in that conflict through peaceful negotiations.

In regard of the political-military upheavals of the South Caucasus India plays a balanced role, promoting regional peace and cooperation. That contributes to erasing of the dividing lines.

An aspect of significance is that India’s position on major international and regional issues in overwhelming majority coincides with the Armenian one.

India in its turn builds relations with Armenia being anchored on the following factors. In nature, New Delhi was guided by initial pursuit of the objective to establish bilateral direct relations with the newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union, with consideration of developing special type of relations with geographically closer ones. Geopolitical factor was undoubtedly prevailing. The South Caucasuses is a strategic crossroads between the East and the West, the North and the South.

India’s outlook at South Caucasus as a region of strategic location was also stipulated by strong geo-economic considerations. The region is not only producer of energy resources but also constitutes operational and prospective transit routes to other destinations. India has its own interests in this set up. Armenia certainly is not an oil or

gas producer country, not even a transit country, but as a regional state and a regional player represents certain interest. In addition, Armenia can become a transit country for Iran or acquire that role in another scenario - after resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In geo-economic terms viewing oil and gas rich Central Asia as strategic, it is impossible to discard the options of having the pipelines from there pass via South Caucasus. Often South Caucasus and Central Asia perceived as adjoining entities, which superficially makes it single dimension in certain terms. This perception currently has much less supporters primarily because of differing regional identity shaping processes. Since engagement of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan in the EU’s European Neighborhood Policy, European distinctiveness as a model for regional identity in prospective finds more fertile ground in South Caucasus.

In the process of post Cold War formation of the New World Order Central Asia - South Caucasus dimension is appraised globally as space of importance. India has similar comprehension of that factor. The history testifies that the Silk Road crossing the mentioned regions and its branch roads connecting it with the South were for centuries the major routes linking India with the rest of the world. The modern projects of Silk Road revival in terms of transportation, communication, oil and gas pipeline routes, notwithstanding how realistic they appear currently, inevitably carry strategic importance.

The proactive foreign policy of Armenia towards India since late 1990s contributed to elevation of interest level vis-à-vis Armenia in Indian external policy circles. In this regard manifestation of support to India from official Yerevan at the time of Pokhran nuclear tests in 1998, supportive position of Armenia on Jammu and Kashmir issue, and support and advocacy by Armenia for the Indian candidacy for the permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council definitely carried importance for New Delhi. Implications of these actions came to enhance New Delhi’s outlook on Armenia as partner of rising importance.

Both nations appreciate history, and in this light historically formed traditional set of friendly bonds generate favorable public opinion for the enhancement of bilateral cooperation.
The first “layer” for the establishment and consequent development of the Armenian-Indian bilateral relation was the process of its institutionalization. Having laid initial legal basis by signing in Moscow by the two ambassadors in Russia “Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of India and the Republic of Armenia” and “Protocol on the Establishment of Consular Relations between the Republic of India and the Republic of Armenia” in August, 1992. In September, 1992, India appointed S.T. Devare as its first Ambassador to Armenia. He was concurrently accredited to Armenia from Ukraine, having Kiev as residence for ambassadorship. In March, 1993, the Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Navasardian visited New Delhi in capacity of the first Armenian official to visit India. As a result, Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations has been signed. The Armenian Foreign Ministry took decision on appointment of honorary consul in New Delhi, instead of accrediting to India an ambassador among just a few embassies that were established a short time prior. In 1994, Hovsep Seferian, former employer of the Brazilian Embassy in New Delhi, assumed charge of the Armenian Honorary Consul.

In 14-16 December, 1995, the first highest level visit of the Armenian leader to India took place. At that time Armenia was already able to overcome myriad of overarching problems, starting from solution of the energy production issue (by restarting Metsamor nuclear power station) and finishing with having in place reliable transportation routes to outside world via Georgia and Iran. The road infrastructure, connecting Armenia and Iran, was created from the scratch. The first generation political and economic reforms were successfully launched and were already producing results. The land reform and massive privatization covering different sectors of economy were implemented in a short time frame. As a result, even under hardships of closed land borders with two of its neighbors, Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia succeeded in creating a flexible and healthy economy. The war in and around Nagorno-Karabakh was over with signing of the cease-fire agreement in May 1994. The Armenian leadership was able to dispose of the crisis management policy and focus on longer term perspective priorities. The President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrossian paid state visit to India (according to protocol, the highest status visit offered by the host country) in December, 1995. That visit signified for the Armenian side the commencement on the desired level of relations
in its multitude, which Yerevan was very much eager to elevate to. In Armenian perception, natural partnership relations with India were also aimed at strengthening the Armenian statehood and contributing to profound acknowledgment of this newly independent state on the international arena. As far as the Indian side was concerned, offer to bind bilateral relations with the highest level treaty agreement signified a manifestation of its keen interest in enhancing relations with Armenia. During the visit, on 14 December, 1995, President Ter-Petrossian and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao signed “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of India and the Republic of Armenia”. The Treaty reiterates the mutual desire to strengthen cooperation, respect for each other’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in internal affairs. It also contains provision for consultation in case of a threat to peace. The countries reached the highest level of the bilateral legal basis not after years and decades of enhancing relations but at the very beginning of the process. President Ter-Petrossian during his stay in New Delhi announced Armenia’s support for India’s permanent membership at the UN Security Council.

The visit of the head of state has been followed by steps to boost cooperation in legislative area. The parliamentarian diplomacy was launched by the visit of an eight-member Armenian parliamentary delegation led by the Chairman of the Supreme Council Babken Ararktsian in December 1996. Agreements were reached to start cooperation with both Lok Sabha and Raja Sabha. The delegation also met with political, community and business leaders. They had a thorough discussion on strengthening the existing political-economic interaction, and more focus on partnership in development.

