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SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUGGLE CONCERNING THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN ARMENIA

(ERMENİSTAN'DA RUS DİLİ HAKKINDAKİ
SOSYO-POLİTİK MÜCADELE)

Günel MUSAYEVA*

Abstract: *In the republics of the former USSR, Russian language is known for its prestigious and official status. Unlike the other republics, Armenian was the state language in Armenia back in the Soviet times. Armenia, which gained its independence from the USSR in 1991, began a complete monopoly of the Armenian language in all areas. Even though the majority of the population of Armenia is closely connected with Russia, with each passing year, the Russian language is being increasingly marginalized in the country. Political circles in Armenia are not interested in the promotion of the Russian language and culture in Armenia, which is primarily a manifestation of racial and ethnic discrimination. They perceive Russian as the language of an exceptionally small ethnic minority. This is also a violation of the requirements of the allied strategy between Russia and Armenia. Taking into account all these factors, the article examines the current situation of the Russian language in Armenia and analyzes the measures taken by the government in this area.*

Keywords: Russian, language, Armenia, law, struggle, policy

* ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6940-6207>

PhD in History, Manager of the Department of Scientific Translation, Publication and Public Relations, Institute of Caucasus Studies, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS)
alieva.gun@gmail.com

Öz: *Eski SSCB cumhuriyetlerinde Rus dili prestijli ve resmi statüsü ile bilinir. Diğer cumhuriyetlerin aksine Ermenice, Sovyet döneminde Ermenistan'da devlet diliydi. 1991 yılında SSCB'den bağımsızlığını kazanan Ermenistan, Ermeni dilinin her alanda tam bir tekel konumuna gelmesi sürecini başlatmıştır. Ermenistan nüfusunun çoğunluğunun Rusya ile yakından bağlantılı olmasına rağmen, Rus dili her yıl ülkede giderek daha fazla kenara itilmektedir. Ermenistan'daki siyasi çevreler, öncelikle ırk ve etnik ayrımcılığın bir tezahürü olarak Ermenistan'daki Rus dili ve kültürünün teşvik edilmesiyle ilgilenmemektedir. Bu çevreler Rusçayı son derece küçük bir etnik azınlığın dili olarak algılamaktadır. Bu ise aynı zamanda Rusya ve Ermenistan arasındaki müttefik stratejisinin gerekliliklerinin de ihlalidir. Makale, tüm bu faktörleri göz önünde bulundurarak Ermenistan'da Rus dilinin mevcut durumunu incelemekte ve hükümetin bu alanda aldığı önlemleri analiz etmektedir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Rusça, dil, Ermenistan, kanun, mücadele, politika*

Introduction

The number of speakers in Russian (258 million people) ranks eighth in the world after English, Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, French, Arabic, and Bengali. At the same time, in terms of the degree of prevalence in the global language space, the Russian language is surpassed only by French, English, and Indonesian.¹

The Russian language in Armenia is the second most widely spoken after the Armenian language. Moreover, the main native speakers of the language are ethnic Armenians - immigrants from Russia or other republics of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Armenians who received Russian education in Armenia.

The issue of the Russian language has always been an extremely sensitive topic for Armenians. Back in Soviet times, Armenia and Georgia, unlike other union republics, refused to make Russian the state language in their legislation. According to the Constitution of the Armenian SSR of 1978, Armenian was the only state language, and its use was ensured in state and public bodies, in institutions of culture, education and others.² All state affairs were conducted exclusively in Armenian.

1. Russian language in the education system of Armenia

After Armenia gained independence, on April 17, 1993, the government adopted a tough law titled “On Language”, which established a complete monopoly of the Armenian language in all areas. This concerned both the state and the public in terms of education. The law strictly stated that in the current educational system, the literary Armenian language is the language of teaching and education.³ After that, Russian schools were closed in Armenia, and the Russian language was only taught in schools as a foreign subject. A year after this law came into force, out of eight dozen schools with the Russian language of instruction, not a single one remained in Armenia; they were all transformed into the Armenian language of instruction (although, as noted, Russian classes were preserved in schools - for children of minorities and children from mixed marriages). Only Russian schools and educational institutions for the children

1 V. Yegorov and V. Shtol, “Русский язык в глобальном лингвокультурном пространстве”, *Международная жизнь*, 2022 V: p. 74.

