

ПОЛИТИКА

The Artsakh issue: possible options for resolving the problem

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«Արցախյան հիմնախնդիր». Խնդրի լուծման հնարավոր տարբերակներ

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Անփոփում՝ Արցախի Հանրապետությունը գտնվում է Հարավային Կովկասում: Չնայած, որ Արցախը զբաղեցնում է փոքր տարածք, «Արցախի հիմնախնդիրը» այնքան բարդ է, որ իր լուծման համար անհրաժեշտ է միջազգային համագործակցություն: Այս հոդվածը նպատակաուղղված է ուսումնասիրել «Արցախյան հիմնախնդիրը»: Հոդվածում հեղինակը նաև նշում է հարցի լուծման համար անհրաժեշտ և կարևորագույն փաստարկները: Ավելին, հոդվածում քննարկվում են Արցախի Հանրապետության և Ադրբեջանի Հանրապետության միջև տնտեսական համագործակցության հնարավորությունները, որոնք կարող են նպաստել երկու պետությունների միջև առկա խնդրի վաղաժամկետ լուծմանը:

Վճռորոշ բառեր՝ «Արցախյան հիմնախնդիր», Լեռնային Ղարաբաղ, ԼՂՀ, Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն, Ադրբեջանի Հանրապետություն, ԵԱՀԿ Մինսկի խումբ, Քի Վեսթյան բանակցություններ, «Ընդհանուր պետություն», ԱՄՆ-ի քաղաքականությունը, աշխարհատնտեսական գործոն, Իրանի տնտեսական ծրագիրը:

«Арцахский вопрос»: возможные варианты решения проблемы

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Резюме: Республика Арцах (НКР) занимает небольшую территорию на Южном Кавказе, однако «Арцахский вопрос» настолько сложен, что требует международного сотрудничества для своего разрешения. Данная статья направлена на исследование разрешения данного вопроса. В своей статье автор приводит важные аргументы, которые необходимы для разрешения данного вопроса. Более того, в работе обсуждаются возможности экономического сотрудничества между Республикой Арцах и Азербайджанской Республикой, которые могут способствовать скорейшему разрешению проблемы между двумя государствами.

Ключевые слова: «Арцахский вопрос», Нагорный Карабах, НКР, Республика Армения, Азербайджанская Республика, Минская группа ОБСЕ, Ки-Уэстские переговоры, «Общее государство», политика США, геоэкономический фактор, иранский экономический проект.

The Artsakh issue (Karabakh) as a political problem came into existence at the beginning of the 20th century as a result of decisions made by the Caucasus regional body of the Bolshevik Party on including Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) into the administrative board of Azerbaijan Soviet Republic [13, 22]. The very decision is a completely illegitimate act of totalitarian regime which was carrying out home policy of the Soviet State in order to please Turkey and her factual protectorate in the

South Caucasus - Azerbaijan. During the existence of the Soviet State the Armenian community of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and the governing body of the Soviet Armenia had been raising the question of reuniting Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) with Armenia. With the collapse of the Soviet Union new political conditions came up, and the Armenian population of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) exercised its right for independent existence and political integration with the Republic

of Armenia through civic disobedience and then, later, through armed national liberation struggle [8, 37]. Since the 1990th the problem of Artsakh has actually become an international one, and owing to the efforts of OSCE an armistice was declared between Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (Artsakh) and the Republic of Azerbaijan¹. It is worth noticing that the armistice was declared not in 1992 - during the failures of Armenian armed forces when Russian armed forces came out in a united front with the army of Azerbaijan but during the time when the army of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic set up a "security zone" around the territory of ex-Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomy [10, 24]. By the way, the regions around ex-Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomy historically and legally are part of Artsakh (Karabakh). These regions have been cut off from the Nagorno-Karabakh in the Soviet period, as a result of the illegal administrative and territorial transformation that was carried out under direct control from Moscow and Baku [8, 63].

