ANNA KARAPETYAN

THE NEW DYNAMICS OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERNAL PROCESSES IN ARMENIA IN 2018

Abstract: The developments in and around Armenia after 2017 directly and indirectly impacted the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, influencing both negotiations and their perceptions.

The internal political processes of Armenia during 2018 (known as the "Velvet Revolution") initiated active political changes, which, despite the declared continuation of the course of Armenian foreign policy, brought certain changes to the process of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the developments surrounding it. The public perception of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict underwent certain transformations, and the Armenian authorities came up with new emphases and approaches, forming new tendencies in international perceptions and expectations.

The aim of this article is to examine the transformation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process and its perception in the context of modern political processes, both domestic and international, and to highlight key tendencies.

Keywords: *Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, political modernization, democratization, Artsakh Republic, perceptions of the conflict.*

Introduction

The process of political modernization and democratization supposes the transformation of values of the political elite and society. F. Fukuyama considers development to be a result of changes in four main dimensions: economic growth, social mobilization, changes in ideas, and political development.[1] In the case of revolutionary developments and rapid modernization, this transformation occurs faster and not necessarily proportional. There is a high likelihood of uncertainty in the post-modernization phase as well, and especially in the transition period.[2]

---

[1] Francis Fukuyama, "Political Order and Political Decay", *The American Interest*, August 28, 2014, http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/08/28/political-order-and-political-decay/ (accessed September 20, 2019).

[2] Shmuel Eisenstadt, "Disruptions to Modernization" *Neprikosnovenniy zapas,* № 6 (2010), 42-67, (in Russian) https://magazines.gorky.media/nz/2010/6/sryvy-modernizaczii.html (accessed September 20, 2019).

The new attitudes and perception shifts affect both domestic and foreign policy. Followers of the theory of constructivism tend to condition the external relations of the state with a combination of identity and interests.[3] In this case, democratization affects perceptions of identity and interests, and also changes the country's "behavior" (its policies) in the negotiations on the settlement of the conflict as well.

The internal political processes of Armenia during 2018 (known as the "Velvet Revolution") initiated active political changes, which, despite the declared continuity of foreign policy course, brought certain changes to the process of settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the developments surrounding it. The public perception of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict underwent certain transformations. The Armenian authorities came up with new emphases and approaches, forming also new tendencies in international perceptions and expectations.

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict after "Velvet Revolution"

For Armenia's new authorities, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process resumed having an edited version of the so-called "Madrid Principles" on the table. With the insistence of the Armenian side, despite the stated principle of continuity of the foreign policy, the issue of clarifying the perceptions and approaches of the parties on those principles became relevant.

After getting acquainted with each other's approaches and studying the history of the negotiation process, the Armenian side voiced the need to clarify the interpretation of 3 principles and 6 elements of the settlement. "This is indeed the most important issue, but important clarifications are needed to answer to this question. What do these principles mean in practice, and who is entitled to interpret them? This is important as we consider unacceptable the way Azerbaijan interprets those principles. Of course, we can present our own interpretation of these principles, but there will be no use, because our aim is not to be engaged in a verbal dispute, but to have an efficient negotiation process. Therefore, the negotiations should be based on statements which give no

---

[3] Vyacheslav Morozov, "The Concept of State Identity in Modern Theoretical Discourse", *Mezhdunarodnyye protsessy*, № 1/10, (January-April 2006), (in Russian) http://www.perspektivy.info/misl/koncept/ponyatie_gosudarstvennoiy_identichnosti_v_so vremennom_teoreticheskom_diskurse_2007-8-11-57-32.htm (accessed September 25, 2019).

room for misinterpretations,"[4] Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated on March 2019 at a joint session of the Security Council of Armenia and Artsakh in Stepanakert. That means that the negotiations were continuing based on interpretations of the previous package, the Madrid Principles, without a new document.

