



RSC NEWS

December 2015-January 2016

The following is a brief summary of news from the Regional Studies Center (RSC), an independent think tank based in Yerevan, Armenia.

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ACTIVITIES

RSC JANUARY CLOSED BRIEFING

20 January 2016

The Regional Studies Center (RSC) held its latest closed monthly briefing on 20 January, with presentations by RSC Director Richard Giragosian and Senior Analyst David Shahnazaryan. The summary notes are available online: www.regional-studies.org/en/news/events/486-200116

This month's briefing featured a comprehensive analysis consisting of three main areas: (1) assessing recent political developments in Armenia, related to the implications of the December passage of the constitutional referendum, and a review of the negative economic impact on Armenia from the Russian crisis; (2) an overview of regional developments, including the recent Russian military buildup in Armenia, the deepening economic crisis in Azerbaijan, and the outlook for Armenia-Turkey "normalization," especially given the recent Turkish-Russian crisis; (3) an assessment of the broader military situation, in light of the recent escalation of clashes over Nagorno-Karabakh and with an added focus on the outlook for the diplomatic mediation of the Karabakh conflict following the December meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents in Switzerland.

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RECENT REPORTS & ARTICLES

RSC STAFF ANALYSIS: "ARMENIA 2015: FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW"

19 January 2016

In the latest in our series of RSC Staff Papers, entitled, "Armenia 2015: Foreign Policy Review," Satenik Baghdasaryan offers a comprehensive overview of Armenian foreign policy in 2015. Looking back at the year in review, Baghdasaryan identified four main foreign policy priorities for Armenia: the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a more balanced policy between the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and European Union (EU), and closer cooperation with neighboring countries, such as Iran and Georgia, for some notable examples.

www.regional-studies.org/en/publications/analytical/483-190116

RSC STAFF ANALYSIS: “UNRESOLVED CHALLENGES FACING ARMENIA IN 2015”

(IN ARMENIAN)

20 January 2016

In the latest in our series of RSC Staff Papers, entitled, “Unresolved Challenges Facing Armenia in 2015,” Dr. Haykak Arshamyan assessed the main challenges facing Armenia last year and that continue to threaten the country's security in 2016. This RSC Staff paper, in Armenian, argued that these challenges included a variety of areas, ranging from political, economic and social issues to the development of democracy in general. Arshamyan went on to state that this set of challenges are not only due to the 2015 global economic and political fluctuations and other adverse developments, but also stem from Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union.

www.regional-studies.org/en/publications/analytical/484-200116

NEW SECURITY THREATS IN THE CAUCASUS

18 January 2016

On January 11 Georgian State Security Service officials announced the arrest of three men for attempting to sell a quantity of the radioactive substance Cesium-137. Although unlikely to be tied to any larger terrorist plot, the incident does raise serious concerns over the possibility of terrorist organizations being able to secure similar material for use as a radiological “dirty bomb.” This prompted RSC Director Richard Giragosian to write an analysis for al Jazeera, entitled “Just the threat of a dirty bomb. New deadly radiological weapons pose new challenge to under-funded, unprepared security services in South Caucasus.”

www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/01/threat-dirty-bomb-160113053622510.html

REPORT ON ARMENIAN PEACEKEEPING

21 December 2015

In a special report entitled, “Peacekeeping Contributor Profile: Armenia,” RSC Director Richard Giragosian authored a study of trends and developments regarding Armenia’s demonstrable commitment to international peacekeeping operations. The report, completed in late November, was commissioned as the 60th country study for an independent research project, “Providing for Peacekeeping,” of the International Peace Institute, the Elliott School at George Washington University, and the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect at the University of Queensland.

www.regional-studies.org/en/publications/analytical/468-211215

RSC ON THE RISK OF WAR OVER NAGORNO-KARABAKH

24 December 2015

RSC Director Richard Giragosian assessed the risk of war over Nagorno-Karabakh in an article for al Jazeera entitled “Is war imminent in the Caucasus?”

www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/12/war-imminent-caucasus-151224095948528.html

RSC NAGORNO-KARABAKH SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

14 December 2015

The latest “RSC Nagorno-Karabakh Situational Assessment” was released on 14 December 2015, covering the recent escalation over Nagorno-Karabakh, in which at least half of dozen deaths were reported from all sides, a military UAV was shot down and a tank unit was used for the first time since the signing of the 1994 ceasefire. As an independent think tank based in Yerevan, Armenia, the RSC produces a series of brief analytical security products, or “Situational Assessments,” in conjunction with our monthly monitoring of ceasefire violations.

