**In case of competent work, the Armenian side can turn Azerbaijan's recent aggression into a diplomatic nightmare**

After 44-day war, Armenia's biggest diplomatic failure in resolving the Artsakh conflict was the process of dismantling the OSCE Minsk Group, which resulted in the loss of a negotiating legacy accumulated over decades. Mediocre foreign policy of the current government of Armenia is to be blamed primarily considering also the obvious geopolitical prerequisites.

Negotiations with Azerbaijan outside the format of the OSCE Minsk Group, as well as discussions of issues related to Artsakh and the so-called "peace treaty" at other negotiation platforms, were aimed at putting an end to the many years of activity of the OSCE Minsk Group, with all the ensuing negative consequences.

Azerbaijan's recent aggression has once again demonstrated that this country is not capable of following any reached agreements, especially if they are not backed by superpowers and are not under their supervision. The reaction of the key international actors to recent events reveals that a new military escalation in the region proceeds solely out the interests of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem and not one of the superpowers is interested in it. In this regard, we would like to draw attention to several important events:

* France initiated a meeting of the UN Security Council on the resumption of hostilities on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border[[1]](#footnote-1).
* Representative of the US State Department, Ned Price told that the US is urging the Russian Federation to use its influence and leverage with Armenia and Azerbaijan to end hostilities and ease tensions more broadly. He also said: “We have seen significant evidence of Azerbaijani shelling inside Armenia, significant damage to Armenian infrastructure.[[2]](#footnote-2)”
* Russian Foreign Ministry representative Denis Gonchar told that Paris is sending signals about the readiness to resume contacts regarding the Karabakh settlement through the OSCE Minsk Group[[3]](#footnote-3).

These seemingly unrelated, but very important from the point of view of the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Artsakh conflicts statements and actions obviousely open up new opportunities for counteroffensives for Armenian diplomacy.

* First of all, it is necessary to use the UN Security Council and other important platforms to explain to the international community that Azerbaijan is not ready to implement any international agreements with Armenia without serious and multilateral international supervision over it by such superpowers as the United States, Russia and France ( as well as other permanent members of the UN Security Council). Therefore, the so-called "peace" negotiations can be effective only with the joint mediation and guarantees of these actors.
* It is necessary to convey to the international community, and especially the co-chairing countries of the OSCE Minsk Group, the unequivocal truth that it is imperative to unite the agendas of the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan interstate relations and Artsakh conflict, discussing these issues in the framework of the same package. Reality has demonstrated that in both cases there is an ontological problem, and without a comprehensive solution to the Artsakh problem, the final resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations is unrealistic, and the continuous aggression of Azerbaijan against the Armenian people is inevitable.
* It is necessary to reject to negotiate with Azerbaijan on other than OSCE MG platforms regarding the “peace agreement”, whether it be within the framework of the upcoming Samarkand summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (in which, in addition to Armenia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran will also participate), or at the EU platforms (for example, in Prague during the summit initiated by French President Emmanuel Macron, which should take place in mid-October).
* Given the start of the annual session of the UN General Assembly expected in the coming days, the Armenian side can write a letter to each of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries with a request to use the platform of the UN General Assembly to restore the format of the OSCE Minsk Group and initiate, through its mediation, an Armenian-Azerbaijani meeting, which will be aimed at the resumption of the negotiation process on the "peace treaty", interrupted due to the recent aggression of Baku. Even if Azerbaijan rejects the proposal for holding such a meeting, a separate meeting of the Armenian side with three co-chairs at the same time can give the process a very important diplomatic boost.
* Invite the co-chairing countries jointly or separately to confirm their position on the key points of the negotiating heritage of the OSCE Minsk Group, in particular on the Madrid principles.
* Try to revive the agreements reached in Vienna and St. Petersburg in 2016 on the implementation of border incident control mechanisms, which were lost as a result of gross diplomatic failures in 2018-2020.

HOW REALISTIC IS THE PROSPECT OF SUCCESS IN THIS MATTER?

* Evidently, in the context of the geopolitical confrontation between the United States and the Russian Federation and the situation in Ukraine, it is very difficult to motivate the Russian Federation and the United States for diplomatic contacts and consensus, but the above mentioned three statements give some hope for its successful outcome. Obviously, the parties minimum acknowledge each other's role in this matter, and the restoration of the OSCE Minsk Group will give them the opportunity to resume at least this last channel of diplomatic contacts, which is very important from the point of view of managing the Ukrainian crisis in order not to let it get out of control.
* The restoration of the OSCE Minsk Group format will enable the US to return to the geopolitics in the South Caucasus, and for the Russian Federation - to avoid military escalations and the opening of a conditional “2nd military front”, which is undesirable for it at the moment. The EU, represented by France, will also be interested in this issue, since a new military conflict in the region may further intensify an already aggravated energy crisis in Europe, especially given certain EU hopes for energy supplies from Azerbaijan and Central Asia, which may be interrupted in case of a full-scale war in the region.

Azerbaijan's military adventure against Artsakh in April 2016 ended up in a diplomatic fiasco, which followed by the Vienna and St. Petersburg agreements and Aliyev's acknowledgement that he was being forced behind closed doors to recognize the independence of Artsakh. Despite the fact that, unlike in 2016, the balance of power at the moment, as well as the regional realities and the geopolitical situation have changed significantly not in favor of the Armenian side, but even in this case there is still a window of opportunity, which would be unforgivable not to take advantage of.

Of course, there is no guarantee that this process will be 100% successful, especially in the case of the current government, which is not distinguished by effective diplomacy and the ability to skilfully maneuver between geopolitical poles. In other words, even if the proposed diplomatic combination does not bring success, then, most likely, this will happen due to the failure of the authorities, and not because of the imperfection of the idea or unfavorable geopolitical factors.

Anyway, this is one of the few opportunities in the current situation, the one that should be seized on and try to achieve at least a minimal victory on the diplomatic stage, in order to alleviate the pain of irreversible human and territorial losses as a result of Azerbaijan's latest aggression.

1. France to raise Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict at UN Security Council, 14/09/2022, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20220914-france-to-raise-armenia-azerbaijan-conflict-at-un-security-council> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Department Press Briefing – September 13, 2022, NED PRICE, DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON, WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 13, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-september-13-2022/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Париж шлет сигналы, что готов возобновить Минскую группу ОБСЕ по Карабаху - МИД России 11:56 14.09.2022, <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20220914/parizh-shlet-signaly-chto-gotov-vozobnovit-minskuyu-gruppu-obse-po-karabakhu---mid-rossii-48251193.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)