In September, 1997, the first Foreign Office Consultations under 1993 protocol were held in New Delhi at the visit of the Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Manasarian. Both sides ascertained that the two countries share excellent political relations and support each other in international forums. Upon exchanging information on countries’ position on a range of regional and global issues, the sides discussed issues of Nagorno-Karabakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

In the global framework of the Armenian-Indian relations, which are close and free from any problematic issues, one may argue that there is, however, an issue that both countries address from different positions. In case of Armenia could be considered
Nagorno-Karabakh problem, an Armenian populated enclave in Azerbaijan that started its struggle for independence from the latter with the breakup of the erstwhile Soviet Union. In case of India, it is the problem of Jammu and Kashmir, which was inherited from the time of partition. While addressing these two different conflicts, it must be affirmed from the outset that every conflict has a different roots and historical development, which, of course, implies different solutions. The parallels may be drawn in each case, but one feature remains unchanged – it is a democratic commitment to resolve all problems peacefully and through negotiations. Analysis of the roots of the conflicts of Nagorno-Karabakh and Jammu and Kashmir of post-partition period clearly shows that both countries’ approaches are not “incompatible”. The argument here is the following.

The status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which was populated by Armenians, was not clearly defined at the time of forming the Union of Soviet Republics and moreover has never been a part of the Azerbaijani Republic in the period of its independence in 1918-1920. The decision to transfer the region under the authority of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic was taken by the regional bureau of the Communist Party of the USSR, which was not legally entitled to make relevant decisions. For this reason it was illegal. Any manifestation of those people who tried to assert the right to determine their future was suppressed. The write for self-determination was the fundamental nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians struggle – asserting their rights to freely choose their future, which was denied by Baku. Way back in 1988 they resorted to the tactic of ethnic cleansing of the Armenians not only from the Nagorno-Karabakh, but also from all over Azerbaijan. As a result, Armenians were subjected to the same fate as Kashmiri pandits. When the political negotiations under the auspices of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe started in 1992 aimed at peaceful resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a principle decision was taken to define the final status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Conference. That is set to constitute the only internationally legal decision, accepted by the all parties to the conflict.

As in case of Jammu and Kashmir, again it is a matter of disputed legacy, this time the British Empire taking the responsibility. Without going into details of partition, one essential aspect should be singled out from the outset. The Instrument of Accession to Indian Dominion signed by Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir was a legal act,
corresponding to the required norms. Afterwards, invasion of tribal forces, supported by Pakistan, took place, resulting in occupation of the part of historical territory of Kashmir. The conclusion is that the accession of Kashmir to India was final and could not be subject to deliberations, because it was along with accepted norms of international law as well as rules of partition. The subsequent elections in Jammu and Kashmir have strongly supported this fact. Any deviation from that line could be considered as attempt to change forcibly the ground realities and detrimental to the negotiation process. An obvious conflict in international law is often observed between the principle of self-determination, as clearly is in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the principle of territorial integrity, as some may suggest is the case in Jammu and Kashmir conflict. The reality is that Jammu and Kashmir problem should not be viewed through the prism of territorial integrity, but as an attempt of Pakistan to assert its national identity as a state and unfinished agenda of partition. This divergence in principles is simply not applicable for the two mentioned cases due to explained reasons. It should be added that both Armenia and India clearly perceive these conflict as non-religious and having absolutely no ground for attempt for such ascertainment. India never accepted religion as fundamental element of politics and always demonstrated in practice that its nationhood was based on secular criteria. The Armenian and Indian mutual approaches were free from any misunderstandings and moreover, misinterpretations.

India expressed in belief that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be resolved peacefully. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs made a statement on Nagorno-Karabakh on 7 September 1993, where it appealed to “the parties concerned urgently to take the remedial steps required to respect international borders, to restore peace, and resolve mutual differences through early peaceful negotiations.” MEA did not make any statement on NK after May 1994 ceasefire. In 1994-1995, India donated two consignments of medicines as humanitarian assistance to Armenia for the persons affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenia fully supports India’s stand that the Kashmir issue should be resolved bilaterally within the framework of the Shimla Agreement. This mutual understanding of each other’s position was duly expressed

17 Sisir Gupta, Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations, New Delhi, 1998, p. 441
during the mentioned and various other meetings between Armenian and Indian dignitaries.

The nuclear tests carried out by India on 11 and 13 May 1998 in Pokhran, Rajasthan, perhaps reflected the most momentous decision after the initial policy decisions taken by the Indian leaders at the time of independence. India was facing since the late 1980s progressively deteriorating security environment. Initial indications were that the world at large is not likely to declare an economic and technological war on India collectively. Anyhow, after Pokhran II there was selective imposition of sanctions, the magnitude of which was determined by individual countries. The situation was getting complicated. Australia and New Zealand withdrew their High Commissioners, Japan, US, EU member countries harshly criticized and enforced certain sanctions. Armenia’s official reaction to the Pokhran II nuclear tests, conducted by India in May 1998, was characterized by understanding of the national security concerns of India. That was reflected in the appropriate statement of the Foreign Ministry of Armenia. Armenia also condemned Pakistan for “reciprocal tests”. Armenia also encouraged India’s purposive dialogue with Pakistan in order to forge a stable security environment in South Asia, realizing the need to put in place mutual security guaranties.

The further evolvement of the Armenian-Indian relations was expressed through reciprocal establishment of embassies in both capitals, which enabled the sides to efficiently conduct daily basis work. Resident Indian mission opened in Yerevan on 1 March 1999. The first resident Ambassador Bal Anand assumed charge in October 1999, presenting letter of credence to President Kocharian in November. The Armenian resident mission has been established in October 1999, with the first resident Ambassador Armen Baibourtian arriving in New Delhi in April 2000 and presenting his letter of credence to President Narayanan in May.