One of the major changes in the overall context of the negotiation process was Armenia's goal to return to a full-fledged negotiation process as soon as possible. The issue was raised with a new emphasis. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced this for the first time in Stepanakert in 2018 during a press conference on May 9: "I am ready to negotiate fully on behalf of the Republic of Armenia, but the Artsakh authorities should negotiate on behalf of the Republic of Artsakh presented by the President of the Artsakh Republic."[5] This point was also included in the government's program. "As a key party to the conflict, Artsakh must have a decisive voice and involvement in the settlement process aimed at establishing genuine and lasting peace," the government's plan reads.

As a justification for the claim, the Prime Minister used the thesis that the population of Artsakh did not vote for him, so he is not authorized to represent Artsakh in the negotiation process. The elected authorities of Artsakh should do so.

However, this approach was resisted by Azerbaijan. So far, it has not been possible to make the stated goal more achievable in practice. At the same time, Azerbaijan used the moment to promote the intercommunity approach of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and began to voice the need for the so-called "Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh" to participate in the negotiations. The career diplomat Tural Ganjaliev was appointed the head of that structure, which, according to former OSCE Minsk Group co-chair Kerry Cavano, is already included in the Azerbaijani delegation that negotiates. "Although Baku has stated that the format of the talks should remain unchanged, I have nevertheless noticed that Baku has changed the list of

---

[4] "RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's remarks on the joint session of the Security Councils of Armenia and Artsakh in Stepanakert", last modified March 12, 2019, https://www.primeminister.am/en/Artsakh-visits/item/2019/03/11/Nikol-Pashinyan-visit-to-Stepanakert/ (accessed September 25, 2019).

[5] "Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's press conference in Stepanakert", last modified May 9, 2018, https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2018/05/09/Prime-Minister-Nikol-Pashinyans-press-conferance/ (accessed September 25, 2019).

its delegation internally, increasing the presence of the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh there. I see this as a sign of some preparedness with the prospect of changing the negotiation format,"[6] Cavano said in an interview with Voice of America. The Armenian side did not respond adequately to this process.

Nikol Pashinyan's speech in Stepanakert on August 5, 2019, when he announced that "Artsakh is Armenia and that is all"[7] again made the issue of Artsakh's final status a matter of public discourse. Later, at a conference in Vanadzor on September 16, Nikol Pashinyan made it clear that such a resolution is the answer to Azerbaijan's uncompromising, categorical approach - that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be resolved solely on the basis of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, as was mentioned above. Azerbaijan, in its turn, has been consistent in its statements and has pushed for the need to settle the conflict on the basis of the principle of territorial integrity.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan noted that he was the first to declare that any settlement of the conflict should be acceptable to the peoples of Armenia, Artsakh, and Azerbaijan. He believed this to be an important and innovative step and he expects a similar statement from the President of Azerbaijan as well. However, the Azerbaijani side has not responded to this statement.

Though this thesis intends to primarily create a positive atmosphere for the negotiation process, it also raises certain challenges. The realization of the right to self-determination, which is the basis for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, is an inalienable right and it cannot be debated and become dependent on the will of the Azerbaijani people.

As for discussions at the negotiation table, according to Nikol Pashinyan's statement, "During discussions with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs it was unofficially stated that the status of Nagorno-Karabakh may be different, even outside Azerbaijan, etc."[8]

---

[6] "Details on Kocharyan, Pashinyan and Karabakh settlement by mediator," *VOA*, June 27, 2019, https://www.amerikayidzayn.com/a/4975141.html (accessed October 23, 2019).
[7] "Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's speech at the ceremonious opening of the 7th Pan-Armenian Summer Games in Stepanakert," *Official Website of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, August 7, 2019, https://www.primeminister.am/en/Artsakh-visits/item/2019/08/05/Nikol-Pashinyan-visit-to-Artsakh/ (accessed October 23, 2019).
[8] "100 Facts about New Armenia -2" - PM Nikol Pashinyan's introductory remarks at his press conference, *Official Website of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia,*

In fact, Azerbaijan's approach to the status issue has remained unchanged, while Armenia's "Artsakh is Armenia and that is all" formula deviates from the approach announced earlier by the Armenian authorities, including in the settlement package, that the people of Artsakh should decide the future of Artsakh. That is, the issue of the final status must be resolved through a referendum. In the statements of the mediators, no special attention was paid to the territorial issue, and the parties did not address it separately.

