



Ambassador (ret.) Ara Papian

Ambassador Ara Papian was born in Yerevan, Armenia in 1961.

Education

- 1984, Graduated from the Department of Oriental (Middle Eastern) Studies of Yerevan State University with an undergraduate degree.
- 1989, Received a postgraduate degree in Armenian History from the Yerevan State University
- 1994, Graduated from the Moscow Diplomatic Academy, Russia.
- 1998, Graduated from the NATO Defense College, Rome, Italy.
- 1999, Attended a special course in Public Diplomacy in Oxford, United Kingdom.

Professional Experience

- 1981-2/4-6, Active-duty military interpreter/translator (Farsi) in Afghanistan.
- 1987-91, Professor of Armenian language and literature at Melkonian Educational Institute in Nicosia, Cyprus, the most prominent Armenian private educational establishment in the Diaspora.
- 1991-92, Second Secretary of the US and Canada Division of the American Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 1992-93, Second Secretary of the Armenian Embassy in Tehran. A founding team member of the Embassy.

- 1997-96, Second Secretary of the Armenian Embassy in Bucharest, Romania.
- 1997, Charge d'Affaires of the Armenian Embassy in Bucharest, Romania.
- 1997-99, Head of Iran Division of the Middle East Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 1999, Head of Security Cooperation Division of the Security Issues and Arms Control Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.
- 1999-2000, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Head of Public Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 2000-06, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Armenia to Canada.

Research and Political Activism

Following his departure from the Foreign Service in March 2006, Amb. Papian founded Modus Vivendi think tank, one of the objectives of which was to conduct research on the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Arbitral Award and its implications for Armenia's foreign policy.

He has pushed for Armenia's de-colonization and real independence from Russia and a shift towards the West and is one of the leading advocates of the need for Armenia to become a Major non-NATO Ally of the United States.

Ambassador Papian is well-known across Armenia and the Diaspora and maintains an active public profile, with thousands of media appearances/interviews over the years. He is widely considered as one of the top experts in Armenia on International Law and all Treaties concerning Armenia and the region.

In 2020, Ara Papian became a founding member of the National-Democratic Alliance movement and in 2021 a Board Member of the National-Democratic Alliance political party.

Amb. Papian is a dual Canadian-Armenian national with residences in Yerevan and Ottawa. He is married and has two children.

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Dr. David A. Grigorian is a Research Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and a Non-Resident Fellow at the Center for Global Development in Washington, DC.

Prior to that, he has spent 22 years at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC where he worked on some of the most politically visible and impactful IMF programs of the past two decades.

Throughout his tenure at Monetary and Capital Markets Department, Dr. Grigorian has provided technical assistance advice to governments in a variety of emerging market and advanced countries on issues of sovereign debt restructuring, debt market development, and financial crisis management.

For his role in helping the authorities of Jamaica restructure their sovereign debt in 2010, Dr. Grigorian received an Outstanding Effort Award from the IMF's Managing Director. During 2016-18, Dr. Grigorian was in Asia Pacific Department, where he led the IMF mission to Bhutan and conducted oversight of financial sector in Singapore and Malaysia.

In his previous position as the desk economist on Iraq, he helped the country authorities prepare the federal budgets for 2007-09 under occupation and complete two back-to-back Stand-By Arrangements that led to the world's largest sovereign debt relief ever provided by the Paris Club.

Prior to joining the IMF in 2001, Dr. Grigorian worked at the World Bank, where he managed banking sector restructuring projects in Central Asia.

He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Maryland at College Park and has published extensively in refereed economic journals on a wide range of issues including sovereign debt, banking and capital markets, growth and institutions, remittances, and fiscal performance, and his research is cited widely.

Dr. Grigorian also co-founded and led Policy Forum Armenia (2008-2018), a virtual anti-corruption think-tank uniting nearly 50 researchers and public policy professionals with interest in Armenia's development. He writes extensively on issues related to Armenia and has published in excess of 20 reviews and opinion articles in international media in the past 2 years.

Questions & Answers for Hill Leadership Staff

Q: Where did Pashinyan come from and how did he get elected?

