




**Vahram  
HOVYAN**

Lecturer,  
Masters in Political Science

Between 1999 and 2003 Vahram Hovyan studied in the Department of Politics at the International Relations Institute of Yerevan State University. In 2005 he graduated with an MA degree. Between 2006 and 2018 he was a researcher at the "Noravank" Scientific Educational Foundation, and between 2012 and 2018 - the secretary of the Scientific Experimental Council. In 2019-2021 he was an expert at "Orbeli" Center. Since 2022 he is a lecturer at the Chair of Social Sciences at Armenian State University of Economics. He has authored 187 research and analytical papers, coauthored 14 books, and presented reports at 24 scientific conferences and workshops. His scientific interests include the Armenian Diaspora, Armenia-Diaspora relations, and regional processes in the Middle East and South Caucasus.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2177-4887>

## THE PROSPECTS OF THE ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJANI PEACE AGREEMENT

### FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION METHODOLOGY

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**Keywords:** *Conflict resolution, de-escalation, normalization of relations, reconciliation, integration, peace agreement, Armenia, Azerbaijan, West, Russia*

*The settlement of conflicts is methodically right if it is based on the following four stages: a) de-escalation, b) normalization of relationships, c) reconciliation and d) integration. The first stage is the establishment of cease fire, when hostilities are ended. The second one implies establishment of relations and cooperation between formerly fighting sides even if on a minimum level. The third stage is the conclusion of peace treaty, when the sides come to an agreement around the object of the issue. And the fourth one means deepening of relationships and cooperation between formerly fighting sides to such a level that they become parts of one system, which practically excludes the probability of a new conflict between them or maximally decreases that.*

*The main cause for Artsakh (Armenian-Azerbaijani) conflict is not resolved so far, in spite of the decades-long diplomatic efforts, is that every time after the establishment of cease-fire it was tried to achieve an eventual peace missing the stage of the normalization of relations.*

Generally, both the survey of professional literature and the observation of the international practice entail the conviction that the settlement of conflicts will be methodically right if it is based on the following four stages: a) de-escalation, b) normalization of relationships, c) reconciliation and d) integration. The first stage – **de-escalation** – is in essence the establishment of cease fire, when military hostilities are ended. Allegorically, this is the stage of extinguishing a fire. When there is a fire, naturally, the first step or action must be its extinguishing.

The second stage – **normalization of relationships** –

implies the establishment of relations and cooperation between formerly fighting sides even if on a minimum level. This means trade-economic relationships, opening of borders, establishment of diplomatic relations, cooperation in education, science, culture, sport, health care, environmental issues etc. As an instance Russian-Japanese relationships after World War II can be referred to, when there is no peace treaty between the sides, but there are diplomatic, trade-economic and other relationships.

The third stage – **reconciliation** – is in essence the conclusion of peace treaty, when the sides come to an agreement around the object of the issue and the last in essence disappears. Problem is solved.

The fourth stage – **integration** – means deepening of relationships and cooperation between formerly fighting sides to such a level that they become parts of one system, which practically excludes the possibility of a new conflict between them or maximally decreases that. Franco-German relationships in the contemporary era are the best example of this. It isn't a secret that for a long time these two states had been deadly enemies (Franco-Prussian War, World War I, World War II). After World War II, however, the cooperation between formerly fighting these two nations has deepened so much that they presently constitute the axis of a united system – The European Union. Also, it is very hard to imagine a new confrontation between these two European giants.

Obviously, each of the abovementioned four stages has an important significance for passing to the next stage. Particularly, the second stage – normalization of relationships – is the important circumstance, which by means of forming an atmosphere of mutual understanding creates a favorable ground for the conclusion of eventual peace – reconciliation treaty. Truly, the normalization of relationships does not assure the eventual peace, as in the Russian-Japanese relations the sides have not so far managed to come to

an eventual agreement around Kuril Islands, but at least reduces the risk of the subsequent intensification of conflict – the outbreak of a new war. Whereas after the establishment of cease fire, if a normalization of relationships does not take place – the borders remain closed – then that increases the risk of conflict reescalation or a new outbreak of military hostilities after some time, which obviously is seen by the example of Artsakh conflict.

Why hasn't the Artsakh (Armenian-Azerbaijani) conflict been resolved despite decades of diplomatic efforts?

The primary reason lies in the approach taken after each ceasefire. Rather than focusing on the intermediate stage of normalizing relations, efforts have consistently aimed to achieve a final peace settlement directly. In other words, the process has attempted to leap from the initial ceasefire stage to the final peace agreement, bypassing the critical stage of relationship normalization.

This approach became evident after the establishment of a ceasefire in May 1994. Although frameworks such as the 1997 stage-by-stage variant, the Madrid Principles, and the Lavrov Plan proposed normalizing Armenian-Azerbaijani relations before addressing the main issue—the status of Artsakh—they were never implemented. As a result, no meaningful normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan occurred.

In other words, an atmosphere of mutual trust, essential as a foundation for lasting peace, was never established.

It happened so after the 44-day war in 2020 as well. Though the statement of November 9<sup>1</sup> and the following it three Armenian-Russian-Azerbaijani three lateral statements were just about the normalization of relationships, but practically they are not being implemented as well. In any case, after the 44-day war there is no positive movement in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. There is the contrary – a degradation of the situation.

<sup>1</sup> Заявление Президента Азербайджанской Республики, Премьер-министра Республики Армения и Президента Российской Федерации (Statement by the President of the Azerbaijani Republic, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation), <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/64384>

It was expected that after the 44-day war if only in the Armenian-Turkish relations a normalization would happen, but in that issue also there isn't any visible movement so far. Only the air communication, which was suspended by Turkey during the 44-day war as a sign of solidarity with Azerbaijan, has been restored. And after a short period since the end of the 44-day war Azerbaijan manifested an initiative to conclude a peace treaty with Armenia. I. e. it went by the way of escaping from the second stage of the conflict overcoming and immediately passing to the third stage.

It is so nowadays as well – after the disastrous clashes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border in September 2022 and the ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population of Artsakh in September 2023, when in various international platforms – Moscow, Brussels, Washington – the issue of the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty is actively discussed, while the issue of the normalization of relations has been pushed to the second plan, if not to say has been forgotten.

In the process of conflict resolution, the passage at once from the first stage to the third one, i. e. the conclusion of peace treaty immediately after cease fire is possible in two cases. The first case is that one of the sides undergoes to unconditional surrender, i. e. when war ends with the complete victory of one side and at the same time with full defeat of the other one. In this case, the victorious side dictates its conditions of peace to the defeated one. After the 44-day war, it might have seemed to Azerbaijan that Armenia had undergone an unconditional surrender. That is why after a short time they initiated a process of immediately concluding a peace treaty. However, in this issue Baku ran to extremes or euphoria. Though the defeat for Armenia in the 44-day war was painful and bitter enough, it was not an eventual surrender. It was not an eventual surrender

for the Republic of Artsakh either. Artsakh, in spite of huge territorial losses, up to September 2023 preserved its statehood, state institutions, in that account – its Defense Army.

In the second scenario, peace is imposed by the international community. For example, a peace treaty might be prepared in Moscow, Washington, or Brussels and then imposed on the conflicting sides. However, at present, no such imposition is evident.

If the collective West, represented by Washington or Brussels, wants a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan to be concluded under its mediation, it must first exert sufficient pressure on Baku, as Baku continues to obstruct the process. Currently, however, the collective West limits itself to calls, exhortations, reports, resolutions, and court judgments, none of which are effectively enforced in practice.

The Russian approach was at some extent different from the western one. They considered as prior the solution of current actual issues such as the reopening of the regional communications, demarcation and delimitation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, prisoners' repatriation, while the main issue of the conflict – the issue of Artsakh status – they wanted to leave for the future, when favorable conditions would emerge for that. It is obvious not only by the statements signed by Russia's intermediation, but also by the statements of relevant bodies, for instance, the FA minister Sergey Lavrov. On May 19, 2023 the minister stated after the negotiations with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts: "But our partners asserted today, that without the resolution of delimitation issues, deblocking transport and economic communications, without general improvement of the situation concerning the assurance of security in Karabakh and on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border it is hard to move forward by the concrete aspects of peace agreement."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Комментарий Министра иностранных дел Российской Федерации С. В. Лаврова по итогам переговоров с Министром иностранных дел Азербайджанской Республики Д. А. Байрамовым и Министром иностранных дел Республики Армения А. С. Мирзояном, Москва, 19 мая 2023 года (Comment by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation according to the Results of the Negotiations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic J. A. Bayramov and the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia A. S. Mirzoyan, Moscow, May 19, 2023), [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru)

This approach naturally is more corresponding to the abovementioned scheme of conflict resolution – ceasefire-normalization-reconciliation-integration. However, official Moscow has not managed to implement practically its approach, as so far not only there is not a positive movement in the issue of the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, but also there is a visible degradation of the situation, the most obvious manifestations of which were the blocking of Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan in December 2022 and the aggression against Artsakh in September 2023.

Moreover, Russia also presented a draft Armenian-Azerbaijani peace agreement, which proposed the settlement of all issues except for the status of Artsakh. According to the draft, Artsakh status was to be clarified in the future. Armenia accepted Russia's proposal, but Azerbaijan rejected it.

Thus, the reason for the unresolved situation of Artsakh issue so far is the circumstance that every time after the establishment of cease fire a passage to the second stage of the overcoming the conflict – the normalization of relations between the conflicting sides – is not made, instead an attempt is made to achieve the reconciliation at once.

The practical life also shows that the achievement of an eventual peace without the normalization of relations is very hard, if not to say impossible. After the border clashes in September, 2022 in the official circles of Armenia the optimism that up to the yearend – the end of 2022 – a peace agreement would be concluded was high. Such kind of optimism existed among Armenian official circles after the Azerbaijani aggression against Artsakh in September, 2023. However, as the practice

showed, this optimism was not justified. Today almost nothing of the former optimism has remained. Contrary, there are pessimistic moods. So, the indication of the succession of the above mentioned four stages of conflict resolution is not mere a result of speculation or theoretical judgements but is proven in practical life.

However, it could be argued that the West is exerting some pressure on Azerbaijan to encourage it toward peace. This pressure manifests in several ways. The first is the "honey-cake" policy, where the West attempts to persuade Baku that peace is more beneficial than the continuation of the conflict<sup>3</sup>. Particularly, the West has pushed forward the idea-project of "Middle Corridor", which is foreseen for the connection of Central Asia with Europe and in which a key place is assigned to Azerbaijan. So, the West strives to persuade Baku that in the case of carrying out "Middle Corridor", for which the peace with Armenia is necessary, Azerbaijan will get much more benefits than several villages or several hills, because of which Baku is escaping from peace agreement. "Middle Corridor" will bring tremendous dividends to Azerbaijan from economic, political, security and other viewpoints.

The other manifestation of western pressure on Azerbaijan is the certain intensification of cooperation with Armenia in military-technical, economic and other fields, the supplement of western arms to Yerevan, economic support etc.<sup>4</sup> With this, the West tries to restore the power balance in South Caucasus, particularly between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which has been violated since the 44-day war in 2020. The western economic support to Armenia, which is in blockade<sup>5</sup>, aims to raise its resilience in economy, food,

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Secretary of State Blinken Drops Truth Bombs about U.S. Foreign Policy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URT9cy9XkIU&t=2134s>

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Հիվանդանոցային Ստանալու համար Հայաստան Դիմում Կատարեց Ամերիկային, Նոր Մարմարա, 23.08.2024 (Armenia Applied to America for Receiving Atomic Technology, New Marmara, 23.08.2024.); ԱՄՆ Միգրիթ Է Ապահովության Ոլորտին մեջ Աջակցելու Հայաստանին, Նոր Մարմարա, 21.08.2024 (The US Intends to Support Armenia in Security Sphere, New Marmara, 21.08.2024.); Հայաստան պիտի Ստանայ Հնդկական «ԱՔԱՇ-1Ս» Համակարգերը, Նոր Մարմարա, 09.08.2024 (Armenia will Receive Indian Systems "AKASH-1S", New Marmara, 09.08.2024.); Հայաստան, Իրան եւ Հնդկաստան կը Բանակցին Առևտրական Երթուղիի համար, Նոր Մարմարա, 08.08.2024 (Armenia, Iran and India Negotiate for a Trade Road, New Marmara, 08.08.2024.):

<sup>5</sup> See Atoyan, V., Brosius, L., & Hovyan, V. (2023). Comparative Analysis of National Security Strategies of Armenia in the Context of Political Realism, Liberalism, and Marxism. *Journal of Political Science: Bulletin of Yerevan University*, 2(3(6)), 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.46991/JOPS/2023.2.6.011>

energy and other aspects. These Western actions aim to demonstrate to Azerbaijan's ruling elite that the deeply ingrained belief in their mentality — that time works in favor of Baku — is false. This realization is shocking for Azerbaijan.

For decades, Baku's foreign policy on the Karabakh issue has been based on this belief. It was assumed in Azerbaijan that, with oil revenues, they would grow wealthier, become stronger, and equip their forces with modern military technology, while Armenia, under the Turkish-Azerbaijani blockade, would remain condemned to continuous weakening and lack of development. In practice, this Azerbaijani postulate seemed to be confirmed, which led to the disastrous 44-day war in 2020 and other subsequent tragic events.

The current Western support for Yerevan, aimed at boosting its defense capabilities and resilience, is thus surprising to Baku. It disrupts the belief that time works in Azerbaijan's favor and complicates its plans.

That is why Azerbaijan reacts drastically to Armenia's cooperation with the West in economic, political, defense, security, energy and other spheres. Under the false theses and slogans such as “regional issues to the regional actors”, “the interference of extra-regional powers is not constructive and doesn't favor to the establishment of peace and security in the region”, “Armenia and Azerbaijan don't need in intermediators” etc. Baku in fact seeks to prevent Armenia's development by means of cooperation with western countries and to see the last always

in a weak and undefended state.

The other manifestation of the western pressure on Baku are the certain legal assessments to Azerbaijani cruelties, which were carried out both during the 44-day war in 2020 and after it and are continued so far. They for the present are assessments given by various international human rights organizations, authoritative and competent lawyers, the parliaments of various countries and such kind of other structures, which are reflected in the form of resolutions, reports etc. They for the present do not have a legally imposing force. However, by means of such resolutions, reports and other documents the West tries to address a message to Baku that in the case of continuation of its destructive policy those legally not imposing assessments can turn into decisions with legally imposing force as well such as, for example, the judgements of the international justice instances with stemming from them consequences.

It is hard to say whether the abovementioned pressures on Azerbaijan by the West will be sufficient from the viewpoint of imposing a peace agreement to it or not. Life will show. It depends on the circumstance how much consistent the West will be in carrying out this policy as well. For the present, Baku does not demonstrate any inclination to go to peace. It continuously poses new and new preconditions and demands, the real purpose of which is the failure or the breakdown of the process of the conclusion of peace agreement<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Արդալեյանի Արտաքին Գործոց Նախարարը Անգարա Ժամանեց, Նոր Մարմարա, 28.08.2024: (The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Arrived Ankara, New Marmara, 28.08.2024).

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#### Վահրամ ՀՈՎՅԱՆ

ՀԴՏՀ Հասարակական գիտությունների ամբիոնի դասախոս,  
բաղադրագիտության մագիստրոս

ԱՆՎՏԱՆԳՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ԵՎ ՄԱՐՏԱՀՐԱՎԵՐՆԵՐ

### ՀԱՅ-ԱՊՐԲԵՋԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԽԱՂԱՂՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՊԱՅՄԱՆԱԳՐԻ ՀԵՌԱՆԿԱՐՆԵՐԸ ՀԱՎԱՄԱՐՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ԿԱՐԳԱՎՈՐՄԱՆ ՄԵԹՈԴԱԲԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՏԵՍԱՆԿՅՈՒՆԻՑ

Հակամարտությունների կարգավորումը մեթոդաբանորեն ճիշտ է, երբ հիմնվում է հետևյալ չորս փուլերի վրա. ա) լիցքաթափում, բ) հարաբերությունների բնականոնացում, գ) հաշտություն և դ) համարկում: Առաջին փուլը հրադադարի հաստատումն է, երբ ռազմական գործողություններն ավարտվում են: Երկրորդը ենթադրում է նախկինում պատերազմող կողմերի միջև հարաբերությունների և համագործակցության հաստատում՝ գոնե նվազագույն մակարդակով: Երրորդ փուլը խաղաղության պայմանագրի կնքումն է, երբ կողմերը համաձայնության են գալիս վեճի առարկայի շուրջ: Եվ չորրորդը նշանակում է նախկին հակամարտող կողմերի միջև հարաբերությունների ու համագործակցության այն աստիճանի խորացում, որ նրանք դառնում են մեկ համակարգի մաս, ինչը գործնականում բացառում է նրանց միջև նոր հակամարտության հավանականությունը կամ առավելագույնս նվազեցնում դա:

Գլխավոր պատճառը, որ արցախյան (հայ-ադրբեջանական) հակամարտությունը մինչ այժմ չի լուծվել, չնայած տասնամյակների դիվանագիտական ջանքերին, այն է, որ ամեն անգամ հրադադարի հաստատումից հետո փորձ է արվել հասնելու վերջնական խաղաղության՝ շրջանցելով հարաբերությունների բնականոնացման փուլը:

**Հիմնաբառեր.** *հակամարտությունների կարգավորում, լիցքաթափում, հարաբերությունների բնականոնացում, հաշտություն, համարկում, խաղաղության պայմանագիր, Հայաստան, Ադրբեջան, Արևմուտք, Ռուսաստան*

**БЕЗОПАСНОСТЬ И ВЫЗОВЫ**

**ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ АРМЯНО-АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОГО МИРНОГО ДОГОВОРА С ТОЧКИ ЗРЕНИЯ  
МЕТОДОЛОГИИ УРЕГУЛИРОВАНИЯ КОНФЛИКТОВ**

Урегулирование конфликтов методически правильно, если основывается на следующих четырёх этапах: а) де-эскалация, б) нормализация отношений, в) примирение и г) интеграция. Первый этап – это установление перемирия, когда боевые действия прекращаются. Второй предполагает установление отношений и кооперации между конфликтующих в прежнем сторон хоть на минимальном уровне. Третий этап – это заключение мирного договора, когда стороны соглашаются о предмете ссоры. И четвёртый означает углубление отношений и сотрудничества между конфликтующих в прежнем сторонами до такой степени, что они становятся частями одной единой системы, и это практически исключает вероятность нового конфликта между ними или максимально уменьшает её.

Главной причиной того, что арцахский (армяно-азербайджанский) конфликт не разрешён до сих пор, несмотря на десятилетние дипломатические усилия, является то, что каждый раз после установления перемирия делалась попытка добиться окончательного мира, обходя этап нормализации отношений.

**Ключевые слова:** *разрешение конфликтов, де-эскалация, нормализация отношений, примирение, интеграция, мирный договор, Армения, Азербайджан, Запад, Россия*