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# Chilly Autumn: Political Stagnation Follows Armenia's Foreign Policy U-Turn

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The forecasts for the hot political autumn appear to have proved erroneous as Armenia seems to be "enjoying" perhaps the most tranquil period in its recent history. Political forces do not advance claims, public rallies have been called off, civil protests that were quite vigorous during the summer months have subsided. Even though analysts had expected that President Serzh Sargsyan's decision on Armenia's accession to the Customs Union that was announced on September 3 would cause a storm of emotions, in reality it has led to stagnation.

The sole active actor in Armenia now is Russia, and although Armenia has already declared about its intention to join the Moscow-led bloc, Russia is trying to prove through its local public relations that entry into the Customs Union will be beneficial for Armenia. Few people publicly argue with it, Russia continues to advance arguments, perhaps realizing that they are not particularly convincing.

What accounts for such indifference of the Armenian society? According to experts, the problem may be that some political forces had been tuned to protests and a change of power in connection with the already past intentions of Sargsyan to initial the Association Agreement with the EU. Still in summer these forces hinted that an agreement with the EU would threaten the security of Karabakh.

In the context of these protests the political forces had also hinted at the possibility of impeachment, but the September 3 decision solved the task of keeping Armenia within the Russian zone of influence, while leaving the task of regime change unfulfilled. And now the Armenian political forces need to build a new foundation for the president's impeachment or acknowledge that he is right.

Apparently, this is what explains the political lull in Armenia. The Dashnaktsutyun party appears to have taken time out by announcing a national program to curb outward migration. The party calls on all political forces to consolidate, but it does not demand the resignation of the government.

The second largest parliamentary party, Prosperous Armenia, which has always been in favor of the Eurasian future of Armenia, also appears to be at a loss - Armenia is almost in Eurasia, and President Sargsyan has only strengthened his positions and the party itself is now almost irrelevant. Prosperous Armenia has always avoided political decisions and steps, and now it only tries to criticize Sargsyan through media controlled by it.

The party of the first President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the Armenian National Congress (ANC), in fact, endorsed the decision by Sargsyan on the Customs Union and now focuses mainly on issues of the release of imprisoned young activist Tigran Arakelyan.

Once the questions of power change and Armenia' foreign policy orientation have been delineated, the Armenian opposition has to decide whether it will rally around the idea of impeaching President Sargsyan without linking the matter to the Customs Union or the EU. In this regard, some experts do not

rule out an alliance between the ANC and the Prosperous Armenia, as cooperation between the two parties is becoming more noticeable.

However, after the September 3 development, the local media have been increasingly talking about the likelihood of Prosperous Armenia's re-entry into the ruling coalition. The party of wealthy businessman Gagik Tsarukyan clearly understands that it has few resources for the impeachment, especially since there is no Russian support, and at this stage it is better to rejoin the coalition.

As for Dashnaktsutyun, it is unlikely that the party will re-enter the coalition - influential members of the American structures of the party, in particular, the chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America Ken Hachikian, have openly criticized Sargsyan for the decision to join the Customs Union.

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