www.regional-studies.org/en/publications/analytical/467-141215

RSC COMMENTS ON THE NEW “EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (ENP) REVIEW”

26 November 2015

As an independent think tank in Armenia, the Regional Studies Center (RSC) was pleased to have been invited to offer an analytical review of the recently released “European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Review.” On 26 November, the RSC submitted its analytical comments on the ENP review, with a specific focus on the opportunities for Armenia.

www.regional-studies.org/en/news/events/472-261115

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BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

RSC ON TURKISH-RUSSIAN CRISIS

RSC SENIOR ANALYST ON “ARMENIA BETWEEN RUSSIA AND TURKEY”

10 January 2016

(In Russian)

RSC Senior Analyst David Shahnazaryan provided his analysis of Armenia’s position in the Russia-Turkey crisis in an interview with the “Свободная Зона” (“Free Zone”) electronic news service. The interview, in Russian, also covered broader regional developments.

www.szona.org/93900-2/

RSC ANALYSIS: “RESURGENT RUSSIA TAKES ON TENACIOUS TURKEY”

9 December 2015

In an analytical contribution for *al Jazeera*, RSC Director Richard Giragosian assesses the Russian “capacity for raid power projection” and its “equally assertive force posture, marked by an expansion of its presence throughout the wider region.”

www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/12/resurgent-russia-takes-tenacious-turkey-151209071618920.html

RSC ASSESSES DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONTEXT OF RUSSIAN-TURKISH CRISIS

2 December 2015

In an article for *al Jazeera* entitled, “Turkey-Russia: The inevitable clash of the titans,” RSC Director Richard Giragosian assesses the domestic context of the Russian-Turkish crisis, arguing that political dividends only deepen division and encourage escalation.

www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/12/turkey-russia-inevitable-clash-titans-151201112733785.html

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MEDIA INTERVIEWS

RSC ANALYST ON THE LIMITS OF ARMENIA-IRAN RELATIONS

20 January 2016

(In Armenian)

In an interview with the Lragir news agency, RSC Analyst Dr. Mikayel Zolyan assessed the outlook for expanding Armenian relations with Iran. In the interview, conducted in Armenian, Dr. Zolyan noted that although the recent easing of sanctions against Iran presented a significant new opportunity, Armenian dependence on Russia will only elevate the role of Russia in determining the scope of expanding relations between Armenia and Iran.

www.lragir.am/index/arm/0/interview/view/126505

RSC HAILS ARMENIA’S OPPORTUNITY IN LIFTING OF IRAN SANCTIONS

18 January 2016

(In Armenian)

In an interview with Radio Free Europe’s (RFE/RL) Armenian Service, RSC Director Richard Giragosian hailed the lifting of sanctions against Iran and noted the significant opportunity for Armenia to emerge as a strategic avenue for Iran’s re-engagement with the global economy. Stressing Armenia’s “unique position” as the “only stable, friendly and reliable neighbor of Iran,” Giragosian also warned that the “imperative is for the Armenian government to act quickly, develop a far-ranging strategy for engagement and dispatch a delegation to Iran in the coming weeks, in order not to lose the opportunity of this new opening.”

www.armenialiberty.org/content/article/27494427.html

RSC SENIOR ANALYST COMMENTS ON KARABAKH AND ARMENIA’S POSITION REGARDING RUSSIA AND THE TURKEY-RUSSIA CRISIS

7 January 2016

(In Armenian)

Speaking in an extensive interview, RSC Senior Analyst David Shahnazaryan offered a comprehensive assessment of developments related to the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, the current outlook for Armenian-Russian relations and an analysis of the crisis in relations between Turkey and Russia. The 30-minute interview, conducted in Armenian, also included specific policy recommendations aimed at bolstering regional security and stability.

www.1in.am/1811314.html

RSC “YEAR IN REVIEW” INTERVIEW

31 December 2015

(In Armenian)

In a wide-ranging interview, RSC Director Richard Giragosian assessed the year in review in terms of Armenian foreign policy, regional developments and domestic political developments in Armenia. The 15-minute interview was conducted in English and dubbed into Armenian.

www.1in.am/1807648.html

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As an independent think tank, the Regional Studies Center (RSC) is actively engaged in the public policy process in Armenia and regularly assesses critical issues facing Armenia and the wider region. For more information, please go to the RSC website: www.regional-studies.org