



TOPICAL DIALOGUES

A "Region" Research Center Project

ON ARMENIA'S NEW INTEGRATION AGENDA

N 2

2015

This issue of the electronic bulletin is prepared within the framework of “Region” Research Center “Topical Dialogues on Armenia’s New Integration Agenda” project, supported by the Public Relations office of the US Embassy in Armenia. The opinions, conclusions or recommendations presented here do not necessarily reflect those of the US government.



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RUSSIA AND ARMENIA TODAY: REALITIES AND PERCEPTIONS

The materials of the Internet conference on the website of the “Region” Research Center www.regioncenter.info

Following and a whole set of other questions were discussed in the course of the Internet conference “Russia and Armenia Today: Realities and Perceptions,” held on February 23 – 25, 2015.

- How will Russia influence the domestic policy and the public life in Armenia?
- What are the mutual perceptions of Armenia and Russia at the public and media levels?
- How will the overall internal political situation in Russia and the processes taking place between Russia and Ukraine, as well as Russia and a part of the Western world impact on the Armenian and Russian relations?
- What is the semantic charge of the term “anti-Russian” in Russia and Armenia?
- Is there a real trend in the perceptions of one another, in the current alliance between Russia and Armenia, and what do these perceptions consist in? Where did they come from?

The following experts from Russia and Armenia took part in the conference:

Sergey Markedonov – Associate Professor of the Russian State University for Humanities, a political scientist (Russia),

Arkady Dubnov – a political scientist, a CIS expert (Russia),

Sergey Sargsyan – Deputy Director of the Center for Political Studies JVP "Noravank", Retired lieutenant colonel (Armenia),

Boris Navasardyan – President of Yerevan Press Club (Armenia),

Moderator – Laura Baghdasaryan, Director of “Region” Research Center (Armenia).

ON ASYMMETRICAL INTEREST



Sergey Markedonov – In my opinion, it is extremely important to understand the asymmetry in the mutual relations between Moscow and Yerevan. If the Armenian direction is important, yet it is only one of the many (and sometimes not at all primary) issues for the Russian foreign policy, every step of the strategic ally is studied against the light.



Laura Baghdasryan - The asymmetry in the interests (of Armenia and Russia in each other) is truly conditioned by numerous significant factors and in this concrete case by indicators of varied weight in relation to the military as well as a number of other spheres. However, there are bilateral agreements where the mutually acceptable rules of the game are established.

I have a question: why the “argument” about which party should conduct the investigation of the crime committed by the military serviceman in Gyumri¹ is considered by the official and unofficial circles in Moscow as an attempt to politicize the situation, or is simply substantiated by the fact that if the USA never left their soldiers to the justice of other countries, Russia shouldn’t similarly, claiming that this is an issue of Russia’s sovereignty.

What I mean here is that such accidents in the Russian and Armenian relations are not the machinations of third parties, and even the paranoid consideration of these steps of Russia are studied under magnifying glasses.

Here we are addressing the most important issues of Armenia’s security Base 102 is part of.

¹ It is about the murder of the Avetisyan family by the Russian soldier in Gyumri on January 12, 2015.

IRRITATING POINTS: ABOUT THE MILITARY COOPERATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND AZERBAIJAN



Sergey Markedonov – As for Azerbaijan and the cooperation between Baku and Moscow... I understand that this issue is quite painfully perceived in Yerevan. And still I will try to provide a few explanatory points.

1. After “the five-day war” of 2008 and the recognition of independence, Moscow lost considerable control over Tbilisi. And in this situation it is an extremely risky step to bet only on Yerevan or, on the contrary, to try to shift their focus onto Baku. In this case two of the three republics in Transcaucasia would be lost for Moscow. And this is where the maneuvering comes from. Even more so since no one has cancelled geography. The total length of the land border in the Dagestan section between the Russian federation and Azerbaijan equals 284 kilometers, if we leave aside the waters of the Caspian Sea.

2. Baku is a strategic partner to Moscow, Yerevan is a strategic ally. If we rise above some media and propaganda clichés, such definitions still do have some meaning. The status quo in the South Caucasus is important to Moscow.

Both the supply to Azerbaijan, in Moscow’s opinion (no matter how cynical this seems to anybody) do not yet break the essential balance between the forces and the resources (by the way, the military experts could provide a more comprehensive picture). And another thing: It is important to tell the primary and the derived. Baku has considerable financial means to buy arms, and if Russia is not involved, Azerbaijan will always find another partner (we can at least recall the Israeli and Azerbaijani arms deal).

And the partnership between Moscow and Baku is not considered as a shift of interests towards the Caspian republic.



Laura Baghdasaryan – The “what difference who sells arms to Azerbaijan?” formula, whether it is Russia or the same Israel, is not very convincing for Armenians. Because if the presence of the Russian base is directly correlated to the thesis that “Russia is the guarantor of Armenia’s security from Azerbaijan and Turkey”, then the sale of arms to Azerbaijan which will use those same arms against Armenia, and in case of more serious clashes and conflict in the border regions, and will be used against the Russian base in the RA, does not correlate to either this statement of yours, and moreover to the fact of Russia being a co-chair in the OSCE Minsk Group.

ON MILITARY BASE 102 IN GYUMRI



Arkady Dubnov – About the preparedness of politicization of reproaches in terms of terrible tragedy in Gyumri by Russian officialdom and semi-officialdom. The discussion of this problem, if done honestly, will bring this out onto a larger issue, on the meaning of values in the Russian politics.

Here they were ready to reproach Armenians in the politicization because they were not able to admit that the Russian administration was not able to assess the tragedy during the first few hours in the human dimension, to understand how important it was for the Russian government to express compassion for the victims, their relatives and to react to the fact that Armenians are killed by people who are present in Armenia for the opposite purpose – to ensure the security of Armenians. Given this generation of the quite cynical ruling elite in Russia there are no such “weeping Bolsheviks,” as the Soviet Prime-Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, very well known in Armenia after the 1988 earthquake. The thing is that we often substitute concepts, and we camouflage the absence of simple conscience and human decency by means of reproaches in politicization...



Boris Navasardyan – I wonder what we should be doing next. And I can see two options here.

The first (and least probable option): the Russian party finds a possibility to construe its Constitution so that Permyakov is passed on to the RA jurisdiction (a new wave of demand has been rising since yesterday, hence there is the “actual occasion”).

The second (and the only rational alternative): the agreement provisions on both the base, and the Russian border guards are reviewed in order to exclude any discrepancy between these documents and the Constitutions of both countries.

If the crimes of the RF citizens in the territory of the RA, regardless of the will of the Armenian authorities, could fall beyond the jurisdiction of the Armenian investigative and judicial bodies as a result of certain actions of the official Russian structures, the Russian law enforcement and security agencies should hence not have a right to implement individual investigative and search operations beyond their special objects. And every time the Russian military servicemen and border guards go out of the borders of their special objects, this should be coordinated with the competent bodies of the RA.

Unfortunately, I do not believe that raising the level of discipline and the replenishment of the contingent only by contract servicemen may be a fundamental solution to the problem. And every new incident will be an occasion for raising the issue of the presence of the base as such in the public discourse.



Arkady Dubnov – ... Picture a situation when the Russians close the base as decisively as Americans did with Manas in Kirgiz Republic or Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan. We should take into consideration that they were initially dislocated during the American operation in Afghanistan. The subtotal is that Bishkek has practically finally lost its status of an independent regional player, and the pay for this may be the rise within the EAEU in the long-term, but foreseeable future. Today Uzbekistan is again forced to return to a closer union with the United States, trying to distance itself from the need to seek guarantees of security from Moscow. These somersaults are quite costly. Should the security system already existing in South Caucasus be jeopardized, maybe it would be more practical to work on its adaptation to the current reality?

... When 8 years ago on Manas base at Bishkek the American soldier on the post shot a Kyrgyz driver with the last name Ivanov dead the proceedings were very loud, the Kyrgyz authorities did everything to make others respect them. As a result, the US military, who behaved quite casually in Bishkek, lost the possibility even to go beyond the base. But they were the ones to try their own military serviceman who shot the man dead...



Sergey Sargsyan – Unfortunately, I must admit that even systemic improvements in assuring discipline and the constant work with the personnel can reduce only the relatively minor offenses (and this is good, too). There are no “fuses” from such tragedies and incidents. As for the investigation, again, to our deep regret the crimes committed before this one were qualified as “nothing of the kind should happen again,” and the legal collisions that were noticed back then were not eliminated. Now this loud tragedy should fix all the previous "settlings".