2 “Конституция Армянской Советской Социалистической Республики (14 апреля 1978 г.)”, *Nodussr.ru*, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://nodussr.ru/konstituciya-armyanskoj-ssr>

3 “The law of the Republic of Armenia on language, 1993”, *National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia*, accessed December 5, 2020, <http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1793&lang=eng>

of military personnel operated, which were subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

Changes then affected not only the sphere of education. All office work in the country was translated into Armenian. The circulation of Russian-language newspapers declined markedly. On television and radio, the number of hours of broadcasting was sharply limited by law. The results of such measures were not long in coming: the level of Russian language proficiency dropped sharply in Armenia.

Also, according to the legislation, national schools operate in places of compact residence of national minorities. In general, the marginalization of the small Russian population in Armenia is a long-standing problem. In Armenia, which has turned into a mono-ethnic state, neither the previous authorities nor the current authorities have done anything to eliminate this situation, which has become even more unbearable. For example, if according to the 1989 census statistics, Russians amounted to 51,000 people in Armenia, then in 2022 this figure dropped to 6000-7000 Russians.⁴ This indicates that there has been a systemic ousting and expelling of other nationalities from Armenia over the past 30 years.

The only state Russian school operates in the village of Fioletovo, where the Molokan community has historically lived. But due to the state not providing sufficient funds to re-equip and repair the school, it is funded by the Russian embassy and Russian companies in Armenia. So, in 2019, with the support of the Russian close joint stock company South Caucasus Railway, the territory of the school was fenced, classrooms were repaired, textbooks were replenished, and new desks and equipment were purchased.⁵

This national policy has led to a situation in which the Russian-speaking population has practically left the country. At one time, opponents of Russian education argued that an Armenian brought up on Armenian literature and an Armenian brought up on reading Pushkin are different Armenians, and the country needs, of course, the first ones. A special language inspectorate even made sure that children from Armenian families were not accepted into Russian classes.⁶ Any attempts to soften the law met with the resistance from Armenian

4 "Demography", *The Government of the Republic of Armenia*, accessed September 10, 2022, <https://www.gov.am/ru/demographics/>

5 М. Мкртчян, «Копыркин в школе села Фиолетово: Молокане играют связующую роль между народами России и Армении», *ArmInfo*, September 2, 2019, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=44833&lang=2

6 Е. Yefimova, "Русский язык в Закавказье: быть или не быть?", *Ritm Eurasia*, March 3, 2016, <https://www.ritimeurasia.org/news—2016-03-03—russkij-jazyk-v-zakavkaze-byt-ili-ne-byt-22204>

society, especially the intelligentsia, who considered the increase in the status of the Russian language as an attack on the independence of Armenia.

Although Russian is taught as a foreign language, since the 2000s, the number of hours for teaching it has been reduced. It should be noted that there are also Russian classes in public schools in Armenia. If on average, up to 6 Armenian classes are formed in schools, then among them one Russian class is given. But not every family in Armenia has the right to send a child to these classes. To do this, the family must have Russian citizenship or be a representative of national minorities. Citizens of Armenia who have previously received education in Russia or in other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries are also eligible for education. This situation violates the rights of the Russian-speaking population of the country and leads to the curtailment of their freedom. In addition, there is a shortage of teaching aids and textbooks in all subjects in Russian classes in state schools. Many of them are sponsored by Russian centers or by various foundations operating in Armenia.