In continuation of the high-level dialogue, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Vartan Oskanian visited India in 3-5 December, 2000. He met with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his counterpart Jaswant Singh. Their talks focused on expansion of political, cultural and economic cooperation. Special attention was attached to issues of collaboration at the United Nations. Foreign Minister Oskanian reaffirmed

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action of Pakistan. The Permanent Representative of Armenia to the UN made a written statement, funding “the reference made by the delegation of Pakistan during the introduction of the draft resolution A/C.3/57/L.33 inappropriate.”

Armenia and India regularly supported each other and their respective candidates at the United Nations. India abstained on the amendment proposed by Azerbaijan to the UN General Assembly resolution on “Cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE” of December 2000, in regard of the chapter on Nagorno-Karabakh. India was among 65 abstained countries, while 62 were in favor and one voted against (Armenia) with 34 non-participants. It was a valued support to Armenia. The Azerbaijani amendment, which read “Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was proposed instead of the original draft resolution’s “Nagorno-Karabakh region” phrase. According to the established practice of the OSCE, paragraphs 15 and 16 of the draft resolution, dealing with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, repeated the relevant paragraphs of the OSCE summit and OSCE Ministerial Conference Declaration. That was the result of consensus within member-states of the OSCE. Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group on Nagorno-Karabakh, namely USA, Russian Federation and France, stridently expressed their opinion, similar to OSCE Istanbul Declaration of 1999. The latter contained the following paragraph on NK: “We received the report of the Cp-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group on the evolving situation and recent developments connected with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and commend their efforts. We applaud in particular the intensified dialogue between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, whose regular contacts have created opportunities to dynamiza the process of finding a lasting and comprehensive solution to the problem. We firmly support this dialogue and encourage its continuation, with the hope of resuming negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group. We also confirm that the OSCE and its Minsk Group, which remains the most appropriate format for finding a solution, stand ready to further advance the peace process and its future implementation, including by providing all necessary assistance to the parties.” The draft resolution, presented for the consideration of the 55th session of the UN General Assembly in 2000, in its two paragraphs on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, contained exact excerpts from the OSCE agreed position. These paragraphs were agreed by all the members of the OSCE, including Armenia and Azerbaijan, provided a
solid basis for a consensus in the United Nations. However, Azerbaijan year after year was presenting the mentioned amendment to the agreed text, which was in direct contradiction to the language of the Istanbul Declaration. The Co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group – USA, Russia and France – abstained vis-à-vis the Azerbaijani amendment. There was another consideration as well. The countries abstained, while supporting the principle of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, were convinced that the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh should not be predetermined and is supposed to be the outcome of the negotiations under the auspices of OSCE. Internationally approved mechanism of defining the NK’s final status was delegated to the OSCE Minsk Conference, to be convened precisely for that purpose.

India also supported Armenia’s bid for the membership in UNESCO committee. In September, 2002, Armenia supported the candidature of Justice P.N. Bhagwati for re-election to the UN Human Rights Committee at elections held during the States Parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights at New York. In October, 2002, Armenia also extended its support to the candidature of P.C. Sharma, Director of CBI for the post of Delegate in the Executive Committee of ICPO-Interpol at the elections held during the 71st General Assembly Session in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

The firm position India on peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was especially valuable for Armenia also in the light of India’s neighbor Pakistan’s repeated references to the military option. On several occasions on the high level such an opinion was expressed publically. At a meeting with Azerbaijani President Heidar Aliyev in June 2000, Pakistani leader General Parviz Musharraf offered himself a radical method of settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. General Musharraf also promised Baku military assistance whenever Azerbaijan opted for a military resolution of the conflict. Musharraf explained that he meant the whole spectrum of aid including participation of Pakistani military units in the hostilities. President Aliyev replied that Azerbaijan had always backed up Pakistan’s stand on Kashmir. Pakistan was the second country after Turkey to recognize Azerbaijan’s sovereignty. General Musharraf regularly demanded “Yerevan unconditionally pull out from the occupied Azerbaijani lands.”

20 *Kommersant*, Moscow, June 14, 2000
Armenia while visiting border regions: “We are not cooperating with Armenia. We have not established any economical, political and diplomatic relations with Armenia for its having occupied Azerbaijan’s territories. Pakistan has not established its embassy in Armenia as we back Azerbaijan in this matter. Pakistan has always been together with Azerbaijan and will further be.”

Minister of State for External Affairs Digvijay Singh was the first ever Indian Minister to visit Armenia in July 14-15, 2003. He met President Kocharian, Deputy Chairman of the National Assembly Tigran Torosian and five Ministers. During his meeting with foreign Minister Oskanian, Digvijay Singh observed that there is pleasing political cooperation between the two countries providing a firm base for accelerating trade and economic cooperation. Both sides reviewed the growth of bilateral trade and various measures required to give an impetus to it. For deepening bilateral relations the sides pointed out the importance of expanding the corresponding legal ground. They also discussed regional issues, particularly Indian-Pakistani relations, developments in Indo-Chinese relations, the current state of Kashmir problem, as well as issues within South Caucasus, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in particular.

MEA Joint Secretary (Eurasia) Rajiv Dogra visited Armenia in May 2004 and met several top officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Culture. His visit contributed to the strengthening of inter-ministry ties between the Foreign Offices.