The internal political developments of the conflicting sides have a direct and indirect impact on the negotiation process of the settlement of the conflict, as well as on the perception of the conflict. These developments determine the situation in the region. As Henry Kissinger points out, world order describes the concept held by a region about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world.

These systems of order are themselves based on two components: a set of commonly accepted rules that define the limits of permissible action and a balance of power that enforces restraint where rules break down.[9] The internal political developments in the countries of the region may lead to the disruption of these arrangements and balances and lead to changes in the order of the region. In the case of unresolved conflicts, the quality of dialogue and atmosphere of confidence between the parties play important roles for the implementation of arrangements and for peace in the region in general.

The agenda of the negotiation process during this period was mainly focused on coordinating measures aimed at improving the atmosphere of trust for dialogue. There had been some dynamics in this regard after the oral agreement reached between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Dushanbe on September 28, 2018 on "decreasing the tension on borders and overall, preventing border incidents and establishing operative communication between the parties." These arrangements have been maintained for some time, which somehow have reduced the number of border incidents and casualties.

September 16, 2019, https://www.primeminister.am/hy/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2019/09/16/Nikol-Pashinyan-Press-Conference/ (accessed September 20, 2019).
[9] Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 6, 7.

For the Armenian parties, these arrangements were important, first and foremost, from a humanitarian perspective, as they prevented casualties on the borders. In addition, the Armenian authorities presented it as a diplomatic victory, as the Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Geneva agreements were not implemented. The Azerbaijani side used them to take the Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Geneva agreements (reached in 2016-2017 after the four-day war) off the negotiation table. In addition, Azerbaijan took advantage of these arrangements to construct a positive image and to balance the potential challenges arising from the democratization of Armenia, while at the same time carrying out engineering and construction works on its borders. The OSCE MG Co-Chairs' statements focused on the implementation and development of the Dushanbe Agreements, the Vienna and St. Petersburg agreements were not mentioned any more.

In addition, the Azerbaijani side tried to show that it is ready for a constructive dialogue with the new Armenian authorities. However, in the summer of 2019, the number of ceasefire violations increased again, as well as the tension in the rhetoric of the parties. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry began declaring that the maintenance of the ceasefire is not a necessary condition for conducting negotiations. "The situation on the line of contact should not hinder progress towards a declaration or a peace treaty,"[10] the Azeri FM said after a June 21 meeting with the Armenian Foreign Minister in Washington.

The development of the process showed that the change of power in Armenia did not in any way influence the policy pursued by the Azerbaijani side. Its constructiveness was temporary. As a result, the Armenian Foreign Ministry put forward a proposal of Dushanbe+, which supposes the implementation of the Dushanbe arrangements and establishment of an investigation mechanism. That is, Dushanbe + Vienna, St. Petersburg, Geneva. "Dushanbe should become also a "Dushanbe plus", because the situation and the tension demonstrated that it can lead to an absolutely wrong direction. In this regard, the situation when we have casualties, when we have ceasefire violations, indeed outlines the importance of the measures, such as, investigation mechanism of ceasefire violations and strengthening of monitoring

---

[10] "Elmar Mammadyarov: Quite serious disagreements remain between Armenia and Azerbaijan," *Arminfo*, June 21, 2019, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=43193&lang=3 (accessed October 1, 2019).

capabilities. St. Petersburg and Vienna are about it. Those substantial tools are vital for us, the idea of those tools exists and we need to work on that towards one important goal - to maintain an environment conducive to peace"[11] Zohrab Mnatsakanyan told reporters on June 27 at the Foreign Ministry.

