



NAGORNO-KARABAKH CRISIS: AZERBAIJAN’S FRAYING TEMPER AGAINST A BACKDROP OF ARMENIAN AGGRESSION

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Another escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh in early morning on September 27, 2020 brought Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict once again to the focus of world community. Approximately 30 years have elapsed since this conflict was initiated. However, there has not been any substantial progress in the efforts to solve the problem. The prominent political figures in Armenia, who more or less understood the consequences of their actions and endeavored to solve the problem were either ousted or assassinated. This fact proves that, the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh is not in the interest of Armenian population at large. The reluctance of Armenian citizens to send their offspring to serve in Nagorno-Karabakh substantiates our argument.

Nikol Pashinyan is another Armenian leader who has adopted unconstructive policy since he came to power. His dilettante behavior with regard to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh proves our argument. Thus, Pashinyan claims the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia in one of his bellicose interviews.¹ According to Joshua Kucera, the forceful appeal indicated that Pashinyan was taking a harder line on Karabakh even as he had made efforts to revive the negotiations with Azerbaijan over settling the conflict. In his another speech, Pashinyan insists the participation of Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent “republic” in the negotiations,² which contradicts his previous statement. The debate between the President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the Munich Security Conference in February 2020,³ as well as Pashinyan’s interview

¹ Joshua Kucera, “Pashinyan calls for unification between Armenia and Karabakh”, August 6, 2019, <https://bit.ly/32R68AZ>.

² Nikol Pashinyan's promises and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, August 28, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2F1WfIM>.

³ Joshua Kucera, “Armenian, Azerbaijani leaders spar in unprecedented public debate”, February 16, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3hNnLII>.

to Stephen Sackur, a well-known correspondent of BBC in August 2020,⁴ demonstrated that Armenian authority at the highest level was not capable of supporting their arguments, which plunged them into ludicrous and unpleasant position in an international arena. However, before coming to power Nikol Pashinyan had promised a revival of negotiations through “preparing his nation for peace”. Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan complies with the international law, respects all international organizations, sticks to its obligations and commitments. However, Azerbaijan’s patience is limited. No nation in the world would tolerate another nation with Armenian features as Azerbaijanis did. Pashinyan’s policy is even more aggressive than his predecessors were. Anyway, his impulsive strategy of ruling government will be the end of the Armenian ambition and contribute to the fulfillment of former Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan’s dream. Because for the first time in 1997, there was a hope to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Ter-Petrosyan made a realistic assessment and stated that either way Armenia would have to face the wealthy and powerful Azerbaijan. He had a concern that the economic blockade of his country due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would damage the long-term economic viability of Armenia. According to him, that was a chance to guarantee security of Karabakh and political-economic well-being of Armenia.⁵ However, he was immediately ousted from office and his successor Robert Kocharian threw a spanner in the negotiation process and brought it to a standstill.

Today, the principled and consistent position of the Azerbaijani leadership on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is leading to a completely new situation in the region in connection with the conflict. One of the first reasons for this is that Azerbaijan is not the same country Armenians fought with in early 90s. At the same time, serious results have been achieved in conveying the truth about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to the world community. Thus, a new reality has emerged in the region in connection with the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As the President Ilham Aliyev stated on May 26, 2017: *“Nagorno-Karabakh is a historical land of Azerbaijan. The Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be resolved on the basis of the resolutions of the UN Security Council within the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani state and people will never allow the creation of a second contrived Armenian state on our ancestral lands. The territorial integrity of our country is not and will never be the subject of negotiations”*.⁶ Meanwhile, it is important to touch upon Levon Ter-Petrosyan’s views on Nagorno-Karabakh problem. Ter-Petrosyan at the beginning of March 1992, speaking about the creation of a “system of security guarantees” and the demilitarization of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, proposed the following option: *“Full autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh, lifting its blockade and ensuring the normal life of Nagorno-Karabakh. This decision today, I think, will be acceptable both for Karabakh and for Azerbaijan. If there is such an autonomy, where internal problems will be solved by local authorities, including personnel issues, the parties can come to an agreement. I think that the status of an autonomous republic within Azerbaijan would completely satisfy all parties, because at the same time Karabakh remains a part of Azerbaijan, the territorial integrity of the republic is preserved, and the people of Karabakh, in turn, have guaranteed livelihoods. Here is our position. We are ready to discuss it at any level”*.⁷ Apart from it, in 1997, Ter-Petrosyan gave a clear answer to his political opponents, who had populist promises with regard to Karabakh issue. He warned them of the possible catastrophic consequences for Armenia, including the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh: *“If we do not agree with what Azerbaijan is now proposing (full autonomy), the strengthened Azerbaijan in future, will not offer us that either. Armenia does not have the economic and demographic potential to keep up with Azerbaijan, so we will gradually lag behind Azerbaijan. And, as many times in history, Armenians will be left with*

