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Creating the “Enemy Nation”: The Difficult Historical Legacies of Armenian–Azerbaijani Relations

By Shalala Mammadova, Baku

Abstract

The “four-day war” between Armenia and Azerbaijan in early April 2016 drew the attention of the international community to the mountainous region of Karabakh, the location of one of the so-called “frozen conflicts” in the South Caucasus. During intense fighting, dozens were killed, hundreds were wounded, and many driven from their homes. This military confrontation demonstrated that the ceasefire negotiated more than twenty years earlier between Azerbaijan and Armenia has not worked and has not helped to bring the two alienated neighboring nations any closer to a lasting, peaceful settlement. This article provides an overview of over a century of Armenian–Azerbaijani confrontation by analyzing the roots of this difficult relationship and how historical legacies still impact the situation today.

A Short Historical Overview

Living side by side for centuries, the relationship between Armenians and Azerbaijanis has been shaped not only by conflict but also by long periods of peaceful coexistence. Despite differences in their historical trajectories, there are also many common traits these peoples share in terms of culture and way of life (i.e., cuisine, music, poetry, etc.). Armenians, who created their first historical narratives in the 5th CE, understand themselves as an “old continuous nation”. Their state was divided between the Sassanid and Byzantine empires in the 4th century, around the time that Armenians adopted Christianity. The territory was under constant pressure from rival empires and under threat of conquest by Arabs, Mongols, and Turkish-speaking groups. From the late Middle Ages, Armenians formed large Christian minority groups in both the Ottoman and the Safavid empires, where they faced considerable obstacles in the conduct of their social and religious life. The experience under foreign rule, the frequent migrations and the persecutions served as mobilizing factors, strongly shaping Armenian ethnic identity. The same cannot be said of Muslim Azerbaijanis whose ethnic identity as “Azerbaijanis” emerged only in the early 20th century, which was coincidentally precisely during the start of confrontations with Armenians.

The Armenians’ situation changed with the expansion of the Russian Empire, which emerged as the major military and political power in the region during the 18th and 19th centuries, pushing back the influence of both the Ottoman and Persian empires. Even in the early 18th century, when Peter the Great advanced south with his armies, Armenians hoped to gain Russian protection and assistance in their goal of liberating “the majority of the Armenian people, who still lived under Ottoman rule”.¹ Peter the Great had to withdraw his forces from

the Caucasus, but Russian policy in the region remained directed at “liberating” Christians (not only Armenians, but Orthodox Georgians as well) and protecting them against Ottomans and Persians. In fact, it was also on these grounds that Russia would later justify its annexation of the whole of the South Caucasus, which was largely completed in the first third of the 19th century.

The situation changed again towards the end of the 19th century with the emergence of Slavophil nationalistic ideas as professed by Tsar Alexander III. Abandoning his father’s reform policies, which were prepared and directed by Minister of Internal Affairs Loris-Melikoff, an Armenian by ethnic origin, the new Tsar declared Russification and Russian Orthodox Christianization as the pillars of his strategy to modernize the Russian Empire. “The political, social and cultural origins of the new attitude, and of the policy which resulted from it, were rather complicated and remain in some respects obscure, but of the phenomenon itself there can be no doubt,” wrote British Historian Hugh Seton-Watson in a work published in 1977.² Russification, as Seton-Watson noted, first targeted “the most devoted subjects” of the Russian Empire and had caused a resonant protest among non-Russians, including the Armenians. In fact, during the 1880s, Armenian schools were closed and the study of the history and geography of Armenia was abandoned.

Tsar Nicholas II, who succeeded his father Alexander III to the Russian throne, continued this policy. On June 12, 1903, he ordered the confiscation of the properties of the Apostolic Armenian Church, which played a crucial role in Armenian national identity. Additionally, Armenian charitable foundations, theatres, newspapers, and magazines were closed down. Clergy and leaders of the Armenian community considered the attacks on the Armenian Church to be a direct threat to

1 Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States. An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (London: Methuen, 1977), 61.

2 Ibid., 186.

the existence of the Armenian nation. The anti-Armenian policy of the Russian authorities was supported by members of the Russian and local intelligentsia and Armenophobic scholars.

Armenians mobilized against this policy, and the Catholicos, the head of the Apostolic Armenian Church, turned to the socialist-oriented Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), also known as Dashnaktsutyun (or Dashnak, in short). The ARF was created towards the end of the 19th century in Tiflis, which fell into the territory of the Russian Empire. The short-term goal of this party was to obtain Armenian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire to ensure the protection of the Armenian Church and defend against the armed assaults of Ottoman armed contingents against Armenians. The long-term goal of the ARF was to create a free, independent, and united Armenia, incorporating all territories populated by Armenians. Until 1903, the main area of operation of the ARF was in Ottoman Turkey. However, Russia's increasing anti-Armenian policy forced the Dashnaktsutyun to become more active in the Russian South Caucasus as well, especially in those parts where Armenians had established themselves with great success as bankers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, merchants, and leading cultural figures. Out of eight revolutionary committees of the ARF, three were located in the territory of modern-day Azerbaijan: Baku, Ganja, and Shusha; and the terror of this organization was soon felt in these parts, primarily in the city of Baku.

The Bloody Upheavals of 1905–1906

By the beginning of the 20th century, the city of Baku, at that time the capital of the Baku governorate (*Bakinskaya guberniia*), had developed from a backward, tiny town on the Asiatic periphery of the Russian Empire into a quickly industrializing, multiethnic city of Transcaucasia with a population of some 140,000. This was due primarily to the development of the oil industry that dramatically changed socio-ethnic structure as well as political importance of the city. According to the 1903 Baku census, Turkish speaking Azerbaijanis ("Transcaucasian Tatars" in the official language of the time) comprised 21.4 percent of the city's population, while 35.5 percent of Baku's inhabitants were ethnic Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) and 19.4 percent Armenians. There was also a substantial Jewish minority living in the city—some 9,700 people, according to the 1903 census.³ It was a multiethnic city but not a "melting pot" as each ethnic group lived in its own district, separated from each other.

3 Central State Archive of the Republic of Azerbaijan, box 894, folder 10, file 99, page 90.

The city prospered thanks to oil production, which around 1900 achieved production levels similar to those in the United States. However, the wealth did not serve the indigenous Turkish-speaking population well, but instead enriched the owners of the oil companies, who were foreigners and Russians. Imperial legislation restricted native Muslims' economic, financial, military, and even cultural activity, creating serious obstacles for them to prosper. In practice, Baku and its oil industry were ruled largely by non-Muslims, that is, Christians. The City Statute issued in 1870 by Tsar Alexander II granted Baku a large degree of autonomy in matters of local governance and specified that "the non-Christian members of the City Duma [the parliament] should not exceed one third of the total number of councilors".⁴ During the whole of the 19th century, no Muslim, no matter his ethnic background, rose to occupy high administrative positions in Azerbaijan. Additionally, Muslims were not subject to military conscription as they were not deemed trustworthy.

By the time the revolutionary movement started in central Russia in 1905, Baku was experiencing bloody ethnic clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. This conflict was not so much over territory but over political and economic supremacy in the city. Between February 6 and February 9, 1905, "four bloody days of madness and horror raged in the city", as the local newspaper *Bakinskii izvestiia* described the tragic events.⁵ Ethnic violence was largely felt in Baku but not confined to it. Violent clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis also took place in Nakhchivan (May 1905), Shusha (August 1905), and Elizavetpol (November 1905).

A year later, in February–March, 1906, an Armenian–Azerbaijani (Tatar) congress was convened in Tiflis to analyze the reasons for the extreme ethnic violence. The Russian administration, represented by the Caucasian vicegerent (*namestnik*) Count Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov, mentioned cultural and religious differences as a main cause of the ethnic confrontation. The member of the Armenian delegation, Qeorgii Khatisov, blamed imperial authorities' fomentation of ethnic hatred towards Azerbaijanis. Muslims incriminated Armenian military organizations, especially the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun party. The Russian administration could not explain why, despite cultural and religious differences, Azerbaijanis' anger was not directed against Russians

4 Tsar Alexander II's decree (*Gorodskoe polozhenie*) of 1870 can be found on page 827 at: <<http://документы.рф/19/именно-указ-данный-правительству-ушchemu-senatu-1870-goda-iyunya-16-28/>> (accessed April 21, 2016).

