

THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT AND THE MINSK GROUP

(DAĞLIK KARABAĞ ÇATIŞMASI VE MINSK GRUBU)

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Before addressing the attempts for a solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the context of the formation created with a decision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and named the “Minsk Group”, it will be useful to first shortly address the history of the conflict.

History

Karabakh is a region of approximately 18.000 km² found between Azerbaijan’s rivers of Kura and Aras, in the east of Lake Sevan in Armenia.

On the other hand, Nagorno-Karabakh is the territory covering the mountainous upper areas of Karabakh of approximately 4.388 km². Therefore, the region is referred to as Mountainous Karabakh or Nagorno-Karabakh. With the belief that it describes the region more correctly, we preferred the name Nagorno-Karabakh.

This is the region which is the subject of dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Armenians argue that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to them ever since ancient histories. However, historical facts show that this allegation is groundless.

Since the Armenians show the old ruins of the church in the region as evidence for their allegations, it would be appropriate to address this issue before anything else.

The first determinable habitants of the territories of the Southern Caucasus forming the country of Azerbaijan today were the Albans. Just as there are

theses which argue that an ethnic bond exists between the Albans and today's Albanians, there are also scholars who put forth that this thesis is wrong. The ethnic characteristics of the Albans are irrelevant to our subject. The reason for mentioning the Albans is the unique architecture these Christian people used in the construction of the church. This architectural feature refutes the Armenians' allegations that based on history they have rights over the region. In other words, these old church ruins invalidate the allegation that the region "belongs to the Armenians ever since ancient histories". This thesis carries no other meaning than being one of the attempts of the Armenians directed towards exploiting religion in the Christian world.

In this context, the Armenian allegation that Turkish and Islamic monuments in the region are so few that no attention is paid to them could be responded by drawing attention to the fact that there is no mosque in Athens which had remained under Ottoman domination for almost four centuries. Destroying has always been easier than building.

Although the Armenians' assertions that since the 4th century, Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to the "Kingdom of Great Armenia" is correct, the region has always remained under the domination of others in the following centuries. The domination over the region has passed on from the Christian Albans to the Arabs, Mongols, Safavid Iran of Turkish origin, and the Turks. The region's name is a combination of Turkish and Persian: Kara-bakh.

Since the 11th century, the Seljuk Turks have started to dominate the region.

Hasan Celal Davla (1214-1261) from the Seljuk Hans has established the Jalali Dynasty. Those from the Jalali Dynasty have left behind many works of art. The Dynasty has displayed the ability and capacity to continue following Timur Leng's Mongol invasion.

It is due to the presence of the Jalalians, who have blood relations with the Ottomans, that during the expedition made to Iran in 1514 Yavuz Sultan Selim has been able to pass the winter in Karabakh. The area has entered the administration of other Turkmen rulers in the 15-16th centuries.

These rulers have created various Khanates on the territories which form Azerbaijan today. The main ones are Ganja, Revan, Sheki, Baku, Kuba, Derbent, Nakhchivan, and Karabakh Khanates.

The Karabakh Khanate has been established in 1747 by Panah Ali Khan from the Javanshir Tribe. The city, whose current name is Shusha, was initially named Panahabad in honor of the Khanate and the name of its founder. His

son Ibrahim Halil Khan, who replaced him after his death, has turned Panahabad into a civilized city. This beautiful city, whose monuments belonging to that period are still standing, has also raised many poets and composers.

As a result of the attacks Russia undertook in order to bring the Southern Caucasus under its domination, all the Khanates have been seized by the Russian Tzar. Finally, the Karabakh Khanate has entered within Russian domination with an agreement signed on 14 May 1805. Iran has accepted this situation in 1813 with the Treaty of Gulistan signed with Russia.

Russia has not trusted the local community of Turkish origin living on the territories it dominates. Therefore, it was necessary for a population to be created which Russia can trust. The opportunity Russia sought in this area was provided by the victories it gained during the wars waged with Iran in one year and the Ottoman Empire the next.

The Turkmenchay Treaty signed in 1828 between Iran and Russia has also granted the people living on the territories of the two countries the right to mutually migrate to wherever they want.

Based on this point, Russia has drawn around 70.000 Armenians living in Iran to their own territories through some privileges bestowed to them. These Armenians who migrated to Russia were settled in Yerevan, Nakhchivan, Ganja, Shamahi and the regions of Karabakh afterwards. The most extensive settlement has been made to Yerevan and Karabakh.

With the Treaty of Adrianople signed with the Ottoman Empire a year later, Russia has pushed the Ottoman Empire into accepting the articles of the Turkmenchay Treaty. This way, the article on population transfer has gained validity. Utilizing the opportunity provided by the conventional situation, Russia has transferred many Armenians, particularly those living in Erzurum, Kars and Bayazit, to their own territories by tempting them.

The number of Armenians who migrated or forced to migrate from the territories of Iran and the Ottoman Empire to current Armenian territories and Karabakh are conveyed to be around 130,000. The mountaineous sections of the region have been found suitable for a majority of those settled in the Karabakh Khanate.

Considering the data on population, it can be seen that according to a census conducted by Russian military officials in 1823, the Muslim population in Karabakh was 91% and the Armenian population was 8.4%. Census verified

that even after receiving extensive immigration due to opportunity created by the treaties of Turkmenchay and Adrianople, the population of Muslims reduced to 64.8% while the Armenians were still around 34.8%.

On the other hand, according to another census conducted at the end of the century, we can see that the Armenians population increased up around 53.3%.

The migration from Eastern Anatolia to Armenia also continued during the First World War. In accordance with the Relocation Law of 1915, while many Armenians in these territories have been transferred to Ottoman territories remaining outside the battleground, a major portion of Armenian population emigrated to Russia. According to presumptions, approximately 420.000 Armenians have migrated to Russia in this period.

The armed struggle carried out by the Armenian Government, where the Dashnaks are dominant, in order to conquer the regions of Nagorno-Karabakh and Zangezur, has continued until the Red Army's occupation of Southern Caucasia in 1920.

During the period of Russian domination, tension between Azeri Turks and the Armenian population has never been absent. This tension has reached its climax during the Russian Revolution of 1905.

Just as the entire Southern Caucasus during the years of the First World War, Nagorno-Karabakh has also witnessed the conflicts of the Ottoman, English and local powers.

Nuri Pasha's "Islamic Army" has reached Baku in 1918 by passing through Azerbaijan's regions in its west of Kazakh, Ganja, Nukha, Akdam, Jebail, and Karabakh. Meanwhile, vicious conflicts were taking place between the Azeri Turks and Armenians in Karabakh. By intervening into the situation, Nuri Pasha drove the Armenians back. The city of Stepanakart, under the occupation of the Armenians, has been rescued as a result of a tough war through the local forces joining Nuri Pasha at Susa, which possesses an arduous strait. This way, effective Azeri domination has once again been established. Thomson, the commander of the English forces entering Azerbaijan upon the Ottomans losing the World War and Nuri Pasha withdrawing, has caused Retired General Andranik to abandon its attempts to seize Nagorno-Karabakh, whose "two-thirds of its population is constituted by the Azerbaijanis".

