

Armenia–India military cooperation: emerging strategic partnerships in a shifting geopolitical landscape

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Summary

Armenia's evolving defense and diplomatic strategy reflects a complex response to shifting power dynamics in the South Caucasus. Following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, Armenia's security architecture – long dependent on Russia – faced structural erosion amid Moscow's preoccupation with the war in Ukraine and closer ties with Azerbaijan and Turkey. To address these vulnerabilities, Armenia expanded defense and strategic cooperation with India, a rising power seeking to extend its influence westward. This partnership brought tangible military benefits, including artillery systems, radar technologies, and joint training initiatives, while also diversifying Armenia's strategic orientation.

However, by 2025, new developments have altered this trajectory. The Iran–Israel “12-Day War” shifted Tehran's regional posture toward caution, reducing its willingness to challenge Azerbaijani influence, while the U.S.-mediated “TRIPP corridor” declaration between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey redefined Armenia's borders and weakened its strategic leverage. As Armenia's foreign policy increasingly favors political normalization over military deterrence, its reliance on hard-power balancing declines. The study argues that although Armenia's engagement with India remains a valuable component of its diversification strategy, excessive dependence on diplomatic containment may further constrain its sovereignty and long-term security options.

Keywords: Armenia, India, deterrence, regional security, military cooperation, defense partnership, South Caucasus, arms procurement, military modernization, Nagorno-Karabakh War, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, USA, “TRIPP corridor”, Pinaka, ATAGS, Swathi radar

1. Introduction

The geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus has undergone a fundamental transformation since the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, reshaping the strategic outlook of Armenia and its regional partners. The defeat in that conflict, coupled with Russia's declining reliability as a security guarantor, forced Yerevan to reconsider its foreign policy priorities. The loss of control over Nagorno-Karabakh and subsequent security setbacks revealed deep vulnerabilities in Armenia's defense system, prompting an urgent search for new partners capable of contributing to military modernization and regional balance. Among these, **India has emerged as one of Armenia's most influential strategic partners**, providing both advanced defense systems and a platform for broader geopolitical cooperation.

Armenia's partnership with India represents a pragmatic response to its security dilemma. Confronted by an assertive Azerbaijani–Turkish alliance, Yerevan seeks to strengthen its deterrence capacity through external cooperation. India, driven by its own interests in countering Turkish–Pakistani collaboration and expanding its westward strategic reach, has deepened its involvement in the South Caucasus. Defense cooperation has included the **sale of Pinaka rocket systems, ATAGS artillery, and Swathi radar units** [3],

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which together enhance Armenia's operational capability. India's "Make in India"² defense export strategy also provides opportunities for technological exchange and co-production, supporting Armenia's efforts to develop an indigenous defense industry.

Yet, Armenia's geopolitical trajectory in 2024–2025 demonstrates a gradual reorientation from military-political containment toward **political normalization**. Through **U.S. mediation**, Yerevan has engaged in a series of talks with Azerbaijan and Turkey, culminating in the **TRIPP declaration**, which proposes a new transport route linking Azerbaijan with its exclave Nakhichevan through Armenian territory. While framed as a peace initiative, this project effectively reduces Armenia's sovereign control over its southern borders, diminishing its value as a strategic transit hub for both Iran and India [16].

Simultaneously, the **Iran–Israel “12-Day War”** (2025) altered Tehran's strategic posture in the South Caucasus. Previously assertive in supporting Armenia's territorial integrity, Iran has adopted a more cautious stance, prioritizing border stability and limiting open opposition to Azerbaijan. This new regional balance weakens the geopolitical logic that initially underpinned Armenia's partnership with India, which relied on a shared interest in countering Turkish and Azerbaijani expansionism.

These transformations signify a deeper structural shift in Armenia's foreign policy identity. The country's reliance on diplomatic mediation and external facilitation – particularly by the United States and the European Union – reflects an emerging preference for political containment over hard-power balancing. While this approach may reduce short-term conflict risks, it also **erodes Armenia's independence in shaping its own alliances** and constrains its capacity for deterrence. From a strategic standpoint, Armenia's effort to achieve stability through political accommodation risks entrenching regional asymmetries, as the Azerbaijani–Turkish axis continues to consolidate both militarily and diplomatically.

Against this backdrop, the Armenia–India partnership remains a critical, though not exclusive, pillar of Armenia's diversification strategy. It symbolizes a pragmatic attempt to maintain security autonomy amid regional and global realignments. However, as Yerevan shifts toward a normalization agenda, the mutual necessity that once defined this cooperation may gradually decline. The challenge for Armenia lies in reconciling its diplomatic engagement with the practical imperatives of defense modernization – ensuring that political dialogue does not substitute for credible deterrence.

This study examines these dynamics by analyzing the evolution, implications, and sustainability of Armenia's cooperation with India. It evaluates the balance between political adaptation and strategic independence, arguing that while normalization offers immediate relief from regional tensions, enduring security can only be ensured through diversified, capability-based partnerships.

² The "Make in India" initiative, launched in September 2014, is a government program designed to transform India into a global manufacturing hub by encouraging investment, fostering innovation, and developing best-in-class infrastructure. Its primary goals include making it easier to do business, attracting foreign investment, and increasing the manufacturing sector's contribution to the GDP, though some targets have not been met. The initiative focuses on a variety of sectors, including automobiles, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and textiles, and is supported by other programs like Skill India and Startup India.