In the spring of 2001 negotiations between the presidents of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia took place in Key West on the Artsakh issue – on the initiative and through mediation of the USA Administration². As a result of failure of these negotiations, the US administration as well as the governments of France and Russia, co-chairman of the Minsk group of OSCE, sized up that Artsakh problem cannot be settled without any compulsion on the basis of an agreement between the two parties - Azerbaijan and Armenia. The importance of Key West negotiations is that the US administration, in fact, took up decisions so as not to initiate a new stage of negotiations [3, 41]. The governments of France and Russia arrived at the same conclusion. It is conditioned by the fact that the priority of the US policy in the South Caucasus is the safeguarding of stability which is necessary to reach the strategic goals in the region - extraction and transportation of Caspian oil without any obstacles. Any initiative on the settlement of interstate and interethnic conflicts will increase the tension in the region, and might resume military actions. The US displays the same attitude to the conflicts in Georgia, namely, Abkhazian and South Ossetian [5, 74]. Within the strategy the chief tasks of the US in the South Caucasus are the establishing of democratic governments which will be the result of democratic elections, the development of civic society, the strengthening of pacifist attitudes, the banning to

recommence military actions in the zones of confrontation. One can assume that the US, France and Russia are interested in the maintenance of the Minsk group on the settlement of the Artsakh issue. It allows to ensure the chief task- to bar the recommencement of military actions and the dialogue between the opposing parties. The events in the Near East, the military operation of the USA and the Great Britain against Iraq have objectively resulted in that the US became less interested in the South Caucasus, the importance of Caspian oil lessened, though, on the whole the US is still interested in Caspian energy resources [1, 38]. If within the next few months, after ceasing of military operations in Iraq, it will become possible to provide substantial supplies of oil for the world market, some projects in the Caspian basin will be revised. All this still makes the importance of the Artsakh issue for the US policy less urgent³.

The international community more and more comes to the conclusion that it will be impossible to find a political solution to the Artsakh issue. Different proposals of OSCE on the settlement of the problem which had been approved by European structures, first of all the proposal on establishing a "common state" proved to be unacceptable both for the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Artsakh [6, 57]. Considering the possibility of the Artsakh issue settlement it is necessary that the following basic factors should be taken into account:

1. *The people of the Republic of Artsakh will admit neither of any factual or formal submissions to the Republic of Azerbaijan nor have their newly formed state be in a somewhat "within state" relationship with the Republic of Azerbaijan;*
2. *The people of the Republic of Azerbaijan will never admit of the breach of territorial integrity of the country and suffer the loss of half of their territory which according to the ideology of the Azeri people is part of the territory of their motherland.*
3. *The Republic of Artsakh will not cede the territories under its control around ex-Nagorno-Karabakh autonomy (reintegrated regions) which consider as liberated without any force compulsion;*
4. *The Republic of Armenia, on account of available legislative deeds adopted by the Parliament in 1985-95 is obliged to defend the interests of the Republic of Artsakh.*

At present there exists a whole number of states and ethnic territory in the world which are

¹ *The Hungarian OSCE Chairmanship,*

<https://www.osce.org/mg/70125>

² *Suny R., Shaffer B.,*

<https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/negotiations-nagorno-karabagh>

³ *Stronski P.,* <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/13/time-to-reset-u.s.-policy-in-south-caucasus-pub-71256>

internationally unrecognized as such, and the US administration prefers to term them as “territories beyond control” [2, 46]. Such are the Chinese Republic of Taiwan, the Republic of Northern Cyprus, the Republic of Artsakh, Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria), the Herat province in Afghanistan, Palestinian autonomy, Iraqi Kurdistan. These state formations are considerably more organized, more provided by resources, and possess more vital capacity than many internationally recognized states. In this connection the following work “Global tendencies of human development till 2015” is of great interest [7, 36]. It presents the Materials of the US national Intelligence Council with the following data: “The number of countries which since 1945 has increased for more than 3 times, and since 1990 by 20%, by the year of 2015 will begin to grow more slowly. This growth will still take place in the result of a still continuing process of decolonization as well as because of some religious and ethnic conflicts which lead to the breach of states. This is more likely for the countries of Africa to the south of the Sahara, in Central Asia and Indonesia. In some cases, the new states may be formed owing to the activities of separative movements which destabilize the situation in the countries where in the beginning the minorities did not strive for separation” [3, 81]. Thus, the realization of the fact that the process of forming new states goes on is becoming stronger. According to the viewpoint of an outstanding American political science specialist of Paul Goble “it is much cheaper to change the existing boundaries rather than to keep them unchanged” [5, 42]. Even disregarding the processes of new state formations on post-Soviet territory, the Western Community crashed with irresistible problems in Cyprus, on the Balkans and in Iraq. Despite the global participation of the US and NATO to settle the problems in Bosnia and Kosovo, the given problem remains unsolved and does not leave room for doubt that a sovereign Albanian State, which in 2008 was formed in Kosovo, at best would have an obliged agreement with Serbia. The problems of Iraqi Kurdistan look the same, where the Kurds owing to favorable political conditions managed to establish a National State System. In the nearest perspective it will become clear that the processes of forming sovereign States Afghanistan became more active (taking into consideration the non-Pashto part of the country), in the Shiite provinces of Iraq, in the East of Turkey. Compared with the 1990s, the tendencies towards bigger sovereignty in Russian Federation: Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Dagestan and Chechnya are not very actual as it was in the 1990s. Not all given ethnic groups were to gain independence. Most of them prefers to coexist as a

parent state [1, 58]. This on the whole depends on several factors:

1. *The peculiarities of historical conditions, language, religious, ethnic and common cultural community of the parent state and the given ethnic type;*
2. *Economic conditions, real possibilities to get positive economic and socio-cultural development within the parent state, a possibility for cooperation in the international political and economic arena;*
3. *Real conditions for the safety of existence of the given ethnic type.*

Under present historic and political conditions practically all ethnic types that have experienced ethnic, religious, socio-cultural discrimination, particularly, features of genocide on the part of the parent state, will strive for independence, at least from the given parent state. Within the given process not only separation will take place but also some changes of state borders resulting from the annexation of the ethnic territory to the neighboring or other state. In the presence of redundancy of international institutions, the active interference of NATO, European community and the US in the given process it is impossible to stop the and the attempts to stop them will result in a still bigger reinforcement of the problem in the regions. The international law cannot be applied in the settlement of these problems since it does not reflect global processes and the present international orders did not provide simple safety of the peoples and societies as well as less big human individuals.

The Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) had never formed part of Azerbaijan State system because the Soviet Union Republics had never been internationally recognized sovereign countries. Nagorno-Karabakh had been part of the Soviet Union- a state which no longer exists. The recognition of only Union State republics as sovereign states by international community became an act of crying discrimination of the rights of the peoples and nations. As a result of this four unrecognized states were formed on the ex-Soviet territory. According to the degree of State discipline the Republic of Artsakh exceeds not only the Republic of Azerbaijan but many new independent states as well. The Republic of Artsakh army of defense is the most efficient military alignment in the South Caucasus. The recommencement of military actions on part of the Republic of Azerbaijan will result in mass calamity for Azerbaijan while losses of the civic population will be not less than 300.000 people. Actually, during the previous period of military opposition NKR defense army did not initiate offensive operations

with the aim of inflicting decisive losses to the armed forces of Azerbaijan. The liberation of a number of historical territories of Armenia aimed at providing NKR with safety. The absence of offensive operations can be accounted for by the wish of political leadership and military command to avoid big human losses. According to the estimation of western military experts, under the existing standards of fighting efficiency of the armies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Artsakh, the Azeri armed forces will lose the ability to resistance in two weeks' time if active operations are carried out. As a result, Baku will meet the danger of the break down of state system. According to another scenario, regional powers will get involved in the conflict, namely Turkey, Iran and Russia (perhaps other states and large-scale national liberation movements).