At the invitation of the President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the President of Armenia, Robert Kocharian, paid a state visit to India from October 29 to November 1, 2003. Accompanied by a high-level business delegation and four Ministers, President Kocharian and the first lady visited New Delhi Agra and Chandigarh. Within the framework of the visit, Robert Kocharian held fruitful discussions with President Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. Three bilateral agreements were signed, while the Joint Statement reaffirmed Armenia’s support for India’s permanent membership of the UNSC. India offered a grant of US$ 5mln. A Joint Declaration was issued at the end of the visit. In Chandigarh the President

21 The Pakistan Newswire, June 8, 2006
inaugurated Asia's first Centre for Caucasian Studies set up in the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, besides interacting with local community leaders. During the wide-ranging discussions held in cordial atmosphere, Armenian and Indian sides exchanged views on various bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The two sides noted the high level of interaction and cooperation between Armenia and India at the United Nations and other multilateral fora and expressed their intention to further cooperate in this field. They noted with satisfaction that the close relations between India and Armenia, which have a cultural and historical basis, are marked by warmth and a high degree of understanding as well as shared interest in current principal issues. Both sides reiterated their desire to strengthen even further the bilateral relations and close ties between the two countries and peoples.

The Armenian and Indian delegations emphasized the continuing relevance of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Armenia and India signed in 1995. The treaty has served both countries well and provided a solid foundation for further development of bilateral relations and cooperation on regional and international level in the years ahead.

During the meeting between President Kocharian and Prime Minister Vajpayee the issue of terrorism was touched upon. They expressed concern over the increase in international terrorism, religious extremism, trans-border organized crime and illicit trafficking in arms and drugs. They viewed this upsurge as a serious threat to sovereign states, international peace, development, security and stability. They affirmed that terrorism was a grave violation of human rights and a crime against humanity and that no excuse could justify it in any form. They agreed that the fight against terrorism by the international community has to be comprehensive, with the ultimate objective of its total eradication from the world. Action should be taken against those states, entities and individuals who support, finance terrorists or provide them shelter to engage in cross-border terrorism. In that regard it was essential that every state be made to refrain from organizing or participating in terrorist acts in another state. In this context, they stressed the importance of strict implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution on the fight against terrorism. They stressed the need to strengthen the international legal regime to fight terrorism through the early finalization and adoption of the draft Comprehensive

President Kocharian and Prime Minister Vajpayee also discussed issues of bilateral military-technical cooperation and interaction between the law enforcement bodies of the two countries. "Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Defense Cooperation" with an emphasis on military education, defense industry, scientific-technical programs for defense, was also finalized.

The Armenian President respected the evolving security concerns of India in the light of recent local, regional and global developments. He appreciated the initiatives taken by India to resume diplomatic relations with Pakistan. In this connection, the Armenian side supported the resolution of differences between India and Pakistan through bilateral dialogue in the spirit of the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration. In its turn the Indian side appreciated the security concerns of Armenia in the light of regional developments. It welcomed the efforts undertaken by the Armenian side toward the establishment of lasting peace in the region. In this connection, the Indian side confirmed its support for finding peaceful and negotiated solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. The two sides reaffirmed their allegiance to the principle of peaceful and negotiated resolution of disputes as opposed to the use of force or the threat thereof, pursuant to the applicable rules of international law.22

During the visit President Kocharian inaugurated the new chancery of the Armenian Embassy, built by the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth in Calcutta. The State Minister for External Affairs Digvijay Singh, ambassadors from New Delhi diplomatic corps and representatives of Calcutta Armenian community, including forty students of the Armenian College and Philanthropic academy, attended the opening function.

The Indian Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat visited Armenia from 6 to 8 October, 2005. This was the highest level visit ever from India to Armenia. He led a

22 Joint Declaration on the State visit of H.E. Mr. Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Armenia to the Republic of India (October 29-November 1, 2003, New Delhi)
delegation of members of Parliament, senior officials and representatives of the media. During the visit, the Vice President met twice with President Robert Kocharian and the Speaker of the National Assembly Artur Baghdasarian. The Vice President handed over the shipping documents for the first gift consignment of 60 India SONALIKA 4x4 tractors made by International Tractors Ltd of Hoshiarpur, Punjab. About 240 more were supposed to come soon. These tractors were a gift from the people of India. During the visit, a Memorandum of Understanding on Parliamentary Cooperation was signed and the Instruments of Ratification of the India-Armenia Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation exchanged. The Vice President received the title of Honorary Doctor of Yerevan State Medical University. He also released a book in Armenian on "Festivals of India". Vice President also called on Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians.

The parliamentarian diplomacy was enhanced by the official visit to India of the Armenian National Assembly’s delegation, headed by the Chairman Tigran Torosian in December of 2006. The delegation called on the Speaker of Lok Sabha Somnath Chatterjee, the Vice President and the Chairman of Rajya Sabha Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the Minister of External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee and the Indian Sansad opposition leader Lal Krishna Advani. Issues of development of the interstate and interparliamentary relations were discussed during the meeting with Somnath Chatterjee, the Speaker of the House of the People. The latter touched upon the newest developments of the Armenian-Indian friendship, having two thousand-year history, mentioning generality of viewpoints and interests, the two sides' faithfulness to solution of problems based on peace and cooperation in international relations. He expressed gratitude for the assistance shown by India in the issue of permanent membership to the UN Security Council and readiness to assist the UN reformation. The Lok Sabha Speaker attached importance to the two sides' united position in the anti-terrorism struggle. Speaker Torosian emphasized the balanced and impartial posture of India concerning the South Caucasus region, and, particularly, in such a delicate issue as the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. During the meeting the sides also touched upon the cooperation of the two parliaments' staffs and exchange of experience. The Armenian parliamentary delegation took part on December 14 in sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha of India23. At

23 Noyan Tapan News Agency, December 14, 2006
meeting with Lal Krishna Advani, the Indian Sansad opposition leader, the latter mentioned that time by time he has opportunities to notice that there are differences among parliaments of different countries, but the meeting with the Armenian National Assembly speaker assures that there are no differences between Armenia and India.

