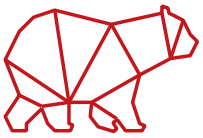

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Armenia's integration policy between 'complementarity' and 'conditionality'

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Armenia's foreign policy principle of complementarity is a unique strategy of the South Caucasian republic balancing between the world and regional actors. The deterioration of the Russia-West relations in the second half of the 2000s led to a radical revision of many international cooperation practices, particularly in post-Soviet space. But for Armenia, the search for development resources through participation in various bilateral or multilateral formats of interaction remained as an important aspect of national policy.

Tactically in period from 2009 to 2013 the Armenian political elite has managed to ensure the effectiveness of its decisions by playing on two integration projects that provided certain benefits for the country. Thus, integration with the EU promised great financial assistance in some areas, both humanitarian and infrastructural. The space of Eurasian economic integration, in its turn, represented a large market for the export of competitive Armenian products. The various issues of military-political and energy security intertwined within the framework of the Eurasian integration.

The cooperation fields with the EU are important for Armenia in order to cover the needs of the Armenian society in those areas that are only indirectly related to activities within the EAEU. In this context, it can be stated a certain revival of the policy of "complementarism", but there is an important difference due to the fact that complementarity of the 90s and 2000s worked to form relations between different states and their blocs by the efforts of Armenian diplomacy, but today we are dealing with one-sided influence of the EU or the EAEU on Armenia in various areas of interaction.

Thus, there is a threat that "complementarism" will degenerate into the principle of "conditionality," according to which Armenia will experience losses in the issue of "subjectivity" (capability to make own unconditional decisions and improve the state image abroad). At the moment, political relations between the EU and the EAEU leave much to be desired, and the end of the "exceptional" period for Armenia in the EAEU makes think of the difficult 20s.

Recommendations

1. Firstly, the misconceptions in Russo-European relations lead to the competition of two different discourses, which can influence the deepening of social division in Armenia. At the same time, these approaches of public opinion formation demonstrate a distorted picture of bilateral relations with the EU or Russia and remained EAEU member-states.

2. The crisis of Armenia's complementarity policy also reflects the rejection of the world and regional actors to use the Armenian dialogue platform not only in case of the EU-EAEU relations, but within the EAEU member states' humanitarian cooperation. This situation also influences the academic sphere, where the most part of publications on the topic of the EU-EAEU relations and their "shared neighbourhood" is politicized. The first step can be a creation of a permanent information center, which, along with problems of public diplomacy, will become a platform for dialogue between academic communities.

3. The absence of Armenia's own vision of integration processes does not allow to advance a more ambitious program of the republic's economic development. In addition, the dominance of fake news, the stereotypical perception of Russian political interest and the lack of any stable ties with partners in the EAEU contributes to a distorted attitude towards integration processes in Armenia. In its turn, relations with the EU are built by inertia and do not exclude any strategic plan for linking two integration projects. Armenia's main integration function is mediation between economic unions and various societies, which the republic cannot fully perform.

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