

The Yerevan Protests Might End Armenia's Unconvincing "Balancing" Act between Russia and the West

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Armenia's unconvincing attempts to "balance" between Russia and the West as it moves ever-closer to the pro-American EU might end in failure as the Yerevan protests put pressure on the country's leadership to more decisively move westward.

The Roots Of Armenian Rage

The Armenian capital of Yerevan has been rocked by [increasingly violent protests](#) over the past couple of days as demonstrators react with rage at former President Sargsyan's bid to become the country's next Prime Minister after an upcoming vote in Parliament later today. The South Caucasus country [recently changed](#) its governing model to a prime ministerial system from a presidential one, and Sargsyan is essentially retaining the same powers as before despite him "switching hats" and taking on a nominally different role. Protesters are angry at Armenia's economic stagnation and the perception (key word) that not much has improved since the country joined the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and they blame (whether rightly or wrongly) what they believe to be their corrupt government and Sargsyan in particular for perpetuating their plight.

Sargsyan is also seen as being "Moscow's man" in Armenia much as his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vucic is considered to be the same in the Balkans, and in spite of their actual and speculated faults, both leaders have maintained and at least visibly expanded their country's relations with Russia during their tenure. In addition, Vucic also "switched hats" recently by becoming Serbia's President after having served for a while as its Prime Minister, so it's interesting to draw parallels with what's happening in Armenia nowadays, especially when considering that both men pride themselves on supposedly "balancing" between the West and Russia. Armenia, however, is in much direr economic straits than Serbia is and the situation is arguably more desperate there, which is why the ongoing anti-government protests have the potential of becoming really dangerous both in local terms and also geopolitical ones.

The Latest Step In A Long Process

[Color Revolutions](#) work most effectively whenever there are legitimate grievances within a country because this enables their organizers to effortlessly catalyze self-sustaining processes of unrest that can then be guided by a select "core" of individuals (some of whom are usually linked to abroad) in the eventual direction that's most closely in line with their and their patrons' geopolitical objectives. The domestic and international situation that

Armenia finds itself in is very complicated because this EAU-member state recently agreed to a "[Comprehensive & Enhanced Partnership Agreement](#)" (CEPA) with the EU and also [proudly participates](#) in NATO "peacekeeping" missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo. In fact, Armenia has been moving westward for the past 3 years already, and the following collection of the author's works should be referenced for those who are unfamiliar with what's been happening:

- 25 May, 2015: "[Are Armenia And Belarus Wandering Westward?](#)"
- 24 June, 2015: "['Electric Yerevan' is Sliding Out of Control](#)"
- 13 August, 2016: "[Serzh Sargsyan: All Roads Lead to Moscow](#)"
- 9 September, 2016: "[The Tripartite's Big Barter In The 'Eurasian Balkans': The Southern Caucasus](#)"
- 10 August, 2017: "[Armenia Abandoning Russia: Consequences for the Caucasus](#)"
- 29 August, 2017: "[Are Armenia, India, And Serbia 'Balancing' Against Russia Or 'Betraying' It?](#)"
- 15 September, 2017: "[Russia's New Thinking Towards Armenia And Azerbaijan: An 'Obstructionist' vs. An 'Integrationalist'](#)"
- 4 October, 2017: "[The US-Based Armenian Lobby Is On A Mission To Provoke Azerbaijan And Russia](#)"
- 24 February, 2018: "[Armenia's Black Sea-Persian Gulf Corridor Plans Risk Antagonizing Russia](#)"

Summarizing The Strategic Trends

The general idea is that Armenia has drifted closer to the EU (and by extent, the US and NATO) in spite of its institutional obligations to Russia per the EAU and CSTO because of the distrust that Yerevan feels towards Moscow as the country's traditional partner seeks to "balance" between it and Azerbaijan. [Hyper-nationalist](#) fringe elements have taken advantage of this sentiment and society's overall anger against the authorities for their perceived corruption and other faults to encourage increasingly violent protests against them, all with the intent of either seizing power for themselves and steering the state in a radically anti-Russian direction just like what happened in Ukraine after "EuroMaidan".

In this specific context, an ultra-nationalist Armenia on unfriendly terms with Russia might either provoke a "[Continuation War](#)" in Nagorno-Karabakh so as to drag Moscow into potential conflict with Azerbaijan & Turkey and/or undermine the North-South Corridor through an Armenian-transiting branch to the Black Sea, both outcomes of which are detrimental to Russia's strategic interests. It should serve as no surprise that the same man who played a leading role in the 2015 "Electric Yerevan" Color Revolution "probing" attempt, Nikol Pashinyan, is also [front and center](#) in this week's disturbances as well, making it obvious that politician has [been tasked](#) with being the face of Armenia's hyper-nationalist Color Revolution movements.

The "Armenian Dagger"

The end result of his provocations - no matter how supposedly "justified" they may be in channeling the public's pent-up rage against an utterly dysfunctional system - is to fulfill the "[Armenian Dagger](#)" scenario that the author wrote about on 23 September, 2016 in his work about the "Mideast: Greater Eurasia Scenarios" and which is being republished below for the reader's convenience:

“Armenia undergoes either a hyper-nationalist Pravy Sektor-like Color Revolution or such ideologically affiliated candidates are democratically voted into office, instantly moving the country closer to the unipolar camp when the hot-headed leaders expel Russia’s military presence because of Moscow’s cautious refusal to aid in the new Armenian leadership’s hostile provocations against Azerbaijan. Yerevan quickly pivots closer to the EU and NATO, and Washington wastes no time in deploying military assets there in order to protect its new regime from their “pro-Russian” Azeri enemies, thus turning the curve-shaped country into a decisive dagger striking straight at the heart of the Russian-Iranian-Turkish Tripartite of Great Powers.”

In this case, Pashinyan’s Pravy Sektor-like Color Revolution doesn’t even have to succeed in the traditional sense of installing its own members into power, but all that it has to do is exert enough “grassroots” pressure on the authorities that they become intimidated into complying with his vision, which would basically allow him to exploit Armenia as a tool of geopolitical blackmail against Russia.

Concluding Thoughts

Armenians may have convinced themselves that moving closer to the West would safeguard them from these [Hybrid War](#) scenarios, but such an assumption would betray a naïve belief that only a “desperate” population could fall for. This makes the situation all the more dangerous because there are indeed many “legitimate” reasons for people to be angry with the authorities, and there’s always the ever-present threat that some demagogues might try to exploit the masses’ easily manipulatable “crowd psychology” by giving an anti-Russian angle to events in alleging that all of Sargysan’s political and other faults (both presumed and actual) are attributable to Moscow in one way or another. The situation has yet to unfold in this manner, but there are arguably deep roots of rage surrounding Russia’s regional “balancing” role that could be tapped into if “need” be.

What’s happening nowadays in Yerevan therefore isn’t anything thematically new since it follows the exact same pattern as what happened in 2016, 2015, and even in previous years before those two. The only real difference is the specific “trigger event” that’s being relied on as the public pretext for setting these preplanned provocations into motion and deceiving the many peaceful civilians who are innocently taking part in these protests for reasons unrelated to the geopolitical endgame that its organizers have in mind. It’s still far too early to gauge whether this newfound destabilization attempt will have the staying power that “Electric Yerevan” did and if it’ll yield any tangible political dividends for the forces that are behind it, but any “success” in this respect would undoubtedly represent a “zero-sum” “defeat” for Russia and severely complicate its regional peacemaking efforts.

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