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**INTEGRATION VS. SECURITY: REVISITING ARMENIA'S DECISION
TO JOIN THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION****Abstract:**

On September 3rd, 2013, the President of the RA Serzh Sargsyan abruptly shifted the direction of Armenia's long-praised integration preference with the EU and announced "Armenia's decision to join" the Russia-led Customs Union. To make his move more profound and convincing, the President accentuated that Armenia depends on Russia for security and that was a critical determinant for Armenian integration preferences. In the aftermath of the visit „securitization" started taking place with the choice being presented as a security issue. That step by the President of Armenia was initially perceived either as an extraordinary or an isolated case. However, when 80 days later Ukraine followed the suit and announced its decision to stop the preparation of signing the Association Agreement with the EU, it became more than obvious that we became witnesses of a paradigmatic shift in the regional integration processes.

These two cases illustrate not only Russia's changing priorities and strategies pertaining regional integration issues in the post-Soviet space, but also reasserts changing paradigms in the integration strategies in general. The prevailing uncertainty among the Eastern Partnership countries even a few days prior to the Vilnius Summit affirms that presumption. This highly contentious problem along with Russia's recent bold foreign policy moves will occupy the agenda of experts and practitioners alike long after the mentioned summit and, therefore, a well-thought out research needs to be carried out in order to identify general patterns and tendencies.

Overall, the study aims to contribute to the academic and increasingly intensifying public debates about the determinants of Armenia's integration choices. Two sets of pertinent research questions will be considered during the research: In what ways did the military-political cooperation, trade and institution-building/strengthening strategies influence integration aspirations of not only Armenia but also other CIS members?; How did the dominant integration projects/doctrines/ideologies/thoughts influence Armenia's decision? What visible and invisible factors influenced Armenia's decision?

Based on the aforementioned questions following hypotheses are developed:

1. The regional developments, notably both cooperation projects and conflicts, are directly correlated with the integration decision of the RA.
2. Economic development and institutional efficiency play secondary role in determining Armenia's integration prospects.
3. The more guarantees a regional actor has in provision of Armenia's national security, the stronger leverage it has on Armenia's integration decisions.

Keywords:

Armenia, Russia, Integration, Security, European Union, Eurasian Customs Union

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