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The Armenians' claims on the two regions mentioned above have also not settled during the Soviet Union period.

The ownership of the region has for a long time kept the Soviet rulers occupied. For instance, one of the initiators of the Bolshevik movement in the Caucasus, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan, from an Armenian origin, has stated that the region being annexed to Armenia will serve "the Armenians' ambitions to enlarge" and in a conversation held with Stalin in the beginning of the 1920's before the Red Army's occupation of the area, he has indicated that Karabakh cannot be given to Armenia. As justification for his view, Mikoyan has indicated that "the community never and in any way had a common past with Armenia" and such an annexation will "be the equivalent of being deprived of the right to live which originated from Baku".

In the first years following Soviet Russia's domination of the Southern Caucasus, the Armenians have persistently continued their claims for the regions of Nakhchivan, Nagorno-Karabakh and Zangezur to be annexed to them.

As a result, Soviet Russia has signed an agreement with Azerbaijan and Armenia in December 1920. With this agreement, although Armenia's claims on Nakhchivan and Nagorno-Karabakh were rejected, Zangezur was annexed to Armenia. With the region being given to Armenia, Nakhchivan was torn from its mother country Azerbaijan and the possibility of Nakhchivan connecting Turkey and Azerbaijan to each other has been eliminated. On the other hand, although Azerbaijan, under the administration of Nerimanov, has declared that it does not see any harm in Nakhchivan to be given to Armenia; it has abandoned this as a result of the public opinion poll conducted in 1921 where 90% of the population has said that they want to remain connected to Azerbaijan.

Armenia's annexation of Zangezur did not suspend its attempts to annex Nagorno-Karabakh. Various conferences were held and several delegations sent due to the tension generally originating from Armenian outbursts in the region in 1921-1923. In the end, Nagorno-Karabakh was given an autonomous status in 1923 and on the condition of its sovereignty remaining in Azerbaijan, the "Autonomous Nagorno-Karabakh Region" has been declared in November 1924. Its capital has been moved from historical Susa to Stepanakert.

While the region's status was confirmed with the 1936 constitution of Soviet Russia, its name was changed into "Autonomous Nagorno-Karabakh Region" (NKAR).

In order to create “Great Armenia” existing in the minds of the Armenians, annexing Nagorno-Karabakh to their territories was a primary goal. Obtaining the majority of the population in the region over time was a factor strengthening its hand.

Moreover, the Armenians who did not have the opportunity to fulfill their goals despite their attempts in 1923 and 1936 did not give up and in the 1960’s and 1970’s they have brought their claims once again to the agenda. However, the result was defeat: the 1977 Soviet constitution made no change to the article stating that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan.

The Moscow administration in despair, faced with the events gradually increasing, has appealed to a measure on 25 July 1990 non-existent in the Soviet constitution and has decided to disband the armed forces of the two countries.

Gorbachev’s “transparency and restructuring” period came during that time. The Armenians pressing Moscow by finding support with Russia becoming more flexible and the attempts of its effective and powerful diaspora in many Western states, have started concentrating on the issue with an increasing intensity, have organized various demonstrations and eventually have resorted to violence in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Moscow administration in despair, faced with the events gradually increasing, has appealed to a measure on 25 July 1990 non-existent in the Soviet constitution and has decided to disband the armed forces of the two countries. Upon the Armenian violence continuing despite this measure, Azerbaijan has cut its natural gas transmission in August 1990 and then have placed total embargo, including transformation.

The following month, it has dispatched military units to Russia, which had deployed military units to borders of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and then to Azerbaijan and Armenia in November.

By issuing a statement in March 1991, Gorbachev had confirmed that Nagorno-Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan and has called on the parties to negotiate.

The Armenian attacks have also gained a terrorist characteristic in May 1991 with 53 people dying as a result of the bombs exploding which were placed in trains in Baku. Armenian terror, which has occupied a place in world literature for carrying out the first city terror and massacring Turkish state officials, has now come to the fore in Baku with this event.

Armenia, alarmed with Azerbaijan declaring its independence on 30 August 1991, has suggested the governing council in Nagorno-Karabakh and

Goranboy (Shahumian) in its north to declare independence. The local administration following this suggestion has declared “independence” on 31 August.

With 16 Azerbaijan Turks losing their lives on September 17 during the Armenian attacks, the two countries have signed on September 23 the declaration which foresees the settlement of the problem through negotiations and the establishment of a buffer zone on the borders.

However, a while after this agreement, on 20 November 1992, upon a helicopter carrying Spokesman of the Azerbaijan Presidency Osman Mirzaev, Mayor of Shusha Vagif Caferov and officials of Russia and Kazakhstan being crashed over Nagorno-Karabakh and 26 people losing their lives, the softening emerging in the relations between the two countries have been replaced with an increasing sternness.

In such a situation, in order to prevent the increase in disagreement, a stir has emerged in the international sphere.

In this context, the first institution put emphasis on is the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

“The Minsk Group”

It was understood that CSCE, formed in the 1960’s as a result of the works continuing for tens of years of NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries in order to ease the East-West tension, would be an appropriate forum. Indeed, CSCE had developed in time and had contributed to an atmosphere of dialogue being created between the two pacts. The institution which was foreseen to turn into a platform that would contribute to security and cooperation being developed between the member countries following the dissolution of Soviet Russia, could have assumed the function of finding a settlement to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Changes were even made in the rules of establishment and function that would serve this purpose. (The institution has after a while turned into an organization and taken the name “Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe” – OSCE)

With these ideas in mind, a group of countries in which we also exist, have brought the issue on 30 January 1992 to the organization to which Azerbaijan and Armenia had just become members and it was decided for a reporter mission to be sent to the region.

This way, the disagreement on Nagorno-Karabakh had entered the agenda of international forums.

However, it appeared that the Armenian attacks were increasingly becoming intense. In this context, the massacre known in history as the Khojaly Massacre had emerged on 25-26 February. The horrible protests in Khojaly are clearly explained, absent from any feeling of embarrassment, in the book “Revival of Our Souls” of Zori Balayan and “For the Sake of Cross” of Daud Kheyrian who had participated in the protests.

The point that must immediately be indicated is that it was clear that Armenia had studied its international relations lesson well. Armenia had calculated that international organizations have no sanction power and that countries in the position to be able to intervene would not do so with the influence of various factors. They had the support of the powerful and effective Armenian lobbies in countries like the US and France. On the other hand, Russia was struggling with its own problems. Moreover, it was known that Russia’s heart was with Armenia. However, Turkey, as the only country that could directly intervene to the benefit of Azerbaijan, was aware that the correlation of relations did not make such an intervention easy. Furthermore, the Russian forces stationed in Armenia also had to be taken into consideration in this equation. Widespread rumors that some soldiers from these Russian forces have fought on the side of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and in some situations, have acted as leaders in the operation were also not absent. In time it became obvious that these rumors were not groundless. The statements made in the court by six “special forces” (spetsnaz) from the Russian 7th army stationed in Armenia caught in September 1992 by the Azerbaijani border patrols had displayed that Russian troops have fought on the side of the Armenians*.

Armenia had made good use of this general situation indicated with thick lines. In making use of the situation, the contribution of their personnel was great. For instance, Foreign Minister Hovanissian who is a US citizen was an expert in international relations. History professor Gerard (Jirair) Libaridian who was Ter-Petrosyan’s International Security Advisor was also a US citizen and knew the US policies well.

The Armenians were acting accordingly to the saying of “dogs bark, the caravan keeps on making way”.

Faced with this negative atmosphere, OSCE has adopted two decisions to find a solution to the disagreement.

The first of these was to send a second observer mission to the region on 19-23 March 1992. The second decision was the one dated 24 March which aimed

* For detailed information on the Russian troops entering the war see: Thomas Goltz’s article named “Letter From Eurasia: Hidden Russian Hand” published in fall 1993 in the “Foreign Policy” journal. (pp.92-116)

at the CSCE Council of Ministers to get to the core of the problem and find a solution.

Although the official name of the decision adopted by the Council of Ministers during a meeting held in Helsinki is “Conference on Nagorno-Karabakh”, since it was envisaged that the final conference would be held in the capital of White Russia, the decision has been referred to as the “Minsk Conference” and the group formed with this decision as the “Minsk Group”. This decision carries such importance that it must be emphasized.

Before anything else, the events taking place during the writing process of the decision must be addressed. As a rule of CSCE, Troika formed by the chairman-in-office, the former chairman-in-office and representatives of three countries to assume the next chairman-in-office, attends all the works of the conference and writing as a presidency council. The Czech and Slovak Republic who was Chairman back then, Germany as the former Chairman and Sweden to assume Chairmanship in the next period automatically became members of the writing committee. Naturally, Azerbaijan and Armenia as parties to the disagreement also entered the committee. Russia and France also joined. The joining of England was prevented by Armenia on grounds that “England was mistreating them after the First World War”. Despite all insistent initiatives and attempts to join, as a result of German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher resisting with the same determination, we were unable to join the Writing Committee.

Since we closely knew Azeri Foreign Minister Sadik Sadikov who was to join the writing committee, we did not expect him to make any positive contribution. However, we indicated to Sadikov and the First Secretary of that period Araz Azimov that they must absolutely oppose a statement like “representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh” to being added to the decision, that such a statement existing in the text of the decision could form the beginning of a development extending to the future recognition of the so-called independence Nagorno-Karabakh proclaimed. The second point we put emphasis on was to make sure that Turkey would join the working group to be formed.

In the decision it was recorded that a conference convened under the auspices of the CSCE will be a suitable forum aimed at the achievement of peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and that the conference will be convened in Minsk. It has also indicated that the US, Germany, Azerbaijan, White Russia, Czech and Slovak Republic, Armenia, France, Sweden, Italy, Russia and Turkey attending the conference was also found appropriate. In the decision text, the statement of the Chairman of the Conference, after consulting the participant countries, of “the elected and other representatives of Nagorno-

Karabakh as interested parties would be invited to the Conference” unfortunately also existed. The chairmanship of the conference was given to Italy.

Although not clearly stated in the decision, it was found appropriate for the representatives of the mentioned countries to organize a conference under Italy’s presidency in order to address the Conference preparations. Italy appointed politician Mario Rafaelli to this position.

In the weeks following this decision, CSCE undertook a series of activities “to prepare the preliminary meeting” like the visits to the region of chairman-in-office Czech and Slovak Republic’s Foreign Minister Dienstbier, a pre-delegation in order to make the contacts of the observer mission easier, and Rafaelli appointed as Conference Chairman.

While the CSCE’s preparations to send a delegation to the region continued, the historical city of Shusha in Nagorno-Karabakh where the Azeri Turks constitute the majority and is the last population center under their control which resembles a fortress not penetrated fell on May 9.

The day Shusha fell, Rafaelli came to Ankara. This visit took place after his visit to the region. Therefore, we wanted to listen to his impressions and what he foresees. It was seen that he was quite confused. Actually, more than himself, his deputy Ambassador Sica spoke more. To be honest, this first contact with the Presidential Delegation did not very much encourage us. We explained to him our views and approach in a loud and clear manner: the conflicts must stop, the territories occupied must be evacuated and an agreement must be reached on the autonomy to be given to Nagorno-Karabakh on the condition that it remains under Azeri domination.

A short while after Rafaelli leaving Ankara, we received the news that the Lachin Corridor had fell to the hands of the Armenians. The Lachin Corridor carries strategic importance for providing a direct connection from Armenia to Azerbaijan, because the Armenians taking hold of this corridor had obtained the opportunity to be able to send all kinds of supplies they wish to Nagorno-Karabakh over land without encountering any obstacles.

As an odd twist of fortune and a pre-messenger of its mission’s failure, Shusha had fell and the Lachin corridor had passed to the hands of the Armenians while Rafaelli was coming to Ankara.

The next stop of the goal of enlarging the territories under occupation of the Armenians, who gained more encourage by easily seizing Shusha whose occupation was seen as impossible, was the region of Lachin.

The attack on the area of Lachin had started on 17 March and the area had been captured by them the following day. With the advantage of inspecting the corridor, now the entire Lachin region had easily fell under their occupation and therefore, the means of logistic support was fully guaranteed.

Again meetings were held upon this occupation and statements were made. One of the main two statements is the joint statement of Turkey and France. France, where there was no doubt that it approached Armenia's enlargement with sympathy, condemning the attack, raiding and sabotage with us resembled crocodile tears. The second was the statement of Chairman-in-Office of the European Community (EU) Portugal condemning the attack in a harsh manner.

Meanwhile, in one of the CSCE meetings, Armenia vetoed a declaration on 21st of May which confirmed that Nagorno-Karabakh is Azerbaijani territory and condemned the attacks.

On the other hand, the Minsk Group somehow could not convene, because while the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (ANK) expected to attend the meeting as an independent state, as the "concerning party" they resisted for not being invited on an equal level with the Azeri representatives of the region. This resistance also found support from the opposition parties in Armenia. Another factor increasing the ANK's resistance was the opposition in Yerevan forcing Ter-Petrosyan to recognize ANK's independence. In his statements, Ter-Petrosyan insisted on his thesis that the issue should be resolved through negotiations and reconciliation and as a result of the pressures intensifying on the ANK, it has been possible for the Minsk Group to convene.

After attacks, occupation, resistance and statements, the turn has finally come to the Minsk Group's meetings.

The first meeting was held in 1-5 June 1992 in Rome.

We went to the first meeting with a large delegation: Our Ambassador before the CSCE, expert on the issue and multilateral diplomacy Ali Hikmet Alp, well known figure of multilateral diplomacy Ambassador Selçuk Korkud, myself, Daryal Batıbay responsible of international organizations at the center and some young colleagues.

Nadir Hüdaverdioğlu Mehtiyev was heading the Azerbaijani delegation. He was member of the Azerbaijani Assembly and President of the Human Rights Commission. The foreign language he knew was Russian. Mehtiyev, whose actual profession was chemical engineering, said that he did not know why he was appointed to this task and that he had no international experience. Araz

Azimov who was First Secretary back then and Tefvik Zülfikarov were also in the delegation. After Elcibey coming to power, Foreign Minister Tefvik Kasimov started to personally attend the Minsk Group meetings. After Elcibey left his Presidential seat, the President's deputy Vefa Gülizade, having a diplomatic origin, usually chaired the Azerbaijani delegation.

The Armenian delegation consisted of names such as Christian Der Stepanian, Jirair (Gerard) Libaridian, and Souren Zolyan. Stepanian was purely an enemy towards the Turks who worked as a teacher in France. Libaridian who is a history professor had chaired the Zoryan Institute, a Dashnak institution, in Boston. Due to divergence of views, he had later on withdrawn from membership to the Dashnak Party. While continuing his works at the university in the US, he had been invited by Levon Ter-Petrosyan for the task and had assumed the position of the President's Foreign Policy Advisor. His historical knowledge on the "Armenian facts" was complete. He was determined, but at the same time possessed a soft manner. It was possible to speak to him. Some changes took place in the Armenian delegation in the other sessions. Stepanian withdrew from delegation, David Shahnazarian joined. Shahnazarian, born in Armenia, was also the President's foreign policy advisor.

The head of the Russian delegation was Ambassador Vladimir Kazimirov, purely a representative of the Soviet Russia diplomacy. He had specialized on Latin America. Since he did not know English, he was spoken to through a translator. He was a tough negotiator. According to him, the only person who knew the truth and the facts was himself.

Ambassador John (Jack) Maresca, the absolute leader of the US delegation, was an ambitious negotiator who had formerly served as Permanent Representative at the CSCE. He did not refrain from showing that he knows the position of the country he represents in the international field.

Since the representatives of the other countries generally remain only as listeners, their delegations are not mentioned. Among these countries, for France it is difficult to say that despite being ambitious, it has shown any presence in the meetings since its heads of delegation constantly change. France's presence in the Group started being felt in 1993 after the appointment of Ambassador Helene Dubois.

Since the first meetings of the Minsk Group, it became clear that Mehtiyev neither really knows the issue nor does he have experience in international contacts. Moreover, despite Russia, France and in the beginning the US within the Group being prone to Armenia, it was Azerbaijan which was attacked. It could not be said that Italy, assuming chairmanship, was also acting neutral.

Since Chairman Rafaelli, who in the mean time was waiting to be appointed to the Foreign Ministry, was waiting for the news to arrive to him, efficaciously Ambassador Sica was chairing the meeting.

With the guise of the “concerning party”, there were the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (ANK) and the Nagorno-Karabakh Azerbaijanis (NKA). The “ANK delegation” had a command of the issue. It interfered in almost all statements and expressed views. They constantly acted in consultancy and interdependence with the Armenian Delegation. On the other hand, the NKA Delegation was entirely aggrieved. Just as they gave the impression that they do not even know why they are in the meeting, it seemed that they also were not in contact with the Azeri Delegation. It could not be said that it was easy for our attempts to form a dialogue with him were successful due to the problem of language, because members of the NKA Delegation did not know their mother tongue and there was no one in our delegation who knew Russian.

It was obvious that our mission would be difficult.

In 1992, the Group held a total of seven meetings where five of them were official, two were unofficial. The meetings passed with discussions on how they would attend the negotiations held between the ANK and the NKA. The Armenian delegation insisted on the opportunity to be given to the ANK to express their views. We, together with the Azeri delegation, absolutely opposed this. In the end although an agreement was reached on the “concerning two parties” to express views through the Chairman, this solution did not satisfy the NKA.

Although the Minsk Group’s main function was to make the determining of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh easier, the main issue was left aside due to the continuing conflicts and occupations and concentration was given to how the conflicts could be ended.

Kazimirov believed that the essential purpose was to obtain a ceasefire and he was not flexible on his view. For Russia, the essential purpose was to obtain a ceasefire and to somehow maintain its presence on Azeri territories, from where he believed his forces would soon be withdrawn, on a basis of international legitimacy. (Eventually the Russian forces have been withdrawn from the area of Nakhchivan in 1992 and from the whole of Azerbaijan in the Spring of 1993).

The observers, whose deployment was inevitable for the protection of the ceasefire, could have formed a good opportunity for Russia. Of course, in order to conceal the purpose, Kazimirov was referring to the forces of the

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) being sent as observers. In the current conditions, there was no one who did not know that within the CIS, no other country besides Russia could deploy an observer to Nagorno-Karabakh. The term “CIS observer” was actually used as a cover for the “Russian soldier”.

A general evaluation made by an author on Russia’s approach to the Southern Caucasus is striking:

Although it is doubtful that Russia knows the difference between ‘protecting peace’ and ‘obtaining peace’, it considering itself as the gendarme of Soviet Russia territories is without doubt. Despite Moscow being the “poser of problem” in the Southern Caucasus, it is apparent that it wants to assume the role of ‘protecting peace’. As long as disagreement continues to exist in the Southern Caucasus, the concern for ‘providing peace’ will dominate Russia’s policy towards the region. If it cannot be obtained through peace, mediation and attempts to protect peace, it must be expected for Russia to resort to the methods of “obtaining peace” of the 19th century.

We believed in case this ceasefire did not work hand-in-hand with the evacuation of the occupied territories and the creation of conditions for the displaced persons to return their homes easier, it will cause the occupations to strengthen. Furthermore, we also expressed that among the observers of the ceasefire, our soldiers should also exist. As expected, the Armenian delegation strongly opposed the view that Turkish soldiers should exist among the observers. Kazimirov also supported the Armenian view through different, various excuses.

The Armenian side neither supported a ceasefire, nor an evacuation.

Maresca believed that the CSCE rules should be applied. However, no one but specialists like himself knew what these rules were. The US Representative giving the impression that he does not have full knowledge on the background of the issue and the goals pursued also did not quite take a dim view towards the Russian proposal at the beginning.

In the meetings, academic discussions were being held on how “territorial integrity” and “self-determination”, two conflicting principles of international law, could be associated with Nagorno-Karabakh. We were arguing that the first principle was a rule forming the basis of law, while “self-determination” was used as an instrument after World War II in order to give independence to the colonies and was a term that fulfilled its purpose.

The views confined to a few paragraphs above had filled the days and sessions.

Following Elcibey coming to power, Azerbaijan achieved partial success on the front. Martakert, occupied before, was rescued and some progress was made in Goranboy.

Under the conditions back then, Azerbaijan's success in the military area was an extraordinary development. How was it that the Azeri soldiers who had constantly withdrawn on the front could rescue some territories under occupation? An emergency meeting was held. When a break was taken during the meeting, Maresca said that he wants to meet me in private. When stepping aside, I told Maresca, who said that the success was achieved with the intervention of the Turkish soldiers, that this is not true, it could be the contribution of American officers of US oil companies who are said to be deployed in the region. When receiving the response of "I don't even care about your thought" and replying to him with "we don't care about your proposal either", our relations with Maresca were tense for some time. Truly, back then, there were sayings that some retired officers of US oil companies were assigned in order to help in the creation of the Azerbaijani army and that they also provided consultancy services on the front.