A: Eager to implement what was known since 2012 as the “Lavrov Plan” for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) problem to appease its newly found partners Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Kremlin handpicked a college drop-out turned sensationalist journalist Nikol Pashinyan to replace a Serge Sargsyan (who was slow to deliver the Artsakh handover, having been on the receiving end of the 2016 rebellion in Yerevan).¹

On June 8, 2018, using mass street protests of population eager to get rid of Sargsyan, the ruling party—which remained under tight Russian control—engineered a vote to make Pashinyan the Prime Minister (to replace Serge Sargsyan, who had resigned a couple of weeks prior to that).

Since then, Pashinyan has consistently deceived the West about his intentions to pivot away from Russia and toward the West. However, in reality, Russia's influence in Armenia has only grown since Pashinyan ascend to power in 2018.

Q: So how was his win possible? How did he win? What percentage did he win by? How does he continue to govern - he must have support within the parliament?

A: In office since June 2018, Pashinyan then run in an election as an incumbent in December 2018 and was elected by a popular vote (with over 80 percent of the vote, given the anti-corruption euphoria among the general population).

Having signed Armenia's capitulation in the 2020 war with Azerbaijan over Artsakh, Pashinyan initially went into hiding for a few days but then re-appeared and started blaming the army and people for desertion. He then consolidated his power—undoubtedly with the help of Russia, with Vladimir Putin going on central Russian TV and telling his audience that “Pashinyan should not be considered a traitor”—and announced a snap election in June 2021 (only 6-7 month after the defeat in the war).

Serge Sargsyan and the main notorious pro-Russian political figure former President Robert Kocharyan both run in the same election and were used by Pashinyan as “scare crows” to gather the necessary minimum to win (about 52 percent of the vote). Russia's direct and indirect help was evident during the election. This assistance included help with setting up several new political parties (with the total number of parties running in the election reaching 26) to dilute the vote and confuse the population. Some forms of election fraud have been used, most important of which was blatant use of administrative and budgetary resources to campaign and pay election bribes.

Q: How do we expect him to do in the next election?

A: Unless tangible political pressure is applied from the outside, there is growing apprehension among political opposition and civil society that Pashinyan is prepared to manipulate or compromise the integrity of the 2026 election to compensate for their very low approval rating. Forced voting by civil service employees, law enforcement personnel, and military (using mechanisms that effectively negate the secrecy of their vote), ballot stuffing, carousel voting, fraudulent accounting, as well as massive use of administrative apparatus

¹ Pashinyan wrote about assisting Azerbaijan in the takeover of Artsakh in a book he authored when he was in prison for his role in mass riots that led to deaths of 8 protesters and two police officers in 2008.

and budgetary resources are among the ways the incumbent regimes in Armenia have used extensively to their advantage.

He has imprisoned his political opponents, including billionaire Samvel Karapetyan and the mayor of the second largest city Gyumri, Vardan Ghukasyan, and is not lifting a finger to get the POWs kept Azerbaijani prisons released, at least one of whom (Ruben Vardanyan) is considered a major political opponent of Pashinyan.

He is also keeping Colonel (ret.) Varuzhan Avetisyan—an NDA Board member and a key opponent of Pashinyan—in jail, despite an amnesty for his role in the 2016 rebellion against the pro-Russian regime of Sargsyan. Col. Avetisyan, a former Department of Defense Lawyer, is one of the most charismatic and patriotic leaders of present-day Armenia.

Q: In a country where the overwhelming majority of population are members of the Armenian Apostolic Church, politically speaking how can Pashinyan get away with this type of repression?

A: Pashinyan and his regime have ratcheted up repressions and signaled a willingness to go after every dissident who dares to oppose the regime. Arrests of businessman Karapetyan, mayor Ghukasyan, 4 Archbishops, and journalists suggests that the regime will stop at nothing to advance its objectives, naturally making ordinary citizens concerned about their own fate.

Pashinyan remains in full control of the law enforcement apparatus and judiciary and has once famously noted that “no judge in the country will disobey his orders.”

As indicated by human rights defenders, Armenia’s prisons are full of detainees, in numbers that far exceed those during previous administrations.

The regime has significantly increased the administrative and court penalties for “insulting dignity of public officials”, having targeted people for social media posts and other expressions of their freedom of speech.