In January, 2007, a new round of Foreign Office consultations was held in New Delhi between visiting Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Armen Baibourtian and Secretary (West) of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Ravi. The two diplomats discussed issues of bilateral coordinated actions on global issues in the framework of international organizations, on the regional scale and practical matters of increasing cooperative efforts. Deputy Minister Baibourtian touched upon the specifics of the Armenian-Indian relations at the meeting with Minister of State of External Affairs E. Ahamed.

Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit paid a three-day visit to Yerevan in September 2007. She was received by the Prime Minister Serge Sargsyan, the National Assembly Speaker Tigran Torosian and the Mayor of Yerevan Yervan Zakharian. 24 "The negotiations covered the issues of local self-governance, also spheres of science, education and economy", announced the Mayor of Yerevan Ervand Zakharian. The sides agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding of cooperation between the cities of Delhi and Yerevan. The constitutional amendments upon referendum of 2005 in Armenia envisaged change of the status of the city of Yerevan, certain administrative reforms, election of the city council and the mayor, as opposed to previous appointment of the mayor. In this circumstance it was important to get in-depth knowledge on Delhi governance system, with the aim of applying some elements into the new law being written on the capital.

Mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zakharyan visited India in September, 2008, on the invitation of the Chief Minister of Delhi. Street near Armenian Embassy Anand Niketan area in Delhi was re-named as ‘Armenian Street” during the visit.

According to a widely acknowledged theory, the practice of diplomacy has a three-pronged approach: a tacit acceptance of another country’s position, an understanding of its viewpoint and a continual dialogue to present and carry through

24 Armenia India: 15 Years of Diplomatic Relations, New Delhi, September 2007
one’s own country’s position and approach. Whenever dialogues took place among cultures, India being one among many, there was always a profound give-and-take, and a true interchange of values as well as artistic objects and expressions - leading to “shared systems” in the best sense of the term, without the least self-conscious dominance by one over the other.25

In the olden times culture was not consciously conceived of as an instrument of politics or diplomacy. It was rather inherent in the process of exchanges between states and societies. The flow of ideas, the cross fertilization and synthesis of values was an unconscious, endemic part of intercourse between nations and peoples. If some system of culture or school of philosophy caught the imagination of another, it generated new interactions or political developments. The interaction between India and Armenia exemplify this process. The emergence of “culture” as an instrument of external policy of various states in the aftermath of the Second World War is a significant phenomenon. The decline and gradual disappearance of the imperial and colonial framework of global relations resulted in states attempting to diversify and devise means by which they could retain or create friendship and influence in other countries, in other societies. The impact of cultural, educational and sociological orientation on the economic and political policies of countries was recognized. Given this recognition culture became a dynamic operational element in international relations and diplomacy.26

The newly independent states utilized their “cultures” to overcome their respective crisis of identies and to assert their nationhood. That notion is applicable to Armenia as well. In addition, the Armenians being also a nation of world-spread Diaspora anchored their plight for preservation of identity mainly on culture, in its all encompassing sense. Being also a relatively small nation, for the Armenians their milleniums-old unique culture, formed in the circumstance of interaction between the Eastern and the Western civilizations, was a means of being acknowledged. Since the emergence of modern independent Armenia, culture was put at service of bridging the country with other nations. It turned into an integral component of conduit of official

relations with external partners as far as Armenia, like India, has along with an ancient cultural heritage also a dynamic contemporary culture. In case of India, this process was immensly facilitated due to cultural interactions of earlier historical periods and factual existence of fertile soil for the Armenian culture.

India, in its turn, has a fairly active and wide range of external cultural programs. The specific motivations of India’s external cultural policy can be described as follows: to make Indian cultural, intellectual and scientific developments known abroad in the hope that it would add to bilateral cooperation among countries; to respond to academic, cultural and artistic curiosity about India in foreign countries. In Armenia, the Indian culture was already well-known and cherished because of late centuries interactions and, more importantly, from the Soviet period experience.

In May, 2000, the Indian Embassy in Yerevan organized an exhibition of Indian literature and encyclopedic references on India at the Fundamental Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. Similar books, 56 in number, were presented to the National Library of Armenia by Ambassador Bal Anand in June, 2001. In September, 2000, Indian chess team participated in the “World juniors and girls championship” in Yerevan, where Krishan Sasikaran of India won the “junior grand master” title. In March, 2001, the Embassy of India and the Ministry of Culture of Armenia organized a two-week long exhibition of Indian miniature dolls and dresses, sponsored by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) in Yerevan. The expositions included 52 dolls representing dresses, dance traditions, tribal groups and brides of India. In addition, Ajanta cave paintings’ reproductions by Sargis Khachaturian were made part of it. The exhibition was inaugurated by the first lady Bella Kocharian. Shahnai ensemble of Ustad Ali Ahmed Hussain khan participated in Yerevan World Festival of Music in May, 2001. On July 19th, 2001, the Embassy of India organized celebration of 25th anniversary of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s visit to Armenia. On this occasion, photo exhibition was held in “Moscow” theatre, and the Armenian edition of the Indian epic Mahabharata was released. Twenty-five paintings of the epic Mahabharata by Armenian artist Niko Manukyan were also displayed. The Indian

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27 Ibid., p. 424
Embassy presented as a gift nine classical instruments of Indian music to the Yerevan State Conservatory on behalf of ICCR.

With the goal to perpetuate the Armenian culture in India and enable Indians to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the Armenian culture, the Embassy of Armenia in India hosted a week long Armenian cultural festival on 14-21 April, 2001, at the New Delhi Maurya Sheraton Hotel, complete with Armenian cuisine and Armenian musicians, who were flown in for the occasion. The inauguration of the festival was followed by a press conference and an exhibit illustrating the 1700th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity as state religion in Armenia. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Armenia's independence, the Armenian Embassy in India organized a series of functions in November, 2001. In collaboration with the ICCR the Armenian Embassy launched a tour of performances of the Armenian folk dance and music group “Akounk” in largest cities of India such as Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. A team of Armenian TV and photo journalists accompanied the group in all three cities and also produced a documentary film on India. The inauguration of the celebration function has been launched by a meeting with the Indian press and video presentation of Armenia. The first performance of “Akounk” took place in Delhi’s Kamani auditorium. Former President of India Venkataraman was the chief guest for the occasion. The Embassy organized blessing ceremony of its chancery, conducted by the Pontifical Legate for Far East and South Asia of the Armenian Apostolic Church Archbishop Baliozian. The faction for the tenth anniversary of independence with performance of “Akounk” was attended by Vice President of India Krishan Kant and his spouse. A number of Armenians from Kolkata as well as Singapore, Thailand, China and Australia congregated in New Delhi to celebrate the Armenian national event.

Twelve children from Armenia participated and have won prizes in Shankar’a International Children’s Competition in painting in 2001, organized by Children’s Book Trust.

In order to enhance bilateral legal basis for cultural cooperation between Armenia and India, “Cultural Exchange Program for 2003-2005 has been signed in New Delhi on May 22nd, 2003. This document was anchored on the New Delhi “Agreement on

28 Socialook International, Vol. 28, No. 1, New Delhi, pp. 5-6
cooperation in culture, arts, education, tourism, sports and mass-media" of December 14th, 1995. The Joint Declaration, issued on the occasion of the state visit of President Kocharian to India in 2003 contained the following clause on cultural cooperation: “In the field of culture, the two sides reiterated the long standing historical ties between the two countries. They expressed satisfaction over the fact that they have the necessary framework for regular and diverse cultural exchanges. Both the Educational Exchange Programme and the recently concluded Cultural Exchange Programme are in place and would help to institutionalize cultural exchanges and ties. The two sides expressed their appreciation regarding the many and significant contributions made by the Armenian community in India to Indian national life.”

On the occasion of the mentioned presidential visit the Indian Minister of Human Resource Development Murli Manohar Joshi stated, referring to culture: “India and Armenia do have very warm and friendly relations through contacts which go back over 2000 years. The 5th century theologian Yeghishe referred to the Hindu language as musical. Ms. Gauhar Jan of the Armenian origin was the first recorded Indian classical singer. These traditional, historical and cultural links have produced a vast reservoir of goodwill and warmth for India.”

ICCR-sponsored troupes visited Armenia regularly since 2002. Their performances were appreciated by the local population. They visited in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2009. In September, 2006 a 16-member ICCR-sponsored classical dance and music troupe participated in the celebration of Armenia’s 15 years of independence. A 10-member cultural troupe visited Armenia from 14-22 March, 2009 and performed in various cities of Armenia including Yerevan. The troupe comprised a 5-member Kuchipudi dance group and a 4-member classical vocal group.

Indian films are regularly screened and sought on Armenian TV channels. Indian film director P.N. Ramchandra participated in the Golden Apricot 4th international film festival in Armenia in 2007 with his film “The Cleansing Rites”. The film was about family rites and customs of all religious communities living in India. An exhibition of the painting of the renowned Russian artist of Armenian origin Hovhannes Ayvozovski was inaugurated in New Delhi in July 2007. The All India Chess Federation organized first

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29 Joint Declaration on the State visit of H.E. Mr. Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Armenia to the Republic of India (October 29-November 1, 2003, New Delhi)
30 A Milestone in Armenian-Indian Cultural Cooperation, New Delhi, October, 2003
India-Armenia friendship competition in New Delhi from November 30 to December 2, 2008.\textsuperscript{31}

The essence of cultural cooperation between the two nations could be expressed through the words of the Director General of Indian Council of Cultural Relations Rakesh Kumar: “Relations between India and Armenia have always been warm and cordial. They are deeply rooted in history and culture: shared objectives and unique similarities of social and cultural milieu. A significant level of mutual respect and understanding has fostered substantial appreciation for the richness of each other’s culture and diversity. We are also proud of the contributions made to our national life by sizable Armenian Community in Kolkata.”\textsuperscript{32}

The head of the Armenian Church Catholicos Karekin II visited India twice in February-March of 2007 and in November 2008. It should be noted that Catholicos Karekin II hosted in September 2001, a seven-member clerical delegation from Kottayam in South India, led by His Holiness Baseleos Marthoma Mathews II, Catholicos of Syrian Orthodox Malankara Church in India. The Indian delegation was participating at celebrations on the occasion of 1700 anniversary of the adoption of Christianity as a state religion in Armenia.\textsuperscript{33} During his first visit, the Catholicos met with President Abdul Kalam and the State of West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya. Catholicos Karekin II expressed his appreciation to President Kalam for the careful attention and kind attitude that religious and national minorities have always enjoyed in India, and specifically thanked the Indian authorities for the freedoms and opportunities given to the Armenians to organize and create their national and spiritual lives. The Chief Minister spoke of the high esteem and admiration with which the Armenians of India are regarded and expressed hope that the then large community, which has diminished in recent years, would once again grow and flourish. The delegation also visited the memorial complex to Mahatma Gandhi in New Delhi.

