

## Russia Incites Armenia To Change CSTO « Driving Belt » With NATO « Umbrella ».

YEREVAN, JANUARY 16. ARMINFO. Armenian Prime Minister's statement was not unexpected; it was predictable enough as it reflects the growing disappointment in Armenia at Russia's policy to its ally, President of the Association of Armenian Political Scientists, MP Hmayak Hovhannissyan says in an interview to ARMINFO predicting the consequences of the rise in the prices for Russian gas in the context of Armenian-Russian strategic cooperation.

If many Armenians still believe that the present political leadership of Russia has once and for all done away with disregarding the interests of its allies to conciliate the foes who are breaking the ties of military-political and economic cooperation with Russia, now many are disposed to see a certain historical succession in the position of the Russian leadership, he says. It is not accidental that the Armenian press has frequently published analyses of Russia's present position to Armenia drawing analogies with the stoic composure of Yeltsin's administration to Belgrad's bombing or even with not less evident negligence to the genocide of the "Russian outpost" representatives in Western Armenia in the first half of the 20th century, the political scientist says.

"I think the incumbent leadership of Russia treats rather lightly this progress in the national consciousness of the present generation of Armenia so dangerous for the future of Armenian- Russian relations, " Hovhannissyan says. The point is that the attitude of Armenians to Russia has been just emotional for the last two centuries, he explains. Hence, the traditional Russophilia of Armenians was also emotional. It was not pragmatic as it would be much more safer and favorable to be an "outpost" of Turkey. This traditional emotional attitude to Russia, which allowed no mercantile intentions, has been now displayed with the fact that no one in Armenia has raised the issue of charging Russia for placement of military base in our territory so far and no one has publicly stated that NATO's umbrella is much reliable and economically favorable than Russia's one. While, the Armenian press is full with such statements at present. The point is not that there is a single step from love to hatred, one should just take into account that any pragmatic intentions in the Russian-Armenian relations make the supporters of the strategic union with Russia unarmed against the arguments of their compatriots who say that Armenia having no borders with Russia should rely on NATO and the consolidated West rather than on the weak CSTO. In this connection I'd like to advise my Russian colleagues not to delude themselves by a possibility that Russia may use the unsettled Karabakh conflict as a peculiar "driving belt" to influence Armenia. One should not forget that unlike Abkhazia, South Ossetia or Transdnistria, there are no Russian peacemakers in Karabakh; and the military-political influence of Russia on Karabakh and on the South Caucasus, on the whole, is connected with the Russian military base in Armenia. But for the base, Karabakh could become a South Caucasian "driving belt" of NATO. Here is what Russia's mercantile "market" intentions may bring to; the intentions that ignore the value of the military- strategic alliance with Armenia, H. Hovhannissyan says in conclusion.

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