2. Literature review

Research on Armenia's defense strategy has historically emphasized its dependence on Russian security guarantees and the subsequent vulnerabilities emerging from this asymmetrical relationship³. Until recently, the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and bilateral defense agreements were viewed as the cornerstone of Armenia's deterrence architecture. However, the geopolitical aftershocks of the 2020 Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) War, the 2023 depopulation of Artsakh, and Russia's growing alignment with Azerbaijan and Turkey have revealed the limitations of this dependency. Consequently, Armenia has begun diversifying its defense partnerships, with India and France emerging as significant new partners in its evolving military doctrine.

While prior research [17, 18] primarily analyzed Armenia's geopolitical realignment, few studies have comprehensively assessed the *military-technical* dimensions of these new relationships. Most analyses remained descriptive, emphasizing the shift in foreign policy orientation rather than the operational benefits of specific defense procurements. This literature gap underlines the need for a detailed examination of Armenia's cooperation with India, focusing on arms transfers, defense-industrial partnerships, and the modernization of the Armenian armed forces.

India's defense industrial evolution

India's transformation from one of the world's largest arms importers to a rising exporter has become a key factor in its foreign policy outreach. The "Make in India" initiative, launched in 2014 and expanded through the *Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020*, has positioned India as an emerging defense manufacturing hub. According to official press releases from India's Press Information Bureau (PIB), the country's defense exports reached ₹23,622 crore (approximately \$2.76 billion) in FY2024-25, marking a significant increase over the decade. In FY 2023-24, exports were approximately \$2.63 billion, showing a 31-fold growth compared to FY 2013-14 [10].

The Indian defense industry now includes several globally recognized public and private actors such as *Bharat Dynamics Limited* (BDL)⁴, *Bharat Electronics Limited* (BEL)⁵, *Larsen & Toubro*⁶, and the *Defence Research and Development Organisation* (DRDO)⁷. These institutions have developed advanced systems – notably the *Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL)* [12], *Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)*, *Akash* [7] and *MR-SAM* air defense systems, and *Nag* and *Helina* anti-tank guided missiles.

³ National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, 2020. The "National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia 2020" is a state policy document outlining how Armenia will ensure its state, public, and individual security, and promote sustainable development. <https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/security%20and%20defense/Armenia%202020%20National%20Security%20Strategy.pdf>

⁴ *Bharat Dynamics Limited* (BDL) is a Government of India Enterprise under the Ministry of Defence that manufactures guided missiles, torpedoes, and other allied defense equipment for the Indian Armed Forces.

⁵ *Bharat Electronics Limited* (BEL) is an Indian state-owned aerospace and defense electronics company that manufactures products for the Indian defense forces and other government organizations.

⁶ *Larsen & Toubro* (L&T) is an Indian multinational conglomerate that operates in technology, engineering, construction, manufacturing, and financial services, with global operations in over 50 countries.

⁷ The *Defence Research and Development Organisation* (DRDO) is the Indian Ministry of Defence's research and development (R&D) wing, responsible for designing and developing state-of-the-art defense technologies, weapons systems, and equipment for the Indian Armed Forces.

Armenia's strategic reorientation and defense modernization

Armenia's defeat in the 2020 Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) War and its loss of strategic depth profoundly reshaped its defense doctrine. The war exposed deficiencies in Armenia's reconnaissance, air defense, and electronic warfare capabilities, highlighting an urgent need for modernization [19].

Following the war, Armenia's Ministry of Defense launched a strategic review focusing on three key goals: strengthening deterrence through advanced firepower, rebuilding air defense networks, and diversifying external partnerships.

In this context, India emerged as an appealing partner due to both political and practical reasons. Politically, India shares Armenia's concerns about Turkish-Pakistani cooperation and Azerbaijan's use of Israeli and Turkish weaponry. Practically, India offers cost-effective and technologically competitive defense systems, free from restrictive political conditions often imposed by Western suppliers.

Armenia's procurement from India began in earnest in 2020 and has accelerated since 2022. Reports confirm deliveries of several advanced systems, including the *Pinaka MBRL*, *ATAGS*, *MArG (Mountain Artillery Guns)*, *Swathi weapon-locating radars*, and *anti-tank missile systems*. In 2023, Yerevan finalized a deal reportedly worth over \$400 million, the largest defense contract between the two countries.

Key systems and their strategic impact

The ***Pinaka MBRL*** [13], developed by *DRDO* and produced by *Tata and L&T*, provides Armenia with long-range precision strike capabilities up to 75 km. Its high mobility and rapid salvo fire make it suitable for mountainous warfare – a decisive advantage given Armenia's topography. The ***ATAGS*** system, with a 48-kilometer range and advanced navigation and fire-control systems, offers both offensive and counter-battery capabilities critical for deterring Azerbaijani artillery. In 2025, new reports confirmed that Armenia will procure the Indo-French 155mm "***ATAGS-Trajan***" artillery gun system, jointly developed by *Bharat Forge* and France's *Nexter*⁸. This procurement underscores the deepening technological collaboration between Yerevan, New Delhi, and Paris, reflecting a shift toward hybrid defense production and diversified artillery modernization [8].

The ***Swathi radar***, already exported to several countries, enhances Armenia's ability to locate enemy artillery positions in real-time, thus improving situational awareness and battlefield survivability.

Equally significant are India's proposals for the ***Akash*** [1] and ***MR-SAM*** surface-to-air missile systems. The *Akash* system, capable of engaging aircraft and drones at ranges up to 30 km, could fill a crucial gap in Armenia's medium-range air defense layer. The *MR-SAM* system, jointly developed with Israel, would provide even greater range and interoperability with modern command networks.

⁸ *Nexter* is a French company that is a major systems architect and integrator for land defense, designing and manufacturing a wide range of products, including armored vehicles, artillery, and ammunition. As a part of the European group KNDS (formed with Germany's Krauss-Maffei Wegmann), *Nexter* is a key supplier to the French Army and a participant in international defense projects.

By integrating these systems, Armenia seeks to build a multi-layered deterrence structure that reduces its vulnerability to precision strikes and drone warfare, both of which proved decisive in 2020.

Institutional and industrial cooperation

Beyond procurement, Armenia and India have discussed deeper defense-industrial collaboration. Delegations from the Armenian Ministry of Defense and Indian firms have met repeatedly since 2023 to explore joint production and technology transfer initiatives. Potential cooperation areas include the local assembly of artillery components, radar systems, and maintenance facilities for Indian-origin equipment. Such initiatives align with India's policy of fostering regional defense partnerships through co-production rather than simple export dependence.

This collaboration also extends to training and interoperability. Joint exercises and officer exchange programs have been discussed to strengthen Armenia's operational proficiency with Indian systems. Although still in early stages, these initiatives could substantially improve Armenia's readiness and doctrinal alignment with India's operational practices, especially in mountain warfare and drone defense.

Comparative regional context

The Armenian-Indian partnership must also be understood within the broader South Caucasus security environment. Following the 2025 Iran–Israel 12-day conflict [6], Tehran has adopted a more cautious regional stance, reducing its visible support for Armenia while prioritizing border stability. Simultaneously, the 2025 preliminary U.S.-mediated declaration between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Washington on the “**TRIPP corridor**” – connecting Azerbaijan with its Nakhijevan exclave through Armenian territory — signals a significant shift toward political normalization at the expense of traditional hard-security priorities [15].

Scholars note that this process risks eroding Armenia's sovereignty over its southern border and diminishing its attractiveness as a strategic transit partner for both Iran and India. The “*containment through diplomacy*” approach, though promising in theory, may inadvertently weaken Armenia's leverage and reduce the urgency of Indian defense cooperation.

Nevertheless, from an Indian perspective, continued cooperation with Armenia serves broader strategic interests, including limiting Turkish-Pakistani influence in the South Caucasus and expanding India's defense export footprint westward toward Europe.

Analytical gaps and emerging themes

The literature on India–Armenia defense cooperation remains limited and fragmented. Most academic publications and think-tank analyses focus on Armenia's search for new alliances rather than on the operational integration of acquired systems. Furthermore, there is little empirical assessment of how these systems enhance deterrence or affect the regional military balance vis-à-vis Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Analysts note that partnerships with smaller states like Armenia illustrate India's intent to project influence westward and strengthen its defense-industrial base. This cooperation complements India's effort to integrate the International North–South Transport Corridor

(INSTC)⁹ into its regional strategy, linking defense diplomacy with energy and trade corridors.

This perspective aligns with the broader theoretical debate on how middle powers use defense exports as instruments of geopolitical influence [4, 5]. In this framework, Armenia's partnership with India exemplifies a *balancing strategy* – a means to offset external threats while simultaneously securing political support in multilateral forums.

Conclusion of the literature review

The reviewed literature thus underscores several key themes:

1. **Armenia's strategic diversification** marks a fundamental shift from reliance on Russian security guarantees toward multi-vector diplomacy.
2. **India's defense industrial rise** provides the technological and economic foundation for sustainable cooperation with Armenia.
3. **Armenia's acquisitions** of Indian weapon systems – notably Pinaka, ATAGS, and Akash – have begun transforming its operational doctrine, particularly in artillery and air defense.
4. **Geopolitical developments since 2024**, including the TRIPP agreement and Iran's recalibrated posture, have complicated the strategic rationale for deepening the partnership.
5. Despite these constraints, **India remains a viable and influential defense partner**, offering tangible capabilities, industrial cooperation, and diplomatic support.

The literature therefore converges on the idea that while Armenia's foreign policy trajectory increasingly emphasizes political normalization, sustainable security will continue to depend on pragmatic military-technical cooperation. Strengthening such partnerships remains essential for maintaining deterrence, protecting sovereignty, and ensuring long-term stability in the South Caucasus.

3. Methods

This study employs a **qualitative research design**, integrating documentary analysis, expert interpretation, and comparative assessment to examine the evolution of Armenia's military and political cooperation with India. The methodology aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the drivers, scope, and implications of this partnership within the broader geopolitical transformations of the South Caucasus between 2020 and 2025.

Primary data for the study include official statements, procurement records, and government publications from the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs of Armenia and India. These are supplemented with parliamentary reports, policy briefings, and bilateral agreements made public through official channels. Such sources provide the factual foundation for assessing defense transactions, military exercises, and strategic dialogues.

Secondary data were drawn from academic articles, policy papers, defense industry analyses, and reputable media outlets. This was complemented by the work of regional think tanks including the Observer Research Foundation (India), CEPA (USA), and the Davis Center (USA). The triangulation of these sources enables the study to capture multiple

⁹ INSTC, or the International North–South Transport Corridor, is a multimodal network of ship, rail, and road routes designed to connect Northern Europe with Southeast Asia. Initiated in 2000 by Russia, India, and Iran, the project aims to create a faster and more cost-effective alternative to existing sea routes, such as the Suez Canal. It connects the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf with the Caspian Sea and then onward to St. Petersburg and Northern Europe.

perspectives and ensure reliability amid an often-politicized information environment.

In analyzing the data collected, the study adopts a **contextual interpretive approach**, guided by frameworks of small-state security behavior and external balancing. The analysis focuses on the interplay between Armenia's military procurement from India, its shifting regional alliances, and the broader transformation of its foreign policy identity in light of the 2024–2025 developments – most notably the Iran–Israel war and the U.S.-mediated “*TRIPP corridor*” declaration. This interpretive lens allows for identifying patterns of adaptation in Armenia's strategy as it moves from reliance on hard-power alliances toward politically mediated normalization.

To enhance analytical precision, **digital research tools** were used to process, classify, and synthesize information. AI-assisted text analysis using **OpenAI's GPT-5** helped identify recurring themes and ensure terminological consistency across different data sources. These tools were used solely to assist in summarizing and structuring findings, while critical evaluation, interpretation, and argumentation were conducted by the author. The inclusion of AI technologies increased efficiency in cross-referencing data, ensuring comprehensive coverage of sources published between 2020 and 2025.

The study also followed academic standards for source verification and ethical integrity. Each referenced document was cross-checked for credibility and authorship. Conflicting reports were compared through triangulation, and information from unverified or anonymous sources was excluded. The study prioritizes transparency in distinguishing between official data, expert assessments, and analytical commentary.

Overall, this methodological approach allows for a holistic and empirically grounded analysis of Armenia's evolving partnership with India. It situates the bilateral relationship within a broader geopolitical and temporal framework while acknowledging both the strengths and limitations of qualitative inquiry in assessing dynamic regional processes.

4. Results

Modernization of Armed Forces

The analysis demonstrates that Armenia's cooperation with India continues to represent one of the most significant transformations in its post-Soviet defense strategy. The partnership directly targets Armenia's principal weaknesses exposed during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War: outdated artillery, limited air defense, and poor counter-drone capabilities.

Following Armenia's procurement contracts signed between 2020 and 2024, deliveries from India have accelerated. According to open sources Armenia has already received key systems such as the *Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL)*, *MArG (Mountain Artillery Guns)* [11], *ATAGS (Advanced Towed Artillery Gun Systems)*, *Swathi Weapon-Locating Radars*, *anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs)*, and *night vision devices*. A portion of these systems has been integrated into active units, marking Armenia's first significant step away from Russian-origin armament since independence [20].

The ***Pinaka MBRL***, jointly developed by the *DRDO* and *Tata Advanced Systems*, provides Armenia with a mobile, long-range fire system capable of delivering precision strikes up to 75 kilometers. Its modular design allows for rapid reloading and salvo firing, increasing

battlefield responsiveness. Analysts note that this acquisition enhances Armenia's capacity for counter-battery fire and area denial operations – critical in defending mountainous terrain against advancing forces.

The **ATAGS** represents a substantial improvement in Armenia's artillery firepower. Its 48-kilometer range and automated fire control system enable precision engagement with minimal crew exposure. When paired with the **Swathi radar**, which detects and tracks hostile artillery fire, Armenia gains a closed-loop system for identifying and neutralizing threats – a capability previously absent in its force structure.

In addition to these systems, Yerevan has shown interest in acquiring the **Akash** and **MR-SAM** [9] air defense systems, as well as the **Pralay tactical ballistic missile**. The **Akash** provides a short- to medium-range solution against aircraft and drones, while **MR-SAM**, co-developed by India and Israel, offers extended coverage against aerial and ballistic threats. The **Pralay**, with its 150–500 km range, would give Armenia a credible deterrent comparable to Azerbaijan's Israeli-made LORA missiles [21]. These systems would collectively form a layered defensive network, significantly improving Armenia's deterrence posture.

Indian-produced **night vision systems** and **anti-tank missiles** are already in use by Armenian forces. The anti-tank weapons improve Armenia's ability to counter armored assaults, while optical and thermal imaging technologies expand operational effectiveness in low-visibility conditions [22]. The cumulative effect of these procurements is a measurable modernization of Armenia's artillery, surveillance, and air defense capacities, moving the armed forces closer to NATO operational standards.

Table 1. Armenia–India Defense Cooperation: Systems Acquired or Under Negotiation (2020–2025)¹⁰

System / Equipment	Type / Function	Supplier / Developer	Status (as of 2025)	Strategic Significance for Armenia
Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL)	Long-range artillery system	DRDO / Tata Group (India)	Partially delivered (2023–2024)	Enhances Armenia's long-range precision strike capability and deterrence posture.
ATAGS (Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System)	155 mm artillery gun	DRDO / Bharat Forge	Under procurement, first deliveries expected 2024	Provides extended firing range and accuracy; supports modernization of artillery forces.
MArG (Mountain Artillery Gun)	Mobile, lightweight howitzer	Bharat Forge	Delivered in limited quantities (2023)	Improves mountain warfare capability; enhances mobility in high-altitude regions.
Trajan 155 mm Gun System	Artillery (Joint Indo-French)	India–France (Bharat Forge & Nexter)	Procurement confirmed 2025	Enhanced firepower and interoperability under hybrid production model
Akash Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) System	Air defense system	Bharat Dynamics Ltd. / DRDO	Contract signed, first delivery expected late 2024	Strengthens Armenia's low- to mid-range air defense network against drone and missile threats.
MR-SAM (Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile)	Joint Indo-Israeli air defense system	DRDO & IAI	Negotiations ongoing	Provides multi-target engagement capacity; enhances layered air defense.

