AZERBAIJAN TO BRING PERSIAN GULF STATES TO THE MEDITERRANEAN: ANOTHER SUCCESS OF BAKU AND THE FAILURE OF YEREVAN

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Indeed, there is no more important and necessary case when it comes to the connection between cities and countries. When roads appeared, cooperation began. The development of human society went in parallel with the development of roads, the wider their network, the wider the cooperation between states and between peoples.

The importance of transport routes has become even more emphasized nowadays, in the context of globalization and large-scale international cooperation. And the old wisdom sounds even stronger today, now blessing those who initiate, finance and promote projects linking the regions.

The first meeting of the quadrilateral format Azerbaijan - Turkey - Georgia - Iran was held in Baku on March 15. The Foreign Ministers of the four countries signed a joint declaration on expanding cooperation in several areas, including infrastructure, transport, energy, trade, agriculture, etc. As the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov said after the meeting, it is planned to create and consolidate a format of cooperation that will link the large regions of the world in joint fruitful cooperation. Commenting on the new format, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stressed that this fact is an indicator of the role that Azerbaijan and Turkey play in the region.

The meeting in this format was held for the first time. Before that, it was only spoken about Iran's participation in the successful and already established tripartite Azerbaijan-Turkey-Georgia format. The Iranian side was been mulling it long enough, making a choice between benefits and politics. According to analysts, the hitch was caused by the fact that Iran was probably thinking about the possibility of centralizing the regional exchange on itself, considering Armenia as its main partner. But, as practice shows, it is impossible to do without Azerbaijan in our region. And it would be impossible to do so, even if there were no Armenian occupation and, consequently, Armenia was not be isolated.

Creation of a stable economic route is a common goal for the countries participating in the Silk Road, and Azerbaijan makes a great contribution to this route, OSCE PA President Georgy Tsereteli said at the first conference of the OSCE PA Silk Road Support Group on Tuesday in Baku.

According to him, achieving economic prosperity requires cooperation between all the participating countries of the route. "Baku-Tbilisi-Kars is an ideal example of a corridor between the East and West, such projects are vital economic bridges between the countries," the OSCE PA

head said.

By the way, the support group of the "Silk Road" is an initiative of Azerbaijan. The group aims to promote the development of transport corridors, facilitate trade and transport procedures, and the free and safe movement of persons, goods, services and investments.

It should be noted that all-round cooperation in the Azerbaijan-Turkey-Georgia format has been implemented for a long time and was marked by the implementation of large transport and energy projects. These are the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway corridor, and the current project "Southern Gas Corridor", in which our three countries are involved.

One of the important prospects opened by the new format may be Iran's involvement in the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway corridor and through it the extension of the corridor to the Persian Gulf. Iranian side began to show interest in BTK almost immediately after the opening of the road and putting it into active operation. So, at the end of last year, the Minister of Development of the city and roads of Iran Abbas Akhundi proposed to extend the BTK to Tabriz. The proposal is interesting and has several solutions, according to experts.

Thus, today we can already talk about the formation of a new economic, transport route - the West-South. In addition to the West-East route already created in the person of BTK and the ongoing North-South project, it will become part of a large-scale network linking all parts of the world through our region. It is worth recalling that the Iranian president is expected to visit Azerbaijan in late March. During the visit the opening ceremony of the Astara-Astara railway and the laying of the Astara-Rasht highway will take place with the participation of the high ranking officials of Azerbaijan. After the completion of the North-South corridor, the option of connecting the Kazvin-Resht-Astara highway to the Iran-Pakistan railway with further access to Southeast Asia and India can be considered.

It should be noted that the formation of the quadrilateral format of cooperation has not only economic but also political consequences. It puts an end to the last hopes of Armenia to somehow integrate into the regional exchange and expand its own economic opportunities. The Armenian side has already suffered defeat in the Georgian direction - Georgia did not get involved in the project to ensure Armenia's access to Russia, build roads for it and think over the alternative to the unreliable Upper Lars checkpoint. In Tbilisi, the topic was culturally hushed up. Just like in Iran, with which Yerevan had high hopes for secession from isolation. The calculation to become a bridge between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the markets of the Eurasian Union, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the European Union has failed. In this role, Armenia was not useful to any of the parties. On the wave of optimism, a SEZ project was implemented in the Meghri region, on the Armenian-Iranian border, designed to become the focus of cooperation between the South and the North, as well as the South and the West. At the end of last year, the SEZ was solemnly opened, but it soon became clear that it had no prospects, and local economists admitted it two months later.

Armenia's calculations to bring the countries of the Persian Gulf and Iran to the Black Sea and further to Europe, at least by automobile routes crashed too.

An interesting event was held in Yerevan earlier this month. Armenia and Ukraine discussed "the peculiarities of the Ukrainian-Iranian transport corridor." An intergovernmental meeting of TRACECA national secretaries was also held, in which the Ukrainian minister talked about the

importance of transit to Iran through Armenia, "opening up new markets for exports and imports."

Commenting on this unexpected initiative, Fuad Alizade, an expert on economic issues, told Day.Az that such a route will have no success because from the economic point of view it is impossible to organize profitable, profitable transit through Armenia. Transportation by ferries, then by cars through Georgia and further through the complex terrain of Armenia is an expensive treat, and it is, of course, much more profitable for Ukrainian carriers to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Azerbaijani corridors. The parties simply exchanged diplomatic curtseys, which will not have a continuation, and this transit is likely to be limited to the passage of a pair of trucks back and forth, the Azerbaijani expert noted.

In a word, the circle is closed. Armenia is now completely isolated from large-scale regional cooperation. The new format, uniting Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia and Iran, deprived the occupier country of the last hopes.

The next meeting in the quadrilateral format will be held in Georgia. The agreements reached during it can further upset our neighbors who have been deceiving themselves for a quarter of a century and who do not want to understand the simple truth: development is impossible without peace with neighbors.

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