

სამშენაშენი  
ნაშენი

DISCUSSION #13/14  
1ST OF OCTOBER  
29TH OF OCTOBER

CASPIAN SEA

**ARMENIA**

POLITICS OF

# PEACE AND WAR

IN SOUTH CAUCASUS, COSTS OF WAR

**AZERBAIJAN**

Baku ★

*Nagorno-Karabakh*

IRAN

Nagorno-Karabakh Region

Armenian-Occupied Territories

Line of Contact (Indicating northern and eastern limit of area controlled by de-facto Nagorno-Karabakh government)

WEBINAR SERIES BY CIVIC IDEA  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FNF — SOUTH CAUCASUS

2020

# October 1, 12:00 Tbilisi Time

## Join our Zoom WebTalk Live

### Politics of Peace and War in South Caucasus



**Tinatin Khidasheli**

Cahir, Civic IDEA, Former MP  
& MOD, Georgia



**Dr. Leila Alieva**

Russian and East European Studies  
(REES) affiliate, Oxford School of Global  
and Area Studies University of Oxford



**Ahmad ALILI**

Head of Caucasus Policy Analysis  
Center, Lecturer at the Academy of  
Public Administration



**Stepan Grigoryan**

Chairman of the Board, Analytical  
Centre on Globalization and  
Regional Cooperation (ACGRC)



**Styopa (Stepan) Safaryan**

founder of AIISA, & a Chair of the  
Public Council of RA, a consultative  
body to the PM of Armenia.



**Giorgi Kanashvili**

Senior expert at Civic IDEA, former  
Director of Caucasia House.



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South Caucasus



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A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND



# October 29, 13:00 Tbilisi Time

## Join our Zoom WebTalk Live

### The Cots of War



**Tinatin Khidasheli**  
Cahir, Civic IDEA, Former MP  
& MOD, Georgia



**Bakhtiyar Aslanov**  
Project Coordinator, Berghof Foundation's  
project "Memory and Alternative History in Azerbaijan"



**Eka Akobia**  
PhD Dean, School of Governance,  
CU



**Olesya Vartanyan**  
International Crisis Group



**Arzu Geybullayeva**  
Azerbaijani journalist  
and blogger



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN  
FOUNDATION** For Freedom.  
South Caucasus



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## DISCUSSION #13/14

### NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY COVID-19: POLITICS OF PEACE AND WAR IN SOUTH CAUCASUS, COSTS OF WAR

#### SPEAKERS:

Dr. Stepan Grigoryan -

Chairman of the Board of the Yerevan-based Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC)

Dr. Leila Alieva -

Russian and East European Studies (REES) affiliate, Oxford School of Global and Area Studies University of Oxford

Styopa (Stepan) Safaryan -

founder of AIISA, & a Chair of the Public Council of RA, a consultative body to the PM of Armenia

Ahmad ALILI -

Head of Caucasus Policy Analysis Center, Lecturer at the Academy of Public Administration

Giorgi Kanashvili -

Senior expert at Civic IDEA, former Director of Caucasia House

Arzu Geybullayeva -

Azerbaijani journalist and blogger

Olesya Vartanyan -

Representative of International Crisis Group

Eka Akobia -

PhD Dean, School of Governance, CU

Bakhtiyar Aslanov -

Project Coordinator, Berghof Foundation's project "Memory and Alternative History in Azerbaijan"

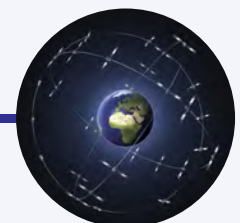
#### MODERATOR:

Tinatin Khidasheli

Chairperson of the Civic IDEA, Former MP & MOD

On **October 1** and October **29**, 2020 Civic IDEA hosted two online discussions "Politics of Peace and War in South Caucasus, Costs of War" on current developments in Karabakh region between Armenia and Azerbaijan with the experts from both countries and Georgia. The objective of hosting the web talk was to find out what were the core reasons for the recent conflict escalation between the two parties. The panelists discussed the current state of affairs in Nagorno Karabakh and their respective states, short, medium, and long-term consequences of the clashes, and the efforts of the international community for peaceful conflict resolution.

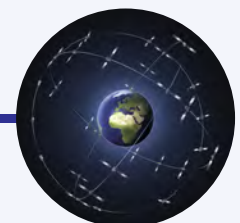
On September 27, significant fighting broke out in Nagorno Karabakh, between the militaries of Armenia and Azerbaijan, that have been struggling over this territory since the collapse of the Soviet Union. There have been instant upsurges already in recent years. However, the current developments seem to take more extensive shapes that can lead the region to the long-term war, as well as cause a massive economic and political crisis. Moreover, the fact that the frozen conflict heats up did not stay unnoticeable for such vital regional players as Russia and Turkey. Right before moving to the potential consequences of the conflict and the discussion of the role of the international community in its peaceful resolution, first, we asked all the experts about the current state of affairs in Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to know the moods,



attitudes, analysis and opinions of the citizens to later determine whether there is still the ground for peacebuilding and cooperation. It is also important to see the regional context and the consequences of war for neighbors.

