

ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN TODAY

EVENTS AND COMMENTS

Electronic Bulletin *N5, 2013*

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF 'THE OTHER SIDE' BY ARMENIANS AND AZERBAIJANIS THROUGH ALTERNATIVE AND FIRST-HAND INFORMATION

With the support of the British Embassies in Armenia and Azerbaijan Region Research Center (Armenia) and The Institute of Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan) are implementing a project "Enhancing Knowledge and Understanding of 'The Other Side' by Armenians and Azerbaijanis through Alternative and First-Hand Information" (April 2012-April 2014).

In fact, it is a new round of work aimed at improving the knowledge of Armenians and Azerbaijanis about each other.

Public Dialogues is a new platform for virtual interactions or distance communication among specialists from Armenia and Azerbaijan who represent various spheres of life in both societies. We assume that readers may both find trustworthy information here about contemporary Armenia and Azerbaijan, and draw parallels between the situation in the various fields of their specialization in both countries due to the absolute parallelism of topics and addressed issues.

Parallel interviews and video materials for the website "Public Dialogues" are held with experts and specialists from the two countries and reflect the present situation. These dialogues do not necessarily touch upon the issues of the Karabakh conflict or Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, they also raise and discuss problems which are no less important for the two conflicting societies. These parallel interviews are simultaneously published in Armenian newspaper "Aravot" and in Azerbaijani newspaper "NovoyeVremya".

On-Line Discussions: With the help of these Internet discussions Armenian and Azerbaijani political scientists will be given an opportunity for joint discussions on various issues related to the most topical developments in the international life and will help to adjust their assessments and perceptions with the approaches of their counterparts from the opposite party. Our discussions are held according to the rules of correct and comprehensive discussions where the representatives of both sides are involved.

Joint Online Press Conferences: Armenian and Azerbaijani journalists working in various mass media will have a chance to participate in online joint press conferences with Armenian and Azerbaijani professionals and political figures, as well as with political figures and experts from other countries and receive direct answers to the urgent issues they are interested in. Materials based on these conferences will be published in their mass media outlets.

The electronic bulletin "Armenia and Azerbaijan Today: Events and Comments" reflects the results obtained in the process of cooperation of the Research Center "Region" (Armenia) and The Institute of Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan).

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RUSSIA'S "EURASIAN UNION": PHOBIAS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS COUNTRIES

INTERNATIONAL INTERNET CONFERENCE ON THE PUBLIC DIALOGUES WEBSITE

An Internet conference, named Russia's "Eurasian Union:" Phobias and Opportunities for South Caucasus Countries was held on the Public Dialogues website in the period of March 6 – 8, 2013. Experts from Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia participated in the conference.

About the Participants

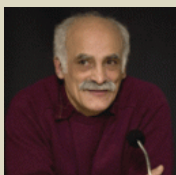
The following experts participated in the conference:



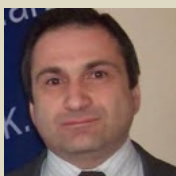
Hanna Shelest (Ukraine) – Senior Researcher at Odessa branch of the National Institute of Strategic Studies under the President of Ukraine



Alexander Krylov (Russia) – Senior Researcher at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, President of the Scientific Union of Scholars on the Caucasus



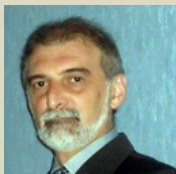
George Tarkhan-Mouravi (Georgia) – Co-Director of the Institute of Public Policy



Sergey Sargsyan (Armenia) – Deputy Director of the Center of Political Studies "Noravank," retired lieutenant-colonel



Arif Yunusov (Azerbaijan) – Director of the Department of Conflict Studies and Migration of the institute for Peace and Democracy



Hikmet Hadjy-zadeh (Azerbaijan) – Political Scientist, Former Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Russia



Moderator of the conference – **Laura Baghdasaryan,**
Director of Region Research Center (**Armenia**)

What kind of project is Eurasian Union (EAU) and how useful can it be for the countries in the former post-Soviet space?

How feasible is this Union, and who needs it more?

Why create a new integration project, if there are the CIS, CSTO and CU?

Will the countries, for example South Caucasus and Ukraine, have to face the issue of making a clear choice between the EU and the EAU?

What should be done with regard to the Georgian-Russian and Armenian-Azerbaijani contradictions? Is the simultaneous participation of all these countries in EAU possible?

What can the military-political component of the emerging Union consist in?

What will the potential members of the union gain from this membership, what is the "added value" of this integration?

What is the reaction of the EU, the U.S. and other major Eurasian actors to the process of the formation of the EAU?