⁴ “Nikol Pashinyan - Prime Minister of Armenia - BBC HARDtalk”, August 14, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3lIJB1Z>.

⁵ Rashad Tahirov, Khayal Iskandarov, Sadi Sadiyev, “The Updated Madrid Principles in the “Karabakh Knot” in George Vlad Niculescu eds. *2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Research Digest. How to Break the Current Deadlock in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Resolution: Strategic Dialogue on the Peace Process within a Boosted Peace Context?* The European Geopolitical Forum, September 30, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3ibHERW>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

nothing in the end".⁸ Today, Ter-Petrosyan's rational prediction has already come true. Armenians have to accept the reality, whether they like it or not.

Having frustrated with its failure in Tovuz, Armenian government began to concentrate its armed forces close to the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as in the occupied territories. There were intelligence reports⁹ that Armenia had been planning an offensive operation against Azerbaijan with the purpose of seizing other lands. The transfer of YPG/PKK terrorists who received training in Iraq and Syria to Nagorno-Karabakh region is another proof of our argument.¹⁰ Pashinyan's government had been preparing for war, while the world community expected them to prepare their nation for peace. Finally, on September 27 Armenian Armed Forces initiated offensive operations along entire frontline. However, Azerbaijan Armed Forces launched counterattacks, which have been successfully continuing. Azerbaijani leadership has consistently warned Armenian government to refrain from their malign ambitions. Today we remind them about Ter-Petrosyan's prediction: "*This war will be the end of Armenia*".¹¹ It is too late for regrets.

Conclusion

Azerbaijan is a tolerant country. However, this does not mean that it should put up with the shenanigans of Armenian government. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan has never been and won't be the subject of discussions. Azerbaijan was ready to provide Nagorno-Karabakh with full autonomy and has always expressed its will to ensure the security of its population – which is the most important element of peaceful conflict resolution. However, Armenian government did its "best" to sabotage the negotiations and prolong the conflict. Since four resolutions of UN Security Council demand an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from occupied Azerbaijani lands, Armenian government does not have any right to lay down any condition. The justice is with Azerbaijan. Because Azerbaijan is fighting against separatists and terrorists, Azerbaijan is fighting for its territorial integrity. As the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, İlham Aliyev stated: "*The justice is with us, because we defend ourselves. We do not have any ambition in any country. Azerbaijan Armed Forces do not have any objective and target in Armenia. We will defend ourselves in our own territory and restore our control over occupied lands*".¹²

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⁸ Ibid.

⁹ President of Azerbaijan says that Armenia is preparing for a new war, 20.09.2020, <https://bit.ly/36iHIJA>; President İlham Aliyev: Armenia's ongoing policy of aggression against Azerbaijan shows its fascist essence to the whole world, 27.09.2020, <https://bit.ly/3jhG60T>.

¹⁰ Armenia transfers YPG/PKK terrorists to occupied area to train militias against Azerbaijan, September 25, 2020, <https://bit.ly/33dXG0o>.

¹¹ "Левон Тер-Петросян: Война, или мир? Пора стать серьезнее" 26.12.2018, <https://bit.ly/2FaxSbV>.

¹² Prezident İlham Əliyevin sədrliyi ilə Təhlükəsizlik Şurasının iclası keçirilib, 27 sentyabr 2020, <https://bit.ly/3ncfHEe>.

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