
THINKING ALOUD: NOTHING NEW FOR KARABAKH

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Peace remains elusive in Karabakh as the conflict is still active, in blood and fire.

2016 will be remembered as the year when a bomb that had been ticking for several years exploded. After years of unfruitful talks and accompanying provocations, Karabakh has been one of the most dangerous places on the earth this year.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has brimmed and simmered for over two decades, and erupted in April 2016 bringing Armenia and Azerbaijan face to face once again after years of silence.

When intense fighting broke out on April 2-5 in Nagorno-Karabakh, an Azerbaijani land occupied by Armenia back in 1990s, everyone expected the things to change with this worst outbreak of violence since a 1994 ceasefire. This was a powerful reminder of the fragile and changing security environment in the region.

In fact, the April events dubbed as the Four-Day War exposed much truth; the danger of status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh, non-readiness of Yerevan to peace, inactivity of the international community in the conflict resolution process, and the most visibly □ the military power of Azerbaijan, which still backs negotiations rather than guns.

The Four-Day War saw heavy casualties by Armenian side and liberation of some Armenia-held territory for the first time since the 1994 ceasefire. Staging provocation of different types and scales on the frontline for years, Armenia was shocked of the military power of Azerbaijan and was forced to ask for a ceasefire.

Baku, which has suffered from Yerevan's aggressive policy for more than two decades, has voiced commitment to the peaceful negotiated solution to the conflict, while Yerevan was committed to its policy of keeping the situation of no war and no peace.

An intensive phase of negotiations on the settlement of the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region began in the summer months. The subsequent meetings between Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev and Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan first in Vienna in May, and the second time in St. Petersburg in June along with Russian President Vladimir Putin generated hopes for tangible progress in the peace process, deadlocked since the failure of the 2011 Kazan talks.

The presidents agreed to de-escalate the situation along the line of contact, increase the number of OSCE observers working in the conflict zone, and re-launch the resolution process based on the Madrid Principles.

However, the lack of progress since then and the increased ceasefire violations revealed that discussions of a real breakthrough are premature. Yerevan effectively utilized the internal crises to block peace negotiations and held a number of military drills in the occupied regions of Azerbaijan.

In December, the 23rd OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg has failed to reach a clear progress on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. Armenia, as a party to the conflict, refused to sit at a negotiation table with Azerbaijan in an extended format.

However, this mediation effort backed by Baku was broken by Yerevan for the next time, clearly demonstrating lack of the will or interest of the Armenian side to tackle the problem.

Later, the Sargsyan regime launched a campaign against those seeking a civil dialogue with Azerbaijan, although many assessed the establishment of the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace platform by the civil society of the two countries as an encouraging sign for the peace process.

The intensification of ceasefire breaches and timing of the latest military provocation of Armenia against Azerbaijan wasn't chosen accidentally. While Azerbaijan was trying to create base for continuing peace talks in 2017, Yerevan once again resorted to armed provocation.

Attempts by Armenia to bring the armed conflict directly to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and expand the scope of the conflict serve for the escalation of the political situation in the region and pose serious threats to the regional stability and security.

So, although the formulas for a solution to the conflict have seemed clear and acceptable, the conflict still remains unresolved. And because time does not necessarily bring us closer to a solution, but peace approaches in the past and future maybe missed- there is reason to wonder what threats this conflict can bring to the world.

Kaynak/Source: