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# Armenia won't tell Tehran the truth.

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Sometimes the impression is that Armenia itself does not know what to sell to Russia and what not to sell. More exactly, it knows it cannot sell anything. It simply does not know what Russia would like to have. The situation is worrying, but as it is accepted to say, it is not a fact, it is more than a fact, it is the reality. With regard to the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline we deal with the same reality.

Russia announced about its likelihood to buy the gas pipeline several days ago. It is clear that if they announce about their likelihood, they make efforts to fulfill their intention. What is an effort in this direction if not negotiations with the initiators of the gas pipeline? The Iranian Deputy Ambassador to Armenia announced several weeks ago in Yerevan that his country is not aware of the possibility of participation of a third country to the gas pipeline. It means that Gazprom makes efforts to negotiate with Armenia only. For its part, this means that only the section of the pipeline running through Armenia is concerned. Perhaps Gazprom does not need more because for absolute influence it is enough to have the Armenian section. After all Armenia needs the pipeline more, and if the prospect of a transit pipeline is concerned, the section of the pipeline running through Armenia is sufficient to get complete influence.

It is interesting that the Armenian party did not announce officially about negotiation with the Russians but some officials, nevertheless, hinted at it. Both the defense minister and the foreign minister spoke about it. Serge Sargsyan said there are interesting developments, and Vardan Oskanyan said funding of the construction of the Armenian section of the pipeline is considered. It is clear that the Russians would not give the money for nothing, if they would give it at all.

In this situation a logical question occurs why official Yerevan avoids announcing about negotiations with Gazprom for the Iran-Armenia pipeline. In addition, Armenian officials have to make hints at negotiations, while Russia regularly reports on the negotiation and agreement to buy the pipeline.

In other words, evidently Yerevan avoids public speeches on this topic. The reason is clear. Several months ago, when the Iranian foreign minister Manuchehr Mottaki was visiting Yerevan, he and Vardan Oskanyan announced that participation of a third party to the pipeline requires the agreement of both Iran and Armenia. In the meantime, official Iran states that they are unaware of a Russian-Armenian negotiation. On the contrary, the Russians inform that the negotiation is underway and there is already agreement. Hence, Yerevan negotiates with Moscow and fails to inform Tehran about the negotiation despite the agreement. In any case, this is not proper. They sell it with one hand and take an oath with the other not to sell it.

In the meantime, this question is rather important for Iran. Russia's engagement in the project of the pipeline neutralizes Iran's prospect to have an influence over regional energy projects. This might be the reason why the pipeline has appeared on the agenda of the Iran-Armenia relations over the past few months, and already official Iran is not satisfied with the assertions of the high-ranking Armenian officials

that the pipeline is not for sale.

Another question is what Robert Kocharyan achieved during his Iranian visit. The president's visit had been planned long ago but Armenia was said to avoid it. And if it took place, it means that either Yerevan has decided what to say and how to settle the problem with Iran or Tehran has made an ultimatum and Robert Kocharyan had no way but to go.

There were no details on the pipeline in the statements made during the president's visit. Moreover, it was not touched upon in public statements either. On the other hand, there is a diplomatic nuance: language is for hiding thoughts. It is possible that high evaluations of the Iran-Armenia partnership hid the high reefs of this partnership. The presidents of the two countries announced, however, that there are no unsettled questions between Armenia and Iran. If frankness prevails over diplomacy in this statement, it means Robert Kocharyan managed to settle the problem of the pipeline in Iran. On the other hand, if the problem with Iran is settled, sure enough a problem with Russia occurred. In this sense it is highly doubtful that Yerevan would step on this path to running into trouble with Russia, especially with the elections drawing nearer. Consequently, Robert Kocharyan reached an intermediate solution in Tehran in an effort to temporize. It is interesting to know the cost, because everything including time has its price.

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