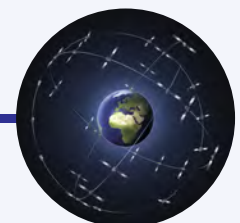
### STATE OF AFFAIRS IN KARABAKH, ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

**Ahmad Alili**, the head of Caucasus Policy Analysis Center, claims that the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan has a different stance towards Nagorno Karabakh's dispute than his predecessors, Kocharyan or Sarkisyan, who, unlike him, are originally from the region. Therefore, his speech on the 5th of August in Karabakh, where he declared the region to be Armenian, seemed populist and boosted many unpleasant processes, which at the end led to the escalation. **Mr. Alili** believes that Pashinyan's reputation raised expectations of Armenians. He also mentioned that there was less effort made by the OSCE Minsk Group, which is responsible for the peaceful resolution of Karabakh conflict. **"Moreover, Azerbaijan was expecting a certain reaction from the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. When there was no reaction from them on halting the whole negotiation process, it became clear that after some time, we were going to have a war."** For understanding the whole picture, it needs to be underlined, that there were manifestations



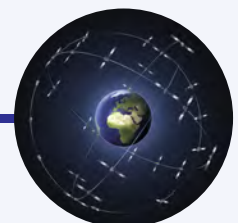
held in Karabakh, demanding immediate elections from the authorities. Azerbaijan waited for the OSCE mediators to cool down the situation, though it never happened. "Regarding the wisdom of leaders, many problems that South Caucasian nations attain with the military, could be achieved through peaceful means. "Mostly, it is about respecting the rights of all, I mean, Nagorno Karabakh Azerbaijanis and Nagorno Karabakh Armenians all together."

**Leila Alieva**, a political analyst of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies Azerbaijani national, condemns violence and believes, it is very unfortunate that the young people are sacrificing themselves in the front lines during the military phase of the conflict, instead of developing their creative potential and living peacefully. She claims that too many actors are involved in the conflict and this occasion makes the proceedings uncontrollable for both sides. "First of all, it showed how dangerous is the uncertain continuation of the frozenness of the conflict, particularly, when you do not have international peacekeeping forces when there is no long-term solution and at the moment it is just a ceasefire. We can see that it is so easy for the sake of some goals to violate the ceasefire." Ms. Alieva considers that both countries are motivated by domestic reasons. Some motives are related also to the current COVID situation where the parties are trying to distract their population from the dire consequences of the pandemic. She highlights the



enormous interest coming from Russia and Turkey, that are actively involved with their own intentions in this conflict. Furthermore, "the problem is that for 27 years, no justice was provided for the victims of the conflict, no documents were implemented by international organizations. There is, what I call, normative uncertainty... Wherever Russia is involved there is normative uncertainty, because there is no equal counterbalance from the West, from the NATO, from any other countries." The active involvement of the international players while balancing the interest of big states in the conflict would have also prevented the stuffing of the region with weapons, which has become a controversial issue, especially during the recent clashes.

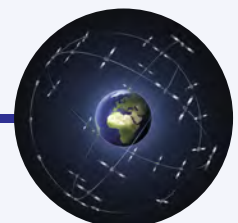
**Stepan Grigoryan**, Chairman of the Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC), underlines several major factors concerning the Karabakh conflict. He refers to the International community as to the mediator that constantly calls the states to a peaceful resolution while frequently forgetting the involvement of other players in the conflict. **Mr. Grigoryan** doubts that even if Armenia and Azerbaijan agree on a ceasefire, the war will still go on. Denoting to several historical events, he believes that President Aliyev did not want the status quo of the region. "Two-three new elements transpired during the conflict, which intensifies the current tension. The first element indicates the Turkish involvement in Karabakh. Despite being a





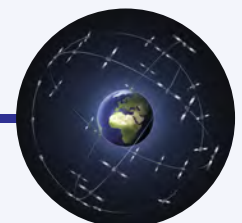
member of the OSCE Minsk Group, Turkey is supporting Azerbaijan without even claiming neutrality. Before the conventional clashes, Turkey has shown diplomatic support, political support to Azerbaijan." In his opinion, the situation has currently changed. Turkey is directly supporting Azerbaijan with its military experts, equipment, and other resources. France has been pursuing the same argument and officially declared Turkey's involvement on the Azerbaijani side. Besides, Turkey's involvement in the conflict is especially disastrous for Armenians for many other reasons. In a historical context revising the 1915 Armenian genocide, Turkey did not act as a friendly neighbor with Armenia. "Nowadays, with the conflict escalation, the Armenian government did not manage to announce mobilization of the human reserves in time, therefore, all the Armenian male population had to sign up for the army."