Overall, it can be noted that there has been a significant reduction of ceasefire violations during the period under review, and new arrangements have been reached. However, the deep perception and policy of each of the parties has not changed substantially, despite the temporary positive dynamics. The Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Geneva agreements have been replaced by the Dushanbe agreement, and the Armenian side's proposal has been put on the agenda. Azerbaijan has continued its policy of exerting pressure on the Armenian side through ceasefire violations, and the rhetoric on this issue has been toughened. The Armenian authorities, adhering to a policy of peaceful settlement of the issue and respecting the ceasefire, have made efforts to reach agreements that will be implemented. The Artsakh authorities, following the agreements reached by the Armenian authorities, have contributed to the reduction of the tension on the border. But the issue of respecting the ceasefire remains relevant.

Some efforts have been made to build an atmosphere of confidence through the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group. As a result of a meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in Moscow on April 15, an agreement was reached "to take measures, on a mutual basis, to allow families to have access to their relatives held in custody in the respective detention centers of the parties. The Ministers expressed their willingness to start concrete work on establishing contacts between people, including through mutual visits of media representatives."[12] However, no practical steps have been taken in this direction.

For some time, discussions on preparing societies for peace became relevant, Prime Minister Pashinyan announced a desire to appeal

---

[11] "Joint press conference of Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RA and Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta", *Official website of MFA*, last modified June 27, 2019, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-conference/2019/06/27/malta_FMs_armenia/9683 (accessed October 1, 2019).

[12] "Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia, and the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group," MOSCOW, *Official website of MFA,* last modified April 15, 2019, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2019/04/15/nk_meeting/9391 (accessed October 1, 2019).

to the Azerbaijani people. However, Azerbaijan's aggressive rhetoric and policy shows that official Baku is not ready to prepare its society for peace. For example, the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan made a statement that if Armenia does not implement the UN Security Council resolutions, "Azerbaijan will restore its sovereignty within internationally recognized borders."[13] The President of Azerbaijan announced at the "Valdai" discussion club that "Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan, and the issue must be settled within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan."[14] He made another statement that "Zangezur is a historic Azeri territory and when it was given to Armenians, the Turkish world was split"[15] and so on.

In fact, during this time much was spoken about confidence building, some clear steps were even planned, but no progress was made. The visible tension between the authorities of Armenia and Artsakh also had a certain impact on the public perception. On one hand, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has maintained its importance in public perceptions a foreign policy priority. On the other hand, perceptions of the overall problem have undergone some changes.

So, the level of political modernization of the parties to the conflict, the quality of democracy and the similarities or differences of values are of crucial importance in the process of conflict resolution for the region as well. The value system of the parties determines the perception of the conflict, the ways of its settlement, the willingness to take real steps, as well as the policy of propaganda towards their own societies.

At the same time, when the conflict is deeply rooted in the issues of identity of the ethnos, the elite's value transformation cannot bring fundamental, decisive changes in the public perception of the conflict in the short term. Changes are mostly reflected in the set of chosen tools and priorities. In this case, the value system transformations taking place in the modernization process provide additional tools for maneuvering in a "paradigm of peace and war." In the case of a high level of modernization

---

[13] "Foreign Ministry Statement," (in Russian), *Minval.az*, September 13, 2019, https://minval.az/news/123919942 (accessed September 13, 2019).
[14] "The meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club," (in Russian), *Official website of Kremlin*, October 3, 2019, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61719 (accessed October 13, 2019)
[15] "Aliyev: "The transfer of Zangezur to Armenia led to a geographical split in the Turkic world," (in Russian), *Radio Liberty*, https://rus.azatutyun.am/a/30217915.html (accessed October 15, 2019).

of all parties to the conflict, the likelihood of choosing peace is increased, whereas ethnic tensions, if deepened, contribute to the strengthening of the principles of the "affected nation" and the "legal right" between nations that cause hostile, strained relations.[16]

From the point of view of game theory, the modernization process with its game logic does not exclude that as a complex whole it includes several value systems.[17] From the point of view of rational choice, the process of modernization is the choice of socially acceptable and progressive values or their comparison with the existing national value system. In this case, the choice of values and approaches that lead to peace becomes the result of the rational choice of the society.

