ECHOES OF UKRAINE WAR IN SOUTH CAUCASUS

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Echoes of Ukraine war in South Caucasus intensified during the past few weeks. Diplomatic, political as well as security activities heightened in the region specially in the Republic of Armenia (RoA), Azerbaijan and Iran.

The Canadian government announced on 5th of July its plan to open an embassy in RoA . The Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly stated that the decision was made to support democracy in RoA and to counter Russia's influence in the region. In addition to RoA, Canada declared that it would open embassies in four Eastern European countries as well. The Canadian officials confirmed that their decision would support NATO war efforts in Eastern Europe.

CIA Director William Burns' visit to Yerevan on 15th of July was not surprising given the intense tension in the region; this was the first trip of such a US security personnel to RoA. The purpose of this visit is not clear yet; however, it came as part of the ongoing US war efforts in Ukraine. The head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service Sergei Naryshkin followed suit and arrived in Yerevan on 18th of July. It is not known whether the two high-ranking security officials met in RoA; but the two foreign visitors respectively met with government officials in RoA including the PM Pashinyan. It is significant that neither of the two guests made any adverse announcement against the other while visiting RoA.

Europe also, progressively, showed more interest in Southern Caucasus. According to an agreement signed on 18th of July, Azerbaijan will increase its natural gas supply to Europe by 50% during 2022. In case this agreement is achieved it will meet 3% of the total European demand; this is the lowest source of natural gas import for Europe and it falls short of creating dependency. The new agreement comes within a comprehensive emergency European plan that aims at first to reduce their reliance on Russian natural gas and second to move faster towards diversified and renewable energy sources.

The new gas agreement with EU means that Azerbaijan's competition with Russia over oil and gas markets becomes serious. This can be managed either through fair competition and open market rules that Russia cannot commit due to its engagement in a total war, alternatively, Russia may sell its natural gas through Azerbaijan to European and other markets. Azerbaijan did not show interest in becoming a proxy state for Russia; rather, it preferred to sell its own oil and gas.

Russia has actively worked in finding new markets and routes to export its oil and gas. During the past weeks, Russia – Iran relationship evolved to full alliance against NATO and the US in Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus, and the Middle East. On 19th of July Putin visited Iran; a trilateral summit was held between Putin, Raisi and Erdogan to discuss the fate of Syria. In an unprecedented manner, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned Erdogan against attempts to block the

border connection between RoA and Iran through Syunik. He clearly stated that Iran would not accept such an act.

Putin's visit to Iran was concluded by signing a $40 billion agreement that included developing new Iranian oil fields and building new gas export pipelines. Russia already exports oil and gas to India through UAE. Iran will be at the core of this new trade route giving Russia higher export capacity. Azerbaijan is not part of this deal. Moreover, several western sources confirmed that Putin will also sign military cooperation deals with Iran that include purchasing Iranian made drones.

RoA and Artsakh should consider benefiting from Russia – Iran rapprochement to push forward their national security agenda. They should seek concessions from the West in return for staying neutral, the least of which is to restrain Azerbaijan's aggressive actions, to preserve RoA's territorial integrity and Artsakh's security. Oddly, at a reception of a German delegation on 20th of July the president of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan made a statement contrary to the interests of RoA and the Armenian nation scattered throughout the globe. Instead of promoting Armenian interests he said, "Armenia has no territorial claims towards its neighbours". This baffling statement, it seems, does not take into consideration the negative consequences. It is submissive and defeatist. Why would a high ranking RoA official feel the urge to make such an unprecedented statement? It weakens the Armenian position in any political settlement in the region. Ominously, such statements are being received by the public without tangible accountability. Armenians have the right to question Mr. Simonyan and demand clarifications.

Comments



Avo Tchaparian – 2022-07-25 15:57:25
Answering Mr. Shahe Boghossian sincere remarks.- IRRESPECTIVE of WHAT Mr. Alen Simonian has said, in WHAT Context he said it, WHY he said it, and What he may say in the future, HE IS ELECTED BY A CLEAR MAJORITY by the voters of Republic of Armenia, who, it seems, are NOT AT ALL bothered by his statements. On the other hand, many "Ethnic" Armenians, living outside Armenia, may feel justifiably outraged, even alienated. That's the usual Result of Democracy, that we all seem to cherish. The ultimate question remains whether Democracy is an Appropriate Choice in case of Armrnia now.



Shahe Boghossian – 2022-07-25 06:16:40
Alen simonyan is such a naive idiot that he needs a lollipop or maybe something else. We had enough of these idiots We need a fair dictator to cut the throats of these idiots and get rid of the russian occupation And please post this and stop being timid and naive yourself. Start taking an aggressive stance for once.... Mr Keghart