5 Ivan Alibegov, "Mysli vysvannye krovavymi sobytiiami poslednikh dnei v gorode Baku", in: *Bakinskii izvestiia*, February, 12, 1905.

but at Armenians, who were not actually considered invaders and rulers of the Caucasus. Armenians could not answer the questions as to why they needed armed committees formed of members from the Dashnaksyuntun party, and for what purpose they were involved in the ethnic crime. In turn, Azerbaijanis refused to recognize their own crimes and instead indicted and convicted Armenians of all wrongdoings.

When Israfil Hajiyev, delegate to the Armenian–Azerbaijani congress, blamed the Dahsnaktsutyun for the terror against Muslims, Konstantin Khatisov, a member of Dahsnaktsutyun party, retorted that the party was fighting for Armenian liberation in Ottoman Turkey and, as democratic people, the Muslim delegation should understand the Armenian struggle for democratic values. “I completely agree with mister Khatisov and the Dashnaksutyun position”, was the answer by the Azerbaijani delegate to the congress, Qarabeg Qarabegov. “I welcome all attempts of the Armenian party in their struggle for the democracy and freedom of the Armenian nation in the territory of Ottoman Turkey. However, you Armenians are engaging in terror operations in the Caucasus. We don’t mind if you are going to improve the living conditions of your compatriots in Turkey, but concerning one million Armenians, who are pursuing narrow nationalist political aims in the Caucasus, we have completely different views.”⁶ The Azerbaijani delegate at this point avoided openly asking the question of whether the ultimate goal of the Armenians was to create a state in the Caucasus. Armenians answered a hidden question thirteen years later when, in March 1918, the next and thus far most tragic clash occurred between the two ethnic groups.

Revolution, Independence and the Establishment of Soviet Power

Soon after the Bolshevik takeover in October 1917, the non-Russian peoples of the former Russian Empire strove for autonomy and independence. During the ensuing Civil War, the Bolsheviks, with the help of local socialist parties, managed to gain brief control over Baku in the spring of 1918. The Baku Soviet (the “Baku Commune”) was a short-lived political entity that lasted only through the summer of 1918. It managed to establish its rule over the city after bloody ethnic conflicts broke out in March 1918 with the Muslim population (the so-called “March Days”). According to official Azerbaijani sources, more than 30,000 Azerbaijanis were killed and many more wounded; ethnic confrontation also broke out in other eastern South Caucasian prov-

inces.⁷ Armenian sources also confirm a high number of casualties, particularly among civilians.⁸

In May 1918, Azerbaijan, together with the two other major South Caucasian nations, Armenia and Georgia, declared its independence from Russia. Thus, barely had the news of independence reached the international community when heavy fighting over disputed land started among the three new nations. The situation became more complicated with the engagement of outside powers: In September 1918, the combined forces of Ottoman Turkey and the newly declared Azerbaijan Republic (the so called “Caucasian Army of Islam”) reached Baku. They drove the British, whose forces under General Dunsterville had gained control over Baku for a brief period, from the city. According to the Armenian sources during and after the Turkish–Azerbaijani conquest of the city, between 10,000 and 30,000 Armenians were massacred, a number that equaled the number of Muslims who had been killed during the anti-Azerbaijani programs in March 1918.

The ethnic clashes of March and September 1918 were differently interpreted at the time. The leader of the Baku Bolsheviks, Stepan Shaumian, an ethnic Armenian, evaluated the March confrontation as a political struggle for Baku in which “Soviet power has always been left hanging up in the air because of resistance of the Muslim nationalist parties.”⁹ The leader of the Azerbaijani Musavat party, Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh, described the March events as a struggle for national independence: “People who were killed during the March events were the Azerbaijani nation’s first victims in the independence of our country.”¹⁰ Ordinary people considered these clashes to be a conflict of two ethnic communities for territory and political supremacy. With the Bolsheviks establishing firm control over the whole of the Caucasus in the early 1920s, internal borders ceased to have any real meaning as “from now on, all lands belong[ed] to Soviet power.”¹¹

7 The tragic events of March 1918 were investigated and recorded by a special commission established in 1918 by the Azerbaijan Republic. The documents were published in 2009 under the direction of Azerbaijani historian Solmaz Rustamova-Tohidi: Solmaz Rustamova-Tohidi et al., ed., *Mart 1918 g. Baku. Azerbaidzhanskie pogromi v dokumentakh* (Baku: Nauchno-issledovatel’skii tsentr Ministerstva Natsional’noi Bezopasnosti, 2009).