In the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, one of the most important preconditions for progress in the negotiation process is to overcome the great differences between the conflicting parties' values and perceptions, but not through artificial approximation. It is possible that changes on one side can also stimulate developments on the other side and change the general atmosphere. In this respect, the revolution in Armenia and its democratization can possibly spur positive changes in the negotiation process, in case of coordinating actions with Artsakh and involving Artsakh, if the Azerbaijani side also alters its approach adequately. Otherwise, the "democratic peace"[18] approach does not work if one of the parties does not advance in the path of democratization, especially if it clearly prefers war. Such a situation complicates the resolution of the conflict and causes other parties to the conflict to toughen their own positions by providing additional security guarantees.

Summing up, we can state that for this moment no progress has been made in the negotiations. As a result of the internal political

---

[16] Mikhail Chernysh, "Factors of the emergence and reproduction of interethnic tension in a theoretical perspective," *Polis. Politicheskiye issledovaniya*, № 5 (2016): 25-36. (in Russian)

[17] Mariam Margaryan, "The Evolution of the Value System of Political Modernization," Political Modernization and Political Processes in the Republic of Armenia, (Proceedings of the Third Conference of Political Science), 2013, (in Armenian) https://mmmargaryan.wordpress.com/2016/11/23/%D6%84%D5%A1%D5%B2%D5%A1%D6%84%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A4%D5%AB%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A1%D6%81%D5%B4%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%AA%D5%A5%D6%84%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB%D5%B6-%D5%B0/:

[18] David Kinsella, "No Rest for the Democratic Peace," *American Political Science Review*, 99 no. 3 (2005): 453–457.

developments in Armenia, there have been some changes in the perceptions of the negotiating elements, which have not yet been clearly reflected in the negotiation process. Among the related factors, the most important is the goal of returning Artsakh to the negotiation process, but which has not led to practical steps and results. While there are positive dynamics in the process of confidence-building measures, its short, medium, and long-term prospects are unclear, as the Armenian side's strategy is constantly changing, and it is difficult to predict Azerbaijan's strategic goal in this regard.

International developments

During the abovementioned period, certain significant developments also took place in other conflicts arising from the struggle for the realization of the right to self-determination, which have a direct and indirect impact on international and regional perceptions of the Artsakh issue.

The rise of tension was rooted in the relations between South Ossetia and Georgia. Tskhinvali closed the border in response to the deployment of Georgian police checkpoints. Georgia's actions in South Ossetia are perceived as an attempt to apply psychological pressure to increase tension in the region. Growing tension in the region tainting Russia-Georgia relations could create new challenges for Armenia.

The situation surrounding the Cyprus issue also had some developments. In the spring of 2019, Turkey began drilling in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus. Ankara claims it has the right to drill gas fields as they are partially owned by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Meanwhile, this step of Ankara was regarded by the Republic of Cyprus and Greece as an intrusion into the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus. Athens called on Brussels to take action against Turkey.

In July, the European Union suspended dialogue with Turkey and imposed sanctions. It was decided to cut financial aid to Turkey by 2020, to suspend the activities of Turkey-EU Association Council and negotiations on an air transportation agreement. The Council of Foreign Ministers also urged the European Investment Bank to review Turkey's financial programs. At the same time, the president of the Republic of Cyprus, Nikos Anastasiadis, offered to share the profit of the sale of natural gas with Turkish Cypriots. He called for the opening of escrow

accounts (an account that can only be accessed if the requirements are met). Nikos Anastasiadis' proposal seems unrealistic at the moment. Each side seeks to take this opportunity to push forward its interests: Greek-Cypriots aim to achieve island reunification by economically including Turkish-Cypriots, and Turkey to the contrary tries to deepen divisions and strengthen its position in the region.