¹⁰ **Table 1** presents Armenia's defense acquisitions from India (2020–2025), highlighting the type, technical features, delivery timeline, strategic purpose, and tactical impact of each system. The data draws from *SIPRI*, *DRDO*, *ORF*, *The Eurasian Times*, *CivilNet*, and other open sources.

System / Equipment	Type / Function	Supplier / Developer	Status (as of 2025)	Strategic Significance for Armenia
Swathi Weapon Locating Radar	Counter-battery radar	Bharat Electronics Ltd.	Delivered (2020)	Improves detection of enemy artillery and supports precision counter-fire.
Pralay Tactical Ballistic Missile	Short-range ballistic missile	DRDO	Under consideration (2025 talks)	Could provide strategic counterbalance to Azerbaijan's LORA systems.
Anti-Tank Missiles	Guided missile	India–Russia	Delivered in batches	Anti-armor and fortified target engagement
Night Vision & Surveillance Equipment	Electro-optical systems	MKU Ltd., India	Delivered in batches	Enhances situational awareness and night operational readiness.

**Table 2. Armenia's Military Capabilities: Pre-2020 vs. Post-2024
(Impact of India Cooperation)¹¹**

Capability Area	Pre-2020 (Before 44-Day War)	Post-2020 (After India Cooperation)	Observed / Expected Impact
Artillery Power	Outdated Soviet systems; limited range and accuracy	Modern artillery (Pinaka, ATAGS, MArG) integrated into national arsenal	Improved range, accuracy, and mobility; enhanced deterrence capacity
Air Defense	Primarily reliant on Russian systems (mostly OSA) with limited effectiveness	Akash and MR-SAM systems introduce multi-layered defense	Expanded air coverage and better interception of drones and missiles
Surveillance and Targeting	Weak radar and intelligence-gathering infrastructure	Swathi radar and electro-optical systems deployed	Enhanced counter-battery capability and situational awareness
Operational Readiness / Training	Low interoperability and outdated training methods	Joint training with Indian personnel; simulated warfare exercises	Increased professionalization and tactical flexibility
Defense Industrial Base	Highly dependent on imports from Russia	Emerging local capacity via Indian technology transfer	Gradual development of domestic production and maintenance facilities
Strategic Autonomy	Heavy reliance on Russia as primary ally	Diversified partnerships with India and Western suppliers	Greater flexibility but increased geopolitical complexity

Operational readiness and training

A crucial dimension of Armenia–India cooperation involves the training and doctrinal alignment of forces. Joint exercises aim to enhance **interoperability**, tactical proficiency, and adaptability in mountainous and drone-contested environments. Initial staff-level discussions have already outlined areas of cooperation in artillery coordination, communications, and joint logistics.

Indian instructors from DRDO-affiliated academies have reportedly begun providing remote advisory assistance to Armenian technical units responsible for maintaining Indian-origin equipment. Simultaneously, Armenian defense officers have participated in observer programs at Indian Army training facilities, focusing on **mountain warfare**, **counter-drone operations**, and **combined-arms coordination**.

¹¹ **Table 2** compares Armenia's military capabilities before 2020 (pre–Artsakh war) and after (following cooperation with India), highlighting measurable modernization outcomes. The data synthesizes information from DRDO, ORF, CEPA, IDRW, The Eurasian Times, and other open sources.

French cooperation complements these efforts, but India's contribution has been more directly tied to the systems Armenia now operates. The integration of Indian platforms requires new maintenance protocols, supply chain structures, and logistical coordination. Therefore, these training initiatives have a dual function: improving tactical readiness and institutional learning.

Additionally, the emphasis on *joint research and development (R&D)* could expand the bilateral agenda beyond procurement. The creation of a small-scale testing and evaluation unit within the Armenian Ministry of Defense – supported by Indian technical advisors – has been proposed to facilitate local modifications of imported systems to fit Armenia's unique operational environment.

These developments mark a significant evolution from a transactional buyer-seller relationship toward a long-term strategic partnership.

Economic and industrial impact

India's growing defense export capacity underpins Armenia's procurement success. As of 2024, India ranked among the top 25 global arms exporters, surpassing \$2.6 billion in annual exports [24]. For Armenia, this partnership is not only a military transaction but also an economic opportunity.

The Armenian government has engaged with several major Indian defense firms – such as **Larsen & Toubro, Bharat Dynamics Limited, and Tata Advanced Systems**. The discussions include potential co-production of artillery shells, radar subcomponents, and optical sensors. If implemented, these projects could provide Armenia with technological spillovers, generate skilled employment, and stimulate the domestic manufacturing sector.

The “**Make in India**” policy framework, which encourages export-oriented co-production, aligns well with Armenia's economic diversification agenda. For India, Armenia serves as both a strategic foothold in the South Caucasus and a testing ground for export competitiveness. For Armenia, the benefit lies in building a foundation for indigenous production capability that could eventually extend to dual-use technologies in optics, electronics, and aerospace materials.

The potential economic multiplier effects are notable. Defense sector growth could create new supply chains in metallurgy, advanced manufacturing, and logistics. Furthermore, successful cooperation could attract **foreign direct investment (FDI)** from Indian companies seeking regional manufacturing bases to serve European and Middle Eastern clients.

However, despite these promising dynamics, Armenia's rapidly shifting foreign policy environment introduces uncertainty. The **2025 “TRIPP corridor” declaration**, brokered by the United States and involving Azerbaijan, threatens to reduce Armenia's control over critical southern routes. This geopolitical shift could weaken investor confidence and diminish Armenia's strategic value as a transit hub for India's connectivity initiatives. Consequently, while the defense sector shows growth potential, its sustainability depends on political stability and clarity in Armenia's sovereignty arrangements.