8 Stepan Shaumian, *Pis’ma. 1896–1918* (Yerevan: Armgiz, 1959), 63–67.

9 Ibid., 63–64.

10 “Vtoroi s’ezd partii Musavat”, *Azerbaijan*, December, 6, 1918, 1.

11 “Reshenie Zakavkazskogo Chrezvychainogo Komiteta”, August, 22, 1922, in: Central State Archive of the Republic of Azerbaijan, box 379, folder 40c, file 45, l. 2.

6 “Armano–musul’anskii s’ezd”, *Kaspii*, February 28, 1906, 3.

The Karabakh War and its Aftermath

Although during the Soviet era, the government did not attach much meaning to internal borders and they were generally not considered important, the republics and regions of the Soviet Union that were created in the 1920s did have fixed administrative borders. The Soviet political leadership in the early 1920s included the mountainous part of Karabakh (Nagorny Karabakh) and Nakhchivan in the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic; Soviet Armenia obtained the Zangezur district. As a consequence of these decisions, Armenia lost its connection to a territory that, at the time, was largely populated by ethnic Armenians, and Azerbaijan was denied a territorial connection with Nakhchivan.

The tragic events during collectivization, the Stalinist repression of 1934–37, and World War II temporarily eclipsed ethnic grievances and distrust between nations. The profession of “friendship of the peoples” and an intensified Russification policy that also played some role in this process. Stalin’s death in 1953 and the “thawing” period under Khrushchev brought changes in the political atmosphere in the country, opening up limited political spaces. During the 1960s, Armenia and the Armenian diaspora in Azerbaijan voiced their discontent regarding the territorial dispute with Azerbaijan on several occasions. On October 18, 1960, a US-based Armenian diaspora newspaper *Baykar* (“Struggle”), issued in Boston in Armenian language, published a letter addressed “to the President of Soviet Azerbaijan”. The letter recommended “fraternal Azerbaijan to grant Nakhchivan and Nagorny Karabakh to Armenia as a present on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Soviet power in Armenia. The Central Committee of the CPSU decided to have the letter translated, added an explanatory note, and on December 9, 1960, sent the letter to the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party.¹² With this action, Moscow signaled to Baku that regional stability completely depended on the center’s (Moscow) position and asked the Azerbaijani comrades to contest Armenians’ territorial claims.

The Azerbaijani party leadership, when evaluating the letter initially published in *Baykar*, considered it a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In

response to Armenian ambitions, the Azerbaijani party leadership put together detailed documentation prepared by a group of lawyers, historians, and cartographers, supporting Azerbaijan’s claim to these territories and sent the material to Moscow. Acquainting himself with the Azerbaijani communists’ report and summarizing discussions concerning the territorial claims of Armenia, Soviet party leader Nikita Khrushchev made a final decision: We all will live friendly as one family. The Soviet leader actually expressed Moscow specialists’ decision that any territorial corrections are undesirable for the Soviet Union and would create a bad precedent for other republics.

Nonetheless, in the run up to Khrushchev’s visit to Armenia, rumors circulated that Moscow was indeed about to make a “special present” to Yerevan by granting it Nagorny Karabakh. According to the chair of the Azerbaijani KGB, Alexander Kardashev, the staff of Yerevan State University had already started to collect signatures in favor of the unification of Nagorny Karabakh with Armenia. The chair of the Nagorny Karabakh branch of the KGB, Vladimir Abramov, confirmed Kardashev’s information and added that Armenian leaders prepared two letters suggesting uniting Karabakh with Armenia and, if that was not possible, with the Russian Socialist Soviet Republic (RSFSR).¹³

The liberalization of political life in the Soviet Union ended with Khrushchev’s removal from his post in 1964, and a 20-year period of renewed hardening of the political situation followed. The glasnost and perestroika period initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev again opened up space for nationalist sentiments. Speaking at the Armenian National Congress in Paris, 1987, Soviet economist Abel Aganbegian stressed that as an economist, he is more than convinced that Nagorny Karabakh is economically more connected to Armenia rather than Azerbaijan. This indication marked the start of a “war of words” that would soon grow into violent ethnic clashes in the following year, as age-old grievances between Armenians and Azerbaijanis reemerged with a vengeance. In 1992, after the break-up of the Soviet Union, full-scale war broke out between the two independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Only in 1994 was a ceasefire established.

During the ceasefire regime that was established more than 20 years ago, nothing was done to reconcile the two rivalling nations. On the contrary, through mass media, history textbooks, the public commemoration of tragic historical events, images of the “other” as an

12 A copy of the letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU to the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party dated December 9, 1960, was obtained from the personal archive of Nazim Hajiyeve, head of the Department of Ideology of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party; a Russian translation of the article in the *Baykar* newspaper issue of October, 18, 1960, titled “The Greatest Present to the Anniversary” is published in: <http://azeribooks.narod.ru/proza/aydin_gadjiyev/vse_ponyat.htm> (accessed May 12, 2016).

13 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (Russian State Archive of Modern History—RGANI), box 5, folder 31, file 172, pages 36–37.

enemy have been propagated. Today, anti-Armenian as well as anti-Azerbaijani propaganda is persistently kept at a high level. Intelligence services and prosecutor's offices of both countries are working hard in this direction. In April 2014, Azerbaijani journalist Rauf Mirgadirov, a correspondent for the Azerbaijani Russian-language newspaper *Zerkalo* and a supporter of "civic diplomacy" between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, was arrested in Turkey and deported to Azerbaijan where he was convicted of espionage for Armenia and sentenced to six years imprisonment.¹⁴ Several month later, two political activists and critics of the Aliyev regime, Arif and Leyla Yunus, were arrested and charged with fraud, illegal entrepreneurship, tax evasion, and treason.¹⁵ Interpreting the couples' arrest, mass media stressed Arif Yunus's Armenian origin and their "collaboration with the Armenian intelligence service".¹⁶ A year later, the media circulated information about Rashad Mammadov (Martirosian), an owner of one of the largest companies in the country, AzImport, who was arrested because of his involvement in a scandal related to the International Bank of the Azerbaijan Republic. The public was not focused on discussing a financial or tax crime but Mammadov's ethnic origin, indicating that the Armenian minority has a luxurious life in Azerbaijan.¹⁷ Rumors spread through the media that Rashad Mammadov has been backed by Azerbaijani Prime Minister Artur Rasi-zadeh, also rumored to be half Armenian.

The April War

Against this background of heightened political tensions, on the night of April 1 to April 2, 2016, military confrontation was renewed between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani officials and the mass media reported the Armenian forces' sneak attack and the Azerbaijani Army's retaliatory measures. These days were described as one of the most serious military clashes between the two nations since the start of the Karabakh war in 1992. Attention was paid to the military operation to liberate some strategic heights and the enemy's military, armament, and civilian casualties. The Azerbaijani population, even opposition leaders, expressed a deep wish to coalesce

around the republics' supreme commander-in-chief (president); the national flag's sale reached an apex within a few hours of the announcement of military operations; people marched with flags, crying the slogan "just command, Mister Supreme Commander-in-Chief!" The media and its broadcasts strengthened anti-Armenian propaganda, using unmasking photos and video footage of clashes in the recent past, especially of the Khochaly tragedy; scurrilous attacks from both sides were spread through social networking (Twitter, Facebook, V Kontakte, etc.)

Only small part of the society could adequately react to the victims, interpreting the sudden fit of aggression as a political manipulation of the political elites. Ali Kerimli, leader of Popular Front of Azerbaijan, in criticizing Ilham Aliyev's revanchist sentiments has made several statements and addressed people via Facebook. He has also accused the political leadership of exacerbating the situation by hiding information about the real military casualties and keeping soldiers' funeral ceremonies from the public. A ceasefire declared on the fourth day of military operations was also severely denounced by the critics of the regime. In response, pro-governmental political parties and organizations arranged several day pickets and actions in front of Ali Kerimli's house with the slogan "Karabakh is ours and will be ours!"