The Kosovo situation also continues to develop. The main issue on the Kosovo-EU agenda at the moment is visa liberalization. Kosovo is trying to put pressure on the European Union. Kosovo's President Hashim Thaci threatens to unite with Albania if the EU pursues its policy of isolation[19], meaning a "protracted process" of EU visa liberalization for Kosovo. The EU has responded to Kosovo's demand. At the end of August, the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini announced that the EU countries should abolish visa requirements for Kosovo[20], as all requirements have already been fulfilled. It is not ruled out that Kosovo will comply with the EU requirements and will not continue its policy of unification with Albania, which may create opportunities in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In spite of the partially recognized status of Kosovo, the EU has provided both financial and advisory support to the development of Kosovo's state institutions. Moreover, the prospect of joining the European Union was opened for Kosovo and Serbia regarding the final settlement of the conflict.

Artsakh has never received such support and assistance from the international community. The international community avoids recognizing Artsakh's independence or working directly with state institutions. One of the reasons is the perception of the international community that Artsakh's ultimate goal is to unite with Armenia.

Now, with such statements by Kosovo, the situation is changing, and that difference in approaches is becoming artificial. In this context, the agencies responsible for the foreign policy of Armenia and Artsakh

---

[19] Kosovo said it would consider a referendum on unification with Albania, *TASS,* September 20, 2019, (in Russian) https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/6494949 (accessed September 20, 2019).

[20] Remarks by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers (Gymnich), *EEAS* website, September 20, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/66820/remarks-hrvp-federica-mogherini-press-conference-following-informal-meeting-eu-foreign_en (accessed September 20, 2019).

have a wide range of things to accomplish. It should be noted that in the new context, the different approaches to these two conflicts are no longer relevant and valid, and it is logical to expect strong support for the development of democracy in Artsakh. This makes it possible once again to speak about the irrationality of avoiding the recognition of Artsakh's independence.

Active processes are also taking place surrounding the issues of Scotland and Northern Ireland. The process of leaving the United Kingdom again raised centrifugal moods in Scotland, and the Northern Ireland issue became one of the major obstacles for Brexit.

The desire for independence in Scotland has again gained momentum during the process of BREXIT (Britain leaving the European Union). On June 23, 2016, during the referendum on BREXIT, 51.89 percent of UK citizens voted to leave the union. Still, in Scotland, 62% voted to stay in the EU and only 38% voted to leave.[21] As a result of this and the prospect of economic hardship, the issue of holding a new referendum on independence is back on the agenda in Scotland. On October 20, 2016, the Government of Scotland published the second draft bill on an independence referendum in the country to start further discussion. Scotland's aim is to gain the right not to leave the EU single market, maybe staying within the United Kingdom, and enhancing the Scottish Parliament's role on the issues of international trade and migration.[22]

The issue of Northern Ireland is one of the main factors hindering the Brexit process today. The Belfast Agreement of 1998 established a specific governance mechanism in a number of areas of Northern Ireland, including the formation of the Irish-British Council, which guarantees the decisions in different areas that are agreed upon by all sides and takes into account the interests of all parties.[23] Due to its historical features, Northern Ireland is economically very close to the Republic of Ireland,

---

[21] "EU referendum results," Electoral Commission, September 25, 2019, https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/eu-referendum/results-and-turnout-eu-referendum (accessed September 29, 2019).

[22] "Scottish independence: draft bill published on second referendum," *The Guardian*, October 20, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/oct/20/second-scottish-independence-referendum-bill-published (accessed September 22, 2019),

[23] "The Belfast Agreement, Agreement reached in multi-party negotiations," *CAIN Web Service*, http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/agreement.htm (accessed October 10, 2019).

which causes no problem as both the UK and the Republic of Ireland were members of the EU and the EU single market and economic union, but after Brexit, the UK will leave this single market. This implies the tightening of border controls, including control of commodity turnover. In the case of Northern Ireland, this also takes on a certain political context, as it will lead to a division from the Republic of Ireland's market and in general from the Republic of Ireland. That is why the so-called "Backstop"[24] was negotiated. The Backstop means that Northern Ireland would remain part of the EU single market and customs union after Brexit. It gives Northern Ireland a special status over other UK units, which is unacceptable for the Conservative party of the UK. This contradiction has caused debate over the issue of postponing Brexit and leaving the EU without a deal.

