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## **EU RECOGNIZES ARMENIA AS A PARTY TO THE CONFLICT WITH AZERBAIJAN**

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The text of the new partnership agreement with the European Union, which was initialed by both sides, has been made public in Armenia.

The document as a whole is rather declarative, with little detail about legal mechanisms of cooperation, according to Trend. The political part of the document is taken from the draft associative agreement, already prepared by 2013. In general, the agreement is rather loose to strengthen the interaction of the parties for years to come ...

In addition, the agreement is unlikely to cause an obvious rejection of Moscow, as it was in 2013, on the eve of the signing of the associative agreement, because of both its weakness and Russia's interest in such "pilot couplings" of the EurAsEC countries it led (as was the case with Kazakhstan that signed a similar document with Brussels two years ago) in order to use these "ties" in the long term to form direct relations between the two unions - the Eurasian and European unions.

Of course, we are interested in that part of the new agreement between Brussels and Yerevan, which talks about the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. This point is reflected in the preamble of the document. Reflected ambiguously. If desired, it is possible to interpret this article as placing an equal sign between the principles of territorial integrity and the right of nations to self-determination. Incidentally, it was immediately made by Armenian pro-governmental media in the hope of presenting the agreement as a new foreign policy victory of Sargsyan's regime.

It is also surprising that the bilateral document between the European Union and Armenia reflects the settlement of the conflict in the territory of the third country, namely, in the occupied lands of Azerbaijan. A paradox worthy of entering the annals of international diplomacy...

What is it - a betrayal, a blow in the back in conditions when the relations between the EU and Azerbaijan are developing on the rise? Or a traditional policy of "double standards" pursued by Brussels, with which we should cease all negotiations on a new agreement, reconsider the position on a number of other areas of interaction with the West, think about the level of participation in the upcoming Eastern Partnership summit in November, etc.?

But it is precisely this "emotional reaction" of the Azerbaijanis that Armenians and their true masters are counting on, ready to do anything to disrupt the increasingly strengthening political and economic interaction of Azerbaijan and the EU, and to prevent a qualitatively new level in the relations.

However, a more cold-blooded analysis of the Armenian-European agreement gives a more detailed and panoramic picture.

First, there is nothing new that would distinguish the current text of the agreement (namely its "conflict part") from the definitions that were reflected in the text of the "late" associative agreement between the EU and Armenia. Moreover, the semantic component of this text is almost identical to the definitions in bilateral agreements signed by Armenians with dozens of countries. All these documents have one thing in common - an opportunity for Armenian interpretations based on the play of words. And the new agreement with the EU is not a "victory" or even an exception, but the same old song about the main thing.

Secondly, the inclusion of the definitions related to the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict to the agreement with EU is another documentary evidence of Armenia's involvement in this conflict. In fact, this article in the preamble publicly confirms Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan.

And, finally, third. The text on the conflict is reflected in the preamble of the agreement. In accordance with the EU legislation, the articles in the preamble are not legally binding in the documents signed by the EU. Legally binding are only the articles in the substantive part of any agreements of the European Union, including a new agreement with Armenians. There are no such definitions in the substantive part of this document.

What does this mean in practice? It means that the "conflict article" in the preamble of the agreement has no legal force and can be used solely for the propaganda purposes of Yerevan with the appropriate "interpretative play of words".

Yes, we do not like the fact that the EU enters into an agreement with the aggressor country. Moreover, we categorically reject the reference to the territories of Azerbaijan in the document between the two other parties without our agreement. And it can and even should be the subject of a serious demarche of Baku to the official representatives of Brussels, as well as the basis for possible appeals of Azerbaijan to the international legal institutions.

But today, nothing prevents us from forming our new agreement with the EU the way we want it to be. The enemy opened his cards. We have, as the military say, an "operational space" for action.

Our negotiations have just begun and are being conducted on the basis of the draft document submitted by the Azerbaijani side (by the way, for the first time in the history of the EU, which has always been the author of agreements). Naturally, in this agreement our national interests will be observed to the fullest extent possible.

In addition, the wording of the new agreement between the EU and Armenia on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict was developed for the "already dead" associative agreement between them in 2013, and during these five years Europe has changed a lot.

In 2016, EU developed a new foreign policy strategy, which clearly states that the European Union

considers support for territorial integrity within the international borders of both its countries and neighbors as one of the priority activities. There was a Catalan problem of its own. After the "Arab spring" and last year's events in Turkey, relations with most of the neighbors - Muslim countries collapsed, and Azerbaijan seems almost the only island of predictable stability. The nuclear deal with Iran, which was involved in economic and transport relations with Europe owing to Azerbaijan, was signed and again threatened. The energy and transport projects strategically important for the EU became the real outlines with the most active participation of our country. Finally, there have been changes in the statements of official Brussels. The European Union, which until 2015 avoided an open demonstration of attitude in the issue of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, by the mouth of President of the EU Council Donald Tusk and Vice-President Federica Mogherini regularly declares open support for our country in this matter.

In short, over these five years, Azerbaijan has developed a serious springboard for an equitable conversation with Brussels, taking into account its national interests. It is time to implement these achievements in a new political document, such as the agreement on strategic partnership with the EU.

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Kaynak/Source: