



ARMENIAN AND AZERI YOUTH ON NAGORNO - KARABAKH CONFLICT

By Edgar Khachatryan and Vahagn Antonyan,
Peace Dialogue NGO, 2009

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Translated by John Clinton

Fifteen years have passed since the cease fire agreement was signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan. A new generation has grown up since that time that has heard about the war from those around them, media, and history books, each party presenting its own history from its own perspective.

In order to reveal the visions of youth regarding the problems with internal relations of Azerbaijan and Armenia, on the possible ways of regulation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and other questions related with previously mentioned topics members of Peace Dialogue NGO, with the support of their Azerbaijani partners, undertook a survey among the youth of these two countries.

The youth participants of the survey, with different professional backgrounds, all agree that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and regulation of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations are topics of general priority.

Sabina, a 4th year student of international law, says “[the] unsolved conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh, from my perspective, reflects very poorly on myself. People are forgetting their own history. To tell the truth, it makes them nervous and hateful; at least, this is my feeling.”

“Although I haven't forgotten anything - and I can't - I am against new military action. The Nagorno-Karabakh issue can only be solved through diplomacy; I reject war, and think that if we initiate war international organizations will not support us,” says Sabina.

Khalida, a 22 year old Azerbaijani salesperson, sees the regulation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as possible only by military actions. “I have never heard of any conflict that has been solved peacefully, through diplomatic negotiations only. This is impossible. But it is difficult for me to say that war will start; I am not sure. I don't even want a new war, but I don't see any other option. It probably sounds wild, but our lands can be taken back only by force. First of all, we need a powerful army and weapons; all these international meetings, signed documents and agreements are just a way to waste time without a purpose,” Khalida says.

Another Azerbaijani, 25 year old Allakhlar, finds that “The unsolved Karabakh conflict has a negative impact; society can lose its trust towards its government. For me, personally, this negative impact makes me abject.”

According to Sevak Mnatsakanyan, 22 year old IT specialist, compromise is the only option to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He thinks that “the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh should have a strong army, because a powerful military force is the face of the state.” “As a citizen of Armenia I am willing and ready to fight for the independence of Karabakh if the necessity arises,” Sevak says, and adds that “the policy of our government is satisfactory to me, because peace exists and border infractions are infrequent.”

According to Yeranuhi Yaralyan, a 19 year old nurse, “the unsolved [Nagorno-Karabakh] issue of course creates a negative impact, although the problem is between the governments of the countries, not the societies. In any case, as a result ordinary people are suffering with great apprehension and are living without knowledge of their future.”

Liana Baghdasaryan, a graduate of Yerevan State University in Asian studies, thinks that “some of the possible ways to solve the problem are by referendum, compromise, or military action. Work done by the government on the conflict is unsatisfying, because after the military success of Armenia there has been no positive change.”

From the perspective of Farik, who is a student of Azerbaijan State Science Academy “there are several options to solve the problem, but with the existing government of Armenia it is almost impossible to solve peacefully; however, the resolution of the conflict should be solved peacefully. Everything is possible, including war, but I really hope that we - Armenia and Azerbaijan - are now much smarter than in 1988. The war is madness, and should not start again.”

Mary Mikalyan, a graduate of Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute, thinks that “there is no war now, and because of this no one is suffering; but living without knowledge of the future is also bad. Since the problem is unsolved, there is a danger of losing Karabakh. How does the conflict impact me? It is difficult to answer. To tell the truth, I don't feel any impact. I would like the conflict to be solved in a positive way for Armenia; I am against a new war, but I would prefer a war to ceding Karabakh; but let it never happen.”

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