ON PERCEPTIONS AND OPERATORS



Boris Navasardyan – The fact that the Russian citizens² did not call Armenia an ally is also related to its non-perception as a sovereign state. I will reiterate myself: what an ally it is if it does not play any role in the international affairs? Vladimir Putin himself in a number of instances forgot that Armenia is a foreign state (for example, when speaking of foreign bases, he did not mention Base 102...) All of these numerous manifestations, which I will not mention to save time and space, change the attitude of even those people who do not want to hear about the West and Europe.

As a result, among those who continue to remain loyal to the Russian ("Eurasian") option, there is a significantly numerous group of people to whom national sovereignty is not a value, or a group of those who consider it right "to sit out the troubled times."

² He means the public opinion poll conducted among Russian citizens at the end of 2014, according to the results of which Armenia occupied the 10th place in the rating of the countries friendly to Russia. Editor's note.



Arkady Dubnov – ... On the topic of how Armenia is perceived in Russia ... I believe that if a survey was carried out in Russia after the tragedy in Gyumri, the result would be different, perhaps even more negative: the public opinion in Russia is extremely malleable and is shaped predominantly by TV, where this drama was practically disregarded: our propaganda is not able to reflect. Especially, if this relates to Russia's image in foreign countries. On the other hand, the references to Armenia made in January were often presented in a positive way, especially after the Treaty on establishing the EAEU entered force. In general, of course, Armenia is on the periphery of public attention in Russia, and there is nothing offensive here, if we, for example, take it as a fact of geography, according to which Russia and Armenia have no common borders...

But what was noticeable (and it speaks more about today's Russia rather than Armenia) was the surprisingly small number of Russian Armenians who dared to publicly condemn the massacre in Gyumri: mostly, they tried to look like extremely loyal Russian citizens making their way to the patriotic mainstream. This is rather evident, unfortunately, and reflects the current state of the civil society in Russia.



Sergey Sargsyan – As to the various "gurus" from Russia, we ourselves have to be more selective when meeting with them. Both their media presentation and the sympathetic and polite, but constructively critical attitude of the expert community in Armenia to themselves and their ideas play a major role here.

On the other hand, before arriving here they consult (at least, they should in fact) with someone from the Russian expert community or local Armenian analysts. And it is very interesting to know the criterion of the selection.



Arkady Dubnov – Sergey Markedonov! You are absolutely right, speaking about the various "Kiselyovs", who are perceived as the heralds of the "Kremlin" in Yerevan, which often is not quite true. But this is a reality that is the same in Yerevan, Astana, Bishkek and even in Chisinau ... But the Armenians, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Moldovans find it difficult, or even almost impossible to distinguish the sane speakers from the insane ones, even more so because often they visit the capitals mentioned above for making policies.

I agree that yes, there is an asymmetry of perception: in Moscow, hardly anyone would take seriously the speech of any speaker from any post-Soviet countries, if the person is not nominated a speaker by the Kremlin, whereas in the post-Soviet capitals, on the other hand, for some reason only the imperials of the "Russian camp" become the heralds of Moscow, according to my own observation ...

I mean that this is a long-term problem, until the "restoration" concept of the Kremlin does not give way to another more tolerant paradigm.



Sergey Sargsyan – Given the media's sharpened focus on negative news, the absence of Armenia in the Russian media is positive. By the way, this can explain the fact that in one of the polls, as it was noted yesterday, Armenia was not included in the top list of countries friendly to Russia. In principle, it is not a very significant indicator, for it does appear in other polls - and quite frequently. It is another issue whether there is any dissatisfaction or concern with this asymmetry? Does Armenia want to increase its presence in the Russian media? Who wants it? Why? And how should that be done - without anything as dramatic as conflict escalation, earthquakes, man-made disasters, and so on?

ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL TEMPLATES AND CLICHÉS



Sergey Markedonov - As to the media demands of Armenia from Russia and such demands of Russia from Armenia... Of course, they were not formalized and were not introduced after any specific decrees. But they are in the minds of influential officials and say those in high places.

The Russian representatives would like to see more support for the Russia's foreign policy in the Armenian media in general, be it on the Crimea or Donbass, Georgia or Russia's relations with the West. Of course, some constraints existent in Armenia get ignored here (those are clear, and there is hardly any point in describing those in detail).

The reason behind all this is that if you are an ally, you should be so kind as to more actively display your feelings as my ally and not to look to the sides! In Armenia, the demand is to understand the nuances (the restrictions).

There is a certain contradiction here, whereas the similarities lie in the same query for the demonstration of alliance. If you are an ally, explain why you need Baku and Ankara, explain your position and do not escape answers. That is, there is a clear aspiration for clarifying misunderstandings and contradictions that are often latent, but are still contradictions.



Boris Navasardyan – I strongly disagree with the statements about the Association Agreement with the EU. If the "common patterns" do not stand for the scheme and the structure of documents, but rather the content, I should say that the texts are very different, especially in the case of Armenia, where there is virtually no prospect of Armenia's membership to the EU and the formation of a common security system. The concept of energy security is significantly different. Unlike the EAEU documents, the Association Agreement parties negotiations were going to strictly comply with the agreement provisions. Let me reiterate myself: especially in the case of Armenia, whose representatives were aware of the delicacy of the mere participation in the intensive and detailed negotiations throughout the process and grasped and delved into every single letter. But the Russian propagandists, including officials of such a level as Glazyev deliberately distorted the essence of the process and the arrangements, writing a variety of myths in the same spirit as the above-

mentioned tracings from Ukraine and thus forming a false image, both in Russia and in Armenia itself.



Sergey Sargsyan - That's exactly the point, the document every single letter of which was delved into, "when there was virtually no prospect of the EU membership and the formation of a single security system", was coordinated in an atmosphere of profound secrecy (perhaps conspiracy?). I am glad if our Armenian specialists from the expert field read and studied it. Unlike their counterparts from Ukraine and Moldova. I think the local media - and the Ukrainian and Moldovan media, too - could find at least a few such specialists, who would be able to professionally explain the content of these strategically important documents to the interested audience and the secrecy of "delving into each letter." In that case, in search for an answer to a simple question of trade taxes for a specific range of goods, I would not have to call all the relevant ministries, to look for mutual friends, in the end find one, who would in the environment of ongoing (and perhaps contagious) secrecy give me the following answer: "Who knows? .." Well, we may ascribe this to my improper research, or to the fact that my friends are not of the right caliber and "from the right system." Also there was another option of the timely demystification (?) of the reality that the EU was ready to receive certificated kiwis and bananas that have grown in our generous sun, and to talk about raising the exports quota of the Atlantic cod from Armenia. And by the way, which system – the one that presupposed "strict compliance to the agreement" or the one where "discrepancies with the EAEU documents" can be detected, implies greater delegation of authority, hence, infringement upon state sovereignty (we mourned about yesterday)?



Sergey Markedonov -Today the Russian-Armenian relations are influenced by background factors to a much greater extent than yesterday. In fact, the Ukrainian crisis will go after the negative scenario (with probably new sanctions, and "an intermediaries' war" and many more unpleasant things), and inevitably "the cost of the issues" will be on the agenda.

It is not an established fact that in the adverse scenario the EAEU will be very strong and firm (let me repeat myself, Lukashenko has already expressed his own interest in the role of the "honest broker"). If, however, the developments take the route, of not the resolution of the conflict in the Donetsk Basin, but at least the "freezing" of and more pragmatic relations between the West and Russia, Yerevan will then have less concern about the ability of Russia to act as a reliable and predictable ally.

A year ago, there was no such external dependency (there is always the influence of the background factors, but in 2015 this is already beyond comparison).



Laura Baghdasaryan - The first information campaign to cover the public protests during the first days after the tragedy in Gyumri went in this vein. "Maidan in Armenia", "the fifth column, whose finest hour came, because there was a reason for the perception of slogans to withdraw the Russian military base," and so on and so forth. I do not even know how to properly perceive these attempts to link the incident with Base 102 to scenarios and plots, not really happening in Armenia. As the inertia of the general background information in Russia, which works also in the Armenian direction, or as a special campaign to understand real sentiments in the Armenian society by sounding?



Arkady Dubnov - The media campaign of the Gyumri tragedy that happened in Russia, Laura is talking about - the "Maidan," the "Fifth column" and so on - was provided by government-controlled resources, primarily TV and such publications as *The Komsomolskaya Pravda*. Indeed, they form the very same 84% of support for the President of the Russian Federation.

