
Contradictive Logics Of The Military-Political Reality: What Does The Stirring Up Of The Russian-Azerbaijani Military And Technical Cooperation Mean?

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In the recent weeks the interest of the Armenian mass media and public towards the situation around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has grown; it has been first of all conditioned by the information concerning realization of a number of large-scale military and technical treaties between Russia and Azerbaijan, which has been negotiated since 2011.

Though this is rather strange phenomenon in the aspect of political ethics - supplying modern weapons to the country which is the probable military enemy of Russia's strategic partner and the CSTO member, it is at the same time rather traditional for the Russian military-technical policy in the South Caucasus. Moscow has been behaving the same way in the Armenian-Azerbaijani-Russian military-political triangle for more than 20 years.

The last time Armenia's similar angry reaction was caused by the sales of S-300PMU-2 Favourite missile system and Mi-35M strike helicopters by Moscow to Baku in 2011-2012. But this time public reaction in Armenia was incomparably stronger. Either the stock-list of the sold weapons was too impressive for the Armenian public or the frequency of such steps caused irritation of Armenia and Armenian Diaspora.

However, this is not that important ...

The other thing which remains unnoticed by both political circles in Armenia, where they are guided by the hurt pride, and in Azerbaijan, where they do not want to admit meaninglessness of their "Sisyphean labor" in the form of permanent race of armaments initiated at the expense of their bloody petrodollars, is important. Nothing new happened, is happening or will happen in the foreseeable future.

Except for Azerbaijan spent either 1 or 3 billion petrodollars in addition to \$15-20 billion which have already been spent without changing essentially military balance in the zone of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Russia sold and it still continues to sell weapons and equipment to Azerbaijan at the market prices, and at the same time it compensates military balance in the zone of the Karabakh conflict by the supplying appropriate weapons and equipment to the Armenian army on easy terms or even almost for free. Though these weapons are half-generation older than the weapons bought by Azerbaijan at market prices (e.g. very good T-90S tanks bought by Azerbaijan in reality are just an advanced modification of an "old and good" T-72 tank), at the same time all the types of weapons received by Armenia can be modernized and thus compensate this balance. On the other hand qualitative advantage can be compensated at the expense of the quantitative one.

In the other words if 200 T-90 tanks will be supplied to Azerbaijan (it was announced about the contract on buying one regiment unit consisting of 94 tanks and an option on buying just as many tanks), it means that Armenia will receive at least 300 T-72 tanks of preceding modifications. They will be modernized taking into account terrain configuration and tasks faced by

the Armenian and Karabakh armies and they can compensate given qualitative difference. The same can be said about other types of weapons. In consequence, we have a situation when Azerbaijan finances re-armament of the Armenian army as well.

Unfortunately the extent of the article does not allow substantiating the statement that the real military and political balance in the Karabakh conflict zone is not essentially disrupted, by bringing some figures and more detailed analysis. Let us confine to stating the fact that taking into consideration the re-armament of the 102nd Russian military base in Gyumri, which was proceeding at the same time, Russian and Armenian parties initiated works directed to preservation of the military and technical balance before the supplies of new weapons to Azerbaijan began. Re-armament of the Russian base in Gyumri was finished at the beginning of this year. Obviously, all the military equipment from this base (of the division level) was not sent to rust somewhere in Siberia, so it is clear where it is now.

But this is not the only mechanism by means of which Russia provides military and technical balance with Armenia. Amounts, volume, stock-list of these military sales are an "open secret" only for three million Armenians and six million Azerbaijanis. Moreover, almost at the same time with the demonstration of T-90S tanks newly bought from Russia, "Smerch" multiples rocket launchers, BMP-3, TOS-1A "Solntsepyok" Heavy Flame Thrower System and other weapons at the military parade in Baku on June 26, 2013, the delegations of the CSTO and Security Council of Russia visited Yerevan and discussed further military and technical cooperation between Armenia and Russia, formation of multi-profile air force component of the CSTO on the territory of Armenia, further rearmament of the 102nd base, etc. So the balance at given moment will not change, especially taking into consideration the fact that the weapons which have to be supplied to Azerbaijan in accordance with the Azerbaijani-Russian contracts, and in particular T-90Ss and BMP-3s, mostly have to be produced at the Russian military industrial factories and this will take another couple of years.