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Returning back to the meeting, a call for a ceasefire was made in haste and an intensive effort was undertaken for it to be complied with. To evaluate the result of these efforts, an unofficial meeting was held on July 17. In the period between, bad news had started being received again from the front.

After Kazimirov indicated in a victorious general manner that he is in contact "with all parties to the conflict including the ANK", he conveyed that Ter-Petrosyan was applying pressure on the ANK to bring the conflicts to a stop. This way, he proved that the conflicting side is not Armenia, but the ANK. Moreover, the Russian representative also said that he gave an action plan with a timetable to the conflicting parties. According to it, the conflicting parties will cease fire, form a demilitarized zone among their selves, will pull their heavy weapons to outside the area of conflict and will deploy observers. In

short, at the end of this progressive process, the ceasefire will be taken under inspection and the observers will start work.

The discussion intensified on the applicability of the plan. The modalities of the Minsk Conference convening if the plan is accepted were also addressed. Some representatives argued that the conference be held without any preconditions, while others argued that it should convene after its application to the ceasefire was guaranteed.

We indicated that the ceasefire is a phase, the timetable should entail the evacuation of the occupied territories concurrently through the ceasefire, and that the conference being organized without evacuation taking place will amount to giving credence to the occupiers and to putting down roots on the territories under occupation.

At the end, it was decided for Chairman Rafaelli to conduct another visit to the region for an assessment of the situation.

In the “Progress Report” published by CSCE in 1992, the situation was remarkably summarized in one sentence:

Mario Rafaelli continues its tireless efforts to advance the peace process.

In reality, the continuous acts were the Armenian attacks.

This way, year 1993 was arrived.

In this year, the regions of Akdere, Kelbecer, Akdam, Fuzuli, Cabrail, Horadis and Zegalan were also occupied. The territories being occupied corresponded to 20 % of Azerbaijan. The Azeri Turks on the territories falling under Armenian occupations were only able to save their lives by running away. At the end, nearly one million people had become migrants (deserters) on their own territories. Efforts for peace also continued.

Now we can look at the developments.

It had become clear that stopping the attacks and the evacuation of the occupied territories through the efforts of the Minsk Group would not be possible.

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the Armenians were in euphoria of victory for easily achieving success. They did not even receive a warning that conveyed the message that serious sanctions would be applied.

At the first stage to maintain its position in the Southern Caucasus and then to

strengthen it, Russia was using this crisis as an instrument. Without doubt, the issue of Azeri oil being sold without passing through Russia being on the agenda also played a role in this. Moreover, the possibility that Turkey's influence in the region could increase also strained the minds.

On the other hand, the attention and efforts of the US and Western European countries had concentrated on the dissolving Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the activities of the Armenian diaspora in these countries to form public opinion in favor of them were also continuing without rest. Despite all its power and superiority, it was a well known fact that the US could not at the same time struggle with two great crises.

Under these conditions, by getting the US on our side and also including Russia in the issue, we could have perhaps obtained a result.

With these thoughts, in order to put the idea of Turkey, US and Russia to form a trilateral initiative, which we have been emphasizing for some time, the CSCE meeting organized in Paris in the beginning of January formed an appropriate forum. Russia's influence over Armenia and the ANK was apparent. Foreign Minister Kozirev could have convinced them that our aim is not to alienate Russia from the region and that if we can act together, common efforts could be shown to bring an end to the attacks and evacuate the areas occupied. We could have achieved this by brining the US on our side. Eagleburger, who was US Secretary of State back then, had worked by Kissinger's side and was a diplomat famous for his talents, who could research the issues in depth and who had a strategic vision.

Before the meeting of Çetin-Eagleburger, we had a long private talk with Maresca on January 12. I explained to him openheartedly our thoughts concerning the developments in the region and our expectations regarding the future and I told him that we want to see the US by our side. I also indicated that Azerbaijan is in favor of close relations being established, including giving the US a significant share in managing rich oil resources and marketing it to the world. By referring to concrete events, I said that the Armenians in Yerevan and Stepanakert have neither planned the developments in Nagorno-Karabakh on their own, nor have they put them into practice on their own. I also added that we expect them to support the trilateral initiative which we foresee.

After listening with patience, Maresca said that a trilateral initiative could be beneficial and that behind Armenia's harsh and violent approach, the support they received from Russian Minister of Defense Grachev could also play a role. Since these statements indicated a positive change in Maresca's views, it

was pleasing. The tension arising between us during the dispute in Rome was also eradicated.

Çetin met with Eagleburger the next day. Eagleburger, known for being extremely intelligent, was as sharp as a needle and assumed the task of examining the grounds together with the Russians. Now if Russia would accept it, a Trilateral Initiative would enter the process.

Meanwhile, the Minsk Group held its first meeting on February 22 in Rome. It convened in two stages. ANK and NKA did not attend the first stage. The ceasefire, timetable for withdrawal and determining the terms of reference of the observers to be deployed in the region were the main agenda items. Water continued to be treaded. It was clear that the Armenians had no intention to retreat. When it became obvious that a compromise cannot be reached on the timetable, attempts started concentrating on the terms of reference of the observers. Despite it not being certain which countries would send observers, when the time comes and they are deployed if a compromise is reached, the rules they have to follow would be in their hands. To be honest, for us, tying the rules the observers would have to follow to a basis without the timetable for withdrawal was not determined, was the same as tying the car in front of the horse. When the other countries were willing, we did not oppose it. We also convinced Azerbaijan.

The meeting lasted for days. The deadlocks were surpassed on 28 February Sunday evening and on the condition of the ANK and NKA representatives as the “concerning party”, the terms of reference was accepted. The next day the meeting’s second stage took place. ANK representative talked at length as if publicly sermonizing. The Armenian delegation’s silencing attempts also did not help. We did not address the ANK. Representatives of the US and Russia made explanations. Sica also displayed an attempt. Eventually he unwillingly accepted the terms of reference. This way, in the first year of its establishment, the Minsk Group had determined the rules the observers would be following. Neither a date for a ceasefire nor a timetable for withdrawal existed. Issues like the number and nationality of the observers to be deployed were also unclear. In summary, the task was up to three horseshoes and one horse.

On March 6, our Foreign Minister conducted a one day visit to Azerbaijan. Our aim was to provide information on the “Trilateral Initiative” and to get their views. In the talk held with President Elcibey, Foreign Minister Tevfik Kasimov and Vefa Gulizade were also present. Elcibey welcomed our initiative warmly and was particularly highly pleased with the possibility of the US dealing with the issue closely.