The second important factor is Democracy in Armenia, which has experienced tremendous changes in the past several years. Even earlier, Armenia was distinguished with its level of Freedom. The journalists and experts having different opinions did not have to flee the country, and the freedom of speech was well reserved. While Azerbaijan's regime is projecting its authoritative nature. Henceforth, Mr. Grigoryan reflects, that Turkish and Azerbaijani authoritarian regimes did not reflect well on Armenia's boosted democracy. At last, Russian politics is worth mentioning. "They are playing and using the conflict to keep Armenia and Azerbaijan on a leash."



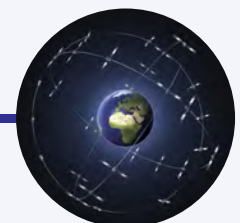
Nevertheless, it surprises me that while even Turkish involvement is very open and direct, Russia has not still expressed significant reactions regarding the on-going tensions. This occasion changes the conflicting atmosphere."

**Styopa Safaryan**, founder of AIIISA and a Chair of the Public Council of RA, reasons that Azerbaijan has never been interested in a peaceful and compromised solution of a Nagorno Karabakh conflict. He recalled Aliyev's statement that he was not going to participating in imitative negotiations. As for Pashinyan, he disagreed with mr. Alili regarding the importance of having Karabakh origins in this conflict, as in the case of an inverse scenario, he would be less keen to concede the territory of Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan. "Pashinyan had an absolutely different approach bringing new fresh air to the settlement and that was very illustrative. I can bring a lot of statements even made by Sarkisyan and Kocharyan speaking about compromises on the Armenian side, regarding the status of Nagorno Karabakh, but I cannot bring any statement of the Azerbaijani President speaking that except territorial integrity, he is envisaging any other status for Karabakh." Mr. Safaryan highlighted that President Aliyev promised society that he would bring all the territories back to Azerbaijan. Thus, there is less ground for negotiations. Armenian expert believes, that the military adventures Aliyev launched already several times, show that he has never been interested in the compromised settlement of the conflict.



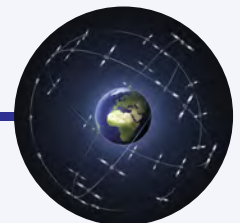
Mr. Safaryan disagrees with ms. Alieva's statement that there is no normative certainty regarding this region. He mentions that there were certain principles negotiated and agreed upon to be taken as the basis for further negotiations. "However, they never fully agreed, since neither Sarkisyan, nor Aliyev was able to sell those solutions to their societies." He recalled the Tavush hostilities that took place this summer and the concerns of the international experts and societies regarding it. "I would tell you that it was for checking the reactions regionally and if we follow the statements made by mr. Aliyev after this fighting, we can find the answer in his addresses. He was checking the reactions of the CSTO, he was checking the reaction of Russia, he wanted to know whether Russia or the CSTO would intervene if Azerbaijan launched a war against Nagorno Karabakh and if Armenia is engaged in that war."

At last mr. Safaryan agreed with his Armenian colleague mentioning three main rivals in the conflict: Azerbaijani Army, Turkish Army, and groups backed by Turkey and deployed from Syria. Moreover, he considers that after the Tavush military actions, Aliyev's positions have weakened internally. "This military adventure is a chance for Aliyev to strengthen his position not only around the negotiation table but also domestically."



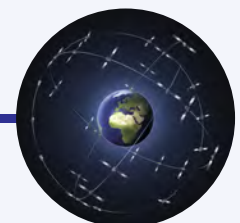
**Tinatin Khidasheli**, Chairperson of the Civic IDEA, commented about the normative assertiveness on the Karabakh conflict, emphasizing that it was present in several proposals, but never ended in any signed tangible document that would have been beneficial for the parties and serve the purpose for peaceful resolution. Indeed, there was no alternative vision agreed and proposed by international players either.

Right after the war emerged in Nagorno Karabakh in September 2020, some people have aired the opinion about it ending soon. However, the long-term observers of the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, as well as the conflict itself, claimed that this fighting would last longer than expected. Since then, there were several ceasefire agreements initiated by the Western partner states, as an attempt to end the hostilities. Therefore, the expectations of the meeting held between the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign ministers on October 30, were not very high. Azerbaijani blogger and journalist, expert **Arzu Geybull**a believes that despite all these efforts to negotiate peace between the disputing sides, we have not seen significant progress made in this conflict. "Over the last four weeks, every time we read about the bombing, every time we read about shelling, every time we read about human losses, especially the one we saw in Barda with 20 over casualties of people who've been killed, innocent civilians, as well as countless others who have been wounded. I think it is really important to understand that this war will not stop until there are concessions made on both sides."- Arzu Geybull



conflict de-escalation requires the guarantees from both sides not to bomb or shell the other and also to return to the negotiation table but with major concessions. Moreover, Arzu considers the human losses being the major cost of the war in Nagorno Karabakh. She feels that human costs need to be kept on the agendas since right now, people are not putting into perspective the importance of human life that is being lost.

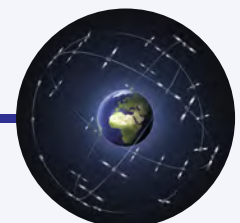
As for the strategy of regional involvement in this conflict, from the beginning, we have seen Turkey taking a very active role in this war. They supported Azerbaijan militarily and politically. However, Arzu thinks that Azerbaijan is not dependent on Turkey in this context. "Yes they (Turkey) have made their support very clear on numerous occasions and they have also made statements. The Ministry of Defense of Turkey recently said that if Azerbaijan needs any sort of military assistance, they are ready to provide it. But again, if this relationship stops at any point and if Turkey decides that it is supporting de-escalation, as it has done for many years while being a member of the OSCE Minsk Group, Azerbaijan is not military dependent on it."-mentioned Arzu Geybulla. As for the other state and international actors, we have not seen much of the US engagement over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which shows its disinterest in this issue. Even this year, the US government is preoccupied with the 2020 presidential elections and its passive attitude has disengaged Europe as well. Arzu believes that there was the growing frustration of Azerbaijan over this conflict not getting enough attention from inter-





national actors and decision-makers. With the arrival of Pashinyan as a Prime Minister of Armenia in 2018, everybody hoped that the relations between the disputing sides would improve. Nevertheless, it completely failed due to some recent controversial statements made by him. Therefore, all the approaches and all the circumstances people thought to know about the Nagorno Karabakh conflict have drastically changed causing the war in the region.

Representative of International Crisis Group, Armenian expert **Olesya Vartanyan** reckons that no matter how the war ends, the region is going to experience tremendous changes. We can see the influence of regional powers, such as Russia and Turkey, and unfortunately, there is no peace plan for the substitution of Azerbaijan's desire to get back the territories of Nagorno Karabakh. **Olesya** believes, there might be a short pose at a certain point, but no real end to this war anytime soon. She agrees with **Arzu** regarding the human losses from both sides and also highlights the involvement of third-party players, such as Russia and Turkey having bigger roles in this conflict. "In addition, there is a cooperation that has been in place between Azerbaijan and Turkey for many years and which no one tries to hide. We all knew that Turkey is selling weaponry, sharing intelligence, and all of that. We see its more visible involvement right now, not only with the reports about the mercenaries coming from Syria with the Turkish support but also its apparent presence."- mentioned **Olesya**. Therefore, the unconditional support coming from Ankara does not contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

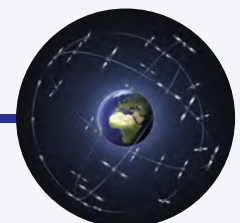


Despite the technological advances of the 21st century, this war is still happening according to the middle age rules. "We see lots of drones, rockets, and missiles being used in different places, but at the same time, we see very little respect to the fact that there are civilian areas, especially inside the conflict zone. I can tell you that I had some people who I knew in person who could not leave their bomb shelters in Stepanakert"- Olesya Vartanyan. Moreover, there are on-going war crimes, such as beheadings of the military and the shootings taking place even in front of the cameras. She highlighted that these activities are not one-sided, because if the listed war crimes are not addressed there will be a chain reaction to that coming from the other sides. One can say that the fighting is only about politics, territory, and so on, but the fighting is getting driven by these kinds of casualties and troubles people have to face in the region.

The third point Olesya made is related to the failure of the notion of prevention.

"We are waiting for something terrible to happen in order to see some strong statements coming from the international community or some sort of diplomatic intervention taking place...This is sad to see that instead of acting to prevent something, we still have to follow in order to wait for the action"

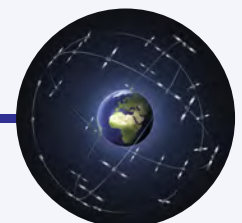
– Olesya Vartanyan.



Azerbaijani expert **Bakhtiyar Aslanov** believes that the war over Nagorno Karabakh escalated because of the misevaluation of the situation by the disputing sides and by the international organizations, like the OSCE Minsk Group. The peace activists and the resources that have been invested for peace activated war propaganda instead. **Bakhtiyar** estimates that the failed mediation process of the Minsk group shows the weakness of this entity in dealing with a conflict in a peaceful way. This is the exact moment when Russia's and Turkey's roles become more visible even in terms of the diplomatic resolution of the dispute.

**Bakhtiyar** considers that the war in Nagorno Karabakh will end once the competing sides become militarily and politically tired. "It also depends on the developments of military operations. Now for example, as we hear from Armenian or Azerbaijani sides, the militaries of both sides are fighting in strategic points"- mentioned **Bakhtiyar Aslanov**. Hence, the end of the war might also depend on the occurrences at these strategically important stations.