For three days, the participants discussed a large number of other questions and issues related to the upcoming more active implementation of the project largely promoted by Russia to create the Eurasian Union in the Eurasian space.

The full text of conference materials can be found here:

<http://www.publicdialogues.info/node/518>

Below we present some excerpts from this material.



LAURA BAGHDASARYAN - WHAT IS POSSIBLE WITH THE EURASIAN UNION

The Eurasian Union project began to circulate in the discourse after Putin's famous article in the autumn of 2011. In his capacity as the President of Russia Vladimir Putin began to intensively promote this project across the former Soviet Union and started to emphasize that the new union would be after the EU model. Against the background of some post-Soviet countries' lower optimism related to their affiliation with Europe, caused by the internal crisis in the EU, the project of the Eurasian Union is perceived as an alternative.

Either, or.

If we use our logic, we would see that there is always a choice, if there are available options. However, should such a definite choice be made if it does not come from the national interest of our countries? After all, in fact, Russia's cooperation with the West has not yet had any impact on the collaboration of the post-Soviet countries with the West, just the opposite.

The process of creating the nucleus of the Eurasian Union is obviously being forcefully implemented. The majority of post-Soviet countries are skeptical, and Western analysts are cautiously critical towards this idea. Western analysts assert that this idea does have some potential, whereas the Union to be formed could become a significant player in Eurasia. Perhaps, that was the reason why at the December summit of the OSCE the resigning U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton assessed Russia's intention as an attempt to re-Sovieticise Central Asia and Eastern Europe.



HANNA SHELEST

Since today the matter of making a choice is most topical for Ukraine and if the countries in South Caucasus will still have to deal with it only in the future, since last year Kiev has been trying to move "between droplets of rain," as they call it here. The EU officials have repeatedly stressed that there cannot be simultaneous membership to both organizations. However, this does not eliminate the possibility of active cooperation.

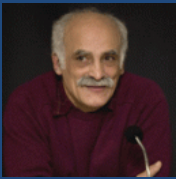
It is important to note that today we cannot talk about the choice between EU membership and the Eurasian Union. We can speak of varied degree of advancement aimed at signing the Association Agreement or the Eurasian Union. And at this point a question rises. Are the post-Soviet states principally ready for serious integration and the transfer of part of their sovereignty to supranational structures? In fact, many are still at the stage of building statehood and searching for identity.

As a well-known Ukrainian economist Veronika Movchan said the Association Agreement is a mutually beneficial friendship, whereas the Eurasian Union is a marriage, entailing strict obligations and difficulties for termination.

The EU was created to evolve for years to arrive at its current format, having experienced multiple crises of identity and expansion. As for the Eurasian Union, an attempt is being made to create it fully from the very beginning, and the rhetoric of its initiators contains rather political statements than economic grounds.

There is another skeptical question here. If the CIS has actually failed, where are the guarantees that the Eurasian Union will succeed? The process of signing the Agreement on CIS Free Trade Zone showed the unwillingness of many parties, including Russia itself (there is a very long list of exceptions).

The “carrot” promised in all the recent negotiations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine has only been the possible reduction of gas prices. This seems to be quite little in order to establish preponderance over what can be gained by joining the EU. Moreover, at the meeting of the two Presidents on Monday (March 4, 2013, *a comment by the editor*), President Putin publicly stated that it was a political rather than an economic issue that a large number of countries are currently interested in.



GEORGE TARKHAN-MOURAVI

Indeed, it is still difficult to say what the EAU is, it is equally difficult to identify the direction in which the EU is developing. But two things are clear: even the movement towards the EU is beneficial for the democratic development of the countries; this was well manifest by the example of Turkey. It is not yet clear what movement in the direction of the EAU is, but it has so far looked quite unattractive. And it is not very clear what will make such an appeal emerge, at least, for Georgia.

Khramchikhin (Russian political scientist, *a comment by the editor*) recently expressed quite an interesting idea that the EAU is the number one alternative to the SCO for Russia, and this initiative is an attempt to weaken the influence of China on the parts of the post-Soviet space.

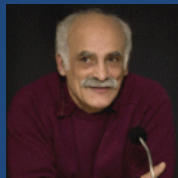
This is even more important if Ukraine continues to resist the attempts to cram it into an association.



SERGEY SARGSYAN

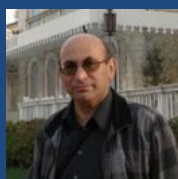
The harshness of the question for the states in South Caucasus is closely related to the military and political problems in the region. And these are problems the resolution attempts of which may be very dynamic, with no rollback of the situation into the starting position. These are very painful issues for individual states, and moreover for the entire region.

As for the EAU and the SCO, these are rather the expansion of the military and political project of CSTO with the economic factor, in particular, because of the fact that China restricts the economic capacity of the SCO by its military force. Besides, the diarchy in the SCO is nasty and barely acceptable for Russia.



GEORGE TARKHAN-MOURAVI

It appears to me that the EAU project is actually topical for the South Caucasus countries only in its secondary and symbolic meaning. As it has already been mentioned, Russia is the only active and dominant player within the project: even if Nazarbayev was the one who came up with the original idea, he seemed to be interested mainly in relations with Russia. Russia remains to be the only one with serious military power that is why in essence there is no difference (apart from symbolism) whether it acts within the EAU or on the basis of bilateral agreements?! So far, Russia has been incapable of handling its own share of North Caucasus, and it is not clear how its reinforced presence will make a favorable impact on the resistance against non-traditional threats in the region.



ARIF YUNUSOV

Dear Sasha, in order to be healthy and wealthy you should aim for being such. And the EU provides a prospect or at least a hope for that. And what do we have in the case with the EAU? Is there such a hope to improve our lives? This is quite doubtful. And one more thing: the problem is that as Laura pointed out the CIS countries need a “carrot” from Russia. The problem is that modern Russia has an extremely unattractive image. And the carrot from modern Russia will be perceived by the CIS countries as a Trojan horse. That is to say theoretically I do not see anything bad in the alliance to be formed by the countries, including poor or regional neighbors, to solve their concrete problems. But only in case there is no fear and mistrust towards one another. And in

the case with the EAU the problem is not the yearning to create a structure on the economic basis. There is huge mistrust towards the locomotive and the initiator of the EAU – Russia. Why do we now associate everything with the economic or military and political constituent? Let's be honest: there is huge mistrust towards Russia on the part of the CIS countries, and Russia has quite an unattractive image for these countries: this is a major factor at present. In the case of the EU, there is no such factor. Some of the EU countries have leaders with quite an unattractive image, for example, Berlusconi or Sarkozy, and tomorrow we may see more countries with other leaders who will have unattractive images and will be extremely unpopular. But the CIS countries focus more not on the personal image, but the factor of hope for changes in their lives by means of European integration.



HIKMET HADJY-ZADEH

Honorable Sergey Sargsyan! Russia may promise to feed (we all know how it is now feeding Armenia), but this is not a topical issue for Azerbaijan. We are getting along without such “support.” By the way, Georgia was in quite a similar state before Saakashvili, very similar to Armenia now. Georgia said no to such “support”, undertook reforms and now they are living twice better than in the unequal marriage with Putin. It is time to make a decision!



ALEXANDER KRYLOV

Dear colleagues! I am calling everyone to sober evaluations, there is too much emotion involved here. I love the EU and I dislike Putin, Russia and the EAU. And what's next? It is your right. What do real politic and real problems have to do here? Here we are dealing with the reality of this or that way of transformation and the solution of quite concrete problems. Has anyone already received Karabakh for oil, or just the opposite? Or has anyone joined NATO and brought back the lost territories? Are there any chances for the lighthouse of democracy to still shed light upon the Caucasus and the whole of the post-Soviet space? Are we still carrying the banner of democracy to Zimbabwe? How will diarchy end and why, after the previously unambiguous pro-European policy, there is a necessity to come back to the Russian market?

Here we are dealing with quite serious stuff: it is possible to make a choice between castles in the air and to run to them through the Sahara sands. Sovereign states have a right to make such a choice, only this cannot be a suicidal one. Is the European option realistic, has it brought concrete benefits in terms of the making of democratic institutions, the multi-party system, the civil society, the building of a competitive economy (long live oil and gas in Azerbaijan, but how did Europe help it in this sense?), how are social problems solved with European support, how is the issue of tolerance solved, how is homophobia being overcome, and so on and so forth? That is why I ask

(without success so far) to illustrate the practical benefits of the European option. And in response all I hear is hopes and rights to have hopes, and also about dislike of Russia and Putin and so on. Does Armenia have a different option other than Russia to ensure its security in its quite well known surroundings? Or is Armenia definitely losing because of its cooperation with Russia, while Europe, the USA and NATO (Turkey?) will help it solve all its problems, up to the acknowledgement of the 1915 Genocide and the whole range of problems related to it? Well, say Russia is gone, it collapses or sinks in the Atlantic Ocean, what will happen next? Will all the problems of South Caucasus get solved and will the European dream come true?



ARIF YUNUSOV

Dear Sergey! When our authorities propose Nagorno Karabakh to become part of Azerbaijan, you, like many Armenians, and not only Armenians, speak of the mistrust Karabakh Armenians have towards Azerbaijan and the words of the Azerbaijani President and so on. Even though the authorities of our country speak of the advantages of Karabakh's return to Azerbaijan, about the "support" they could get, if we use Sergey's terms. But why is Nagorno Karabakh refusing this "support?" Because they do not believe in good words. The situation is similar with Putin's proposal and the attitude towards Russia. But the main thing is that the individuals should not matter seriously, we have already spoken about this above. There are bad leaders with negative images in the West, too, including the EU. But the main thing there does not have to do with the leaders of those countries. The major factors are their political systems and the values they offer. Yes, it is true that for us everything is still at the level of hopes. But these hopes are there. And not only hopes. They propose to accomplish concrete tasks – to reform our judicial and other systems, that is to say to change our lives. And what do we have in case of the EAU? And if this project is not that important for Russia itself and if no one is forcefully dragged into this union, what is the whole hassle about? The thing is that there would be someone who would solve our problems for us. We will always have these problems and it does not matter whether we are part of the EU or any other structure. Besides, we have quite a large number of problems with the EU. The issue is how these problems get solved? At the expense of what? And how would they be solved within the EAU and will they be solved at all?



LAURA BAGHDASARYAN

Good morning, colleagues! This is the second day of our work and I hope that today you will demonstrate an equal level of activity as yesterday (we had time periods when everybody was online)! Especially so, since today I intend to bring to your attention some aspects, mentioned in my last message yesterday. Could I ask you to address these points as thoroughly as possible?

1. The phobias that are associated with the EAU and in general with closer cooperation with Russia, held by the representatives of countries participating in the discussion? Will these phobias get even deeper and what can Russia do (can and cannot do) to disperse them?
2. Do you think it possible for Armenia alone to participate in the EAU and the continuous refusal of Azerbaijan and Georgia to join the union?
3. How can Russia bring Georgia closer to the decision on participation in the EAU and in general to the improvement of relations between Russia and Georgia?
4. What is the perception of the foreign countries and what will be done as a countermeasure on their part?
5. Do Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine have levers they can use in order to insist on their refusal from the integration into the EAU?
6. Is the simultaneous participation of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the EAU possible and what does it mean to join it together with Karabakh, as it was proposed by Mr. Hadjy-zadeh late last night?



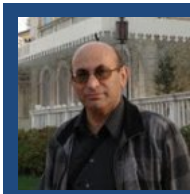
SERGEY SARGSYAN

Dear Hikmet Hadjy-Zadeh!

1. “If Armenia moves towards Russia, Karabakh will be lost.” This is not quite an accurate thesis. And if we accept it, with reservations and omissions, this may be only in case we accept the polar opposite thesis: if Azerbaijan moves towards Turkey, Baku has to admit the loss of Karabakh right away. But it would be even better for it to admit it even before that... Unfortunately, we have communicated only by correspondence that is why I will explain my position that seemed “not quite comprehensible.” I believe that if Armenia moves away from the EU, the USA, or Russia, Karabakh will be lost. The complementary policy Armenia leads is not in vain, and not for the sake of witticism. On the one hand, Yerevan and Baku still maintain their hopes for a final, full and unconditional involvement of Moscow for support. But on the other hand, Moscow in its turn is eager to get both Armenia and Azerbaijan and make them its reliable allies who go exclusively by its interests. In order to ensure a situation when all are exclusively under its wing, Russia may “pass” Karabakh over to Azerbaijan under certain circumstances. This has happened already and many times – both in Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union. I assume our views on this matter differ from those of Azerbaijan, and it is quite unlikely that we will arrive at a consensus. Besides, we should not underestimate Moscow’s foreign policy fluctuations, to put it mildly. But here it seems that the Russian experts themselves criticize the Kremlin on this very point much more extensively and with more valid reasons for it. In the end, the Kremlin has seen both Gorbachov, and Yeltsin, and we have caught it in the neck, being both within and outside the Soviet Union.

If Armenia, say, goes under the wing of NATO, the EU and the USA, it is clear that the NKR will be passed over to Azerbaijan, for various reasons, at least for the oil tensions and Turkish lobby.

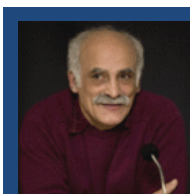
Hence, there seems to be really something “to be discussed further” in the process of constant situational analysis which is a generally regular thing in politics...



ARIF YUNUSOV

Deat Sergey! I have read what you wrote and even if we are diverting from the topic, only slightly.

I agree with the evaluation given to Russia because of its contradictory role and position in the Karabakh issue. Yes, in fact it could care less which republic Karabakh would be part of, Moscow uses it to maintain its influence and pressure over Armenians and Azerbaijanis, because in the past Russia occasionally helped both Armenia and Azerbaijan both in the military and political terms. That is why both parties have hopes and apprehensions with regard to the loss of Karabakh, just as you expressed them above. Besides, we have both politicians and citizens who say that it is necessary to join the EAU and in general pursue a pro-Russian policy in order not to lose Karabakh. And many Armenians, including you, repeated that point. That is to say the major thing here is the fear of losing Karabakh. In essence, both Armenia and Azerbaijan have today become the hostages of Russia in the Karabakh issue. But this actually leads to a conclusion: why should you get such a firm hold of Russia? It was because of this position of Russia that in Azerbaijan we came to the conclusion that there is no reason to struggle for Russia, since it will still never make a definite and unambiguous movement towards this or that party. This is exactly what Hikmet (Hadjy-zadeh, *a comment by the editor*) meant when he spoke about the possibility of simultaneous movement towards Russia. That is to say if we are both fighting for the same thing (Karabakh) and we have the same fear factor (Russia), perhaps we could choose to change the fear factor? And thus stop being hostages? Don't you think so, too? Doesn't it seem to you that you have a lot of phobias in your attitude? The phrase on the “Turkish lobby” already shows a lot. We have similar and sincerely expressed apprehensions of the “Armenian lobby”))) However, these are the myths held by the parties, extremely exaggerated impressions and apprehensions of one another. By the way, we come from the point that it is important for Russia not to move towards NATO, but with regard to the EU the position is more or less steady. So, perhaps we could move from this very moment on towards the EU?



GEORGE TARKAH-MOURAVI

1. The important matters here are not only the phobias, but that Russia (hiding behind the EAU) has nothing to offer. For Georgia the main threat to its security comes from Russia, so, does this mean we should open the door ourselves to let in the wolf? No improvement can be seen for the moment, while the foreign policy lead by Russia is an expression of its internal policy, and there is a slow aggravation in this aspect. Russia must turn into a democratic state, and it should stop to be

a spoiler for the West, in order to dispel the phobias, but this is highly unlikely. When this happens, at least to a certain degree, we can renew the conversation.

2. Yes, only Armenia's affiliation to the EAU is possible, and quite probable.

3. There has been some improvement in the Russian-Georgian relations, just like in the period when Saakashvili had taken office. But to "bring Georgia closer to the decision to affiliate with the EAU" cannot be foreseen when considered realistically.



HIKMET HADJY-ZADEH

I will try to answer Laura Baghdasaryan's questions.

1. The more persistently Putin continues to invite us to join the EAU, the stronger the phobias would be. In order to dispel Putinophobia, Russia should give up neo-Stalinism in general. It is necessary for Russia to miraculously arrive at a situation when the power is taken not by former KGB officials, but rather liberal authorities, at least close to what Russia had in Yeltsin's times. Perhaps then the Russian Federation will cease to see an enemy in the person of the West, for this is the point, actually! All these EAUs and "the regulation of neighboring foreign countries" take place because of the phobias the current regime in the Russian Federation has of the West. West is coming!

2. Do you think participation of only Armenia in the EAU and the continuous refusal of Azerbaijan and Georgia possible?

- Of course, it is quite possible, and judging by the current indicators, that is exactly what will happen.

3. How can Russia bring Georgia closer to the improvement of the Russian-Georgian relations? - The incumbent authorities in the Russian Federation will not be able to do so, because they believe that if they leave Georgia alone, NATO will immediately get there and will position its missiles right on the border with the Russian Federation, thus owning the resources in the Baykal.

4. What is the perception of the foreign countries and what will be done as a countermeasure on their part?

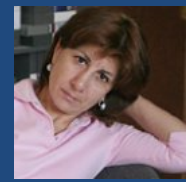
- As it has already been written here, the Europeans were quite negative towards the idea of the EAU, and they were equally negative towards the simultaneous participation of our countries in both projects (the Western and the Eastern).

5. Do Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine have levers they can use in order to insist on their refusal from the integration into the EAU?

- In this matter Azerbaijan relies on its resources and the support of the West who is quite unwilling to see the re-Sovietization of the former post-Soviet space.

6. Is the simultaneous participation of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the EAU possible and what does it mean to join the EAU together with Karabakh, as it was proposed by Mr. Hadji-zadeh late last night?

- A correct question. Karabakh will be one of the main obstacles on Azerbaijan's way to join the EAU. As for my remark on "Armenia's joining the EAU together with Karabakh, so that no one notices it," I meant it would be impossible to achieve.



LAURA BAGHDASARYAN

Colleagues, yesterday's and today's comments that addressed quite a wide range of issues, somehow related to the topic of our conference, testify to the problems that have accumulated in the post-Soviet space (and this is only based on the example of 4 countries), the key ones among them being the regional conflicts.

I do not think that I should refer only to the results of surveys conducted among the population, according to which the vast majority of the people in Georgia are for integration into NATO. I have always been skeptical to the results of this kind of surveys since I have never seen Russophobia among the Georgian population. I mean the society at the level of ordinary people, not at political or expert levels. And this is something we cannot disregard. Specifically, there is no need to aggravate the situation, since the Russian-Georgian conflict, even after August 8th, 2008, did not worsen to get to a point where it would turn into an interethnic conflict. From my perspective, this is a geopolitical conflict with the political elites of the two countries involved in it. That is why it seems to me that the solution of this conflict, hence the regulation of the Russian and Georgian relations, is quite feasible in the form of a slowly and steadily advancing process.

But the situation is just the opposite with regard to the Armenian and Azerbaijani conflict.

ABOUT CONFLICTS: It seems no one denies the fact that as long as the Karabakh conflict remains open, it will be impossible to see Armenia and Azerbaijan in one integrating organization. Arif even proposes to move away from Russia together, in concord and so on. I did not expect to hear such an unrealistic proposal from you, Arif, who always pours a bucket of icy water onto hot-blooded heads, and brings theoreticians back to the reality at various discussions. And that is why I wonder if you truly believe that such a thing is ever possible? Under the circumstances of a constantly harsh game between Armenia and Azerbaijan that ends in nil? When absolutely all the steps undertaken by both parties are polar opposites?



ALEXANDER KRYLOV

The harsh opposition between the EAU and EU in this discussion seems to be excessively categorical to me. If the EAU is Russia, then the relations between Russia and the EU are in no way absolutely confrontational, as it is described by some of the participants of this conference. That is why the smaller post-Soviet states should not overestimate the significance of existing contradictions and build their policies on this basis.

As for sweeping everyone with the foul Russian broom into the EAU in the future: so far the picture has been just the opposite. The Kirgiz Republic and its neighbors are eager to join, but they are not adopted. I assume this is because of the reasons that have already been mentioned, regarding the failure of the CIS.

The most probable option in the near future is the affiliation of three, maximum five states, no more than that. There are no threats for Azerbaijan and Georgia to be forced into a new Imperialistic project, there should be no major concerns in this regard. Only if we do not consider the promised opening of the Russian market for Georgian goods as another manifestation of Russian imperialism. In this case Georgia can proudly say no to this offer and forever deprive Russian imperialists of Georgian fruits and wines (and the Azerbaijani gas, the Ukrainian fat and so on), which they insidiously are so eager to get. It is true that the capital in Russia and all over the world has ceased to be purely national, but it is rather transnational, and it would be preferable to keep this in mind in reasoning. The topic on how the interest of transitional capital coincide with the interests of modern states, democracy and the interests of the society is worthwhile for a serious conversation, but it is beyond the topic of today's discussion.



HANNA SHELEST

Laura, I would not qualify the yearnings to join NATO as Russophobia. This is an absolutely incorrect thesis, cultivated more in Russia than in the individual countries, who have selected the course of Euro-Atlantic integration. If Russia stops to perceive NATO as in the “cold war” period, a number of problems would become invalid right away. In this regard the 2005 – 2007 period was quite illustrative to me when Ukraine officially and purposefully headed for NATO, but the analysis of the facts, and particularly the missions under NATO (both qualitatively and quantitatively), the quantity and topics of bilateral negotiations, the number of joint drills, arms trade, bilateral entities and so on, acting between Russia and NATO and between Ukraine and NATO raised an inconceivable question: who is moving to NATO – Ukraine or Russia? Moscow's cooperation with the Alliance was considerably more active, more productive and closer than that of Kiev. But instead the Central media outlets constantly carried screaming headlines that Russia

threatens Ukraine in case it joins NATO. That is why, in my opinion, the yearnings of the Caucasian countries to become a member of the EU or NATO should not be perceived as anti-Russian. Simply, the states saw “additional benefits”, security guarantees, and guarantees for development which they have been unable to see in other integration processes or in simply bilateral satellite relations with Russia.