In February 26, His Holiness Karekin II arrived in Kolkata. He addressed the students of the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy, noting that more than 80 young boys and girls from Armenia, Iran, Iraq and India study and live as one family within the halls

\textsuperscript{31} Times of India, Nov 30, 2008
\textsuperscript{32} A Milestone in Armenian-Indian Cultural Cooperation, New Delhi, October, 2003
\textsuperscript{33} Armenia is the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion in 301 AD.
of this historic institution, established more than 185 years ago. The Catholicos also extended his appreciation to the Armenian Church Committee and Armenian community of Calcutta for their continued support of this famous national institution, and stressed its importance not only for the Armenians of India, but for the entire Armenian nation dispersed throughout the world. Catholicos spoke with admiration and commendation of the Indian Armenian community of the past centuries, who had the vision and commitment to establish the many churches and cultural centers in India, as well as this academy and provide for its future stability. In Calcutta, the delegation visited the St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church. Built in 1906, it is the last Armenian Church built in India. Located on the grounds of the church is the 'Sir Catchik Paul Chater Home' - the only operational Armenian Home for the Aged in all of India, which currently has 19 residents. The Armenian Pontiff traveled to Tangra as well to offer the re-consecration service of the historic Armenian church of the Holy Trinity. The church, originally built by the Armenian community in 1823, had fallen into disuse in recent years. The Armenian Church Committee of Calcutta and Chinsurah renovated the sanctuary. The 16 crosses for the columns of the church were anointed with the holy oil. According to the Armenian Church tradition, each column is named after one of the 12 apostles, two evangelists (who were not in the 12) and two Armenian saints. His Holiness presented the church with a 'khatchkar' (cross-stone) from Holy Etchmiadzin. Next visit was to Chinsurah. The local Armenian community has long since disappeared from the agrarian city of Chinsurah, however, the beautiful church they built in 1697 still stands as testimony to their eternal faith. The Armenian Church of Saint John the Baptist, well preserved and maintained by the Armenian Church Committee, is the second oldest Christian house of worship in all of West Bengal, as well as the oldest Armenian church in India still being used by the Armenians.

The restored Surb Mariam (Saint Mary) Church of Saidabad was consecrated on March 4. Surb Mariam was built in 1758. The church was completely restored on the initiative of the newly elected church administration of Calcutta in 2007. A new church tower and guest house were built, the big territory of the church was put in good order and earlier illegally captured territories were returned to the Armenian community. St. Peter Armenian Church, built in Bombay in 1796, currently serves as a house of worship
to not only the few remaining Armenians in the city, but also to the faithful of the Indian Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, who use it regularly for their church services as guests of the Armenian Church. His Eminence Metropolitan Mar Coorilos welcomed the Pontiff of All Armenians to Mumbai and extended the fraternal greetings of His Holiness Baselios Mar Thoma Didymos I, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan. Catholicos Karekin II also visited the Armenian Church of St. Mary (Surb Astvatsatsin) in Chennai. The church, originally built in 1712, underwent a comprehensive renovation. Although there are no longer any Armenian residents of Madras, the church remains continually open. Many Indians from the surrounding neighborhoods had come to the church to greet His Holiness upon his arrival. Catholicos and the pontifical entourage traveled to the historical St. Thomas Shrine, which rests atop a famous hill in Chennai. According Christian tradition, St. Thomas the Apostle was martyred on this hill in the first century A.D. This location was thereafter marked with a chapel and later a church. In 1547, the very first Armenian Church in the Far East was built in this location on the hill. The original church building remains to this day as a functioning sanctuary and shrine of the Roman Catholic faith. However, its Armenian origin is self-evident by the countless Armenian gravestones, paintings and inscriptions, most notably on the altar. On March 1, Catholicos traveled from Calcutta to Chinsurah, one of the earliest Armenian settlements of West Bengal. His Holiness also traveled to the city of Agra. The latter was the site of the second Armenian Church in India, the Church of the Holy Martyrs, constructed in 1562. Although the church no longer exists, there are a number of Armenian gravestones in the cemetery of Agra. Nest visit of the Catholicos to India was in November 2008 to take part in tricentenary celebrations of the Holy Nazareth Church in Kolkata.

The Indo-Armenian community, numbering 300 people in 2000s, represents a small fraction of historically larger and dynamic community. The 1951 census enumerated the Armenian population in Calcutta at 498 souls. At the beginning of 1980s there were around 300 Armenians left in Calcutta and almost half of them were non-Indian nationals, studying or residing in the city for short periods. The community structures currently include the Church under the supremacy of the Holy See of St.

Etchmiadzin in Armenia, with two functioning and five semi-functioning churches, the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy, the Armenian Club, the Armenian Sports Club and Homes - the nursing home. The Primate of the Diocese of Australia and New Zealand in his capacity of Pontifical Legate to the Far East and South Asian supervises the Armenian Church in India. The vast majority of the Armenian population is concentrated in Kolkata.

Thus, the Armenian community in India, having created national sustenance and identity protection mechanisms, as it is the case for the worldwide Armenian Diaspora, lacks a significant component within the system at present stage and has its vulnerabilities. First and foremost, it is the critical number and size of the community, necessary to efficiently support current and prospective sustenance processes, and safeguard community self-generation. Second, the weakness of institutional ties, established directly or through different entities with Armenia and Diaspora. Third, the low revel of community activities within the country beyond domestic concerns, which would contribute to the preservation of national identity and consolidation through self-affirmation. In recent years these last two factors undergo substantive improvement, as far as the Indo-Armenian community becomes widely engaged in relationship with Etchmiadzin, the Armenian Embassy to India and Armenia itself, gradually interacts with the Armenian Diaspora at large, and energizes its ranks by generous benevolent activities in West Bengal, in New Delhi and in the whole country.

The intensive emigration since beginning of the 20th century and especially mid century caused drastic decline in the Armenian population and turned the life of the community into strife for survival. The community underwent certain revival and regeneration with the inflow of college students from Armenia, Iran and Iraq since 1999. It was a substantial supplement to just few in number local Indo-Armenian students. Currently with 80 students the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy constitutes an important institution generating diverse community activities. As a school affiliated to the Board of Secondary Education of the state of West Bengal, the Armenian College has a combined Armenian-English-Indian curriculum. It has a choir, orchestra and rugby team. Upon the ruling of the High Court of West Bengal in 1999, Catholicos of Etchmiadzin assumed the right to run and manage the Armenian College.
head of the Armenians in India, as representative of His Holiness simultaneously heads the school board to govern the activities of the College, while a deacon holds position of the administrator.

