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THE NATO-ARMENIAN RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NATO ENLARGEMENT

The problem of the NATO enlargement is comparatively new problem. It is result of our changing world and new geopolitical situation in the world. It, in its turn, is connected with the collaps of the Soviet Union, the world socialist system and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. After those radical changes, which ment the end of the Cold War Epoch, the USA remained the only superpower in our planet, and the NATO as the only political-military organization. In fact, since then there is no any real force in the world, capable seriously to challenge the USA world leadership and the NATO's leading role.

Hence then firstly had appeared the idea of NATO enlargement and its expansion towards East and concrete steps had been taken in realization of that idea.

The situation from political, international and psychological point of view was quite favourable for implementation of new policy by the NATO. We mean the following circumstances.

Firstly, Russia, after dissolution of the Soviet Union, was weak and not capable to prevent the NATO enlargement to its western borders, though it protested very vigorously. Otherwise, there was no serious obstacle on that way.

Secondly, and it is very important, at that time the Central and Eastern European countreis, as well as some ex-Soviet republics, first of all the Baltic republics, were very eager for the membership of the NATO. They still saw in Russia the main threat to their independence and national security and tried by uniting to NATO to provide more reliable security for themselves.

Here it is necessary to take into consideration another two factors. First of all we mean the changes of NATO itself and its adaptation to the new world geopolitical conditions. The NATO

leadership in 1990s took several very important decisions, due to which it, while preserving its political-military structures and tasks, at the same time adopted new functions: to provide security on the base of dialogue, cooperation and support of the collective defense potentiality. It was very principal innovation in the strategy of NATO.

These changes had made NATO more attractive for non-NATO countries and peoples, and had facilitated the liquidation of certain prejudices against NATO.

The second factor is connected with the new attitude of Russia towards the NATO and the problem of the Russian-NATO relations. Russia, after all, though very slowly and cautiously, but steadily started to improve its relations with NATO and to cooperate with it in many fields.

So the gates of the Central and Eastern Europe were opened before NATO and it remained him to enter through it. And NATO had entered. Poland, Hungary and Chekhia became new members of NATO and now on line are about 10 other countries, such as Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Slovenia, Slovakia, three Baltic countries, etc.

And as it was mentioned in the 48th Congress of the Atlantic Treaty Association hold in Stambul on 9-12 October, 2002, the next step of NATO will be the South Caucasus.

On their intention for the NATO membership had declared also other countries in different regions. Among them two countries in the South Caucasus- Georgia and Azerbaidjan. Georgia is doing it openly, very actively knocking the NATO doors, while Azerbaidjan is acting more cautiously, without making any noise. .

The position of the third country of the region-Armenia, is quite different those of Georgia and Azerbaidjan.

Until 2000 the Armenia-NATO relations were passive and the Armenia's cooperation with NATO was on very low level, which had its internal and external reasons.

Among the internal reasons it should be mentioned the fact that in Armenia the overwhelming majority of the people and different political forces for a long period did not trust NATO,

identifying it with its member Turkey. And as Turkey since 1993 had imposed together with Azerbaijan economical and communicational blockade on Armenia, was putting different preconditions before Armenia for establishing of diplomatic relations and pressures on Armenia in the Karabakh conflict, demanding the resolution of that problem on the Azeri variant, which is not acceptable for Armenia, and many times had openly threatened Armenia, all these in Armenia were accepted not only as a Turkish own policy towards Armenia, but also as NATO's policy in general. And it, naturally, was arousing negative attitude towards the NATO, feeding anti-NATO feelings in Armenia.

The government of Armenia could not ignore this fact and consequently it became for a certain time an obstacle in developing of relations with NATO on a large scale.

This was the main internal reason, standing on the way of it.

As for the external reason, here we mean the Russia's position towards the NATO and the character of the Armenian-Russian relations.

At that time, in mid 1990s, the Russian-NATO relations were strained. Russia rejected thoroughly the possibility of expansion of NATO to the East, near the Russian borders. Its cooperation with NATO was on low level. And these circumstances inevitably affected the attitude of Armenia towards NATO.

Armenia is connected with Russia by the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, concluded in 1997. Armenia is the only country with whom Russia had concluded such kind of Treaty. Russia has a military base in Armenia. Besides that, Armenia is a member of the Collective Defense Treaty (CDT) together with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

So, the Armenia's national security system was based on the strategic partnership with Russia and close cooperation with the countries of the CDT, which put certain obligation on Armenia. In that circumstances Armenia could not ignore the position of Russia which would mean deterioration of the rules of the game.

But recently the situation had changed, which was connected first of all with the improvement of NATO-Russian relations and

rapprochement. Their cooperation now is covering practically all main fields and the logical development of it was creation of the "Format 20" on the base of 19 NATO member states and Russia. Russia, which cooperates so closely with NATO, cannot any more prevent or create difficulties for other countries, including Armenia, for their own cooperation with NATO.

Alongside with the changing of external conditions, had been changed also the internal conditions and political atmosphere within Armenia in favour for cooperation with NATO.

The Armenian society, due to large explanatory works, began better understand the policy of NATO and its tasks in post Cold War Epoch, denied to put a sign of equality between the policy of Turkey and NATO and had demonstrated its willingness to enlarge cooperation with NATO in different fields, including the military sphere.

And I can say proudly that in this principal change its significant contribution had made also the Armenian Atlantic Association.

After these changes Armenia had officially adopted a new policy, named complementary policy. The backbone of it is to develop relations with foreign countries on the multitrack principle. Armenia, while keeping its strategic relations with Russia on the base of the Armenian-Russian Treaty, 1997, and preserving its participation in the CDT, had started to enlarge and deepen its cooperation in political, military and other fields with NATO, European Union and the USA.

And we can confirm that now the main components of national security of Armenia consists of strategical-military cooperation with Russia, participation in the CDT and NATO's program "Partnership for Peace". The USA-EU-NATO track is coming to complement the Russian-CDT track and due to it the ensuring of the national security of Armenia had been raised on a new, more high and reliable level.

After these changes a new page was opened in the NATO-Armenian relations. Armenia activated its participation within the program "Partnership for Peace". In framework of this program a battalion of the Armenian Military Forces, on 17-28 June, 2002,

took part in NATO's multinational, largescale exercises-"Best Effort-2002", in Georgia.

Now the preparatory works for a new NATO exercise in June, 2003, in Armenia are under the way. The Defence Minister of Armenia Serge Sarkisyan, giving great importance to this fact and calling shortsighted some people, who tried to qualify the NATO exercises in 2003 in Armenia as betrayal to Russia, stated: "Some people simply can not truly appreciate the national interests of Armenia".

Soon Armenia will take part in another important NATO program- "Planning and Review". Armenia also takes part in some other NATO measurements.

In addition we would like to mention that it was established and is developing successfully military cooperation between Armenia and the USA. At the beginning of August, 2002, the USA Senate had already passed a new program on military cooperation between them, assigning for this purpose about \$4 mln.

The NATO leadership appreciates positively the European track of the Armenian foreign policy, expressing their good will and readiness to facilitate the efforts of Armenia and to cooperate with it on every level.

We convinced in it during the visit of an Armenian delegation of scientists and representatives of NGO on July 18-19, 2002, to the NATO's Headquarter in Brusselles and Mons by the latter's invitation. The delegation met and had very frankly conversations and discussions with the leaders of all main political and military departments of NATO. We were ensured that the NATO leadership considers the close contacts and cooperation between NATO and Armenia beneficial both for NATO and Armenia.

Moreover, during one of the discussions, a NATO responsible official stated that Armenia, who has a Treaty of Mutual Assistance with Russia and is developing cooperation with NATO, can be a linkage between Russia and NATO to facilitate the further improvement of relations between NATO and Russia, underlying that that role can carry out only Armenia, but neither Georgia, nor Azerbaijan, taking into

consideration the character of their relations with Russia..

On finalising this subject, we have to underline, that in the agenda of the Armenia's foreign policy, however, is not standing the question of membership of Armenia to NATO.

Armenia is for enlargement of cooperation with NATO in different fields. And one has to take into account that for Armenia does not exist the problem of enlargement of NATO to the East. NATO since 1952, after Turkey's membership to it, about 50 years is already in the East, becoming neighbor to Armenia.

And at the end we would like to express our private point of view on the subject whether the NATO enlargement is an unfinished business?

It is very difficult question and is not so easy to find out an answer acceptable for all sides. NATO, of course, still has reserves for further enlargement in the sense that there are a lot of countries standing for membership to NATO, which coincides with the contemporary policy and desire of the NATO. But the question is the following: is it so essential for NATO the endless, let me say, hyperbolic enlargement or not? We think that the endless or hyperbolic enlargement of the NATO after all can lead to the selfliquidation of NATO. The integration of many countries with different, mainly low level of development, different ethnic and cultural traditions, different national interests, etc. would create a lot of new problems from point of view harmonizing their interests and actions with the basic principles of NATO, as well as keeping strong discipline, so necessary for that kind of political-military organizations.

The conglomerate of these countries could make NATO less operative and effective, affect negatively on its capability to act as an interlocking organization. The possible result of it would be degradation and downfall of NATO itself or its metamorphosis in such a degree, that after that it would be hardly possible to call that organization NATO.

As we understand, the strength of NATO is in its quality but not in the quantity of its members.

The endless enlargement of NATO, the involvement of many countries in this organization would mean a challenge to the

United Nations, an attempt to replace it, which to our opinion is not a development on right direction. It would become a new source of international tensions.

Let's not forget also about the new ambitions of European Union to create its own military forces. As it well known, many members of EU are at the same time also the members of NATO. How will be the relations between them and what kind of missions they will carry out?

The variant of enlargement of NATO membership can arouse many other unforeseen problems, difficulties and obstacles.

In result we can have an organization under the name of NATO but in fact another organization, different from the pattern of NATO of 1990s. So we would obliged to select another name for that organization.

But despite these arguments, we have to recognize that enlargement of NATO is one of the options for future existence of NATO.

Another option is enlargement of NATO's cooperation with non-NATO states in different fields-political, military, educational, humanitarian, etc., on the base of decisions, adopted by its leadership in 1990s, which contributed many positive changes in NATO's programs, strategy, tactics and tasks.

NATO can carry out its historical mission not only by means of enlargement and expansion, but also by preserving its high qualities and capabilities, deepening its cooperation with all countries, which are raedy for it.

It seems that the future belongs to the second option.

It is necessary first of all to define the enemy of NATO at this stage of development and then, according to this new task, it would be much easier to decide whether it is necessary or not the further enlargement of NATO.