In the middle of the month, a meeting was held in Geneva with the attendance of the US, Russia and ourselves. Kazimirov once again proved his creativity unique to himself. Despite us repeating tens of times that the beginning of the settlement of the issue lies in the concept of “ceasefire/evacuation”, he appeared with a timetable regarding the ceasefire and the deployment of observers. We also had a suggestion with a timetable. Through the support of Maresca, addressing the timetable which also foresees evacuation was accepted. Representatives of Azerbaijan and Armenia also attended the session on the following day. After the first hours of the session passing with discussions on method, they turned to the essence of the issue. It was a pleasant surprise that in the next day’s session, progress without any problems was made on the timetable until the article on the evacuation of the Lachin area was addressed. However, the Armenians were not in favor of the evacuation of the Lachin region. Another point which raised difficulties was the Armenians not accepting to remove its heavy weapons in the region. As long as those weapons remained there, it would be a dream for the Azeri Turks, who had fled by losing their feelings of trust, to return to their homes. We insisted that in order for an atmosphere of trust to be created in the region, the removal of these weapons was necessary.

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After the session held in Russia’s representative in Geneva, Kazimirov invited me together with Selçuk Korkud to a special meeting. After we drank our teas, Kazimirov removed a bundle of papers from his bag and started reading them. His translator also conveyed what he said. According to what he said, our Foreign Minister Çetin went to Moscow with a sudden decision and met with Kozirev. We have no information about this visit. Our addressee reading the proceedings of Çetin-Kozirev put forth that Çetin only accepted a first step that foresees the ceasefire. I cut in and indicated that the ceasefire and evacuation cannot be separated from each other like the two sides of a coin. I constantly explained that the views conveyed in the meetings are not personal, that after being addressed in the Ministry we also received the approval of the Government and that Turkey does not change

its views from the morning until the evening. He put the proceedings of the talk back into his bag.

Since the principle of “nothing is considered to be accepted as long as everything is accepted” forms the basis of the operation mode of CSCE, we returned empty-handed from the Geneva conference where important progress was made. Despite this, it was decided for the meeting to convene again at the end of the month.

When departing from Ankara to go to Geneva together with the Azerbaijani delegation, we received the news that the Armenians had attacked the Kalbajar region in the north of Nagorno-Karabakh where the Azeri Turks constituted 98% of the population.

The first session was held in our Embassy in Geneva. In the session to which Libaridian did not attend, Shahnazaryan represented Armenia and explained at length that his country has nothing to do with the attack and that it was conducted by the ANK. The second session was held on April 2nd in the US Embassy after receiving the news that Kalbajar was occupied. Negotiations came to a deadlock. Maresca indicated that under the current conditions, he did not know what was to be negotiated and that the meetings must be suspended and he criticized the Armenians in a harsh language. We indicated that two weeks, although distant, ago a gleam of hope had emerged, but with the recent attack we lost our hope.

The Russian, in a wiseacre manner, made a statement meaning to say “it was meant to be”. He did not complain about the situation. We were already suspicious of Kazimirov after the visits made to Yerevan and Stepanakart after each meeting. After these visits, we had to cover again the small distance obtained in the meetings that lasted days and hours. This time, we had fallen way behind the distance covered.

The meeting ended in such a situation.

Upon this attack and occupation, we tried to convince the United Nations Security Council to adopt a resolution. When this was not possible, we had to be satisfied with the statement made by the Term President on April 6. In the statement, “the serious concern felt with relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia increasingly deteriorating” was indicated. This sentence was affirmative with showing that the disagreement existed between the two countries. However, the indication that Kalbajar was “occupied by local Armenian forces” also existing in the statement fell behind our expectations since it reflected the approval of the thesis that Armenia had nothing to do with

the military operation. Though in the statement it was also expressed that Kalbajar was a territory of Azerbaijan and the principles of respect to the countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity and inviolability of borders were confirmed, but it was not indicated that the side violating the borders was Armenia.

Upon Kalbajar's occupation, we suspended all kinds of transportation to Armenia.

We tried to fill the space left by the Minsk process, which was suspended de facto after this last occupation, by giving emphasis to the Trilateral Initiative we were working on for some time.

For this purpose, we utilized the opportunities created by various international meetings. In the period after Kalbajar, after coming together for the first time with the representative of the US and Russia on April 26 at a CSCE conference in Prague, we passed to Moscow on April 28. Kazimirov continued to maintain his ordinary stance. He both accepted and rejected our proposal formed together with the US. At the end he said that he accepts it, but how much could this be trusted?

We found it beneficial for the Security Council to adopt a decision so that it would strengthen our hand in our attempts for a Trilateral Initiative. The US also assisted. In the end, on April 30, a resolution was adopted. The resolution was parallel to the President's Statement on April 6. Armenia was not able to be designated as the attacker. Furthermore, the immediate ending of the conflicts in order to achieve a ceasefire and the evacuation of occupied Azeri territories, including Kalbajar, was called upon in the resolution. This was a positive development, because not only a ceasefire was mentioned, but evacuation was also foreseen.

Meanwhile, Armenia requested for explanatory information to be provided on some points of the Trilateral Initiative and the ANK wanted the security measures to be taken after the evacuation to be enriched.

The point reached made another trilateral meeting necessary. Kazimirov, who had rejected our former proposals, again rejected our proposal to host the meeting. In despair, once again we made our way to Moscow together with Ambassador Volkan Vural. We first held a bilateral talk with Kazimirov. He acted quite insistent on his view which only foresees a ceasefire. When we decided to cut the talks after this, our addressee relaxed and indicated that an evacuation can also be foreseen. However, in the trilateral meeting held with the attendance of US representative Maresca, he spilled the beans and said that

he does not support the Trilateral Initiative. Maresca's harsh response was also not useful.

Was all that time and effort going to waste? We did not give up.

In the beginning of June, it was decided for the representatives of the three countries to come together in Rome under the chairmanship of Sica. When Maresca having gone to Baku and Yerevan was not able to catch up with the first meeting, we held a bilateral talk with Sica on June 2nd. Sica's impressions unfortunately strengthened our conviction on Russia's stance.

A great part of the meeting of June 3rd under Sica's chairmanship passed with listening to Kazimirov's lengthy speech delivered in order to present his new proposal. We started the session on the next day again by listening to his statements. At one point, he went as far as to request authority to be given to Russia to conduct a military intervention. We already knew what Russia wanted: Authorization to intervene in order to resolve the conflict in which it also had a share in its emergence. It wanted to assume the roles of both a creator of conflict and a resolver. Naturally, we, together with Maresca strongly opposed this. Although it regressed after this, what lay behind consciousness was now out in the open.

Just when a negotiation was being reached on a timetable that could be accepted by nine countries, when a rebellion erupted in Azerbaijan against Elcibey, the consequences of this had to be waited for.

Meanwhile, Maresca arrived to Ankara on July 14. The purpose of his visit was to exchange views on the timetable to be formed by nine countries of the Minsk Group, apart from Azerbaijan and Armenia, for the implementation of the resolution adopted by the Security Council regarding the occupation of Kalbajar.

Following these contacts, no progress was made in the meeting held in Rome on July 22nd, because on the 2nd day of the meeting, the Armenians had attacked Agdam, the city strategically important for transport to Baku with a population exceeding 100.000. This way, they had paved the way to Baku.

The Armenians were fearlessly attacking, occupying and banishing the local community from their homes.

They were so reckless that they had attacked Agdam on the next day right after Minsk Group Chairman Rafaelli's visit to the region on 9-13 July, including Stepanakert, in order to provide information on the timetable formed by nine countries to implement the Security Council's resolution. The ANK had

previously played another game on Rafaelli. They had prevented him from coming to Stepanakert through Baku on grounds that “the entire road was mined” and by causing him to pass through Yerevan, had conveyed the message that “they have no business” with Azerbaijan. By accepting this situation, the Minsk Group Chairman had committed a serious blunder. Just as ANK authorities indicated to Rafaelli, who reached Stepanakert through Yerevan, that military considerations dominate their approach and are disinterested with diplomatic initiatives, by first approving the draft and then saying that they signed it on a personal basis, they had in some way also ridiculed the Minsk Group in Rafaelli’s presence.

In the letter sent to the Security Council Term President on this issue, Rafaelli indicated that on the point reached, the point to resolve the conflict through diplomatic initiatives has been exceeded and had pointed out the necessity to apply political pressure.

As a result of the intensive efforts we undertook together with Pakistan, whose term membership had started, the Security Council adopted a new resolution on July 29. In this resolution, where the main points existing in the former resolution were repeated here, all occupying forces were demanded to withdraw from Agdam and the other occupied Azeri territories “immediately, completely and unconditionally”.

Looking from the aspect of international law, this resolution signified an important stage. Although not clearly expressed, it was confirmed that Nagorno-Karabakh was Azerbaijani territory and the immediate, complete and unconditional evacuation of territories under occupation was demanded. However, despite all our efforts, the resolution did not entail the threat of sanctions. Therefore, this resolution was also bound to be ignored.

Eventually, that is what happened.

With the losing of Jabrail, Fizuli and Kubatli in August and Zengelan in September, the west of Azerbaijan had entirely entered under Armenian occupation.

The occupation of these regions had also created the additional problem of “deserters” of 100-150.000 people.

Haydar Aliyev who assumed the office after Elcibey, who saw that at the stage reached the Minsk Group had lost its function and left his seat as a result of the rebellion, was forced to seek the solution at different doors. Aliyev adopted the approach that the first goal must be to stop the conflicts in order for

Azerbaijan to recover its war power and with the idea that it is in a leading position, wanted Russia to show efforts in this direction. This was a stroke of fortune for Kazimirov.

Aliyev went to Moscow on September 5 and signed the document for Azerbaijan to join the CIS.

On the other hand, the Minsk Group decided on continuing in Paris the drafting works of the timetable which foresees the evacuation of some regions under occupation and the partial lifting of the embargos put by Azerbaijan.

The meeting held in Paris brought forth a timetable. It was a meaningful development, because apart from the ceasefire, although in a restricted manner, it also entailed evacuation. Based on this, for each area evacuated by the Armenians, Azerbaijan will incrementally open the roads it closed and put the natural gas pipeline that it had cut into operation. Despite Armenia responding positively with some comments, Azerbaijan did not approve it since it did not foresee the evacuation of Shusha and Lachin.

While trying to determine a new date for a meeting to convince Azerbaijan, a short-term ceasefire, that would be extended later on, was made through the mediation of Russia. Through the initiative of the US, who took action upon this development, the Security Council adopted a new resolution on 14 October. In the resolution, respect to be shown to Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity was reaffirmed and parties were called upon for the achieved ceasefire to be made permanent, but there was no statement that envisaged the evacuation of the occupied territories. The resolution also wanted the timetable formed within the Minsk Group to be accepted. However, compared to the former resolutions, evacuation not being mentioned undoubtedly meant that there was a regress. Furthermore, indicating the necessity for the timetable, which had not been ratified due to Azerbaijan's objection, to be accepted was also a negative message to Baku.

In the end, a meeting was held again in Vienna in the beginning of November in order to eradicate Azerbaijan's hesitations and a new timetable for implementation was prepared. While Armenia responded positively to the timetable, the ANK declared that in principle they accept it, but that an official status different than that of NKA must be granted to them.

Before expressing our own view, we met with the Azerbaijani delegation. We said that this timetable will constitute a beginning, that it will at least allow some regions to be rescued from occupation, and that since the initiatives taken until now no such comprehensive development had taken place and we

indicated that there is no harm in it being accepted. Gulizade, heading the Azerbaijani delegation, said that we might be right, but that his instruction is for it not to be accepted.

By delivering a short statement, Gulizade emphasized that the main reason for Azerbaijan not accepting the proposal is the loss of trust in the Minsk process.

Despite Azerbaijan's negative vote, the "timetable" was accepted by nine countries. According to it, seven occupied regions (Kubatli, Zengelan, Fuzuli, Agdam, Akdere, Jabrail and Kelbecer) outside the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region would be evacuated until the Minsk Conference convened. Due to Lachin being the region which provides the transportation between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, it was not possible to include it in the timetable.

When it was supposed that the meeting had ended, Kazimirov talked almost an hour assuming that we negatively influenced the Azerbaijani delegation. In his speech, before referring to any country by its name, he also said that "it will not be allowed for the conflict to be used as an instrument in implementing expansionist goals and various interests". In response to Kazimirov, we said that the existence of those who harbor a policy of resolving the issue and therefore regaining the position lost and to resolve the problem they created their selves through their own methods can be observed in current news items and comments and that this must somehow be prevented.

The meeting ended in this atmosphere. It was doubtful whether the Armenians would comply with the timetable accepted. In case of it being applied, the occupied territories outside the Autonomous Region would be evacuated and a very important step would be taken towards the settlement of the problem. It was not possible to achieve the evacuation of Lachin which ensured transportation between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. It was obvious that the Armenians wanted to keep Lachin and Shusha in their hands as "war prizes".

In the case of the Armenians complying with the timetable, Russia's influence would weaken. However, since after each meeting of the Minsk Group where progress was achieved the situation deteriorated after Kazimirov's contacts by going to Yerevan and Stepanakert turned into an ordinary situation, again a similar development could also be expected.

The result obtained was presented by Minsk Group Chairman Rafaelli to the CSCE and the Security Council's Term President.

The timetable was published on November 10 as the Security Council's document. Then, the Council adopted a new resolution. In this resolution, the evacuation of the occupied areas was once again expressed and called on the parties to resolve the conflict in accordance with the "timetable" accepted in Vienna by nine countries within the framework of the Minsk process.

With the idea that the Security Council's resolution could form a new incentive, the proposal for the Minsk Group to convene before the CSCE Council of Ministers on November 30-December 1st was unable to take place due to Russia's decision not to attend. Including an article concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in the Council of Ministers' resolution text also failed to be achieved, because the Armenian delegation objected to the article on "respect to be shown to Azerbaijan's territorial integrity" by wanting the principle of "self-determination" to also be included. Despite Armenia openly conveying its intention this way, we could not find support for our insistent claims directed towards a statement in regards to "respect to be shown to Azerbaijan's territorial integrity", confirmed in the Security Council resolutions, violating the text. The Russian delegation remaining silent in the talks held over Nagorno-Karabakh was also meaningful. At the end, a statement foreseeing the resolution of the conflict within the framework of the Minsk process was included in the Presidential Statement.