As for the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, I would recall here the fact that Azerbaijan and Armenia do cooperate within the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, or within the framework of the EU Eastern Partnership Program, if we leave aside the OSCE and other larger organizations. This means that the unregulated conflict is the main hindrance to keep the countries away from participating in the EAU. I would rather say that this is just another factor, but not the only one.

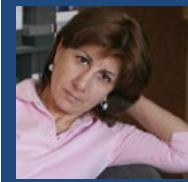
Black Sea Navy– Laura, you touched upon a very painful issue for the Ukrainian society – the Black Sea Navy. I would not call this an example of military cooperation, because there is no such cooperation. The Black Sea Navy is not subjected to anybody, it does not cooperate, moreover, it occasionally violates signed agreements. Unfortunately, this is a major pain in the neck. I would ask you not to perceive my further theses as anti-Russian, since this criticism is more targeted at internal actors. This is because of the short-sightedness of individual politicians, while Russia is only taking advantage of the situation. The reasons of Russia’s willingness to leave the military navy base in Ukraine after the collapse of the USSR are absolutely clear, at least because there were no other options. After long and complicated negotiations, pressures and so on a solution was found to this problem which at that time fitted all: so-called Transition Provisions were added to the Ukrainian Constitution in 1996 which clearly stated that the Black Sea Navy of the Russian Federation can be in the Crimea until 2017 with a possible extension of 5 years. The renowned agreement was subsequently signed. When they started to say that Russia would soon leave, it did not bring about serious objections at the state level: options of other dislocations were being discussed, both Abkhazia, and Novorossiysk, and even Syria. Surely the Crimea was better and cheaper (since they did not pay for many things whatsoever, and they would pay pennies for the land), but some activities were underway in the context of Russia leaving the Crimea. And suddenly in 2010 in the negotiations for gas a decision was made to prolong the stay in the Crimea, by the way not for 5 years, which would not violate the internal legislation, but for 25 years, and in exchange for quite a suspicious proposal along with the violations of a whole range of internal procedures and the Constitution, as many lawyers believe. This might pass without too much ado, but the opponents of this decision brought an example in which Ukraine was de jure involved in warfare without its own consent, particularly in August 2008, when the warships of the Black Sea Navy came onto the Georgian side without notifying Ukraine. Moreover, from the legal perspective Ukraine was formally a party supporting one of the conflicting sides since the warships came over from the Ukrainian territory.

The non-aligned status is in principle a concept I cannot understand. The state may remain neutral; this status is clearly stated by international procedures and traditions. This neutrality is necessary to include in the internal documents, and to have guarantees of neutrality. Being non-aligned is the non-participation in any block. And which are the available blocks? This is a term that has been inherited from the times of the cold war. Is NATO a block? No, it is a usual military and political organization. But even if some consider NATO to be a block, what other blocks do we

then have? That is to say in our case being non-aligned, from the perspective of the authors of the idea, is actually diminished to being outside NATO. And correspondingly, they did not see any contradictions in the presence of a foreign base. By the way, coming back to the same Constitution, Article 17 prohibits the dislocation of any foreign bases in our territory!

That is to say we do not need even the non-aligned status. That is why the Transition Provisions came forth.

And as for the issue of gas, I am afraid, in our relations it has become almost a military instrument of pressure.



LAURA BAGHDASARYAN – ABOUT RUSSOPHOBIA AND NATO

Hanna, you and I may not make Russophobia oppose NATO. But we were speaking of the results of the public opinion poll in Georgia (and not only in Georgia), which as it is well-known is mostly formed at the expense of extensive internal information propaganda. If the main argument of reorientation of the military and political vector was the once anti-Georgian policy led in South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russia, the movement away from Russia should have meant movement towards NATO, as an organization which could have provided Georgia with guarantees regarding its conflicts. And otherwise, why should Georgia leave the CIS and have conflicts with Russia (as a famous Georgian political scientist said, “Russia is close by and very familiar, NATO is something not quite familiar, something not yet tested, and probably something that is more effective for us!”) I may have exaggerated a number of subtle internal policy and orientation issues but the reality in politics, just as life in reality, makes up situations which we described in relation to the Black Sea Navy. Russia itself is certainly actively participating with NATO, and it perceives Armenia’s cooperation with NATO equally calmly. And do you know why? Because Russia is sure that this cooperation does not mean the presence of NATO formations in either Armenia or Russia. Jealousy appears when rapprochement to NATO entails an aspiration to affiliate, with the consequences such affiliation may result in terms of Russia’s interests. Whether we want it or not, the whole problem consists in perceptions the Western countries, also NATO structures have of their relations with Russia. And this can be proved by the general reaction given, for example, by the USA, to the plan of creating the EAU. But this topic is that of the perception of Russia and its projects in the West, and this will be covered tomorrow.

