KARABAKH/GENOCIDE – THE DECEPTION

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By Bruce Tasker, Yerevan-Armenia

Decision time for Armenia's President Sargsyan; sign on to the Karabakh agreement and face domestic turmoil, or not sign and sacrifice the benefits needed to avoid a complete collapse in the Armenian economy. To add to his difficulties, Azerbaijan and Turkey have joined forces and are pressing Sargsyan to accept Turkey's long-awaited 'Independent Commission' to study Genocide. Agreeing to that will give the regime the most beneficial "Karabakh Deal", but will put an end to Armenia's claims of Genocide.

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Kocharian is the architect of the Karabakh deal, a scheduled component of his fabricated economic boom and needed to avoid a total economic collapse. He gave up his driving seat to Sargsyan on the understanding his successor would complete the deal he knew better not to sign. Sargsyan has since been struggling to cope with the many twists and turns in the road, under pressure from all sides and not at all confident that Kocharian as his navigator would not prefer to see him end up in the ditch.

Sargsyan entered his presidential campaign with confidence and declared: "It is important that Armenia recognize territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and that Azerbaijan recognizes the right of Nagorno-Karabakh residents for self-determination". He added that in such case the President will be able to say to his voters: "You have voted for my program and I must implement it". He was of course aware of the 'Madrid Principles', which had just been approved by his predecessor, one of a number of such documents which acknowledged Azerbaijani sovereignty of Karabakh and the surrounding territories, but which did not provide for self-determination.

Sargsyan emerged victorious but less confident from his Kocharian enforced Presidency, and talking about Karabakh he said: "Azerbaijan must understand the simple reality that the existence of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence is irreversible". He added "It is impossible to even imagine that the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh could be subordinate in any way to Azerbaijan" – "If no other means remain, Armenia will recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh". Since then, he and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Nalbandian, have insisted the future of Karabakh will be determined through an internal referendum, in accordance with guidelines laid down in the 'Madrid Principles'. Today, under increasing domestic pressure, Sargsyan attempts to reassert his commitment to Karabakhi 'Self-Determination' and in a press office statement he said: "Azerbaijan must recognize the exercise of the Nagorno Karabakh population's right of self determination." To clarify the seemingly clear but purposefully ambiguous Sargsyan statement, Matthew Bryza eventually revealed the truth: "The issue of Referendum can be reviewed after the liberation of Azerbaijani Regions from the {Armenian} occupation and deployment of Peacekeepers in the Territory".

Throughout Kocharian's ten year Presidency and to this day, none of the Karabakh resolutions have guaranteed the right of

Nagorno-Karabakh residents for self-determination, and according to the 'Madrid Principles', should a referendum ever take place the people of Karabakh might not even be included. However, in 1998 Armenia's first President Levon Ter-Petrossian agreed with Azerbaijan that Karabakh would have full autonomy, which would have given Nagorno Karabakh residents self-determination. Kocharian considered the plan unacceptable and ousted LTP. Armenia's new President Kocharian then secretly negotiated the swap of Armenia's southern border region for Karabakh, with a multi-billion dollar reward from Azerbaijan for his services. Kocharian's 'Goble Plan' was exposed and eventually quashed at a Key West meeting in 2002. Throughout the following years, Armenia's position with respect to Karabakh continued to deteriorate, recently aggravated further by the conflict in Georgia.

Sargsyan was given the Presidency in February 2008 on the promise he would sign the Karabakh agreement which Kocharian had planned and prepared for, but which he shrewdly avoided. The Minsk Group and the international community then closed their eyes to a string of Kocharian / Sargsyan atrocities, knowing the incoming President had committed to sign on to Karabakh. That led to frantic meetings and more promises, in Baku, Ankara, St. Petersburg, Sochi, Moscow, Brussels, Stockholm, Washington, and again in Moscow. The Georgian conflict introduced a new urgency, Russia applied the pressure, Turkey and Azerbaijan strengthened their alliance, and the Armenian regime was left with no option but to look for agreement on whatever resolution they could salvage.

At home, the regime was flip-flopping from one position to another, on Karabakh and with respect to the even more sensitive 'sell-out' of Genocide. In September this year, following President Gul's attendance to the infamous 6th September game of football in Yerevan, the Turkish press reported a diplomatic source as saying Armenia was to announce the establishment of a Joint Commission of Historians to study the events of 1915. The report followed a Turkish press refutation of an untrue announcement by Armenia's Minister of Energy, that during President Gul's trip to Armenia, Turkey had signed an agreement to buy Armenian electricity. Armenia's Minister of Energy Moffsissian was obliged to confess his over-enthusiasm and Sargsyan stepped back from the 'Genocide Commission' saying: first, let our joint border be opened and diplomatic relations constituted, "then we can establish commissions, sub-commissions and sub-sub-commissions for any issue". Sargsyan later said the formation of a commission to investigate the Armenian Genocide is unnecessary and refers to an "Intergovernmental Process", which can be established later.

These are classic examples of Armenian regime tactics to deceive; the same way in which through the past ten years it has collaborated with the World Bank and the IMF to steal billions of dollars worth of state assets, as exposed and reported to the Armenian Parliamentary Commission of 2004, and through the subsequent and ongoing 'Blowing the World Bank Whistle' action in Washington.

Sargsyan's latest statement: "Azerbaijan must recognize the exercise of the Nagorno Karabakh population's right of self-determination", does not refer to "self-determination", it refers to the "exercise of recognizing self-determination". That exercise could start at any time in the future and could last for many years, (in accordance to Bryza's latest statements) and it might conclude that the Nagorno Karabakh population will not have 'Self-Determination' (in accordance with Azerbaijan's repeated statements). Statements on the Genocide commission follow exactly the same deceptive pattern.

Contrary to the misleading rhetoric, Armenia's regime is moving on with its 'Sell-Out' of Karabakh and with establishing the 'Genocide Commission', under pressure from Azerbaijan and Turkey, who have joined forces to resolve these two long outstanding issues, and from the long list of international powers which are waiting for Serzh Sargsyan to stand by his many pre and post Presidential election promises to quickly sign on to a resolution. The alternative will be more isolation for Armenia, a totally

collapsed Armenian economy and the Kocharian / Sargsyan regime falling back on their only remaining option – to provoke Azerbaijan into an unnecessary war over Karabakh, a war they have no intention of winning, but which they will orchestrate to save their illegitimate regime.