Russia preventing the Minsk Group from convening once again and remaining silent in the Council meeting signified that its intention to resolve the conflict on its own and as it knows was becoming stronger.

Armenia, which knew that it cannot successfully implement its plans on Nagorno-Karabakh without Russia's assistance and support, continues to pay its debt to Moscow by allowing two divisions of Russian soldiers to be deployed on its territories and seeking security in Russia under the garb of CIS. However, Russia has not fulfilled its goal of re-deploying its soldiers in Azerbaijan. In order to fulfill this purpose, Russia has taken an initiative in the meeting held in Moscow in February 1994 to which the Defense Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia attended. According to this, ceasefire was to be declared, the soldiers of both sides were to withdraw 15 km. away from the engagement zone and the Russian forces were to be deployed in the region as "disengagement forces". However, since the proposal gave the opportunity for Russian forces to enter Azeri territories once again, it was rejected by Aliyev.

On the other hand, the ceasefire signed in 1994 still continues.

Due to the ceasefire signed without envisaging evacuation, Azerbaijan's 20% of territory has not been rescued from occupation and almost one million

deserters exiled from these territories have not been able to return to their homes.

With the achievement of the ceasefire, the Minsk Group has virtually lost its function. In essence, multiple attendance meetings have also been ended over time. In its place, a system of “Three Co-chairmen” has been instilled. In accordance with this system, formed from the representatives of the US, France and Russia, these representatives of the three countries from time to time come together, forming some proposals and presenting these to the countries “directly being a party” as a requirement and to the interested members of the Minsk Group as information.

The election of countries forming the trilateral co-chairmanship is also in our opinion striking. Expecting the US and France not to remain under the influence of the powerful Armenian diaspora in their countries would most probably be optimism. However, it also should not be expected for them to display a neutral approach appropriate to equity on the face of Russia’s well known stance towards the Southern Caucasus and especially towards Armenia.

Independent Azerbaijan’s first President Mutallibov had no intention of forming an army. On the other hand, Elcibey was unable to form an army due to his inabilities as a ruler.

Eventually, the Three Co-chairmen system, just as the Minsk Group, has also not achieved any significant success until now.

It might be useful to look back and examine the reasons for Azerbaijan losing this war.

Azerbaijan had no national army. It was impossible for the armed groups in various segments to act under a unity of command. It is also a known fact that these groups called “deste” acted waywardly. Moreover, the Armenians obtained some of the weapons in their inventories from the regions they occupied. An Armenian officer, in an interview delivered to an American journalist, has said in a mocking manner “the Government’s job in Baku is difficult, because they are arming both their own armed forces and also us”. Independent Azerbaijan’s first President Mutallibov had no intention of forming an army. On the other hand, Elcibey was unable to form an army due to his inabilities as a ruler.

Indicating some factors in addition to this main element is also necessary to see the picture as a whole.

As if the Armenian officers serving in combatant classes (infantry, cannon, tank, fortification) within Russian armies also serving in these attacks was not enough, it is known that many officers and soldiers from the disintegrating Soviet army joined the Armenians with their weapons. Including Nagorno-Karabakh into their territories as the first goal of the policy of enlargement had been instigated for tens of years and the Armenian soldiers trained in this direction have been successful on the front.

The west has remained insensitive towards the attack and inhuman treatments towards Azerbaijan. Here, the effective role of the Armenian diaspora should be underlined and it must be recalled that more attention was given to the events taking place in the disintegrating Yugoslavia at that time.

The Russian factor has also been to Azerbaijan's disadvantage. The point that should be emphasized is that the concern that after Armenia, its loyal friend in the region, gains full independence it could detach from it has worried Moscow, because Russia has carried the concern that such a development can seriously shatter its position in the region and can cause its interests to be harmed and has pursued a preventive policy for such a development. In order to implement its policy, Moscow has utilized the Armenians in Stepanakert more than the Levon Ter-Petrosyan government in Yerevan.

Another point that must be added to the picture is that in parallel to the increase of the opportunity for Azeri energy resources to be marketed through Turkey, the war has intensified. All the occupied regions being areas where the oil pipeline can pass through is interesting from this aspect. (In the end, the oil pipeline has followed the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan line).

Within this framework, the article named "Maneuver in the Narrow Oil Field" published in September 1993 in the "Moskovskiye Novosti" journal, sheds light on some facts:

...the war in Nagorno-Karabakh has long since been found to spill outside definitions of the communities long since determining their own fate, territorial integrity, democracy, and ethnic or religious solidification. In its sixth year, it has been understood that the reason for the war remaining hidden had actually gone beyond Azerbaijan and Armenia and that Russia, US, United Kingdom, and Iran had the intention of re-sharing regions in the world where oil is found. The problem is also not directly connected to the oil reserves in Azerbaijan. The problem is Azerbaijan's key position strategic wise in the oil fields of Eurasia. It forms the only option for Azerbaijan which is situated right in the center of the zone, for Chechnya possessing treatment

facilities for crude oil, and for Central Asia whose energy resources are abundant to head towards the West without passing through Russian territories in order to reach the spectacular oil reserves extending from Tyumen (West Siberia) to the Persian Gulf... This is where attempts of rival powers to seize a country like Azerbaijan that could entail a leaping point originate from...

Even if the occupation continued, the Armenians could not form domination over this territory. Just as the Azeri Turks abandoned the occupied areas and their homelands, the Armenians withdrew from this area due to the further deterioration of living conditions.

At the end, there has been no winner of the war.

It is not easy to answer the question of “how can the problem be resolved in the future?” However, the maturing of conditions that will cause the Armenians to “go as they came” will form a firm basis for settlement and opposite to Azerbaijan developing and becoming stronger each day in all areas, Armenia is growing poorer. Deterrence emerging in this situation is important for Azerbaijan. When the time comes, it will be possible to benefit from the power of deterrence without actively resorting to weapons. Moreover, it is a rule that international law has generally accepted that an operation conducted to rescue territories under occupation is not considered an “attack”. However, as long as it is not necessary, it would be better if this opportunity is not resorted to. In case of being left desperate and being used, the limits of this option must carefully be determined. But the point that should not be overlooked under this option is Russia. Russia, who has a defense cooperation agreement with Armenia, supporting Armenia carries the danger of the tension to rise and even to spread.

Furthermore, it is also important to keep the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and the viewpoint of the world in consideration. Therefore, it could be understood that under today’s conditions, it is difficult for Azerbaijan to establish direct dominance over Nagorno-Karabakh again. We believe that giving comprehensive sovereignty to the region on the conditions of the elimination of the invalid independence declaration delivered by the ANK and the evacuation of the occupied territories remaining outside Nagorno-Karabakh can form the framework of a permanent resolution. The permanent resolution to emerge will have to be guaranteed with an international document and it is believed that at this point, the article regarding Nakhchivan in the Kars Treaty and more preferably in the Moscow Treaty is a factor that must be taken as reference.