A similar situation is observed in higher educational institutions of the country. In recent years, there has been a trend of teaching in English in the universities of Armenia. Pedagogical universities have ceased to conduct training in Russian. And this, in turn, leads to a shortage of subject teachers for Russian classes in schools. All academic and university research excludes the Russian language. Doctoral studies provide for the writing of dissertations only in Armenian.

The first major discussion around the Russian language in Armenia took place in 2010, when, at the initiative of the government, amendments and additions were made to the laws titled “On Language” and “On General Education”. It also provided for the possibility of opening 11 foreign-language schools in Armenia: 2 private and 9 schools on the basis of intergovernmental agreements (all of them will be required to teach Armenian subjects in Armenian).⁷ Although it was argued that these amendments were designed to create opportunities for Russian-speaking schools to operate, the Dilijan International School (UWC Dilijan College) was eventually opened, where education is conducted not in Russian, but in English.

In 2015, a branch of Moscow State University was opened in Yerevan, where education is conducted in Russian and diplomas are accordingly issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. The training program is fully consistent with the methodology of the Russian university program. Despite the great interest of applicants for admission to this

7 A. Xalatyán, “Русский язык в Армении”, *Press-Unity.com*, April 5, 2018, <http://press-unity.com/analitika-stati/10616.html>

university, there are a number of requirements,⁸ among which at the first stage is the mandatory passing of a written exam in the Russian language. Due to certain restrictions on the conduct of the Russian language in schools, many applicants are faced with the problem of entering university.

In general, in the field of education in Armenia today, the Russian language is studied as a foreign language, but there is a severe restriction of language rights in place according to the law adopted in 1993 that deprives citizens of the opportunity to receive education in Russian. This remains despite the discontent of the population. This is not only an indicator of the violation of human rights, but also contradicts the declared “democratic values” of the Armenian state. It also reveals that the rationale behind limiting access to Russian-language education is not based on practical considerations, but on an ideology that views Russian as a threat to modern Armenia’s state interests.

2. The influence of the political factor on the spread of the Russian language

In Armenia, which is a mono-ethnic country where 98% of the population is Armenian, teaching Russian may not seem so important. But given the fact that Russia is the “guarantor” of Armenia’s security and the fact that Russian companies are highly active in Armenia and occupy leading positions in many areas of the economy, it becomes necessary to know the Russian language for citizens to enter the workforce. In addition, a part of Armenian citizens today is directly connected with Russia - someone works there, someone has relatives who they often visit, etc.

On the other hand, the Russian language plays a significant role for Armenia not only in maintaining cultural ties, but is also an important factor contributing to the integration processes in the post-Soviet space. It is known that in January 2015, Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union, one of the goals of which is the spread of the Russian language in the participating countries. But even this factor did not play a special role in promoting the teaching of the Russian language.

So, in November 2016, the Permanent Representative of Russia to UNESCO, Ambassador-at-Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Eleonora Mitrofanova stated that the Russian language should receive legal status in the constitutions of the countries of the former USSR. She also noted that, at present, Russian is defined in the CIS space at best by the term “language of interethnic communication”, which does not have a clear

8 “Branch of MSU named M.N. Lomonosov”, *Eduscan.net*, accessed July 2, 2020, <https://eduscan.net/colleges/msuyerevan>

and understandable legal interpretation. This, in turn, creates a problem of accessibility for its study. In her opinion, “it is necessary to make special efforts to promote the Russian language abroad and raise the issue at a high level regarding giving the Russian language a legislative status in the countries of the former USSR”.⁹

Although Mitrofanova’s speech was not specifically addressed to Armenia, it caused a great resonance in the country. The media accused Russia of “imperialist” attempts to introduce Russian as the state language in Armenia. Anahit Bakhshyan, a member of the opposition Heritage Party, said this about Mitrofanova’s speech:

“Let Mitrofanova, and all the others who have a pro-Russian orientation, wrap their heads around the fact that the state language of Armenia cannot be any language other than Armenian ... this is an attempt to undermine foundations of our statehood and our sovereignty”.¹⁰

