

ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN TODAY EVENTS AND COMMENTS

Electronic Bulletin N 15, 2013

PROSPECTS OF EASTERN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AFTER VILNIUS SUMMIT



Region Research Center (Armenia) and the Institute for Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan) continue their cooperation on the joint internet platform “Public Dialogues” (www.publicdialogues.info) with the support of the Embassies of Great Britain in Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the Embassies of Poland in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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The views and opinions expressed on this bulletin are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of British and Polish Governments.

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VIRTUAL PARALLELS

THE INTERVIEWS IN ARMENIA ARE ORGANIZED AND HELD BY REGION RESEARCH CENTER AND BY THE INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY IN AZERBAIJAN,

within the framework of a project, supported by the Embassies of Great Britain in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The interviews in this rubric are simultaneously published in Armenia (the Hetq newspaper, hetq.am) and in Azerbaijan (the NovoyeVremya newspaper, <http://online.novoye-vremya.com>).

EU AND RUSSIA: CONFRONTATION OR COOPERATION?

QUESTION - Can we say that the pressure to refuse to sign the agreements to Associate membership to the EU has made the confrontation between Russia and the EU more explicit? Russia has to protect itself from the expansion of the European Union or is this Russia's phobia?

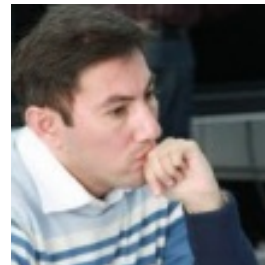


**ALEXANDER
ISKANDARYAN**

*An excerpt from the
interview with the
Director of Caucasus
Institute(Armenia)*

- You can word it any way you wish, but the word – “force” is from newspaper lexicon. There are interactions, and all the countries, any country, even the most powerful ones, cannot disregard the interests of others. The confrontation between Russia and the EU was mainly not because of Armenia: Armenia is not very economically attractive to Russia. Armenia was somehow an instrument to put pressure on Ukraine, not the only instrument, but one of many. The happenings of September 3 have actually nothing to do with us.

We do not at all speak about Georgia, and this is not accidental. Because Russia practically has no means to put pressure on Georgia. In the confrontation with Russia, Georgia has lost all that it could and could not afford to lose. Armenia would be in the same position, having lost Karabakh. Armenia was the



**ILGAR
VELIZADE**

*Political scientist
(Azerbaijan)*

- Discords have existed between the EU and Russia for a long time, but they never led to large-scale confrontation. Because the EU is primarily a union of European countries, by the way a union that is not always monolithic and ideal. Each of the EU countries has its own interests and its own relations with Russia. Germany also largely depends on the Russian gas supply for over 40 years now. Russia has relatively good relations with Italy and France. That is why there is a risk to spoil bilateral relations and this perception is there in terms of the relations between Russia and the EU. As for the Russian phobia against the EU, this must be a rudiment of the Cold War with Brussels and Moscow being to blame for its retention. Both parties cannot identify their principles and rules of interaction, this leads not only to cruel disputes between them, but has most unfavorable effects on international relations,

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means to influence the situation in general, while Russia was gaining at the expense of Armenia. There is a political game in which Russia is trying to bring back the post-Soviet space. The expansion of the European Union is out of the question; at least the European Union has not offered expansion to those countries. This is not very easy: Turkey has been negotiating for already 50 years over admission to the European Union. The admission of every country to the European Union is a huge problem – a financial, technical, and organizational issue. Because of political reasons the European Union admitted 10 countries, and then Rumania and Bulgaria, which it cannot digest so far. But Rumania is twice smaller than Ukraine and 4 times smaller than Bulgaria. There are only 3 countries that the EU would be willing to admit to gain and not to lose: Island, Switzerland and Norway, but none of them are eager to join it. The remaining countries are the consumers of what the European Union has to offer and to the EU this is considerable expense, not only in the sense of funding.

in particular, on the relations of these players with their European neighbors and partners. This is why the relations between Brussels and Moscow are permanently topical for the larger Europe and how much Russia and the EU will be able to agree, the effectiveness of their cooperation will depend also on the nature of the development of the Eastern Partnership Program.

See full interviews here

Confrontation between Russia and EU revealed but not over Armenia and Eastern Partnership Depends on Cooperation between Russia and EU -

<http://publicdialogues.info/en/node/633>

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From the Internet press conference of

ANNA SHELEST

Leading researcher of the Odessa branch of the National Institute for Strategic Studies (Ukraine)

- I think that the recent events in Ukraine and Moldova only prove that Russia is struggling, but is not winning. Look at the progress in the negotiations in Chisinau on the visa-free regime. Look at the demonstration in support of European integration in Chisinau since November 3, at what is happening in Ukraine on Euromaydan. The thing is that not only the population, but also the politicians in these two countries do not want to be part of a sort of the USSR. Even the supporters of closer cooperation with Moscow will not see this as a revival of such a level of integration and control, because it will automatically lead to the loss of their own power.
- The Crimea is a really painful subject. And there are two issues here: the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation and the Crimean Tatar population. Formally, the Crimean issues have been moved beyond the frames of other issues on the relations between the two countries. The Crimea is hardly Russian, as it has been presented by the pro-Russian radical parties. Most Russians appeared there only after the deportation of the Crimean Tatars after World War 2. When I say that we must give away the Crimea to Russia, I always suggest to give it to Turkey or even better to Greece – these two ruled there for a longer time period. But seriously, today the Crimean Tatars went to Kiev to support Euromaydan and Mejlis approved this decision.

