



NATO Foundation  
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### **New tensions in the Eastern Europe**

The Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has announced, at a security forum in Kiev on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, his plans to quit the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and terminate parts of a friendship treaty with Russia. Poroshenko urged the government to present a proposal to lawmakers on Ukraine's full withdrawal from the CIS, of which Kyiv has been an associate member of since the group was formed, following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

“Ukraine has never been a (full) member of the CIS and (given) CIS’s failure to denounce Russia’s aggression (in Ukraine), I would ask that we, together with the government, produce a proposal regarding an official termination of our participation in the statutory organs of the CIS”, Poroshenko said. He also told that he would propose a draft bill before parliament for “an immediate and unilateral termination of specific articles” of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Ukraine and Russia that were “incompatible with national interests and its right to self-defense” [*Ukraine Announces Plans To Quit CIS, Terminate Parts of Russia Friendship Treaty*, RFE/RL, 12/04/2018].

Since 2014, Ukrainian officials have not taken part in CIS-wide activities, but at the same time, Kiev has continued to honour most of the agreements it signed with the organisation; and Moscow thinks that it will likely continue to do so just as Georgia has done.

The still ongoing low-level conflict in the Donbass and Lugansk area does not facilitate of course neither the Minsk Group activities nor any solution in the Caucasus, due also to a number of sternly anti-Russian countries who do not care about a possible escalation with Moscow. I one adds the recent upcoming coloured revolution in Armenia, one can understand that other “frozen conflicts” could heat up again.

In fact street demonstrations erupted in the Armenian capital on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April after Mr Serzh Sargsyan, having reached his two-term limit after a decade as president, was abruptly named prime minister by a Parliament dominated by his Republican Party. In 2015, the Constitution was changed to transfer most presidential powers to the prime minister and the Parliament. After negotiations had

stalled, there was the unexpected resignation of the prime minister. Nikol Pashinyan was the leader of demonstrations that forced this development and he encouraged his supporters to gather again on Republic Square at the centre of Yerevan and “finish the velvet revolution”.

Armenia has remained a close partner of Moscow. Russia, which keeps a military base there, has indicated that it will not intervene and has called for a peaceful transition of power. It has said the demonstrations were an internal affair, and has not accused Western powers of fomenting them, as it did in Ukraine. But on Wednesday, a court in Moscow fined 29 protesters who had gathered outside the Armenian cathedral in the Russian capital in support of the demonstrations in Yerevan [Neil MacFarquhar, *Protests Erupt Anew in Armenia Amid Political Deadlock*, The New York Times, 25/04/2018].

Various political factions were locked in tense standoff, but apparently by the 8<sup>th</sup> of May a new PM could be appointed by the Parliament after a compromise between protesters and establishment. The hope is that the future in Armenia will not be so conflictual as the other former Soviet Republics.

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