Geopolitical implications

The geopolitical dimension of Armenia–India cooperation has evolved dramatically since 2024. The short Iran–Israel war altered the balance of power in the region, leading Iran to adopt a more cautious and defensive regional policy. Previously, Armenia's role as Iran's

northern partner and potential gateway to Eurasian corridors was a strategic asset. Now, with Tehran prioritizing internal security and avoiding direct confrontation, Armenia's relevance in Iranian strategic calculus has diminished.

Simultaneously, the **U.S.-mediated normalization process** between Armenia and Azerbaijan – including the “*TRIPP corridor*” arrangement – has redefined Armenia's regional posture. By accepting external mediation and potential territorial transit arrangements, Armenia risks eroding its sovereignty over key border areas, particularly Syunik province. While the agreement is framed as a peace initiative, many analysts warn that it effectively limits Armenia's freedom in conducting independent defense policy.

This recalibration weakens the strategic rationale for deepening military cooperation with India. As Armenia's security narrative transitions from *containment through military alliances* to *containment through diplomacy*, the mutual necessity underpinning the India–Armenia defense relationship diminishes. Yerevan's growing reliance on Western mediation contrasts with India's preference for autonomous strategic partnerships free from Western alignment.

Nevertheless, from a realist standpoint, Armenia's cooperation with India still serves as an essential hedge against overdependence on any single bloc. India's defense diplomacy operates outside of the NATO-Russia dichotomy, providing Yerevan with flexibility in managing its relationships. Furthermore, Indian engagement demonstrates to Azerbaijan and Turkey that Armenia retains external sources of military support, potentially deterring coercive behavior.

However, the overall **balance of benefits** appears to be shifting. Armenia's pivot toward political normalization may bring temporary de-escalation but at the cost of long-term deterrence and bargaining power. Armenia's defense partnerships risk being overshadowed by diplomatic agreements that do not necessarily enhance national security.

In this context, India's role should be understood as **an influential but not exclusive partner** – a critical component of a multi-vector defense approach, rather than a singular guarantor of Armenia's sovereignty. The success of this partnership depends on Yerevan's ability to balance political flexibility with sustained military modernization.

Summary of results

The expanded results highlight four major findings:

1. **Tangible Modernization Gains:** Armenia's acquisition of Indian weapon systems – particularly *Pinaka*, *ATAGS*, and *Swathi radar* – has improved its artillery precision, counter-battery capabilities, and overall deterrence posture.
2. **Emerging Industrial Collaboration:** Discussions on joint production and technology transfer signal a transition toward defense-industrial cooperation, though progress depends on political stability.
3. **Operational Learning Curve:** Training and advisory exchanges are essential for fully integrating Indian technology, underscoring the need for institutional capacity-building.
4. **Geopolitical Trade-offs:** The 2024–2025 regional shifts, particularly the “*TRIPP corridor*” deal and Iran's restraint, threaten to dilute the strategic rationale for the partnership by reducing Armenia's security autonomy.

Ultimately, the Armenia–India defense partnership represents both a technological upgrade and a geopolitical balancing act. While Armenia has made tangible gains in its

defense modernization, the durability of this cooperation will depend on Yerevan's capacity to preserve policy independence amid intensifying regional realignments.

5. Discussion

The results confirm that Armenia's defense cooperation with India has yielded tangible, measurable benefits in terms of capability enhancement, institutional modernization, and strategic diversification [2]. However, these outcomes must be evaluated within the broader geopolitical transformations unfolding since 2024 – developments that have altered the logic and sustainability of such partnerships.

Strategic reorientation and balance of power

Armenia's engagement with India initially emerged as a pragmatic response to its loss of deterrence after the 2020 Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) war. The conflict underscored Armenia's vulnerability to precision drone warfare and its dependence on obsolete Russian/Soviet systems. In this context, Indian weapon systems – such as *Pinaka MBRL*, *ATAGS*, *Swathi radar*, and *Akash SAM* – provided cost-effective, export-ready solutions suited for mountainous terrain and defensive warfare.

In Realist terms, this partnership was an act of strategic balancing: Armenia sought to counter the Azerbaijani–Turkish axis through diversified external support. Yet, by 2025, the balance of power has shifted again. The U.S.-mediated normalization between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the preliminary agreement on the “TRIPP corridor”, have reframed Armenia's security priorities. Instead of deterrence through force, the government's emerging doctrine emphasizes political normalization and diplomatic containment.

While such normalization efforts might reduce short-term conflict risks, they weaken the *strategic necessity* underpinning defense cooperation with India. Armenia's decreased control over its southern border and the internationalization of regional transit corridors dilute its value as a reliable geopolitical partner for both India and Iran.

Military-industrial implications

Despite changing political contexts, India–Armenia cooperation demonstrates how emerging defense exporters can provide smaller states with tools for autonomous modernization. India's willingness to supply advanced artillery, radar, and missile systems without political conditions enabled Armenia to diversify its procurement sources. The cooperation also offered prospects for joint production and localized maintenance – an important step toward limited defense industrial independence.

However, Armenia's capacity to institutionalize this progress remains uncertain. The country lacks a large-scale defense industry capable of integrating and servicing complex systems such as *ATAGS* or *MR-SAM*. Continued reliance on external maintenance and training could offset some of the independence gained through diversification. Thus, Armenia faces a paradox: it has diversified away from Russia but risks dependency on new suppliers without a domestic technological base.