**Bakhtiyar** disagreed with Arzu Geybulla's argument regarding the Turkish assistance provided to Azerbaijan. He believes there is no tangible proof to this argument despite Turkey's declared support to Azerbaijan. He also disagreed with Olesya regarding the Syrian fighters' presence in Nagorno Karabakh claiming that no videos or photos displaying that and all the other sources (e.g. journalists) are just part of a larger propaganda mechanism. "The journalist who propaga-



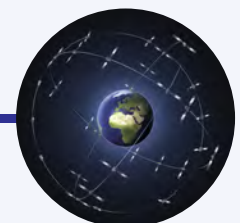
ted this word (Syrians' presence) is in Armenia and she has been acting as a propaganda machine of Armenian Defense Minister."- mentioned Bakhtiyar. He also emphasized that after the Karabakh war in the 90s, misevaluation occurred in the societies of Armenia and Azerbaijan, since they had developed a win-lose approach that people underestimated for a while. Therefore, the peace values were not properly absorbed by the societies, which contributes to the emergence of warfare even today.

## Q&A

### Questions from the Audience:

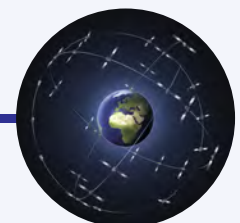
*Why did the conflict escalate so quickly now? What do you expect Georgia to do in given situation? How do you think Georgia's response to the war will (re)shape public perceptions on Azerbaijan-Georgia and Armenia-Georgia relations in the nearer future?*

**Giorgi Kanashvili**, the expert of the Civic IDEA from Georgia, mentioned that there is growing frustration in Azerbaijan, starting from the events that took place in the 90s. The current clashes show well that the breakthrough by force is impossible. Although the sides are speaking about the participation of the third-parties, we know that Azerbaijan has enough financial resources and extensive weaponry, while Armenia is supplied with weaponry from Russia.



Therefore, Armenia will always have enough military arsenal to balance Azerbaijan in the region. Nonetheless, both sides are going to suffer from the costs of war, which once again proves the winless condition of the current clash. Mr. Kanashvili recalled Mr. Grigoryan's argument about democratization, claiming that it is empirically proven that the war starts when the countries start the process of democratization. "There are different types of political infrastructure in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, but still, we are far from the consolidated democracy. I do not share the approach explaining world events through democracy lenses. Having the hope that the Azerbaijani government will pursue democracy bringing changes to the current happenings is unrealistic. I think this kind of illusion that Pashinyan, a new democratic leader will change the Armenian stance is also a mega narrative regarding the Karabakh war and unlikely true. Every new leader who will come to the government will have a very strong and heavy burden to carry."

As for Georgia, the expert believes there is discontent from both sides, Armenia and Azerbaijan, regarding Georgia's neutral position and less active participation. "Any step towards any direction will be disastrous, firstly, for Georgia, taking into account that we have a bigger portion of Azerbaijani and Armenian population. Starting from Shevardnadze to the current government, all realized that the expression of the support to a particular disputing side would be catastrophic."

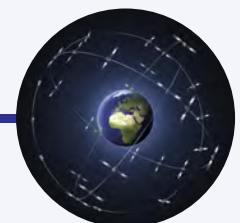




Giorgi hopes that in the nearest future, we all will see the end of the conflict. Azerbaijan is expecting some sort of victory while gaining extra territories during the clashes and then it is going to stop the conflict. Moreover, the international community is becoming more involved in peaceful negotiations, giving the conflict chance for de-escalation shortly.

Styopa Safaryan also commented about Georgia's role in the conflict. He highlighted that there is a large dissatisfaction in Armenia about Georgia's air space being open for the Turkish planes transferring armament in Karabakh. These transfers should be prohibited for all sides. "If Georgia continues to maintain neutrality, it should not allow Turkish air force to transfer military equipment regularly."

In response to mr. Safaryan, Georgian expert, mr. Kanashvili stated Georgia's decision to take the neutral side in this conflict is right and it is the only way to avoid conflict with its close partners and neighbors. Moreover, one month ago, "We heard the same accusations from Azerbaijanian side, that we are giving the possibility to Russia to use our territory for carrying Serbian weaponry to Armenia, so several miscalculations have taken place in this regard."- commented mr. Kanashvili.



Ms. Khidasheli, former MOD of Georgia, has added that

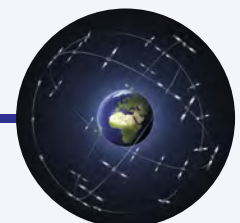
"As someone who was signing those documents while being the Minister of Defense of Georgia, I can assure you that there is no way that Georgia will get jump into this plane of creating disbalance in the region, it is not up to Georgia or about Georgia. We have international commitments that we obey and we respect."

