
Iran Expects Serious Politics From Armenia

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The first meeting of Serzh Sargsyan attending the inauguration of the Iranian president had his first meeting with the president of Iran Hassan Rowhani. The official press release on the meeting is written in a warm tone, which one cannot say about the practical Armenian-Iranian relations during both the tenure of Serzh Sargsyan and especially the past few months or weeks.

Serzh Sargsyan's relations with Iran were so problematic that in the beginning the ex-president Robert Kocharyan committed to the Armenian-Iranian relations who visited Iran after a short while from the end of his term and met with the Iranian foreign minister and President Ahmadinejad.

President Sargsyan was able to "settle down" in the Iran-Armenian relations only after a while. Indeed, the overlap of Serzh Sargsyan's presidency with severe Western sanctions against Iran had a role. In this case, Armenia was able to benefit from the circumstance of present and former presidents and practice a culture that was appropriate of state policy.

Official Yerevan refrained from active relations with Iran. Instead, Robert Kocharyan assumed responsibility in this important area. Hence, Armenia was able to keep the balance in the intricate triangle West-Russia-Iran. There were systemic motives, of course, because in case of complication the government that was hardly recovering from 1 March 2008 would be highly vulnerable and face difficult issues. In other words, along with state necessity, the common systemic interest played a role too.

The Iranian-Armenian relationship has been shattered recently.

Everything began with the rise in the Russian gas price that triggered considerations of alternative Iranian gas. The Armenian government, in the face of the minister of energy Armen Movsisyan stated that Iranian gas is not an alternative to the Russian gas. The Iranian ambassador stated the opposite thing. The minister of energy Movsisyan questioned the awareness of the ambassador. It is already equal to a diplomatic scandal. There was no exchange of notes by the foreign ministries but the facts were enough to see problems in the Armenian-Iranian relations. The Iranian side expressed its dissatisfaction more vividly.

The result of the Iranian presidential election led to a new state of things. The victory of reformer Rowhani was unexpected. The West had a relatively positive attitude. Armenia made a tangible gesture to Iran.

The National Assembly enacted tax preferences for the construction of the big water power plant on the Iran-Armenia border. Hence, official Yerevan tried to alleviate Iran's dissatisfaction with lack of initiatives and vigor of Yerevan towards Iran. The newly-elected president Rowhani said in his answer to Serzh Sargsyan's congratulation that he expects more pro-active relations.

Attending the swearing-in of the new president of Iran, Serzh Sargsyan tried to display his positive disposition. The official press release of the president's administration states, "Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Hasan Rouhani recalled warmly the meetings held in their capacity as the Secretaries of National Security of their respective countries."

At the same time, the West met the inauguration of the Iranian president with tougher sanctions. The U.S. Congress passed a bill to cut Iran's oil exports and toughen sanctions related to financial transactions.

This conjuncture does not benefit Armenia but the West might be trying to hint to the new president of Iran that Tehran is expected to take some steps, otherwise the West is persistent in its steps and knows what to do.

Hence, official Tehran must prove that the new government is based on the philosophy of reforms. Furthermore, Iran can do it through Armenia. In other words, it is clear that the new president of Iran cannot make a revolution of international tolerance in Iran. It must maintain some constant stereotypes. Perhaps, one of these is the call to destroy the state of Israel. In reality, however, the new president of Iran must have the common sense to understand that such calls are populism that is deprived of any prospect. Perhaps, it is a question whether those calls are popular among the Iranian youth where young people have fresh views on the world.

Nevertheless, overly friendly gestures to the West are also clearly unrealistic. In this regard, Iran may preserve toughness to the West at the level of statements, at the same time seeking for practical terms via Armenia. Iran and the West have common far-reaching strategic interests, while Armenia is a potential platform for their maturing.

However, this requires that the Armenian government go down to politics. For the time being, one can see only the shreds because apparently the general philosophy is to seize the moment and conjuncture and sail with the wind. And even if all the four sides of the universe cheer and praise, it will be for a very short period of time.

Only those have a lasting and credible movement who do not catch the wind but create the wind and weather, each to the extent of their capability. In this regard, the foreign policy of Armenia looks like a quest for a more or less warm blanket to hide underneath rather than attempts to reinforce its place and role. And such attempts require reliable premises in one's own country. Without them the foreign policy is highly relative.

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