The current Armenian Club is one of the oldest in Kolkata, being founded in 1881. The charter of the Club was revised in 1951, aiming at improvement of social and cultural status of the Armenians, fostering unity, national pride and patriotism, encouraging to the learning of the Armenian language, history and literature and inculcating feelings of good citizenship and fellowship amongst its members. Annual general and election meetings and monthly committee meetings are held at the Club.

The Sports Club was founded in 1924 and the Armenian Girl’s Club in 1930s, affiliated with the Women’s Basketball Association and Women’s Hockey Association of Bengal. The new Armenian Sports Club came into being in 1945, aiming at organizing athletic sports, indoor games and means of social intercourse for the sports-minded members. The Armenian Sports Club has taken a pride in training a strong hockey team. Among the hockey trophies won by the Club are the kaivan Cup and the Memorial Challenge Shield and others in 1960s and 1970s. But the Sports Club’s main achievement was the rugby football team. The Armenians in Calcutta produced some of Bengal’s best players. For numerous times the team won Calcutta Cup. The list of triumphs of the Armenian rugby team include victories for seventeen times with a triple in 1996-1998 in Calcutta Cup and the All India rugby tournaments for six times. The South Asia tournament they have one once, also contributed to the Indian national team at three Asian Rugby Tournaments in Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia. Making a return to competitive rugby after close to a decade, Armenian Sport Club made triumphant return to the India rugby scene by winning the inaugural All India Under-19 Rugby Tournament of 2007. The Armenian students of the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy from Armenia, Iran and Iraq, along with few local Indo-Armenians comprised the winning rugby team.

Apart from the Armenian College, the Church Committee of the Holy Church of Nazareth in Kolkata constitutes the key governing body in administrative and financial affairs upon all the Armenian properties, with jurisdiction over the whole state of West

35 Anne Basil, Armenian Settlements in India, pp. 221-226
Bengal, some other states in India as well as Bangladesh and Myanmar. The Church Committee consists of seven members, including the chairperson and two wardens. Committee members are elected once in four years and during recent few decades by the electorate of average twenty-thirty community members. Based on the “Scheme for the management of the property and affairs of the Armenian Churches...” of 1889\textsuperscript{36}, amended later in 1970’s, eligibility in voting is stipulated by baptism records, and more importantly by the factor of not being recipient of any assistance through charitable funds in last four years. The latest elections of the Church Committee took place in December 2005. The Committee manages the financial resources that are generated through two major sources – annual yielding from several endowments and wills, the largest being Sir Catchick Paul Chater’s, and rent amounts upon church properties. The official trustee is the West Bengal State government which allocates annually incoming sums to the Armenian Church.

Along with the most important in Calcutta and in the whole country Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth, the seat of the Pastor of the Armenians in India, another church - St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church – functions in this city. Located on the grounds of the church is the 'Sir Catchik Paul Chater Home' for the aged in all of India with 19 residents.

Mumbai’s St. Peter Church and its few properties were transferred under the direct jurisdiction of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin in 2000. As far as there are only three Armenians left in Bombay, upon cordial agreement with St. Etchmiadzin Indian Orthodox Church of Malankara uses it on temporary basis. Since 2005 Armenia has the office of the Honorary Consul in Mumbai. The Honorary Consul Harshad Mehta, who is a prominent Indian businessman, renders his financial support to St. Peter church. Due to his efforts soon Armenian language courses will be launched at Bombay University.

St. Mary Church in Madras Chennai is administered by the Association composed of members living in Calcutta. There are no more Armenians left in Madras. Once or twice a year the Armenian clergyman along with some Armenians from Kolkata visits the church and conducts mass over there.

\textsuperscript{36} “Scheme for the Management of the Property and Affairs of the Armenian Churches at Calcutta and Chinsurah and the Administration of the Endowments, Funds, and Charities Appertaining or Belonging Thereto, or Administered by the Officers Thereof”, Calcutta, 1889
The social structure of the Indo-Armenian community is marked by constant evolution. In the current period the community includes businessmen, craftsmen, accountants, educationists, hoteliers, journalists and also artists, actors, singers. The Community has a dominant female proportion. It is an ageing community with 65% of it over 50 years old. The vast majority of the community, naturally except the College students, who are counted as part of the community on temporarily basis, is shaped through intermarriages. Members of the Indo-Armenian community don’t have any Armenian political affiliation, which is the traditional imprint of this community. Interestingly, it lacks also participation in local Indian political life. The Armenian traditional cultural, benevolent organizations are not present any more in India. The number of standing members of the Armenian community steadily declines. Apart from the faults in community self-generation system due to the small number of the population, the Indo-Armenian community traditionally depended on human inflow from abroad. “Though the Armenians inhabited India more than four hundred years ago, there is no Armenian in this country who can trace his or her Indian heritage back for more than a few generations.” In contemporary period, the small Armenian-Indian community is rarely reinforced by newcomers, except few from Armenia and Iran.

The bonds of cooperation with Armenia during the last years could be regarded as indication of positive development that laid a fertile ground for bridging the Indo-Armenian community with Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora at large. It gave an impetus to rejuvenation of the tradition-rich Armenian community and served to the cause of enhancing bonds of cooperation with motherland. The Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth became engaged in some Armenian and Indian driven benevolent activities beyond its local realm. Many of the Armenian churches in India were fully renovated.

The Indo-Armenian community enjoys respect and support of local authorities and central Indian government.