### Questions from the Audience:

*Who initiated the war? What will be the long-term consequences of this particular war we are witnessing at this moment? What can the international community do to stop the conflict, to stop the active phase of war?*

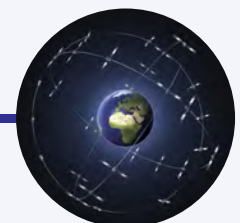
It is a very controversial and sensitive question for both, Armenians and Azerbaijanians. Therefore, our experts had very distinctive standpoints regarding the initiation of the war.

According to **mr. Ahmad Alili**, it is undeniable that Azerbaijan has more motives to change the status quo of the region, but through peaceful means, avoiding any escalations that could marginalize Nagorno Karabakh Armenians in this matter. From his point of view, all the peace negotiations and documents reached with Sarkisyan and the international community were denied by Pashinyan in his public statements. "In January 2019, mediators,

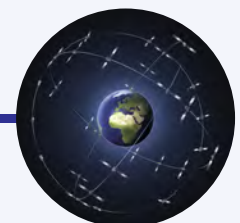


including the OSCE Minsk Group made a call to prepare the population for peace, to avoid the implementation of the clauses in that document, Pashinyan had a strong incentive to push Azerbaijan to war." For example, **mr. Alili** remembered Pashinyan's announcement of moving the public administration offices and several parliamentary institutions to Shusha, which carries an exceptional cultural and historical importance for Azerbaijan. Such provocations triggered Azerbaijan for the use of military means.

Also, the expert agrees that Turkey has its own interests while siding with Azerbaijan in this conflict. Furthermore, in his opinion, the severity of Armenia's current government made Turkey realize that the public image of Armenia was not the same as before. "**Armenia accused Azerbaijan of using UAS while attacking Armenian targets that are close to the strategic pipelines and the railroad that connect Azerbaijan to Georgia, Turkey and all the western and the Euro-Atlantic community. This way it tried to attract Russia for its further engagement in the conflict.**" From there on, it became clear that Turkey would step in despite Azerbaijan's long-lasting desire to engage Ankara in conflict. Media reports also mention Syrian rebels' presence in Nagorno Karabakh based on the face-to-face interviews. **Mr. Alili** mentioned that tracking of those fighters is impossible, however Armenia claimed to have evidences of the existence of Syrian fighters there



**Stepan Grigoryan** highpointed the importance of the political regime established in particular states. Azerbaijan being an authoritarian state, hinders the further platform for peace negotiation. The country's restricted freedom of speech limits the chances for the boosted negotiations and honest discussions. **Mr. Grigoryan** contradicted mr. Alili's argument concerning the pipelines and the railroads, claiming that "during the Tavush fighting, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan threatened Armenia with an attack on its Nuclear Power Plant, while official Armenia has never declared Azerbaijan's attacks on Armenian points." He reckons that there is no justification for war. "Even if one does not like Pashinyan's politics and attitudes, it does not mean that you need to start a large-scale war where young people from both countries suffer." Contrasting the Azerbaijani expert's comments, in Armenia, people blame Pashinyan for having a softer approach to the Karabakh's case. "Nikol Pashinyan does not have radical stances towards this issue, he himself initiated the new peace element during the face-to-face conversation with Aliyev." According to **mr. Grigoryan**, Azerbaijan has harsh demands and that does not contribute to the peaceful resolution of this conflict.

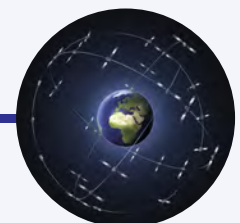


"It was Aliyev who refused the Vienna agenda and the introduction of the investigative mechanism for this kind of escalation and for the OSCE monitoring and yesterday three civilians were killed during the bombardment by Azerbaijani and Turkish air forces, which shows us that it is more than a marginalization of locals, it is their killing."-

responded Styopa Safaryan.

He also remembered that recently, a high-ranking delegation from Azerbaijan visited Turkey to convince the government to engage in war and to communicate them that Armenians were targeting their regional infrastructure.

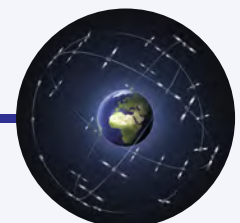
As for the involvement of the International Community, mr. Safaryan claims that President Aliyev closed all the doors for the international peace negotiations even before the renewed violent activities. Bloomberg, CNN and other global media channels have actively reported about the presence of Turkish-backed mercenaries transferred from Syria to Nagorno Karabakh, which can serve as clear evidence for their actual deployment there. A Turkish member of Parliament also confirmed in his statement that Turkey has sent 400 people to Karabakh. "This is leading to large scale war in the Caucasus which is in the interest of many other regional actors and here, not only Armenia but also Georgia and Azerbaijan will not decide the outcome of that war. That is why the international community should stop this large-scale war."





Every state in this world has its own domestic agenda. Especially during the elections, every political leader is guided by its own national interests of the internal agenda. It is also true, that those interests pursue short and long-term goals. Nevertheless, every country has strategic interests that last longer. The South Caucasus is not an exception and Turkey's role in this region is also extremely important. "For Georgia Turkey has been reliable and loyal partner for all these 30 years and probably, together with the United States, this is the country we owe our independence a lot and whatever is left of Georgia is exactly due to that strategic partnership. We all have our strategic interests and they differ from one another. Thus, any claim of expelling Turkey from the Caucasus is unacceptable for us"- highlighted Tinatin Khidasheli.

Ms. Alieva highlighted that viewing the advancement of Azerbaijani military as a threat for Armenia's borders is a wrong discourse since the war is raging on the Azerbaijani territory and the latter is trying to restore its borders.



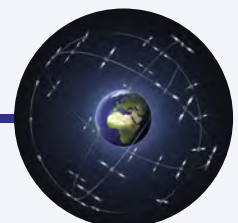
### Questions from the audience:

*What incentives does Aliyev have to resume the negotiations? At the moment, the war is still very popular and the Azerbaijani side is making a progress, Russia has expressed unwillingness to engage heavily as the fighting is not in Armenia itself, so what could be the incentives stopping Aliyev from hostilities?*

*Do you see any future for the different kinds of civil society initiatives in the light of the current re-escalation of the war?*

Arzu Geybullayeva reckons that for Aliyev to agree on joining the negotiation table, he wants to see the implementation of his major appeal. Nevertheless, we see that the two sides are not meeting their demands. Aliyev is pushing for the exit of all the Armenian forces from the Nagorno Karabakh region and until it is done, there will not be a conversation on peace.

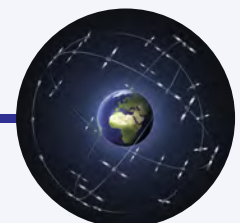
As for the tractor initiatives, there were many collaborative projects, but only a few of them touched the grievances, the needs, the fears, and the general relations of these two countries to the core. Moreover, the scope of these projects was not satisfactory, they were not happening enough and they were not reaching out to larger communities. Also, these programs were held with the help of the NGOs and International Organizations. If they were strengthened and supported by the competing governments and taken on a larger scale, they would have a much bigger impact on both societies.



“Judging or talking from the experience of a country where something similar happened in 2008, we also had the feeling that all the work done by the civil society was thrown away 20 years back and all the peace initiatives that looked very promising were lost. We do have the optimism to say that there are lots of people ready to reengage and be part of the similar activities to bring communities together, to facilitate the problem-solving on a people-to-people basis, to leave the final solutions up to the politicians, but somehow prepare the societies for the better life and coexistence”.

- added Tinatin Khidasheli.

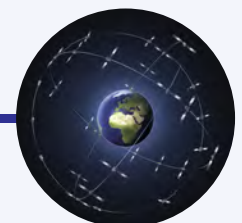
**Olesya Vartanyan** emphasized the dialogue processes in Karabakh conflict being distinctive from those processes occurring in Georgia. She mentioned that in the Karabakh case, it is a closed process because no actor ever dared to bring effective peace proposals to the societies. “Nowadays, when the war is on-going, what we see is that people are discussing and mentioning basic principles without really understanding that the basic principles are about something more comprehensive rather than just the return of territories”- Olesya Vartanyan. Indeed, no peace plan can replace the current fighting in Nagorno Karabakh.



**Bakhtiyar Aslanov** expressed that Russia and Turkey are acting more pragmatically than the average mediators which are far from the region having less leverage over the conflictual parties.

He also highlighted that from the beginning the Azerbaijani side was very reluctant regarding the involvement of international media outlets or journalists in the region, especially because of the 2016 April war, when in his opinion, Azerbaijan had a very negative experience with the journalists coming from Russia. "They were propagating in different ways against the interests of Azerbaijan. That was why this time they were more careful about this" - **Bakhtiyar Aslanov**. Azerbaijan is also reluctant to let the international and local journalists get in the fighting areas because of the unexpected casualties.

Dean of the Caucasus University, Georgian expert **Eka Akobia** made it clear that there is a disinformation campaign led by the Russian media outlets in and outside of Georgia, claiming that Georgia does not let the humanitarian cargo pass through its territory. "There has been a declaration and press conference on this issue from the Ministry of Economy and also from the Armenian Embassy in Georgia. Daily, nearly 750 to 800 cargo trolleys are crossing across our border with Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, the military good transfer has been banned"- **Eka Akobia**. She keeps the hope that the competing sides will get back to the updated Madrid principles, they will provide the security of the people who

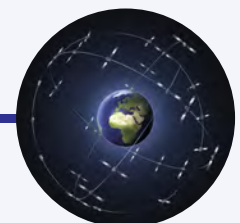


would return to their places of residence and they will start the negotiations on the status of Nagorno Karabakh. "the is the moment when the role of civil society and tractor diplomacy could come in to reach an agreeable solution to both sides and to settle the conflict.

