

The Issue of Nagorno Karabakh and Europe



International
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The influence of Europe in the region tends to expand on a number of dimensions: political, economic and cultural. Its role is especially significant in terms of forming the public opinion and directing the public behavior.

Nowadays the terms “Europe” and “soft power” are often used synonymously. “Europe’s say” has great resources for exerting influence here, since Europe is perceived as a super player with considerable potential for nonpartisanship. Like it or not, the “position of Europe” is considered quite seriously, and the “European instructions” can often be decisive on a number of dimensions, such as regional, intra-state, political, economic, etc.

Is “Europe” then aware of its potential for influence in the region? Certainly, it is. Do they in Europe understand that under such conditions they are compelled to face the issue of at least moral responsibility for all the possible developments? Most probably, they do. Do they realize that in a small country considered to be the “Europe’s neighbor” a feeling of despair is developing? Perhaps they don’t.

Why does Europe keep silent?

The process of the regulation of Nagorno Karabakh conflict has long been described with a variety of criteria. The dimensions vary as well, much like the parties, interests, expectations and approaches. However, expectations from Europe are different; they are in a totally different plane. The issue here is not simply about the fact that Armenia and Azerbaijan have adopted the direction of European integration. People really expect Europe to be the one to lobby for approaches beyond strategic interests, regulation of the conflict by all means and stressing the goal over the means. In the regulation process of the NK conflict people expect Europe to lobby for approaches that are humane and require sticking to the rules of the game which are considered exemplary and are centered on people and their destiny.

- The position of Azerbaijan is getting harder with the day, and Europe does not respond in any way.
- War rhetoric expands significantly. Europe is silent.
- The level of xenophobia increases. It is consistently being nourished into the public consciousness. Again silence.
- Cultural values are being explicitly destroyed. Europe once again keeps silent.

Perception parallels

It is not a secret that attempts have always been made to put the events in Armenia and Azerbaijan on the same scale. Europe’s wish for treating the sides equally and exercising nonpartisanship is so great that it tries to see equality where it does not exist. Europe tolerates - thus promoting - events which contradict the European values. With its silence Europe equates the racist and xenophobic policies of Azerbaijan with the NK conflict resolution efforts. With its silence Europe equates vandalism against cultural treasures with the NK conflict resolution efforts. With its silence Europe equates belligerent and hateful statements of

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Azerbaijan with the NK conflict resolution efforts. One gets the impression that the fight against xenophobia and racism can harm the regulation of the NK conflict.

Dissemination of European values through various events, methods and channels becomes meaningless since Europe does not respond to processes around the NK in accordance with these very values. Today Europe answers in silence, a silence which is strange to see exercised by a body which has directly felt the consequences of racism on its skin. The NK conflict can never be resolved in the current environment of hatred while Europe contributes to the further development of this environment through its silence, thus enhancing the risk of possible war.

Europe must decide what is more significant: the values it believes in or the diplomatic games shaped around the NK conflict? Currently Europe has chosen the second option.

In conclusion

Any textbook on negotiations refers to a simple formula: criticize the problem, not the people. Pretending to be sensitive to the resolution process of the NK conflict and adopting silence in order to avoid the risk of damaging the relations is not really a solution. On the contrary, it contributes to the current negative developments and impedes not only the regulation of the NK conflict but the expansion of European values, as well.

Keeping silent is yet another policy. However, the result is that Europe is starting to be perceived here as a traitor giving up on its own values, since this silence promotes the practices which Europe rails against.

The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the round table

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