But is their "Armenian" the main thing in the creation of the image of Armenia? I doubt it. The thing is that the Armenian issue today is only one of the puzzle pieces in the general picture of a hostile outside world that is being imposed on the Russian "sofa" electorate. Today in the trend of mobilization propaganda, one of its main slogans is quite simple: "our people are being beaten, but our cause is just, and we will win!" Hence the "anti-Maidans," and they are not directed solely against the threat of the Armenian maidan, not at all. Pay attention to Lavrov's latest performance at the UN, he proposed to develop a document declaring the illegality of coups. As you can imagine, it was not Yerevan he was concerned about...



Sergey Markedonov - As for the impact of the information war. In part, I have already written about it before, mentioning about the increased role of background factors. But what I would like to emphasize is the following: instead of narrow specialists this information war will take rather "generalists of wide qualification" to whom only the United States (and Russia vice versa) represent the "true value", while the rest are the nuances, narrow field specialists are only interested in. Hence, all these searches for "conspiracy" and "revolutions".

The multi-faceted and multi-colored picture turns into a simplified black and white image. But if it is delved into, there will be certain dangers in the political planning.



Boris Navasardyan - And there is another thing which I would ask my Russian colleagues to comment on – the dominance of Armenian surnames among the participants of television talk shows and among the reporters covering the events in the east of Ukraine. It is clear that those Armenian name bearers take advantage of this opportunity for solving career advancement and other related tasks; the Russian propaganda machine involves them to show the "Russian-Armenian-Ukrainian-Lithuanian-Jewish International", as opposed to "Judeo-Banderovites." But does this create an impression among the audience that "Armenians are with us"?

The country (Armenia - Ed.) may be very small to be recognized as an ally, but is the nation the unconditional part of the "Russian camp"?



Sergey Markedonov - Frankly speaking, I do not see any evidence of the conscious involvement of Armenians in the cause of the "Russian camp"... I'm not sure that many Russians even know what Aram Ashotovich (Gabrielyanov - Ed.) stands behind LifeNews. Whereas Karen Georgiyevich (Shahnazarov- Ed.) primarily perceives as a film director, just like Kurghinyan who is not very much associated with Armenians either. He is rather associated with the demonic behavior and say a neat and extravagant manner. There is another matter here called “perception” by our friends across the Atlantic. So it may seem to someone that de facto Armenians define the face of the Russian information policy. This is akin to the statements that the early Soviet Republic was "ruled by the Jews."

...The Russian policy by my (and not only!) perceptions is largely reactive than proactive or strategically verified.



Arkady Dubnov - I absolutely agree with Sergey Markedonov, there is no special agenda here: Russian Armenians have long been a natural part of the Russian society, including its intellectual segment that their involvement in these processes is but usual. And if it looks differently from Yerevan, I think it is due to the quite understandably sensitive scrupulousness to the image of "Armenians" in Russia.

Especially if it does not coincide with the dominant self-perception of the Armenian identity, including in the geopolitical terms. At this point I will frankly say that being a Russian Jew I can very clearly understand this perspective, I constantly have to live with it, even if I do not think about it ... But I let me note the following: when I am destined to people like Anatoly Wasserman, I perceive them as freaks, no more no less ... The feeling is a little different with Eskin, he is just not very decent.

But believe me, they are the ones that cannot be "sold" to the West, as evidence of the loyalty of the Jews in the Russian government, or the "Russian camp". This largely applies to Russian Armenians, too.



Sergey Sargsyan - Thank you, Arkady, for your detailed response, because all this is happening against the background of the first victim on Maidan being an Armenian, and some time later the first person killed at the Auto-Maidan ... was Armenian, too, and there emerges a sad picture of inter-Armenian opposition in Ukraine.



Laura Baghdasaryan - In Russia the perception is different in the context of the Karabakh conflict, that of a party who did not miss the opportunity to demonstrate its influence on the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan and to act in the image of "an experienced firefighter." This can be illustrated by the comments from a meeting last August that was followed by a decline in the frontline escalation wave. By the way, the decline was noticed two days before the meeting itself, and right after the information on Vladimir Putin's invitation of the two presidents "to see him" was disseminated.

However, from my point of view, Russia's image of a peacemaker is not so convincing, especially against the Ukrainian military cataclysms.