The Armenian authorities, represented by the Minister of Education and Science Levon Mkrtchyan, stated that the state language of the Republic of Armenia is Armenian, and the issue of the status of the Russian language is not being discussed. Vice Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia Eduard Sharmazanov stressed that the state language of Armenia is Armenian and there was no need to assign the status of a second state language to any language, be it Russian, Greek, or English.¹¹

In July 2017, a stir in Armenia was caused by the statement of the Speaker of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin, who proposed to consolidate the status of the Russian language as an official language in Armenia. He explained this proposal by the new law that came into force in Russia, which prohibits foreign drivers from working in Russia. In July 2017, Russia passed a law that allows drivers from Kyrgyzstan and Belarus to work with the license of their country, motivating the decision of granting state status to the Russian language in these countries.

At a meeting in the State Duma with Chairman of the National Assembly of Armenia Ara Babloyan, Volodin said:

9 I. Mashkov, “Русский язык должен получить законодательный статус в странах бывшего СССР”, *The International Affairs*, November 17, 2016, <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/16395>

10 N. Galechyan, “Оппозиционер требует жестко отреагировать на предложение придать особый статус русскому языку”, *Azatutyun*, November 19, 2016, <https://rus.azatutyun.am/a/28126979.html>

11 E. Sharmazanov, “Знание русского языка в Армении должно быть на высоком уровне, но он не будет вторым государственным языком”, *Lragir*, November 19, 2016, <https://www.lragir.am/ru/2016/11/19/52288>

“The decisions you are talking about, which we have adopted, apply to citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Belarus, since the citizens of these two countries studied the rules of the road in Russian. Knowledge of the Russian language also helps them in their work. Fix it as official, and then the norm of the law will automatically cover the Republic of Armenia”.¹²

Commenting on the statement of the Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Volodin, Sharmazanov noted¹³ that the only official language in Armenia is Armenian and this is included in the constitutional norm.

In September 2017, Armenia’s Ministry developed a project on the concept of teaching the Russian language. It mainly dealt with improving the quality of teaching; revising curricula, replacing textbooks, retraining teachers, and so on. It was also planned to increase the number of schools and classes with in-depth study of the Russian language.¹⁴ However, the concept caused discontent among the public. Some experts criticized the concept, which they considered was raising the status of the Russian language and argued there was no reason for this. But after the change of political power in April-May 2018, talk about the need to adopt the concept finally stopped. The current Nikol Pashinyan government is considering and strengthening measures on the status of the Armenian language.

In November 2018, Russian Ombudsman Tatyana Moskalkova announced¹⁵ ongoing marginalization of the Russian language in several foreign countries, including Armenia, and emphasized that the ban on the study of the Russian language in some countries, including Armenia, created major problems and amounted to blatant violation of the rights of Russian-speaking people.

The former Minister of Education and Science of Russia, Olga Vasilyeva, while in Yerevan, at the end of the meeting with her Armenian counterpart Mkrtchyan, expressed her hope that Russia and Armenia would expand cooperation in the study of the Russian language. This statement itself

12 “Спикер Госдумы России предложил Армении сделать русский язык официальным для признания водительских прав в РФ”, *NewsArmenia.am*, July 17, 2017, <https://newsarmenia.am/news/society/spiker-gosdumy-rossii-predlozhil-armenii-sdelat-russkiy-yazyk-ofitsialnym-dlya-priznaniya-voditelski/>

13 “В Армении не собираются закреплять официальный статус для русского языка”, *Eurasia Daily*, July 17, 2017, <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2017/07/17/v-armenii-ne-sobirayutsya-zakrepyat-oficialnyy-status-dlya-russkogo-yazyka>

14 G. Agbalyan, “Министерство образования Армении по поручению премьера разработало концепцию преподавания русского языка”, *Hetq.am*, September 13, 2017, <https://hetq.am/ru/article/81924>

15 “Москалькова заявила о нарушениях прав русскоязычного населения за рубежом”, *Izvestiya*, July 11, 2018, <https://iz.ru/809384/2018-11-07/moskalkova-zaiavila-o-narusheniakh-prav-ruskoiazycznego-naseleniia-za-rubezhom>

demonstrated the existence of a negative attitude towards the Russian language in Armenia and concerns about its future. However, despite the backdrop of growing pressure from Russia, Armenia has never expressed an unambiguous attitude to the ongoing issues related to the status of the Russian language in Armenia.

During his visit to Yerevan on June 8-9, 2022, the head of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, stated¹⁶ that Russia, taking into account the wishes of Armenian friends, is trying to increase the number of Russian schools in Armenia and to promote the improvement of the qualifications of Armenian-Russian teachers. This statement not only showed that fears and dissatisfaction with the level of development of the Russian language in Armenia still remain in force, but also demonstrated that the obstacles created by the Armenian authorities in this matter have not yet been removed. Undoubtedly, with a statement about the efforts to “increase the number of Russian schools in Armenia,” Lavrov once again expressed the protest of the Russian authorities to official Yerevan.

3. Russian language in audiovisual media in Armenia

The presence of Russian television and radio broadcasts on national frequencies also plays an important role in the spread of the Russian language. In 2000, the Armenian government adopted the law titled “On Television and Radio”, which allowed public television and radio companies to provide airtime for broadcasting special programs and broadcasts in the languages of Armenia’s national minorities. But at the same time, there was a strict restriction indicating that the duration of such programs should not exceed one hour a week on television, and one hour a day on radio.¹⁷ Despite this, private channels were allowed to broadcast feature films or cartoons in Russian. However, Armenia is the only CIS state where news is not broadcast in Russian.

But Russian TV channels - “Perviy”, “RTR Planeta”, and “Culture”, as well as the interstate TV channel of the CIS countries “Mir” - until recently were included in the free public TV package. That is, having an ordinary television antenna on the roof, the inhabitants of Armenia still had the opportunity to receive these channels in the public broadcast.

16 N. Qriqoyan, “Количество русских школ в Армении будет увеличиваться”, *Aravot*, June 9, 2022, <https://www.aravot.ru.am/2022/06/09/385893/>

17 “The law of the Republic of Armenia on television and radio broadcasting, 2000”, *National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia*, accessed April 15, 2021, <http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1464&lang=eng>

On June 18, 2020, the National Assembly of Armenia adopted a package of bills titled “On Audiovisual Media” and amendments to the law titled “On Licensing”, which provided for the replacement of the law titled “On Television and Radio”. These changes determine the status of the distributors of audiovisual media services, audiovisual information, regulate the procedure for licensing, permissions and notifications, the basis of rights and obligations, as well as relationships that arise in the course of such activities. This bill was soon adopted by the National Assembly on July 16, 2020, and signed by the President on August 5, after which it entered into force.¹⁸

The main difference between this law and the previous one is that it mainly provides for the strengthening of the state language and the transition to the Armenian language, regardless of the form of ownership of the TV channels. From now on, according to the new law, all programs in other languages will have to be dubbed into Armenian or broadcast with subtitles.

In fact, the main goal of the new law is the marginalization of the Russian language, which is in line with the policy of the new government in Armenia. Back in June 2018, the Minister of Education and Science Arayik Harutyunyan took the initiative to establish large fines against the organizers of various events, including scientific symposiums, if they do not provide full simultaneous translation into Armenian.¹⁹

It is known that Russian TV channels broadcast in Armenia have a fairly wide audience. But given the new legislative requirements, they have become available only in cable television, which not every citizen of Armenia can afford.