The support of Russia by a number of people is based only on the knowledge of the Russian language and what they remember about Russia, but do not know what is happening there now. Euromaydan is not so much for the EU itself or against the current government. It is against the conditions that have been established, the decisions that have been imposed. Yesterday the activists forced the political parties to bring down their party flags, because these actions are not political, but social. There, people with different views and positions have come together. But many came here because they felt that they were deceived. A week ago, all the screens told them of the agreement to be signed in Vilnius, and suddenly an absolutely incomprehensible decision was made by the Cabinet. For the people who are currently on the Maydan is not a choice between the EU and Russia, we do not oppose one to the other. This is not 2004; it must be very well understood.

Arminfo news agency-www.arminfo.am, News Armenia news agency-www.newsarmenia.am, Public Radio of Armenia-www.armradio.am and panorama.am from Armenia and NovoyeVremya newspaper-www.novoye-vremya.com, BizimYol newspaper-www.bizimyol.az, Zerkalo newspaper-www.zerkalo.az and Turan news agency-www.contact.az from Azerbaijan participated in the press conference of Anna Shelest.

Full version of the material: <http://www.publicdialogues.info/en/node/634>

VIDEO BRIDGES

VILNIUS SUMMIT AND THE FUTURE OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The dialogue took place on December 2, 2013.



THE EXPERTS IN YEREVAN:

SERGEY SARGSYAN

Deputy Director of the Center for Political Studies of the Scientific-Educational Foundation "Noravank"

MANVEL SARGSYAN

Director of the Armenian Center of National and Strategic Research



EXPERTS IN BAKU:

NATIG JAFARLI

Executive Secretary of REAL (Republican Alternative Movement)

YUSIF AGHAYEV

Head of the Institute of Military and Political Studies, independent expert

SERGEY SARGSYAN

- In my opinion, everyone in Vilnius signed what they wanted, and those who did not want to sign, simply did not sign.

As for the pressure on the part of Russia. Honestly, I cannot recall a political process without pressure from this or that side. And I would not like to say that Russia has blackmailed all these countries. Here blackmail would be between a seller and a buyer. And when we go to a shop, and the seller names his price, we can say that he/she puts pressure and blackmails by the more favorable position, and we have to buy in. The same thing happened in the relations between our states, between Europe and Russia. And there is another thing here. Russia has so far been saying: you can sign whatever you wish, this is your right, but my right is to act in this situation as I believe appropriate.

Comments from **YUSIF AGHAYEV**

- I would like to make a brief comment on the statements made by my colleagues from Yerevan. In particular, regarding they failure to see a blackmail in the interaction between the seller and the buyer, with the seller not putting pressure on the buyer. Unfortunately, that was not my take of the situation; on the contrary, I constantly detected blackmail. The recent events prove that there are no market relations here with all parties being free in their activities. Here we can see a real political blackmail. As for Azerbaijan, I can say that though Azerbaijan was least of all involved in this integration process, however we have been constantly feeling political pressure on the part of Russia, also during Presidential elections. Here I mean the events in Biryulovo, the migrant pogroms in Moscow. That is the devalued blackmail by Russia,

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involving Azerbaijan, too. As for the *carte blanche*, what can Russia's *carte blanche* be in the given situation. Simply here everyone has their own, concrete political interests. But Russia has its own concrete political interests, because the Customs Union is rather an initiative based on veiled political Imperial ambitions of Russia than a trade and economic integration space.

MANVEL SARGSYAN

- I think that the political significance of the Vilnius process consists in the developments during the Summit, and not the developments that were planned. These certainly define the new situation. We can already see what has been going on in Ukraine, and it is very difficult to foretell what the outcome will be. Similar processes may be happening with other countries, too. The idea of European integration itself has received a very serious blow, and the thing is not that someone there signed or did not sign the Agreement. The thing is that the long-term strategy of international relations has been on the verge of collapse, the strategy of the reformation of Europe was at stake. And I do not think that such things will later be calmly resolved or shaken off. No, they won't. And in general, Ukraine may become an example of what can happen to the Eastern European space and Russia, too. Certain processes are underway, and they are not fading out. They can be seen in Armenia, too. Today when the President of Russia Putin arrived, there were actions here and there with clashes with the Police. At the same time, new protests and a new political line have been launched.

NATIG JAFARLI

I think that Europe and the EU learnt their lessons from the Vilnius Summit. Our countries should also very accurately consider and reflect upon their course in the future. I do not think that Europe will get along with this failure. There will be new initiatives, new proposals, programs, because all this is very important. We have slightly different time frames and perspectives with Europe. If we want to have reforms in countries right away, to have high level European integration, two years or five years do not have any major significance. They understand that Russia, regardless of its ambitious projects, cannot implement the Customs and Eurasian Unions on its own. This is a very large burden for the economy of Russia, which is, by the way, very vulnerable and highly dependent on energy sources. So far it is not yet known what will happen in a year or two on the energy market, that is why, I think that these processes will be continued by both parties.

See the full version of the video bridge: <http://publicdialogues.info/node/638>