Another correlation with the Ukrainian scenarios in the Armenian media can be found in the Crimea after the "things allowed to Jupiter ..." formula. And the hero of Armenia Ryzhkov, Arkady Dubnov wrote about, managed to fall off the information pedestal in this Crimean context, hardly had he voiced the formula that "Karabakh is quite another matter, since the Crimea is native Russian territory and its return was a historically fair step."

ON THE CONTENT OF THE TERM “ANTI-RUSSIAN” IN ARMENIA AND RUSSIA



Sergey Markedonov - This is an interesting question about the term "anti-Russian". It does not have any clear definition. Everyone understands it differently. Those who are on the extreme right position label almost any criticism of Russia as "anti-Russian". ... Those who identify themselves with the relatively "liberal" spectrum point out that the term was originally incorrect, because no one has a monopoly on the formulation and promotion of national interests.

It is interesting that at the end of the year Putin himself made a clear distinction between the opposition and the so-called "Fifth column", saying that the criticism of the authorities is not the same as the criticism of the country. This is the approximate range of evaluations of the matter.



Boris Navasardyan - On the concept of "anti-Russian" in Armenia. Thank God, so far it has not had any practical repressive application in relation to political leaders, journalists and representatives of the civil society (I hope that our accession to the EAEU will not change anything), hence defining it and drawing its demarcation lines, in contrast to Russia, does not seem so very important. I would like to express my own opinion: all the manifestations of "anti-Russian" begin just where the hope for Russia's ability to integrate into the civilized global processes and relations in its current form ends. In this sense, the phenomenon itself is present in the public opinion in Armenia.



Arkady Dubnov - On the term "anti-Russian" ... If you remember, recently the deputy head of the RF Presidential Administration V. Volodin said something approximately of the kind "Russia will be there if Putin is there; if Putin is not there, there will be no Russia either." Needless to say, that no serious discourse within these constraints seems possible. ... The current paradigm is little different from the old, and if we over-generalize a bit, it looks very familiar: the tsar cannot be wrong, as his power over Russia has been granted to him by God, you can (and should!) criticize the boyars.

I would also like to note that in today's Russia there is no such thing as a political agenda. The systemic opposition does not produce anything of the kind, the criticism of the government (the National Bank) cannot be considered due to the above-mentioned reasons, and the non-systemic opposition representatives are cornered as "national traitors."

ONLINE PRESS-CONFERENCES FOR ARMENIAN MEDIA



From the Internet press-conference with the Head of Caucasus Department of the CIS Institute, Director of the Center for Public Policy Research, Academic Secretary of the Coordinating Council of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) on forecasting VLADIMIR EVSEEV for Armenian media.

13.02.2015

TOPIC: Russian-Armenian military cooperation, present developments of Karabakh conflict and developing military events in Ukraine.

- I believe that only contracted servicemen should serve in the Russian military bases located outside the national borders. The process of their selection is stricter. Such an approach would have eliminated the probability of a similar occurrence. But everything should not be reduced to this military crime. It is more likely that there were serious routine causes, related to rather Chita, than Gyumri. However, I am not sure that it was this very sergeant who committed the horrible crime. I have significant experience of service in the Armed Forces. That occurrence allows us to ask a lot of questions. And not all of them are related to this soldier.
- Permyakov committed a military crime, as he deserted his on guard position with a firearm. The occurrence in Gyumri was most likely related to some events that preceded the actual crime in the Russian Federation, in particular in Chita. I am not sure he was really the one to commit it. First, it is necessary to understand everything. And only after that the form and the place of his punishment will be determined.
- Russia has obligations to protect Armenia from outside threats. Therefore, if Azerbaijan starts shelling Armenian territories along the border, Moscow has every reason to intervene in the conflict. However, in practice such an intervention will happen in the case of a transitional border incident during which the shooting at the Armenian territory may be viewed as an armed conflict along the border. I believe that Azerbaijan is trying to force the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh issue, so the escalation of the armed confrontation in the area of the contact is possible. But I do not think this is directly related to the Ukrainian crisis. President Ilham Aliyev

is more interested in the oil price, which the financial well-being of his country immediately depends on.