### Questions from the audience:

*We all have the feeling that the mediation and many other international peace instruments have failed in both Nagorno Karabakh and Georgian conflicts/occupation cases. Why do we all have the feeling that something big is missing on the international level?*

The Caucasus region is fraught with frozen conflicts and it becomes obvious that the conflicts will not last frozen forever, they will at some point spill over into a hot phase. Georgian expert **Eka Akobia** believes that both local and international actors failed to effectively address the disputes in the region. "As for the conflict at hand, we have a situation that has been unsolved for 30 years now, but what has been in place shows us that it has also lacked implementation. The updated Madrid principles that were announced in 2009 and both Armenia and Azerbaijan politically supported them. However, none of these demands have been met, we have had an asymmetrical balance of power in the region while one party is happy with the status quo, but the other party is extremely unhappy with it."- Eka Akobia.

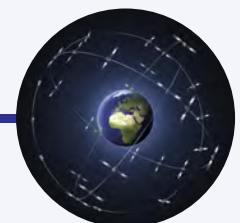




According to Eka's opinion, during the past 4 years with the Trump administration, the US has become more inward-looking, more isolationist, and more unilateralist, in terms of solving problems related to global order. This occasion caused the rise of authoritarianism and up to now, the world is fighting the pandemic that transcends the state border and is massively spread. The international actors that are supposed to be organizing frantically the international diplomatic mechanisms to stop the on-going fighting, in reality, are busy with the inward problems, such as the US elections and the containment of the pandemic.

Another global dimension which Eka Akobia underlined was related to the extreme fatigue with the democratic interventionism. "We have international actors including the United States, the European Union and separate countries of the EU are tired with the unsuccessful interventions in Iraq, in Syria, in Afghanistan, we are again faced with the reality that even in the 21st century, nationalism remains as a dominant ideology."- mentioned Eka. Therefore, as in the early 90s, the world faces humanitarian catastrophes, like the war in Nagorno Karabakh that attract very little international attention.

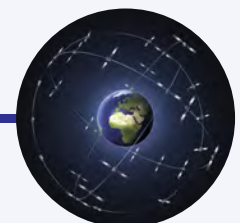
The main question, in this case, is what are the strategic military goals of Azerbaijan? How far are the military actions going and are the international actors going to intervene in these happenings? So far, there is a very question silence and inactivity from the Russian side while during the decades, Russia was considered as Armenia's first and foremost treaty ally committing to protect Armenia. Nevertheless, as we see the main actors in the current war are Armenia and Azerbaijan.



As for the other actors, “we see the shortcomings of international communities’ inability to come up with an effective international or collective security measures. The United Nation is missing in action, I have not seen anybody trying to put the issue on the UN Security Council agenda. As for the EU, it has its own fatigues and is disengaged. The activity within the OSCE Minsk Group has been very fragmented, we have seen three ceasefires reached, but there is no cohesion and unity in this”- stated Eka Akobia. This occasion is also encouraged by the on-going Covid-19 challenges that compounded in a very unfavorable humanitarian situation. Regarding the costs of war, the lives of nearly 5000 people and billions of dollars worth of military technology have been wasted in this war.

As for Georgia, Eka Akobia strongly supports the idea of neutrality from the Georgian side in the Nagorno Karabakh war. Nevertheless, she believes that Georgia must be a part of negotiations and it must look out to its own problems, both internally and internationally while observing the positions of international and local actors in this matter.

Dr. Leila Alieva, mentioned several key problems that prevent the peaceful resolution of the conflict: “This is not the post-soviet space anymore; we are 30 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But Russia is still utilizing the old soviet discourse conflict, the old pre-modern conflict... So, this fighting over territory, is very outdated and it just shows how little progress we have made, because of the lack of democratization. Also, after that,



we need liberalization and the modernization of the mind... We should actually discuss not who started the fighting, but our common strategic vision. How do we see our future? You cannot really isolate yourself completely from your neighbor, you cannot build the wall... There are more years when we lived in peace, we intermarried, we had wonderful coexistence and we appreciated that diversity."

There is always the ground for peace negotiations between parties and we all need to come up with the consensus regarding the fostered peaceful coexistence in this region. Both countries have to come together and think of mutually beneficial solutions without any military intervention. There exist many normal civilized responses to this situation which can establish a long-term peace in this region. Therefore, Armenia and Azerbaijan should think about the common future and come to a strategic level of peaceful discussion.

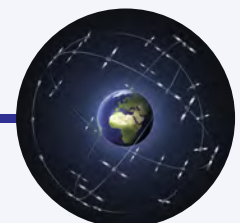
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**We are grateful to FNF-South Caucasus, National Endowment for Democracy,  
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