Indian policymakers view the Armenian case as a demonstration of *strategic export diplomacy* – a means of projecting influence while supporting partner states in fragile

security environments. For Armenia, however, the challenge is not merely technical but strategic: converting these procurements into an integrated, sustainable defense ecosystem.

Operational and doctrinal transformation

The adoption of Indian systems represents more than material procurement – it signifies an operational shift in Armenian defense doctrine. The *Pinaka* and *ATAGS* systems require advanced fire control coordination, logistics synchronization, and drone-assisted targeting. Incorporating such systems compels the Armenian military to modernize its command structures and operational planning.

Training exchanges with Indian institutions provide exposure to mountain warfare tactics, counter-drone defenses, and artillery coordination methods that contrast sharply with Soviet-era doctrine. This doctrinal shift, if institutionalized, could improve Armenia's adaptability and responsiveness in future conflicts. However, this requires consistent training programs, secure funding, and political commitment – conditions not guaranteed in the current fluid environment.

Furthermore, as the results indicate, Armenia's growing reliance on India in technical training, spare parts, and ammunition supply chains will necessitate long-term agreements. Without them, Armenia risks partial capability erosion, as seen in other small states dependent on limited foreign vendors.

Geopolitical and policy constraints

The evolving regional context poses structural challenges to sustaining deep military cooperation. The 2025 Iran–Israel war significantly altered Iran's regional posture, forcing Tehran into a more cautious and defensive policy. As a result, Iran's indirect support for Armenia has diminished, leaving Yerevan with fewer regional enablers. Concurrently, the 2025 “TRIPP corridor” declaration represents a critical inflection point. While presented as a peace-building measure, the corridor undermines Armenia's territorial sovereignty by effectively internationalizing key sections of its transport network.

This geopolitical transformation reduces Armenia's leverage as a land link between Iran and Georgia and, by extension, diminishes its attractiveness for India's strategic calculus. India's interests in the South Caucasus are partially contingent on connectivity and regional influence. If Armenia becomes politically constrained or strategically peripheral, New Delhi may recalibrate its engagement toward other partners, such as Iran or Central Asian states.

Moreover, Armenia's growing dependence on U.S. and European mediation introduces potential friction. India's strategic identity is rooted in autonomy and non-alignment. A highly Western-mediated Armenian foreign policy could thus limit the depth of defense ties, relegating them to a primarily transactional relationship rather than a strategic alliance.

Security vs. diplomacy: Armenia's strategic dilemma

The current trajectory of Armenian foreign policy reveals a widening gap between *security needs* and *diplomatic priorities*. While the government's emphasis on peace and normalization aims to stabilize the region, these efforts risk overlooking the structural asymmetry of power *vis-à-vis* Azerbaijan and Turkey. Without credible military deterrence, diplomatic initiatives may yield temporary concessions but fail to prevent future coercion.

Military cooperation with India offers Armenia one of the few pathways to restore credible deterrence and strengthen defense resilience. However, such cooperation must evolve beyond procurement toward sustainable integration – through training, joint production, and consistent funding. Otherwise, Armenia risks possessing advanced systems without the institutional capacity to use them effectively.

From a strategic analysis perspective, Armenia's current policy trajectory may inadvertently *de-securitize* its national defense agenda. The focus on diplomatic containment over hard power risks transforming the military alliance with India into a secondary component of foreign policy rather than a foundational pillar.

Implications for future defense cooperation

For India, the Armenia partnership provides a testing ground for expanding its defense export diplomacy westward. Continued cooperation could help India strengthen its position as a global arms supplier and showcase its ability to operate outside traditional spheres of influence. For Armenia, the key lies in maintaining sovereignty in its defense decisions despite external mediation.

Future cooperation should prioritize three interlinked objectives:

1. **Sustainability** – ensuring consistent logistical and financial support for Indian-origin systems.
2. **Institutionalization** – embedding cooperation in intergovernmental frameworks rather than ad hoc contracts.
3. **Integration** – linking defense procurement with broader national development strategies, including dual-use technology research and STEM education.

Without such steps, the current achievements risk being undermined by geopolitical developments beyond Armenia's control.

Conclusion of discussion

In sum, Armenia's military cooperation with India reflects both opportunity and fragility. It offers tangible military advantages and technological progress but faces strategic headwinds from Armenia's evolving diplomatic priorities and regional dependencies. The 2024–2025 developments – particularly Iran's restraint and the “TRIPP corridor” – highlight the tension between short-term political normalization and long-term security imperatives.

Armenia's experience underscores a broader lesson for small states in volatile regions: defense diversification can enhance autonomy only when coupled with sustained policy coherence and institutional modernization. India remains a credible and influential partner in this process – but its role, while substantial, cannot compensate for the erosion of Armenia's strategic independence.

6. Conclusion

Armenia's defense cooperation with India has emerged as one of the most significant yet complex developments in its post-2020 security trajectory. This partnership, born out of Armenia's urgent need to rebuild deterrence and diversify its strategic dependencies, has delivered measurable progress in military modernization, defense-industry engagement, and

operational capacity-building. However, the rapidly shifting geopolitical context of 2024–2025 – marked by Iran’s strategic restraint, the U.S.-mediated “TRIPP corridor” agreement, and Armenia’s deepening diplomatic normalization – has redefined the meaning and sustainability of these achievements.