About Armenia’s and Azerbaijan’s cooperation within the framework of various projects and organizations

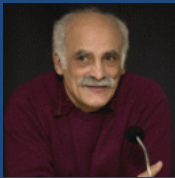
I would not call the membership of the two countries to various organizations or their participation in various programs, like Eastern Partnership, cooperation. These are rather parallel processes – Armenia and Azerbaijan participate in the Eastern Partnership Program, but this does not mean they are doing joint actions, directed at the solution of common problems. Unfortunately, the swing principle is working for Armenia and Azerbaijan, and it would be a sheer mistake to compare the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan with those between Armenia and Turkey. Yes, there is certain turnover of goods between Armenia and Turkey and there are

flights without diplomatic relations. The citizens of Armenia freely go to Turkey without any threats to their lives; some RA citizens are labor migrants in Turkey. And how could we claim the same in the other case? Is such a thing possible for the citizens of Armenia and Azerbaijan? Only in the territory of third countries. As for cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan in other organizations, such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe and so on, these could not be considered cooperation either. These organizations are rather platforms for the two parties to lobby against each other.



ARIF YUNUSOV

Laura, I assume we must clarify certain things here. There is still some cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, even in the conditions of the Karabakh conflict. Even if that's what it looks like and even if it takes place with difficulty. Simply I wanted to point out that even in case of the unresolved conflict the relations of the conflicting parties within the framework of an organization are quite possible. Simply this cooperation is not very largely flaunted today. Personally I participated in an assessment of cooperation to improve irrigation canals and joint exploitation of the irrigation system along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and on the front line. But who was informed officially about this? This was not flaunted but it did take place. Also the parties cooperate in relation to environmental issues within international organizations. What I mean here is that the conflict is not a complete hindrance. Moreover, if an agreement to implement Madrid principles is signed, it will not mean complete peace, and the conflict will persist, but the parties will start to cooperate.



GEORGE TARKHAN-MOURAVI

The EAU is primarily of interest because after the CSTO this is a project that makes post-Soviet states face the need to make a clear choice and to express their willingness to orientate themselves towards integration either with the West or to demonstrate their readiness to unambiguously become part of the Putin geopolitical initiative not only in the military, but also economic and political aspects. The countries who choose the latter option, just like Belarus, will have to constantly refuse from playing on various fronts and will have to give recognizance not to leave. Here I will add my personal opinion which is shared by a large number of my friends and acquaintances that in case the authorities of Georgia decide to join EAU against all our hopes, we will leave that country.



SERGEY SARGSYAN

George said that "if despite our hopes the authorities of Georgia decide to join EAU, we will leave this country." And this brings to serious considerations, and not only about Georgia. We are facing an almost similar situation.

Will everyone leave?

Will the majority of the population stay?

And how can you make a decision, not relying on the will of the majority?

Or is Georgia's (Armenia's, Azerbaijan's, Ukraine's and others') joining the EAU (EU, NATO and so on) already impossible without the expression of the will of their peoples?

And another question, a purely practical one: how is it possible to explain to public that it is necessary to work diligently for a long time, to change a lot and to change themselves, so that in the future (in 5 - 10 - 20 years, in the long term perspective, not in this life and so on) in order to live up to their dreams. And it is necessary to "feed," and not only make promises to, this society already today - and tomorrow and every day. To provide it (roughly speaking) with food, security, cultural values... Or should these issues addressed not by us - experts, but the authorities, who should make decisions coming for the real state of affairs which is sometimes considerably worse than it is seen from aside?

Or maybe the society is ready to tolerate this a few months/years/decades?

Of course, such significant decisions on whether they should join an integration structure or not should be made through extensive public consultations, and after profound and thorough research projects. And after referendums, after all. And all this will take quite a lot of time.. I had an English teacher at school. She did not teach me the language, just like almost any school teacher, but within our discussion I recalled one of her phrases, addressed at one of the girls in our class: "Try to prolong the period between engagement and marriage. It is so romantic, pleasant, and happy! But after it... it ends..."



ALEXANDER KRYLOV

Judging from the few last comments, part of our participants do not accept the idea that there is no need to extremely idealize the situation in one part of Europe and to extremely dramatize it in the other part of it. The validity of their reasons for optimism about their choice of European integration will be proved in the upcoming years, and I hope that the highly overstated hopes would not be the reason for more disappointments.

As our discussion made it clear, thank God, there are no great expectations from the EAU, hence it would be easier to live through probable disappointments.