One of the drafters of the document, Vahagn Tevosyan, a deputy from the ruling My Step bloc, said that if a special agreement was not signed between Russia and Armenia before January 1, 2021, the broadcasting of Russian TV channels would become impossible in the future. Tevosyan explained;

“If by January 1, on the basis of any intergovernmental agreement, some foreign TV channel is in the public multiplex, then it will operate for seven years. If no agreement on this topic is concluded before January 1, then there will be no foreign TV channel in the public multiplex.”²⁰

18 “Президент Армении подписал закон об аудиовизуальных медиа, который заменит закон о СМИ”, *Arka News Agency*, May 8, 2020, http://arka.am/ru/news/society/prezident_armenii_podpisal_zakon_ob_audiovizualnykh_media_kotoryy_zamenit_zakon_o_smi/

19 “Министр образования Армении пригрозил штрафами за нарушение закона о языке”, *Sputnik*, June 10, 2018, <https://m.ru.armeniasputnik.am/society/20180610/12573760/ministr-obrazovaniya-gotovit-shtrafy-za-narushenie-zakona-o-yazyke.html>

20 А. Халатян, “Армения ограничивает себе доступ к российскому телевидению”, *Kommersant*, May 8, 2020, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4443065>

Even at the first reading of the law, the Russian side declared its readiness for appropriate cooperation with the Armenian partners. This was repeatedly stated by the diplomatic mission of Russia. However, the signing of the aforementioned agreement seems not entirely realistic, since the preparation and signing of an interstate agreement in such a short time was literally impossible.

It is worth noting that in January 2020, when the bill was just announced, it caused bewilderment of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Then the Russian embassy reacted to the statement by the Chairman of the National Commission on Television and Radio, Tigran Hakobyan, that the presence of foreign TV channels in Armenian airwaves “poses a threat to the national security of Armenia”, and the Russian ambassador allegedly agreed with this approach. However, later Hakobyan stated that his words were conveyed incorrectly, because he spoke not about national, but about “information” and “language security”. Additionally, Hakobyan did not mention Russian TV channels at all this time.

Concurrently, the Russian Embassy in Armenia expressed its opinion on the new law. The embassy stated;

“This issue is an internal affair of Armenia as a sovereign state. At the same time, the new law will directly affect the fate of broadcasting in the Republic of Russian TV channels. Of course, we are closely following the process of its consideration.”

The embassy also expressed the hope that the above considerations would complement the overall picture of the ongoing discussions, especially since the new law would definitely have a significant impact on information policy, which is a significant part of the overall complex of relations between two countries and peoples.²¹ In fact, the adoption of this law is a continuation of the policy of weakening the influence of the Russian language in Armenia, which began from the day Armenia gained independence. It is known that the Russian language is not just a foreign language for the population of Armenia. The Russian side declared its readiness to resolve this issue, taking into account the special ties between the two countries. But so far the Armenian side has not taken any measures in this regard.

The new law, which makes a special provision for “language security”, aims for the complete marginalization of the Russian language, since few people

21 “Посольство РФ в Армении отреагировало на новый закон об аудиовизуальных медиа”, *Arka News Agency*, June 26, 2020, https://arka.am/ru/news/society/posolstvo_rf_v_armenii_otreagirovalo_na_novyy_zakon_ob_audiovizu_allykh_media/

are interested in other foreign TV channels in Armenia. Supporters of the bill believe that Russian channels voice opinions that do not coincide with Armenia's information policy on a number of issues, and, accordingly, they cause public harm.

The new law was met with criticism both in the public and in the media. Thus, the head of the Yerevan Press Club, Boris Navasardyan, noted that the adopted law will not restrict freedom of speech, but it retains the state's monopoly on terrestrial broadcasting, and this hinders the development of the media;

“The state has long monopolized broadcasting. And if, say, in the old days, in the days of analogue broadcasting, this was, to some extent, justified, because purely technological possibilities were limited, then after the transition to digital broadcasting, maintaining the same approach simply means staying in the past. And this hinders the development of the television industry”.