In the end, no matter how paradoxical it may seem, a situation is created when everybody is almost "happy". Azerbaijan buys very expensive weapons, which were demonstrated with pleasure at the parade on June 26, 2013 on the eve of the presidential elections which have to be held in autumn. Part of Azerbaijani society is happy seeing that equipment at the parade and continues to believe in permanent affirmations of their authorities that in the nearest future (as they have for the recent two decades, and most probably they will do it in the future) they will initiate operation on liberation of Karabakh. In its turn Russia (especially represented by its rather corrupted military industrial complex, which, as some officials try to find some excuses, every time in spite of the opinion of their generals, pushes through Azerbaijani military contracts) is also happy because it earned its billions from the customer which dropped from the clouds.

Military and political authorities of Armenia, which also express their discontent in public, in the end will be satisfied too, because in consequence of this multi-way but at the same time predictable combination they will have an opportunity to re-arm its tank and artillery park, modernize other weapons and equipment.

And finally, western partners of Armenia are also happy because in consequence of this situation anti-Russian moods will intensify in the public and political community in Armenia. But even happier are the organizations and political powers in Armenia which, consciously or unconsciously carry out substantiated anti-Russian policy, because in consequence they will have even more propitious field for their

activity.

Could Russia not do this, taking into consideration strategic partnership between Russia and Armenia? Probably it could, but, on the other hand, when, for example, Ukraine, which is rather friendly country to Armenia, or Israel carried out billion dollars cost military sales to Azerbaijan, Russia never felt obliged to provide Armenia with weapons, which had to balance billion dollars cost weapons flows to Azerbaijan. In this situation Russia is both obliged and forced to make such "balancing" supplies to Armenia. Besides, the point here is rather political component than technical mechanisms of all of this.

One should understand that Russian is simply not interested in resumption of the military activities because among other reasons, it will have to react somehow. It is clear that nobody in Moscow wants to participate in any military actions in Karabakh or around it, but it is also clear that there are some political obligations (both bilateral and within the framework of the CSTO), non-fulfillment of which also has its political and strategic price. Correspondingly, Moscow will continue doing what it has been doing successfully for recent two decades - suspend balance, thus not allowing resumption of the military actions and creation of the situation when the weapons supplied by Russia can be used against the Russian army too, whether it will be on the territory of Armenia or in any other adjoining regions, in correspondence with bilateral and multilateral obligations in the sphere of security to its only military and political ally.

By the way, Russia with this kind of policy in the sphere of the military and technical cooperation with its allies and their rivals is not exclusion in this aspect. Let us remember the similar policy carried out by the US in regard to Greece and Turkey, Egypt and Israel. The situation is that even if such a power is not a monopolist but a dominant weapons supplier to the both parties, it also has definite leverages to influence the situation.

Let us bring another interesting fact. According to the cables leaked from Wikileaks, dated 2009, president of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev in his conversation with the western diplomats while speaking about the military-technical cooperation with Israel concerning buying anti-aircraft defence systems, answering a question why they were buying it if they had already bought S-300 from Russia said that in Baku they were not confident about the efficient usage of S-300 if something happened.. It is mentioned in the cable that Aliyev motivated it by the fact that the modern high-tech electronic systems could be controlled by the country which produced it. However, it cannot be stated for sure whether this conversation took place or not; it is just a reference to the cable from Wikileaks, but nevertheless this information is rather remarkable...

It should be specially underlined that the situation described should not be taken as attempts "to put on a good face". It is natural that this situation is rather consistent within tougher system of military and political relations. One can judge in different ways ethics of Moscow's actions, but the fact is that the multi-way "military and technical policy" plays its role in preserving stability in the region. The appropriate reaction in Armenia is also an ambiguous and sensitive fact and in Russia nobody should avoid it. In Moscow they should give a thought to this fact because despite the aforementioned scheme of Russia's attempts to balance such military sales in the region, it is obvious that this story cannot but affect the perception of Russia by the Armenian society.

This may also have definite military and strategic consequences, and Russia

will have to react properly when the time will come, in order not to be surprised why the Russian Tu-23M3 strategic bombers are being shot down by the Russian "Buk" missile systems (as it was in August 2008), in case if by bad chance Russia will be involved in a conflict which will mainly be caused by its political errors.

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