

REVIEW ON MIKAYEL HOVHANNISYAN'S PAPER "EU FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY AND WIDER SOUTH CAUCASUS"¹⁰

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Thank You. Let me start by expressing my gratitude: thank you Gevorg, thank you, Vazgen, for inviting me again. I spent almost 5 years in the South Caucasus, not in an easy period of time. We arrived in Tbilisi, Georgia, at the end of July 2008, and you all probably know what happened in August. Some Russians organized a smooth welcoming party. But it was a wonderful time. Later on, I was elected as a founding Steering Committee member of the EU Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, together with Ulad Vialichkas and Katarzyna Pelczyńska-Nałęcz, and we are still in almost daily Skype contact. Currently, I am not working in a government mandate anymore so on the paper be careful, otherwise, I would be in trouble for not being able to say something. I am from Cologne and grew up with the spirit of openness and humor I know I can talk endlessly.

Mikayel: - I forgot to say that you have 10 minutes.

Iris: - Yes, I know. But my priority is, let us have a dialogue, which is missing so far. I am in favor of a dialogue, and I will try to be as sharp and short as possible. So my issue was your brilliant paper, congratulations, which is about relations between the European Union and Russia. That means Armenia as an Eastern Partnership country, in particular, after the Riga summit, after new challenges, and being a member - after the U-turn in 2013-2015 - of the Eurasian Union, and I would disagree. Russia is not behaving OK, again being what it is. At least, since the escalation in Eastern Ukraine, in Crimea, the sanctions of European Union started. It's not a cold war, but it's something very challenging, and Paata Zakareishvili will tell anybody what it means to be in conflict with Russia. For Armenia it is not easy, the Europeans are in a crisis, and Russia is in what we can call a kind of

¹⁰ The text is the transcription of the speech given at the conference.

new post-war situation, so it is not easy to be in relationship with EU and Russia. So I disagree with you, EU foreign policy is not fully developed to a joint foreign ministry and ministry of defense, currently. It would be a very new statement, but that would be for the EU. They are now busy resolving Brexit, and other issues.

Mikayel: - You are in fact disagreeing with me, because there is no involvement bilaterally.

Iris: - My first point: the first challenge is the upcoming EU summit, is not taking place in Tallinn but in Brussels since the Estonian EU presidency is busy making the presidency a necessary success. This will be something new. After Eastern Partnership it is not easy, because the Eastern Partnership countries, Armenia included, are in deep crisis, and these are issues that are not mentioned so far. Russia is using all kind of instruments. They are using territorial, ethnic conflicts to intervene: it's Karabakh, Abkhazia, the South Ossetia and plenty of other territories. Russia is also using public diplomacy, so it's also clear. And plenty of others have an interest in the Eastern countries, Armenia included. And I would be happy if someone will come up with this: What does it mean for Armenia, is it fine for you? Is this the right way? Is Russia behaving democratically? All answered or is there a problem? I see a problem! So, that is not easy, but to expect new solutions from the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels, in November.

Second point is, which is too much a part of your paper, it is tackled but unfortunately, nobody from the Armenian civil society forum is present on the Twenty Deliverables. And I am wondering. You either have to have monitoring, a test from someone from the EU, but he has already left, or even better, your own monitoring, and your friends are not doing it. But someone from Armenia too must start that work. It's a pity that Boghos Boghossian is not present. So, it is a test, your Twenty Deliverables are quite crucial for the European Union to develop the Eastern Partnership further. In both ways: the official deliverables and the shadow evaluation. That is a test for you and other scholars that are doing so.

The next point is Eastern policy. For sure it is a task of the European Union, but it is also a task of the member states. And I am happy, obviously

Sweden is taking over again, because others are not able to do it. Previously it was Poland, Poland starting from '15 is lost, the linkage, lost its Eastern policy. I just attended a meeting with Polish Undersecretary of State Bartosz Cichocki in Berlin; he is trying to develop Eastern policy again, he is in charge of it, but Poland has lost its drivers. Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz published a paper on this. It's a decline of Polish Eastern policy. The same in Germany. They are not allocating public speech. It is no more Eastern policy in this case. After the conflict in Crimea, it doesn't develop further. Maybe Sweden can do it, but so far, I do not see very many new ideas. Maybe after Sweden, after new member states are also prone as, you have mentioned the problem in the Netherlands the referendum has been mentioned, because the majority, due to domestic, problems are against it. But it's an issue for EU member states, in particular in the given situation.

The fourth point is history. You mentioned it, history in general terms and in Armenia in particular, the genocide issue. Fortunately, most EU member states and Germany included have recognized the genocide. And that helps because history has trends. You cannot develop the future even much better, but on the other side it is not easy. If you are getting the recognition of the history in Armenia, you are making Turkey angry. And Turkish relations with the EU and EU member states are not doing well. I also disagree with this; I also disagree with Polish, Germans that say no. I can give plenty of examples of this in both cases. The same is with Turkey. With the Erdogan government, there are many concerns. You have to find a balance. So, on your future agenda it is coming to the conclusion that coming to terms with history will make Turkey unhappy. And finding a new balance between the relations of Russia and the European Union. That was always a challenge. It was a challenge during the EU Eastern Partnership Summits in Prague (2009), Warsaw (2011), and Vilnius (2013) and in Riga (2015) and we must look for the outcome in Brussels, but we must deliver an issue. But Russia is not doing fine, it is going in a different direction, but it is a challenge and Armenia is doing well, there are brilliant people in Armenia, brilliant experts. So, for the better path for the future take a breath, attack some of the challenges, and my idea would be to develop the relationship further and have a discourse about it.