- Nazarbayev and Lukashenko have fundamentally diverse problems. Nazarbayev has got into the multi-vector game too deeply, so he has become too dependent on Western influence. At that, the national economy has remained a non-processing one that only supplies raw materials and is totally dependent on the global prices for hydrocarbons. Lukashenko is afraid of a color revolution. Under the current circumstances, both are afraid that Russia will not stand the pressure of the West. That is why they are anxious. With the strengthening of the Russian economy, which I believe will inevitably happen in the short term, both Astana and Minsk will again move towards Moscow. And Kiev's negative experience in this regard will teach them a lot.
- Here is no need to indulge in wishful thinking. Even on the battlefield Kiev could not win. The "Debaltsevo boiler" may serve as a proof of that. However, the main battle will unfold in the economic sphere. Here, the current Ukrainian leadership will definitely lose. Although, while maintaining the limited Western aid the decline of the Ukrainian economy will not be very rapid. But this process will be accelerated if Kiev continues to try an armed resolution of the current problem. Along with the weakening of the central government in Kiev the authority of Moscow will grow in the Ukrainian, as well as the former Soviet Union territory. This will allow the Russian Federation to more actively restrain the warring parties in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh.
- As for the geopolitical picture in the South Caucasus, it will largely depend on the process of strengthening Russian-Turkish and, to a lesser extent, Russian-Iranian relations. In the future, Moscow, Ankara and Tehran will agree to create a fundamentally new system of regional security blocs. This will lead to a decrease of the US's military-political role in the South Caucasus.
- The best way for Armenia is to propose and launch a bridge between the EEU and the EU in the territory of the country. The need for this is due to the fact that Yerevan is interested in preserving the privileges of the EU and the current level of exports in this direction. And it would be good to involve Georgia in this process, too. Then, in many respects the Armenian society will not have to face the problem of choosing between Russia and the West.

Full version of the material here: <http://regioncenter.info/en/Online-Press-Conference-with-Vladimir-Evseev-eng-Interviews>



From the Internet press-conference for Armenian media with one of the leaders of The Social Democratic Party of Georgia, Member of the Tbilisi City Council (Sakrebulo), political scientist BEKA NATSVLISHVILI.

19.02.2015

TOPIC: Georgia after signing the EU Association Agreement.

- Armenia is one of Georgia's several trading partners. And these relations were mainly confined to re-exports of vehicles from Georgia. The situation in this regard will get even worse when the DCFTA and the Eurasian Economic Union come into force, for they could minimize these relations. But Georgia's signing of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) enables Armenian companies to invest and produce in Georgia and have free access to the European market. Therefore, the governments of both countries must approach this issue more creatively.
- I would also add that nothing will prevent the creation of joint ventures, which would enable the Armenian and Georgian businessmen to successfully implement business activity in both economic and customs areas. As for political relations, they will follow the principles of partnership.
- The emergence of Mikhail Saakashvili's team in Ukraine was primarily due to the fact that an image of incomparable reformers in the former Soviet Union was created around his person and his team, and this was the actual superficial impression. Also, Saakashvili's image as a fearless warrior against Russia (mainly against the background of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine) and his excellent relations with politicians from the neoconservative US camp (that bear a more aggressive stance toward Russia) ever since the velvet revolutions played a no less significant role.
... But if well analyzed, he would look more like a leader of the authoritarian regime rather than a reformer. To summarize, this step of the Ukrainian authorities is conditioned by Mikhail Saakashvili's relations with neoconservative political circles and the hope of the Ukrainian authorities to legitimize reforms in their own country with the help of Saakashvili's image. I hope these reforms will not be as severe as they were in Georgia.
- With regard to Saakashvili's return to power, this is impossible spite all the boasting by him and his team. Despite the attitude towards him the society is well aware that he has no resources to come back by either a revolution, or elections. Accordingly, he is not an alternative to the

incumbent power, and if we consider the negative attitude of the larger part of the society, it is totally excluded, even though Saakashvili does have supporters, fewer in Europe than in America. Previously, he was the bastion of neo-liberalism for the Western right-wing political circles, which in these circles is often perceived as progress and democracy. Here we should specifically mention a number of deputies of the European People's Party and the neo-conservative politicians in America. Of course, their support will not change the situation in the country, but may rather introduce anti-Western moods in the society.

Full version of the material here: <http://regioncenter.info/en/Internet-press-conference-with-Beka-Natsvlishvili-eng-Interviews>