The head of the press club also said that the authorities took the wrong approach, considering such a sharp cessation of the broadcasting of Russian channels in the law. According to him, the authorities could take advantage of violations of the law. For example, he cited that TV channels must follow the law on elections and the electoral code, which stipulates for a day of silence on the eve of voting, but foreign TV channels did not adhere to this requirement. This could be a sufficient basis for sanctions and, ultimately, the cancellation of a license.²²

Concerning this debate on the fate of foreign TV channels, the Director of the Caucasus Institute in Armenia, political scientist Alexander Iskandaryan, noted that Russian TV channels are not very popular and disputed their anti-Russian nature;

“According to the data that I had at hand two or three years ago, these channels were watched by less than 6% of the population. Perhaps there are some elements of ill-conceivedness in the law, but I don't think that it has an anti-Russian component.”²³

In general, the norms of the new law on audiovisual media do not take into account the interests of numerous citizens of Armenia who constitute the permanent audience of Russian channels. After all, Armenia, which is a mono-ethnic country, has never been threatened with anything dangerous by the broadcasting of Russian TV channels. As such, the new law was apparently

22 T. Petrosyan, “Армянские аналитики исключили антироссийскую подоплеку нового закона о медиа”, *Kavkaz-Uzel.eu*, July 8, 2020, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/352792/>

23 Petrosyan, “Армянские аналитики исключили антироссийскую подоплеку нового закона о медиа”.

formulated mainly around political goals. Indeed, the new Armenian government has openly expressed its anti-Russian position. In recent months, open anti-Russian statements in the pro-government media and social networks have also been noticeable, which causes concern in Russian circles. And it seems that the anti-Russian campaign is not limited to the adoption of the law on audiovisual media and will continue to follow in other forms.

Conclusion

Russian is a widely spoken language among the majority of the Armenian population. Given the fact that today many citizens of Armenia, in conditions of unemployment in the country, as well as for higher education, go to Russia, there is a tendency among the public to learn the Russian language. In addition, there is a certain segment of the population who during the Soviet period received education in Russian, and who wish to send their children to schools where instruction is conducted in Russian.

Despite all these facts, in Armenia, where especially the current Nikol Pashinyan government is constantly talking about “democratic values”, the citizens are being deprived of the freedom of speech and choice. In truth, this process began from the day of Armenia’s independence after the collapse of the USSR. The political elites of Armenia perceive Russian as the language of an exceptionally small ethnic minority. The propagation of the Russian language and culture in Armenia has thus never received interest, and furthermore, the reactions shown against Russian language and culture can be seen as a manifestation of racial and ethnic discrimination.

Most importantly, this has amounted to a blatant violation of the requirements of the allied strategy between Armenia and Russia; Armenia, having allowed itself to virtually turn into an outpost of Russia, nevertheless pursues only its own interests in bilateral relations, enjoys the favor of the official Moscow at every step, but when it comes to some actions on its part, it uses various excuses under the pretext of protecting national interests. The Armenian authorities thus avoid taking concrete steps regarding the Russian language in accordance with the interests of their alliance with Russia.

The Armenian society and the leadership of the country are not interested in strengthening the state policy towards the Russian language or improving the quality of teaching and expanding the scope of its use. In 2021, remnants of the separatist Armenian regime in Karabakh declared Russian as an official language along with Armenian. At that time, this step seemed a logical consequence of the processes taking place in Armenia, which suffered a heavy defeat in the 2020 Karabakh War (the 44-day War). The desperate government

of Pashinyan tried to cover up the consequences of a terrible defeat in the war with such flattery to the official Moscow.

Despite the flattery, pursuing a policy of marginalization of the Russian language is part of the political course of the Pashinyan government. The weakening of the influence of the Russian language leads to a gradual loss of Russia's influence in Armenia, which is line with the Pashinyan government's Russia-sceptic stance. As such, the measures taken by the Armenian government for these purposes will most certainly continue.

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