Anti-Armenian attitudes are still high and evident in Azerbaijani society. Despite the critical economic situation, people approve and are proud of the serious expenditure on arms.¹⁸ BBC Azerbaijani journalist Aleksey Manvelyan's blog entry on April 20, 2016, perfectly describes psychological condition of both the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies: "Before struggling against corruption, money laundering, and officialdom tyranny, please think twice, otherwise any action that creates trouble for internal political power will be accompanied by 'external enemy's attacks'".¹⁹

Conclusion

The Armenian–Azerbaijani confrontation is a classic example of extreme ethnic violence generated by complex causes. Ethnic hostility is being justified through historic memory and narrations; chauvinism is being spread by various political regimes' ideology; and politics are strengthening mistrust and ethnic hatred among the nations that have already promoted Armenian–Azerbaijani clashes for more than a hundred years. Educational programs and historical curricula based on narrations of

14 The sentence against Mirgadirov was suspended in March 2016 and he was released.

15 Leyla and Arif Yunus have since been released and left the country for medical care.

16 <<http://az.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2298756.html>>; <<http://haqqin.az/news/21826>> (accessed April 21, 2016).

17 <<http://metbuat.az/news/121750/bayraq-meydani-idaresini-kecmis-reisinin-kralstayagi-heyati-.html>> (accessed April 21, 2016); <<https://vetenim.wordpress.com/2015/05/11/anasi-erm%C9%99ni-f%C9%99rari-m%C9%99murun-xeyir-duasibas-nazird%C9%99n-g%C9%99lib/>> (accessed April 21, 2016).

18 <<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.715293>> (accessed April 21, 2016).

19 "Aleksey Manvelyanin blogu: Bize ne oldu?", April 20, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/azeri/azerbaijan/2016/04/160420_karabakh_manvelyan?ocid=socialflow_facebook%3FSThisFB> (accessed April 21, 2016).

hatred support official government ideology, spreading ethnic hostility. Scholars' studies, politicians' speeches, and mass media's broadcasts create an "enemy nation" image, constantly manipulating public opinion. The question of whether history should tell the truth or lie concerning the historical past or what part/piece of history should be publicly open is crucial for societies with unsteady democratic principles. Neither narratives of hatred themselves nor their political deployment could

be causes of the ethnic conflicts. Nations' right to self-determination and disputed territories' issues themselves also do not always lead to a bloody confrontation and genocide. However, when national memory, filled with hateful mythologies and directed by the state ideology, meets the political ambitions of internal and external actors, as happened in the Armenian–Azerbaijani confrontation, cultural differences become more visible and offences degenerate into violence.

About the Author

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A New Phase in the Karabakh Conflict

By Vicken Cheterian, Geneva

Abstract

The "four-day war" in Karabakh in April 2016 was the result of a surprise attack by the Azerbaijani army. The fighting revealed that the military equilibrium has largely been maintained in spite of the massive military expenditure by Azerbaijan under Ilham Aliyev. The eruption of violence signals the end of the 1994 cease-fire and raises the question of whether it will lead to a new cycle of violence or stimulate diplomatic initiatives.

Introduction

On the night of April 2, 2016, a full-scale war erupted in the Caucasus: Azerbaijani armed forces crossed the line of demarcation in a massive attack on three fronts of the Mountainous Karabakh front line using artillery, tanks, and air force. On the same day, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense announced that its forces "liberated" five strategic heights along the front line. The next day, Armenian military sources addressed the loss of eight areas along the conflict zone, although none more than 200–300 meters deep. In the first day of fighting, 30 soldiers were killed by both sides, while the final death count might be at a few hundred. Additionally, Karabakh defense sources spread images of a downed Azerbaijani helicopter, claiming a second one crashed on the Azeri side of the frontline and adding that its forces shot down two Israeli-made drones as well. Both sides have also lost dozens of tanks, revealing the intensity of the

fighting. On April 3rd, 48 hours after the start of the hostilities, Azerbaijani military sources announced a "unilateral ceasefire"¹, yet on the ground, violent clashes continued for two more days, causing scores of casualties on both sides. Nationalist enthusiasm has gripped both the Azerbaijani and Armenian public, who display public support of their armies and their fight.

This was the worst military escalation since the cease-fire of 1994. The fact that the attack took place in several locations with combined arms, including ground troops, artillery and air force, reveals planning rather than a localized event that got out of hand. Why do we have this flare-up now of the Karabakh conflict? Who

1 "Azerbaijan takes unilateral decision to suspend military operations in Nagorno-Karabakh", *Report News Agency*, April 3, 2016, <<http://report.az/en/nagorno-karabakh/azerbaijan-takes-unilateral-decision-to-suspend-military-operations-in-nagorno-karabakh/>> (accessed May 20, 2016).