Strategic and technological gains

At the technical level, Armenia’s acquisitions from India – particularly the *Pinaka MBRL*, *ATAGS*, *MArG*, *Swathi radars*, *anti-tank guided missiles*, and proposed *Akash* and *MR-SAM* systems – represent a genuine leap in capability. These systems fill critical gaps exposed during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, providing Armenia with modern, precision-capable artillery and radar platforms, as well as the foundation for a layered air defense architecture. The introduction of these technologies has begun to transform Armenia’s tactical doctrine, logistics management, and command coordination processes.

Equally important are the emerging elements of **defense-industrial collaboration** [14]. The exploration of co-production and technology transfer between Indian defense firms – such as *Bharat Dynamics Limited*, *Larsen & Toubro*, and *Tata Advanced Systems* – and Armenian entities reflects an effort to institutionalize this cooperation beyond one-time procurement. For Armenia, this cooperation offers the potential to cultivate a nascent defense manufacturing ecosystem and to acquire critical maintenance and technical know-how. For India, Armenia serves as a valuable platform for testing its export competitiveness in the Caucasus and beyond.

These developments underscore that, in a purely military sense, Armenia’s cooperation with India remains one of the few initiatives with tangible outcomes. It has diversified Armenia’s procurement base, reduced its reliance on Russia, and integrated its armed forces with advanced, globally recognized systems.

Constraints and strategic vulnerabilities

Despite these gains, Armenia’s strategic environment remains fragile. The 2025 Iran–Israel conflict reshaped Tehran’s regional policy, compelling Iran to prioritize internal stability over external engagement. This has reduced Armenia’s importance as a northern partner and weakened the potential for regional triangulation involving India, Iran, and Armenia.

More critically, the “**TRIPP corridor**” **agreement**, pre-signed in 2025 with U.S. mediation, represents a turning point in Armenia’s foreign policy. While the agreement promises infrastructure development and regional connectivity, it effectively internationalizes Armenia’s southern border and diminishes its control over the Syunik region. The geopolitical cost of this arrangement is significant: it constrains Armenia’s strategic maneuverability and erodes the very autonomy that underpins sovereign defense planning.

Within this new context, Armenia’s reliance on political normalization – particularly with Azerbaijan and Turkey – risks marginalizing its military agenda. The shift from *military containment* to *political containment* may temporarily ease external pressures but does not address the underlying asymmetry of power in the South Caucasus. Without credible military deterrence, diplomatic gains remain reversible and contingent on external mediation.

This dynamic also affects the trajectory of Armenia's cooperation with India. As Armenia's defense and foreign policy become increasingly subject to Western mediation and regional compromises, its ability to pursue independent military partnerships diminishes. While India remains a committed partner, it may perceive Armenia as a constrained and politically cautious state – limiting the depth of future collaboration.

Balancing diplomacy and security

The central challenge for Armenia lies in reconciling the pursuit of diplomatic normalization with the imperative of maintaining credible defense capacity. A purely political peace, unsupported by adequate deterrence, risks transforming Armenia into a reactive rather than proactive actor in regional affairs. Conversely, sustained military cooperation with India – and, to a lesser extent, France – can provide Armenia with the tools to assert its sovereignty and negotiate from a position of strength.

Therefore, Armenia's strategic success depends on the **integration of diplomacy with defense modernization**. Instead of viewing normalization and armament as mutually exclusive, Yerevan must adopt a dual-track approach that embeds military resilience within its broader foreign policy. This would involve:

1. Maintaining defense diversification to prevent overdependence on any single actor.
2. Institutionalizing cooperation with India through long-term logistical and training agreements.
3. Encouraging domestic industry participation in technology transfer programs.
4. Linking defense modernization with broader economic and technological development.

Such an approach would help ensure that Armenia's diplomatic flexibility is underpinned by credible deterrence – a prerequisite for sustainable peace and sovereignty.

Implications for the India–Armenia partnership

For India, cooperation with Armenia carries both symbolic and strategic value. It reinforces India's status as a capable arms exporter and highlights its willingness to engage outside its immediate neighborhood. By supporting Armenia, India also indirectly counters the Turkish–Pakistani axis that influences Azerbaijan's military posture. However, India's continued engagement will depend on Armenia's internal coherence and foreign policy consistency. Should Armenia's political leadership prioritize short-term diplomatic concessions over long-term security, New Delhi may shift its strategic focus toward more stable regional partners.

Thus, the India–Armenia relationship stands at a **crossroads**. The partnership has achieved significant progress in material and operational terms but faces uncertainty due to Armenia's evolving geopolitical dependencies. The durability of this alliance will depend not only on the continued delivery of Indian systems but also on Armenia's capacity to preserve strategic independence and maintain balanced relations with all major actors, including Russia, the U.S., Iran, and the EU.

Final reflections

Armenia's cooperation with India exemplifies both the promise and peril of defense diversification for small states navigating volatile regions. It has provided Armenia with

advanced capabilities, technological access, and diplomatic leverage. Yet, these benefits can only translate into lasting security if anchored in a coherent national strategy that aligns foreign policy, defense planning, and economic development.

The 2024–2025 period has demonstrated that diplomatic normalization, while desirable, cannot substitute for defense preparedness. A state's sovereignty rests not solely on its alliances or treaties but on its capacity to defend and sustain them. In this light, Armenia's partnership with India remains indispensable – not as an exclusive alliance, but as a critical component of a multi-vector security policy aimed at preserving national resilience in an increasingly uncertain regional order.

Future research should examine whether Armenia can institutionalize its defense-industrial cooperation with India while managing the complex interplay of regional and global influences. Understanding this balance will be essential to assessing whether Armenia's current strategy represents a path toward durable autonomy or a gradual erosion of strategic potential.

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