In American political science and in expert estimation of administration employees there are proposals on the employment of various schemes of "enlarged sovereignty" or "the status of uncontrolled territories". Such ideas are perceived in Europe with more difficulties, may be because of the same problems in Europe. Nevertheless, the political project markers have already started the working out of the proposals. It is the case when the formation of concepts is based on the practice available. However, from the viewpoint of international and local security and political justice, every ethnic group longing for sovereignty must prove its ability to create not simply a state formation but a civic society to put into practice the principles of parliamentarism, multi-party system, self-providing economy to provide inner and foreign tolerance, to recognize the right of other ethnic groups and nations. The US representative in the Minsk group of OSCE, many experts mention the distinctive characteristics of the Republic of Artsakh compared to other unacknowledged states. All above- mentioned attributes of modern state system are already established. Artsakh State structures are to prove their functional responsibility further on. The main NKR problems are the development of civic society the struggle against corruption. The economic boom which has been observed in the Republic of Artsakh recently resulted in the flow of investments and with it in the increase of corruption on all the levels of administration. The chiefly traditional NKR society is being transformed into a bourgeois one but causes damage particularly to the formation of civic society. Despite the efforts of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Artsakh practically overcame the foreign policy isolation and cooperates with many governmental and non-governmental organizations and companies in the West and in the East. The international Community

cannot ignore these processes. There are considerable possibilities of collaboration with the Republic of Azerbaijan first of all on the basis of fair distribution of regional resources [4, 83].

The region of South Caucasus as a vaster Caucasus-Caspian region is a territory where many people during thousand years had been establishing states, civilizations and conditions for inhabiting and vital activities⁴. The given region includes separate sectors of several cultural and historical types, which in different times dominated here and the chief advantages in the development of productive force belonged to them. Approximately since the beginning of the 60th the successive collapse of the Soviet Union, the departing of the USSR countries from Moscow and from one another has begun. In the 70th this process developed in anew way and new speed which resulted in a sharp confrontation already in the 80th [14, 27]. Problems sprang up between the USSR countries in the field of utilization of borderland plots of land, water resources, communications, cultural and economic life of people of different nationalities which turned out to be not "titled" nations on the territory of other republics. A monstrous discrimination of the right of nationalities sprang up in socio-cultural, administrative and economic spheres. The problems of safety in the South Caucasus and in other regions are not only in relationship between the states but the nations as well, between ethnic and religious groups, regional, economic, political clans. In these regions despite favorable bioclimatic conditions natural and natural-economic resources are quite limited. The existing level of economic development, the demographic tendencies suppose a disputed utilization of more valuable and universal resources: **land, water, communications, oil, food staffs and other**. The disputes on the utilization of given resources take place in the North Caucasus in the most violent and barbaric form. But in the South Caucasus too these problems form the basis of present and future conflict. The most pronounced problems are the utilization and distribution of oil and gas resources. Oil and gas resources of the Caspian basin are basically within the state borders of Qazaqstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan [6, 71]. Of course, these countries have the right to link their economic and political future with their exploitation. However, the utilization of these resources at present became possible owing to age-long activities in the region of Russian, European and Armenian capital. The USSR national and state system and then the collapse of the USSR which took place without any serious reserves and arrangements in

⁴ *The Caucasus Caspian Commission*, <http://www.esiweb.org>

respect of the utilization of one common system of transport, infrastructure and national economic resources stipulated the advantages of a number of new independent states for their possession and utilization.

As it is known, the formation of political and administrative structure and inland borders of the USSR had taken place during decades under the influence tactical geopolitical and often foreign factors. Any historical or economic conditionality is out. Ethnic and political conflicts are natural striving of the nations and states towards balance, to the creation of new balance in respect of owing the resources. Moreover, in the Central Asia region, where there are vast territories and more abundant resources, as well as a lower destiny of population in general, practically no armed conflicts took place between state forming nations and the claims were to political tension whereas in the region of North and South Caucasus armed conflicts became the main form of raising claims. There is no doubt in that the small geopolitics which has its own place in the region has long been firmly attached to global processes, but in any case the bases of conflicts are regional conditions and factors.