In the context of Brexit, this example of Northern Ireland shows that the so-called "half-solutions" in conflict resolution, called upon to "save the face" of the parties, that cause the dependence of the conflicting sides, further restricts the sovereignty of the conflicting parties and continues to threaten instability in the region. Overall, in the period under review, we can see the escalation of so-called "frozen" conflicts, while regional developments are causing the reactivation of resolved conflicts.

Conclusion

The revolution in Armenia and the significant increase of the legitimacy of the authorities created positive expectations in the context of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, first and foremost among the international community. Azerbaijan's constructive attitude and positive dynamics in the initial phase of dialogue with the new authorities also contributed to this. However, to justify such expectations, proportionate change is needed for all parties involved, first and foremost for Azerbaijan, which will ensure a balanced transformation of the approaches of all parties and effective dialogue.

Azerbaijan's constructiveness was temporary, pursuing clear interests and goals. Armenia's rapid, revolutionary democratization and constructiveness in the negotiation process could have increased pressure on Azerbaijan, so Baku sought to be cooperative to avoid such pressure

---

[24] "Brexit and Ireland," *European Commission*, https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/news/key-eu-policy-areas/brexit_en (accessed October 10, 2019).

and not let the Armenian sides strengthen their positions. Over time, neutralizing the current threat and taking advantage of the unclear position of the Armenian authorities and some statements, the Azerbaijani side returned to its usual aggressive rhetoric and policy after reaching more favorable positions in the negotiation process. For example, Azerbaijan has made the presence of the so-called "head of the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh" to the negotiation process more institutional. Baku is trying to show that Azerbaijan was ready for progress, but the Armenian sides did not take real steps, etc.

In the case of Armenia, using the positive image of the country after the revolution and the chance to act as new negotiators with fresh approaches, additional opportunities could be created to increase international pressure on Azerbaijan, to strengthen its positions and, at the same time, to "get rid of" the unwanted points on the negotiation table. The new Armenian authorities partially went with that path, or at least made such an attempt, by voicing their demand for the immediate return of Artsakh to the negotiating table.

At present, the efforts for the international recognition of Artsakh are also not visible. Moreover, Armenia, while declaring that it does not represent the people of Artsakh, continues to negotiate on behalf of Artsakh, also reaching an agreement on the maintenance of the ceasefire and the settlement of humanitarian issues.

Developments in Northern Ireland and Brexit have shown that solutions to conflicts that do not provide a final settlement become the basis for instability in the region when the situation changes. It is desirable to build the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process on the basis of a package that will ensure a final and complete settlement, make Artsakh a self-sufficient entity, furthering possible domestic political and foreign policy changes in Armenia and Artsakh, so that Azerbaijan will not create instability in the region again.

Kosovo's rhetoric on joining Albania, as noted, provides an opportunity to voice the international community's unequivocal approach to Artsakh and Kosovo and to voice the need to recognize Artsakh's independence.

International political developments and general tendencies show that the struggle for self-determination has been and continues to be an integral part of international relations and regularly plays a decisive role in geopolitical developments. Even at first glance, the Brexit process,

which is not directly related to self-determination, now faces the problem of self-determination in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Resolved and frozen conflicts condition the stability and potential dangers in the region, as in the case of Cyprus. And in case of all conflicts, domestic political developments directly affect conflict settlement and its perceptions. All of this also shapes international perceptions of the right to self-determination and the conflicts that arose on that basis, as well as those of the opposing sides.