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# Situation Forced Serzh Sargsyan To Stake All

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Interview with Andrias Ghukasyan, political scientist

Mr. Ghukasyan, was the September 3 decision to join the Customs Union made under pressure? And did it promote Russia by one step?

Obviously, that was a force majeure. Serzh Sargsyan's and Vladimir Putin's decision indicates that the regular course of foreign policy of Armenia has been disrupted. In other words, there were serious motives for that and obviously the issue was not just refusal of the Association Agreement. After all, as of today we have broken relations with the EU. If there was a reason for not signing the Association Agreement in Vilnius, there was a way of doing it: publish the agreement, hold public discussions, collect all the pros and cons, and Serzh Sargsyan would have an opportunity to tell the EU that the society is not ready yet. This is the right way of doing it, whereas he agreement was not published, and a step was taken which not only blocks the way of association with the EU but endangers regular relations between Armenia and the EU. Such things are a force majeure which stops the regular course of policy. I think this situation and Serzh Sargsyan's move are both related to the settlement of the conflict over Artsakh. I can see this link.

Do you mean that force majeure was the sale of weapon of 3 billion dollars to Azerbaijan and threat of war?

The situation pushed Serzh Sargsyan to stake all. Soon we may hear that Armenia is preparing for unilateral concessions. You know that Turkey stipulates the return of at least two regions, and in 2014 it will be 20 years since the conflict has been frozen, and the line of contact is not defended by international trips, and one may suggest that Serzh Sargsyan has proposed deployment of CSTO troops in Karabakh for peacekeeping purposes. Hence, the decision to join the Customs Union is the logical consequence because thereby two issues are resolved: first, Armenia associates with Russia, second, opportunities open up for opening the Armenian-Turkish border. Most importantly, Artsakh is in a situation when Russian forces stand between Artsakh and Azerbaijan, and there is a BCP of the Customs Union between Artsakh and Armenia, and all movement to and from Artsakh is controlled by Russia.

Such a solution may interest the United States because opening the Armenian-Turkish border by 2015 is an important goal for the United States. It will be a big achievement for the Democratic Party. Over 2 million people live in the United States, and the Democrats should be interested in their support. Such an arrangement leads to a perception that membership to the Customs Union is the consequence of the necessity for a dramatic change in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. We can see that what happened gave a surprise to Europe, not the United States and Russia. I think Serzh Sargsyan's meeting with the French president was meant to make amends because actually the rules of international diplomatic relations had been violated.

Serzh Sargsyan stated that Armenia is ready to sign the Association Agreement. There is an opinion that this is Moscow-Brussels, not Armenia-Europe relations after all.

In reality, Russia is quite limited by the Olympic Games in Sochi which prevents Russia from taking abrupt steps against the European Union. The response could be boycott of the Olympic Games, resulting in an internal crisis for the top layer of Russia as, besides the public money, the money of the Russian oligarchy has been invested in Sochi. A red line runs across the Moscow-Brussels relations, and the Kremlin cannot cross this line. This means that despite what happened both Moscow and Yerevan hope that this will be accepted by the EU as an argument, and Brussels will ignore it because there is a matter of loss of political reputation and honor. The net output is: Serzh Sargsyan used the EU in the 2012-2013 electoral processes and threw it away as something unnecessary. We also felt this from Serzh Sargsyan's address to the PACE. And all those evaluations of elections which the Europeans actually gave in advance were returned to the European members of parliament. Usually, if contracts are terminated early, the sides return what they received. Now France and the EU need to make a political decision whether or not to restart the political processes in Armenia. Should they create a situation which will lead to Serzh Sargsyan's resignation and restart the political system or will the Europeans have to admit the arguments that are on the table so they may not pick up the gauntlet that Serzh Sargsyan threw down to the EU.

This is a slap in the face of the EPP as well because the RPA which is a member of this party decides to join the Eurasian Union which cannot be explained in any way because how could an EPP member make such a decision?

Do you mean that Europe could cause a revolution in Armenia? Are such u-turns possible?

Trade with Armenia amounts to two billion. If the EU changes its economic policy on Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan may have to resign.

Mr. Ghukasyan, the opposition proved once again its bankruptcy, and the political field seems unable to find its place.

Today the civil movements need to review this state of things and change the strategy of the movement. As to the systemic opposition, it has been destroyed. Now the problem is whether the opposition that is outside the system will pass this important stage or not. If the relations between the EU and the West are over, and Armenia appears under Russia's influence, the Russian forces are deployed in Artsakh, Armenia joins the Customs Union, and we forget about democracy. We saw the examples of Kazakhstan, Belarus, Russia. At this important stage the society needs to identify whether it is going to have a role in these processes or not. If not, these important issues will be resolved within a narrow circle of the regime and great powers.

However, the society does not understand that change depends on it, it does not consider itself to be a participant of foreign policy making.

For years the stereotyped thinking was that foreign policy is a closed area, and people learn about its developments post factum. The examples are many - the Armenian-Turkish process, the Karabakh settlement. The society is very little aware of these processes, what has been happening in the Minsk Group over the past 20 years, the society learned about the Armenian-Turkish protocols when they had been initiated, the Association Agreement was discussed behind closed doors for 3.5 years but the society was not aware of what the EU was offering. The decision on joining the Customs Union was also published post factum, the society learned about it from TV. Earlier was the agreement on prolonging the period of deployment of the Russian military base by 40 years. This is the consequence of the regime undergoing a deep crisis which is not able to discuss any geopolitical

issue with the society. The regime cannot publish any information about foreign policy. So, the society needs to figure out the path of development of the country and prevent the criminal regime from bargaining national interests. The destiny of Armenia depends on the civil society.

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