The participation of the Republic of Georgia in fielding and distribution of oil resources of the Caspian basin is reduced to the realization of transport functions. But Georgia and Armenia also have a right for the resources and must have an access to them. It is clear that when speaking of these rights we mean not juridical but political rights, which, of course, is from the viewpoint of contemporary rights is simply a flight of fancy and good wish. Very important are the problems of fair utilization and distribution of water resources in the region. This particularly refers to the relationship of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Artsakh and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the matters of irrigation, partially the relationship of Georgia and Abkhazia in respect of energetic resources utilization of Inguria hydro-energetic knot, the utilization by the Republic of Azerbaijan of water resources of the bordering river Samour (Azeri-Russian border), and may be in the future there will arise problems connected with the utilization of water resources of the rivers of Eastern Georgia in the Republic of Azerbaijan [16, 51]. Cultivation and agriculture in general in the vast territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan-western low lands (Gardman) and low land Artsakh as well as Nakhichevan is impossible without water resources of the rivers flowing from the territory in the Republic of Armenia - Agstev, Arpa, partially Debet (through the territory of Georgia), as well as the river Terter flowing from the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Without the regulation of

this problem it is hard to expect that the conflicts between the two parties will be settled. In river Araxes, which is a bordering river for Iran for the most part of its border with Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic (an exclave of the Republic of Azerbaijan), the Republic of Armenia, and the Republic of Artsakh utilizes the resources of the main regional river in the minimum way possible (only in Iranian Mougani). Iran is quite interested in the utilization of water resources of the Araxes for the water supply of its biggest cities - Tabriz, Teheran, Arak. The given project which supposes the construction of hydro energetic knot with the Republic of Artsakh with the transmission of the energy to Artsakh and water resources to Iran which will help make the irrigation better in Iranian Azerbaijan [18, 67], would become the most important factor for ensuring security in the region. Both for the Republic of Azerbaijan and the people of this state in general pasturable cattle breeding is of great economic importance, particularly the pasture of sheep and goats in mountainous and pre-mountainous pastures which are for the most part within the borders of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh. After the beginning of the Artsakh-Azerbaijan war, the quantity of sheep and goats in the Republic of Azerbaijan reduced to nearly twice which resulted in a big damage for the country. The pastures of Armenia and Georgia are very important resources for the population of the Republic of Azerbaijan and their utilization will become an important factor for ensuring in the region.

The most important geo-economic factors in the region are the communications which were formed during the decades and especially during the period of Russian and Soviet Empires, they were formed as a common system serving the goals of Empire. At the times of the Soviet Union the regional communications became the most important factors for the development of economy and first of all of industry. The communicative system greatly influenced depopulation, the creation of new populated territories and the exploitation of mineral resources. At present Armenia turned out to be in an unfavorable state in respect of communication and cannot agree with such unfair distribution of rights on owning and using the communications. In the perspective the Republic of Armenia can create alternative communications with Iran, Georgia and Russia. So for instance, railway communications with Iran and Russia (through the Abkhazian line⁵). However, unfortunately, at present these projects are limited to economic

⁵ *Vardzelashvili M.*,
<http://www.georgiatimes.info/en/interview/85381.html>

possibilities. Regardless, we are confident, that the **Universalization and internationalization of communicative systems in the South Caucasus is a key geo-economic factor for ensuring security.** Not only Armenia is interested in it though for the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh it is of primary importance. The neighboring countries too, including the Republic of Azerbaijan. And regional players like Iran, Turkey and Russia are interested in the development and opening of communications in the South Caucasus too. Though these plans should not be connected with demands of political character. These two incompatible spheres and the attempts for the solution of political and communicative problems parallelly will lead to immediate deadlock in the settlement of conflicts. At present, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Georgia connect the opening of communications with the political settlement of Artsakh and Abkhazian conflicts. The Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh connect the opening of communication with Nakhichevan together with the opening of communications on part of Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Certainly, such attitudes of the regional states make a vicious circle of conflicts. In various projects of Europeans and Americans directed to the settlement of conflicts based on projecting some universal system of collaboration in the region, the main focus is on the marketing approaches of economic and geo-economic cooperation. Of course, marketing relationships have no alternatives, but at the same time, the guarantees of states and nations in respect of universal resource utilization are not taken into account. These rights must be confirmed by international guarantees and applied irrespective of market and economic conditions.

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